

GENERATIONAL PERSPECTIVES  
ON THE CHANGING ROLE OF WOMEN:  
WOMEN OF THE 1950'S SPEAK OUT

by

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Valerie Neufeld

A Thesis

Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies  
in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements  
for the degree of  
Masters of Social Work

Winnipeg, Manitoba



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ISBN 0-612-13398-2

**Canada**

**A GENERATIONAL PERSPECTIVE ON THE CHANGING ROLE OF WOMEN:**

**WOMEN OF THE 1950's SPEAK OUT**

**BY**

**VALERIE NEUFELD**

**A Thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies of the University of Manitoba in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of**

**MASTER OF SOCIAL WORK**

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### Acknowledgements

I would first like to thank those women who participated in this study and gave of their time, insight and wisdom. I would also like to express my appreciation to my thesis committee - Annette Gupton and Kim Clare - for the energy and work they put into this project; and to Shirley Grosser, my advisor, for her enthusiasm and support. As well, to my colleagues who helped me through the research process.

I would also like to give my special acknowledgement to my mother, Edna Neufeld, who through her life work gave inspiration to this project. And finally, my thanks to Dylan Fast, who supported me throughout this academic endeavour.



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## Abstract

The transformed role expectations of women between the 1940's to the 1970's held a great deal of significance in affecting women's lives. During this time, expectations of women changed. The image of the "happy homemaker" with aspirations based on the virtues of femininity was negated and a movement towards an image of women with careers, who were also partners and mothers emerged. The question this project examined was the impact this change in socially prescribed behaviour for women may have had on those women who became homemakers after the new expectations of women emerged and evolved.

Grounded Theory, a theory supportive to the canons of feminist research methodology was used. Data was gathered through nine interviews with women who were homemakers in the 1950's and 1960's and who continue to be such.

Data analysis resulted in the identification of the process by which these individuals patterned their lives. The attitudes of the dominant society surrounding them were highlighted as well. Four major components were identified: 1. Knowledge is power; power is knowledge, 2. Ideas are maintained in a social context, 3.

Knowledge is conceived subjectively, but is perceived as objective, and 4. The marginalization of contrary perspectives. These four components provided an explanation as to the circumstances in which these women made their life choices as well as how and why they held onto these convictions, despite the changing social expectations surrounding them.

## Chapter 1

### Introduction

As the essence of human nature is social, so is the acquisition and acceptance of what is understood to be truth - knowledge is socially constructed. A society's endorsement of truth influences the accepted power structure, the interpretation and reaction to a range of behaviours, socially created goals and objectives, and the foundation of individual belief systems. For one to divorce themselves from this realm of understanding, of knowledge, is to risk society's acceptance of them, or to risk society's acceptance of their sanity.

Knowledge is, and has power. Those who have knowledge, have power. This assertion makes it imperative in the development of a comprehensive understanding of human behaviour to ascertain the reality in which knowledge is grounded. One's interpretation of truth sets the stage for individual perceptions, understandings and behaviours. The impact of socially determined knowledge on various groups within society is dependent upon the make up and interpretations of this knowledge structure.

This project deals with the socially established and

changing perceptions and expectations of North American women who are now between the ages of 50 and 65, and who spent a majority of their lives working within the home as homemakers. This project explores these women's perceptions of the changes in their lives over the past four decades (1950's through to the 1980's). The focus is particularly on the societal changes between 1950 and the late 1970's. The impact of transforming socially constructed role expectations on these women's ways of being is explored.

The reasons for selecting this group of women and this time period are based on the changes in role expectations of women which occurred between the mid 1940's and the early to late 1970's. In order to understand who these women were and the choices they had, one needs to first uncover how their behaviours were interpreted and prescribed by and within their social context. What was the impact of the accepted knowledge base in North America on women of this generation?

The mid to late 1940's and 1950's are known to be a time of the "domestication" of women in North America. This time period was preceded by World War II when women were recruited to the work force as a means of replacing



men who were off at war. When the war was over, men came home expecting their jobs back, and women were expected to go back to the home. At this point there was a surge of propaganda from media, politicians, clinicians and scientists proclaiming the virtues of the homemaker, and disclaiming the femininity of the "career girl". Subsequently, many women and young girls forfeited the possibilities of careers for the roles of wife and mother. Motherhood was idealized, placed on a pedestal and became the one real choice available to women.

This socially constructed image of domestication began to crumble in the late 1960's and early 1970's with the emergence of the women's movement. By the 1970's, many of whom had avoided the entrapment of socially determined domestication. The efforts of this liberation highlighted the discriminations encountered by women in the work place and in society at large. As this voice grew stronger, changes began to occur in the larger society's endorsement of acceptable female behaviour. No longer was the "career girl" considered to be deviant or negating her "feminine" qualities by working outside the

home, but rather, she was perceived by society as independent and strong by encouraging her "masculine" qualities. The homemaker on the other hand, by exercising her "feminine" qualities and staying in the home, was perceived to be weak and dependent (Yogev, 1983; Hall & Gordon, 1973; Surette, 1967).

The question being elicited in this project is, "What impact did this change in socially prescribed behaviour for women have on those who became wives and mothers, endorsed the "feminine mystique" during the 1950's and 1960's and who remained homemakers after the expectations of women evolved?"

This project will begin with a discussion of the social construction of knowledge. The underlying supposition on which this is based is that a society's endorsement of what is truth is often founded on the knowledge created within that society. For example, what is often considered "natural", such as the innate ability for a woman to be nurturing, is only natural because the broader society and culture defines it as such. Dangers are inherent to individuals who do not fit the "natural scheme" of things, and who, as a result are judged as being deviant by society. The consequences encountered

as a result of this abnormal behaviour are dependent upon the social perception of the severity of the deviance. This project reviews how women were perceived in academic journals from the 1950's to the late 1970's, and acknowledges the changes which occurred.

There is then a discussion on the contrast of traditional quantitative research methodologies and feminist qualitative research methodologies. Up until this point in time it has been primarily traditional quantitative methodologies which have been used in determining the "character of women". To defend my use of feminist methodologies, in addressing this query, some of these cannons of the traditional methods are challenged.

The specific methodology used in carrying out my research question is grounded theory. Grounded theory stresses the discovery of a theory and does not rely on available theoretical understandings in developing its framework. Subsequently, because it does not rely on previous, possibly sexist literature, it leaves room for the development of a feminist grounded theory.

In grounded theory, data collection and analysis are interrelated, interdependent and immediate. The

researcher begins his/her analysis right after the first bit of research has been collected; and at that point the process of research will begin. The inquiries and interviews are built upon one another. Important or repetitive issues of one observation or interview are included in the next and following interviews. This flexible research process allows the researcher to be guided by the data into examining a variety of avenues. This is how the research can be one of discovery.

## Chapter 2

### Literature Review

#### The Sociology of Knowing

What is the process in which a fact becomes such? Is there an instigator to the development of what becomes a fact? If so, who is that instigator? What is permitted to be fact and what is relegated to fiction? Are facts discovered or are they created? Can there be an absolute nature ascribed to truth and knowledge? If so, is that which we as human beings, living in North America, credit to be true, founded amongst this pure knowing?

Dorothy Smith (1990) argues that the inquiry of knowing must include a critique of its socially constructed and organized practices. Invariably, this implies the study into the method of knowing rather than the end product, knowledge. One must include the ways and means by which power differentials are produced, maintained and reinforced (Gergen, Mary M., 1988). In order to address these, one must heed Smith's (1990) advice and speak to the attributes and properties of knowledge through the acknowledgment of their

development.

Humankind Creates the Knowledge By Which It Is Governed

As stated by Berger and Luckmann in their book The Social Construction of Reality, "No human thought is immune to the influences of its social context" (1966, p. 9). If one were to accept this assertion, it would then follow that thoughts and ideas are dependent upon the environment from which they emerge. Ideas are not created in isolation, rather they are constructed within a social context. "The self cannot be adequately understood apart from the particular social context in which they were shaped" (p.50).

This social context in which ideas are shaped, is one which holds both natural and human qualities. Natural qualities include aspects such as one's physical environment - one's surroundings, body, physical limitations and capabilities. However, in attempting to understand this context, one cannot look toward a natural environment without addressing how it is socially and culturally ordered (the human quality). This latter order includes the values and interpretations placed upon one's environment. According to Berger and Luckmann

(1966), humanness is a social-cultural variable. As they state, "From the moment of birth, man's [human's] organismic development and indeed a large part of his [their] biological being as such are subjected to continuing socially determined interference" (p.48).

Corresponding with these notions, that ideas originate within a social environment, and must be evaluated within that context, and that social and cultural order are allocated by humans to natural phenomenon, one may draw the conclusion that knowledge is dependent upon its social context and social context is dependent upon socially accepted knowledge. Human kind creates the knowledge by which it is governed.

#### The Creators of Knowledge: Knowledge is Power & Power is Knowledge

But who is it that initiates this order, this way of knowing and of structuring one's environment and self? In looking toward the creators of knowledge, one can look toward traditionally accepted sources of authority. Historically there is a visible association between power and knowledge. Small groups of individuals who held positions of power, predominantly men, have historically

controlled and distributed recognized fact to the masses (Ramazanoglu, 1989). Because these were persons in power, and the maintenance of that power was of the utmost importance, the knowledge which they distributed would have corresponded with and supported their accepted power base (Hubbard, 1988). For example, at one point in time, and still today for some groups of people, the church held the most influential role in the acquisition of what could be considered to be truthful (Fee, 1981). The allocation of this power was enmeshed not so much in the abilities of these people to determine truth, but rather was obtained via the power structure of the time. Consequently, many of these facts were grounded in a white male interpretation of morality and were coloured with the underlying intent of maintaining a position of power.

Over time these societies and belief systems have been transformed and a new power structure emerged in North America - science (Fee, 1981). As the truth ascertained through the church was based in morality, so is objectivity the grounding force in science: the study of man over nature; the separation and distinction of the observer and the observed.



Science is founded in the quest to control and predict the phenomena of nature (Haug, 1983; Smith, 1990). A powerful piece of research is one which is able to predict future behaviours. As explained by Frigga Haug (1983), empirical research approaches human beings by determining the degree of how predictable and controllable their actions are. Subsequently, behaviours and traits become fixed elements. When some aspect of life becomes fixed, it becomes repetitive, dependent on a discernable number of factors and becomes relatively predictable. Once an element is understood and predictable it can be controlled, to some degree, by an independent researcher. Knowledge becomes and is power.

The acquisition of knowledge is controlled and determined by some, not all individuals in society. As knowledge is power, conversely, power is knowledge. Those who obtain power are in a position, directly or indirectly, to ascertain what is to be considered knowledge. Those who hold power academically, politically and financially are typically white, middle class men who work in occupations such as professors, deans, government, media or in private funding agencies (Hubbard, 1988). These are the individuals who decide

what is important enough to be studied, portrayed, or written about; by what means these phenomena are to be studied, portrayed or written; and by whom. The underlying intent behind decisions of this type is generally for the purpose of validating their own position of power. This point is supported by Ruth Hubbard (1988) in her statement that "...science is made up, by and large, by a self-perpetuating, self-reflexive group: chosen for the chosen" (p. 3).

Dorothy Smith (1990) asserts this correlation between power and knowledge in her statement,

Issues are formulated because they are administratively relevant, not because they are significant first in the experience of those who live them. The kinds of facts and events that matter to sociologists have already been shaped and given their character and substance by the methods and practice of governing (p.18).

Subsequently, knowledge becomes and is self perpetuating, governed not only by present sources of authority, but as well by previously recognized sources.

Knowledge is Conceived Subjectively but is perceived as

### Objective & The Omission of Women

Despite this assertion, that social and cultural order are not the "Law of Nature", but rather humanly created proclamations, the socially created realities are often taken for granted as being reality. Berger and Luckmann (1966) speak of how humans, in identifying socially constructed concepts as "absolute truth", are in essence forgetting their own authorship of the human world. Concepts can then be,

...experienced by man [and woman] as a strange facididy, an opus alieum over which he [or she] has no control rather than as the opus proprim of his [or her] own productive activity (p.89).

Because of the subjective basis of science (despite its seeming perception of being objective) it is not and cannot be pure, objective knowing. The impact of this declaration is that the fundamental nature of the acquisition of knowledge is to be challenged, a battle which has long been declared by feminist scholars (Smith, 1990, Gergen, 1988).

As some feminist scholars espouse (eg. Haug, 1983; Smith, 1990), much of this "taken for granted" knowledge is saturated within male perspectives and values, and

frequently utilized as a self-serving vehicle for sustaining patriarchy (Gergen, M, 1988). Maguire, in her 1987 book, states that,

...men have excluded women from the circles in which society's meanings are constructed, where they have deprived women of the possibility of defining or raising to social consciousness the problems which concern them (p.10).

Up until recent times social constructs and history have been accounted for by the dominant male experience and perspective. Women have primarily comprised a silent audience, vaguely included and unaccounted for. Their experiences, if acknowledged, were primarily expressed through the eyes and words of men. According to Frigga Haug (1983), "...women were neither linguistically present in our vocabulary, nor present personally in numerous everyday notions of work and society at large" (p. 65). Women are in a subordinate position in relation to the creation and expression of language, modes of thought, emotion and attitudes. As explained by Haug, because women are not accounted for within history, they are relegated to being a phenomena of nature, thus at the mercy of the dominant culture. Only through the

recognition of the history of women can they retrieve elements of a new character and image of themselves, and on that basis construct alternatives for the future.

According to Dorothy Smith (1990), the disciplines of sociology and science have been predicated on a world grounded in men's experience. Subsequently, the emerging ideologies would be such that they would sustain male dominance and female subordination within the institutions. For example, many studies document men's and women's behaviour and evaluate it differently even when their behaviour is identical (Unger, 1988). Men can be viewed as "smarter", whereas women are "luckier"; men are "assertive", whereas women are "aggressive"; men are "ladies men" whereas women are "promiscuous"; men are bachelors whereas women are "old maids"; and so on. Because of this "double standard" founded within gender, the assumption that science is for and about all people is falsified.

#### The Marginalization of Contrary Perspectives

The impact of this fictitious declaration of pure wisdom are that false premises are established on which to base socially constructed norms, theories and

ideologies. As a result of the power of social norms, many contrary perspectives, or perspectives which cannot be measured or understood may fall to the margins in attempts to maintain a homogeneous state. Ruth Hubbard (1988) states,

The ideology of women's nature can differ drastically from the realities of women's lives, and can indeed be antithetical to them. In fact, the ideology often draws a smokescreen that obscures the ways women live and makes people look away from the realities or ask misleading questions about them (p. 4).

A woman may determine her life to be played out in two conflicting spheres, one which is framed in the socially accepted context of male domination, and the other which is recognized through the realities of her own personal experience (Gluck & Daphne, 1991). Haug (1983) explains in her book, Female Sexualization, that individuals construct their lives by the things surrounding them that are subjectively significant. By this process, factors are accepted and rejected until such a point that their lives become relatively uncontradictory. Subsequently, the impact of society imposing on individuals theories

which do not fit their personal experience and yet exercise control over their lives because of their general public acceptance, will likely result in the personal negation of perceptions.

History is abundant in the experience of acclaimed scientific knowledge and language imposing itself on the human condition to the detriment of the personal perspective. Traditionally, women's personal experience and accounts have been overlooked in the understanding of history and in the development of socially constructed sex role expectations. For example, consider the labels which have been attached to women's vocal expression, such as nagging and gossiping. Despite the need for community and communication, women's voices have traditionally been invalidated.

To say that women's perceptions have not been traditionally sought out is not to say that women have been a neglected subject of research, but rather the contrary, women have been, over the past 50 years, a popular source of inquiry. They have not, however, been actively involved in the end product, in the delineating of the properties or the underlying assumptions attached to these assigned attributes (Oakley, 1978). The

following pages will discuss how it is that women have been socialized in the mid 20th century in North America.

#### The Socialization of Women in the 1950's

The generation of women, of whom this study is targeting, are those who are now between the ages of 50 and 65, and who have spent much of their lives working within the home. These women in particular have been victim to socially contrived role expectations which have left them in positions of having limited choice. These women were adolescents and young girls during the 1950's, a time in which the domestication of women was of pivotal importance (Frieden, 1963). This was a time, after a short period of liberation in the 1920's and early 1930's; and after the 1940's where women were recruited to the work place; to replace temporarily the men who were at war. After the war ended, the patriotic woman lost her employed status, because the returning soldiers wanted their jobs back. Soon employed women were no longer portrayed as the patriotic "Rosie the Riveter", but rather they became a threat to the stability of the home and family (Gluck, 1987). The wage earning wife was seen as a threat as well as committing an antisocial act. A working woman was seen as taking away a man's salary,



and subsequently depriving another family of income (Woloch, 1984). Along with, and preceding this societal change of female expectation, came a barrage of propaganda extolling the values of traditional roles (Helson, 1972). Women and girls were expected to marry, to have children, to live and work within the domain of the home under the submission of the men in their lives. Those women who rejected this life choice, "career girls", were viewed as misfits, unable to fit into the societal mores, due to their limited femininity.

Betty Frieden (1963) explains, in her book, The Feminine Mystique, that the propaganda for domesticity and passivity may have made little impression on the women who began their careers in the 1920's and 1930's, but it did have a big impact on women who were at that time deciding what to do with their lives. In speaking about these women she states:

...they have lived their whole lives in the pursuit of feminine fulfilment. They are not career women; they are women whose greatest ambition has been marriage and children. For the oldest of these women, these daughters of American middle class, no other dream was possible. The ones in their

forties and fifties who once had other dreams gave them up and threw themselves joyously into life as housewives. For the youngest, the new wives and mothers, this was the only dream (p. 27).

These young women were confined to a single life choice. The women of the 1950's had to learn to give up their illusions of independence and self-determination (Gluck, 1987).

The feminine mystique took hold of North American society. In 1946, following the return of soldiers from World War II, there was an escalation of marriages. In 1947 the birth rate accelerated (Woloch, 1984). There was a massive exodus to the suburbs. By the end of the 1950's the average marriage age of women in America dropped to 20, and was still dropping into the teens (Frieden, 1963). In 1920 the portion of women attending college compared to men was 47 percent; in 1958 this dropped to 35 percent (Frieden, 1963). In the 1950's the independent women of the big screen in the 1920's and 1930's - Katherine Hepburn, Barbara Stanwyck and Joan Crawford disappeared and were replaced with the "wholesome girl next door" -Doris Day, Nancy Davis Regan, Donna Reed; or the "sexpot" - Marilyn Monroe (Gluck,

1987). Most influential experts supported traditional roles for women, where passivity and dependence were expected (Frieden, 1963). Dr. Spock cautioned women who wanted to seek employment and leave their children to seek professional counselling (Woloch, 1984). The Lost Sex, a best seller of 1947 written by psychoanalysts, Farnham and Lundberg, labelled the "independent woman" as a contradiction in terms, denounced feminism and urged women to find mental health in domestic roles. As they stated, "Feminism was a neurotic reaction to natural male dominance" (cited in Woloch, 1984, p.474). Helson furthers this point of view in her statement about researchers reactions to women with career aspirations in the 1940's and 1950's to be, "...very rare and the unfortunate victim of childhood trauma. The very term "career woman" suggested pretentiousness or hard boiled insensitivity and rejection of femininity" (1972, p.36). As quoted from Betty Frieden (1963),

In the fifteen years after World War II, this mystique of feminine fulfilment became the cherished and self-perpetuating core of contemporary American culture. Millions of women lived the lives in the image of those pretty pictures of the American

suburban housewife, kissing their husbands  
goodbye in front of the picture window, depositing  
their stationwagons full of children to school, and  
smiling as they ran the new electric waxer over the  
spotless kitchen floor (p. 19).

### Perception of Women in Research

#### Gender Roles

In much of the literature, gender role identity is identified as a set of attributes and behaviours which are commonly accepted as appropriate conduct for men and women in a given society (Jenkin, 1969 et al.; Mackie, 1983). Gender roles are learned behaviours and hence are not innate qualities acquired upon the joining of xx and xy chromosomes (Purcell, 1990; Mackie, 1983). Gender roles are learned and perpetuated throughout most (or all) institutions within a given society, from the family to the institution of law. The allocation of gender role identity serves the purpose of providing order within a society. As Nancy Felipe Russo (1976) explains in her article, "The Motherhood Mandate", because and through gender-role stereotyping men and women learn what they can and cannot do, she states that "expectations are

built into the operating principles of society's institutions" (p.144). Those who defy these socially acceptable behaviours face the consequences of social scrutiny. The severity of social condemnation of truculent gender role behaviour is dependent upon the significance that behaviour has in maintaining social order. For example, for many years the professional participation of women was viewed as contradictory to their nature and subsequently as a source of personal strain. As elaborated on by Yogev, "Career women were viewed as the antithesis of feminine women and were thought of as failures as women or as having personality disturbances" (1983, p. 220). For defying the social expectation of the nurturing and devoted mother and wife, the sanity of these career women were challenged.

### Duality

Upon looking into the available literature on women and their identity, one predominant theme is echoed throughout - duality. Dualistic paradigms are not unusual in Western society, as stated by Maguire (1987), in her book, Doing Participatory Research (1987). She explains this further by asserting that most situations

have a dominant and alternative paradigm. Simone de Beauvoir (1952) echoes this view in her book The Second Sex, in the following quote,

...No group has ever set itself up as the One without at once setting up the Other over against itself...duality is essential in the passage from the state of nature to the state of culture (cited in Sanday, 1988, p.60).

The problem with the utilization of dualities as a means of explaining phenomenon and providing societal order is that they falsify experience and impose a divisive hierarchical order on reality (Adam, 1989). As one relies on dichotomous categories to order their understanding of situations they lose touch with the complexities of every day experiences and of relationships.

Women and their sex role identity are typically categorized and divided into two mutually exclusive or contradictory groups, such as: masculine vs. feminine; career girl vs. homemaker; family vs. career; man vs. woman; or feminist vs. traditionalist.

Of the series of dichotomous situations mentioned, the two most closely aligned in the literature available

about women are femininity vs. masculinity and career girl vs. homemaker. Despite the maintenance of this affiliation throughout the 1960's, up until the 1980's and 1990's, the value and expectation attributed to these characteristics has changed.

Literature on Women during the 1950's and 1960's  
"Career Girl" vs. "Homemaker"

In the 1950's and 1960's women working outside of the home were seen as violating sex role stereotypes. Because employment was perceived as a violation, these women were then thought of as failures as women or as having a personality disturbance (Yogev, 1983). Subsequently, because female employment was recognized as an isolated, individual experience (pathologized), numerous studies were undertaken in order to determine who these women were and why they worked (outside of the home). Some carried this employment intrigue further, in differentiating women who worked in "feminine" professions (those which involved the helping of others), and "men's work" (Hoffman & Fidell, 1979; Yogev, 1983).

As a result of this, countless observations were made about women, simply based on the categories of

homemaker and career girl. For example, during the 1950's and 1960's, it was determined that women who worked outside of the home stressed achievement (Gybers, Johnson & Gust, 1968), scored higher on aptitude tests (Rand, 1968), had more need for personal adjustment and counselling (Osipow and Gold, 1971; Gysbers et al., 1968; Helson, 1972), were more impatient when it came to the needs of others, were more sceptical about religion (Wagman, 1966), preferred classical music (Gysbers et al., 1968), lacked in a close relationship with their families (Lewis, 1968 cited in Helson, 1972), were more masculine than feminine, and were emotionally distant from other women and more communicative with men (Gysbers et al., 1968).

Homemakers, in the 1950's and 1960's, on the other hand were found to be feminine, more tolerant, better adjusted and felt more comfortable in social situations (Surette, 1967) and in need of protection from men. A study utilizing the "housewife scale" used to measure the "homemaker syndrome", found that homemakers were more patient with the needs of others, accepting of religious beliefs, enjoyed popular as opposed to classical music, were moderately content with their emotional adjustment



(Gysbers et al, 1968), and were extrinsically motivated (Rand, 1968).

From this vast array of attributes assigned to these two groups of women it was apparent that career women and homemakers could be categorized by these roles. Results from studies demonstrated that these two groups of women were opposites who differed as far as personality, ability and values. The primary assumption on which many of characteristics were ascribed to women were based in the accepted "knowledge" of the time that career women were more masculine and homemakers more feminine. Career women, as a result of adhering more to male attributes than female, were in fact "less than women". The impact of being less a woman meant that they were deviant, not ascribing to the "natural" order of gender.

#### Masculine Vs. Feminine

And what is this "natural" order of gender? From the literature, one finds that masculine refers to attributes such as: strong, confident, energetic, ambitious, personable and courteous (Jenkin, 1969) being a leader, athletic, aggressive, independent, intellectual, self-confident, persevering, and with an

ability in mathematics, science and research (Rand, 1968). Feminine on the other hand has been described as: affectionate, friendly, kind, pleasant (Jenkin, 1969), understanding, artistic, sensitive to the needs of others, and self-controlled (Rand, 1968). A study done by Jenkin found that the least feminine individual was described as active, aggressive, ambitious, assertive, capable, confident, cooperative and dominant. Subsequently, a woman who sought out personal independence and success in the work place risked the loss of her sexuality.

### Double Bind

Through this sex role dichotomy came a double bind for the women of this generation. It has been stated in the literature that femininity meant for one to be passive, innocent, sexy, submissive and maternal. A woman who acted competent ran the risk of being accused of being unfeminine, but if she acted childish (which was encouraged through feminine attributes), she could have run the risk of being perceived as mentally ill. Yogev (1983) discusses this conflict in her article by stating,

The belief that a career was a masculine pursuit had

a devastating effect upon a woman: she encountered the dilemma of feeling that pursuing her career would make her less desirable to men while foregoing her career would cost her self-respect and goals (p.222).

This double bind was extended to all women of society. Women were not to seek out a career, primarily because it would hinder their roles and duties as a mother and homemaker. However if a woman sought out a career and did not marry or have children, she too would be deviant and looked down upon because she had not been able to attract a man (Coser, 1971). Women had two options, to have a family and be feminine or to have a career and be sexless (Yogev, 1983).

As discussed by Unger (1988), women who were encountering the ill fated consequences of not manifesting appropriate sex role characteristics, were likely to blame themselves, for a number of reasons. For example, a woman may feel more comfortable assuming personal responsibility as opposed to viewing herself at the mercy of a dominant culture. Self-blame was encouraged because throughout the literature and research no other way, other than blaming individual women, was

provided for explaining women and their roles. For these women, there was a lack of awareness of the existence of the double bind, a lack of vocabulary to describe it and a lack of comparison with experiences of others. As a result, women tended to blame themselves for not succeeding in emulating the feminine mystique.

#### Perspectives on Women During the 1960's and 1970's

By the late 1960's the women's movement pushed it's way into North American consciousness. During the late 1960's and 1970's changes in expectations of women followed with the growth of the feminist movement. The generally accepted societal promise that every woman could find greater fulfilment as a wife and mother was gone. Between 1960 and 1971 single parent families in United States grew by 1.1 million (Ogden, 1986) and continued to rise. However, because of inequality in pay for women, this transition for women meant downward mobility. The 1970 single mother was very vulnerable to her economic conditions. Her ability to control her own destiny was limited, and may have been dependent upon her ex-husband's wages. For many of these women, who had at one time fulfilled the "feminine mystique", they had no

marketable skills, were ineligible for security benefits or unemployment benefits and were up against sex and age discrimination.

Much of the power of the women's liberation movement was generated by angry young women who had thrown off the roles of convention, before having been pulled into it. Not much overt support was given to the suburban house wife of the early days who chose to remain in that role. As stated by Ogden (1986), "...the middle class house wife was treated as a lost cause, if treated at all" (p. 194). Ogden further states that,

...she no longer stood on the mother pedestal but denigrated as gullible consumers of American products. According to the old principles of domestic sainthood as well as modern popular psychology she only had herself to blame. With all the security pulled from under her, the falling super mother was terrified (p.190).

#### Career Woman Vs. Homemaker

The research and media now spoke of women no longer needing to regard personal achievement and marital satisfaction as mutually exclusive. A woman could now

choose both family and career. Because of liberation, advanced health technology and more effective birth control devices, the traditional mother's role did not cover enough of a woman's lifespan to remain fulfilling (Yogev, 1983). Subsequently, women were encouraged by social forces to go out into the work world. Along with this change in expectations for women, came a different set of attributes associated with the categories: "homemaker" and "career woman". The central question to which much of this literature focused was that of the attractiveness of women displaying characteristics associated with the modern female role, compared to those displaying characteristics of the traditional female role (Wiley, 1978).

Career women were now no longer deviant and sexless, but rather, as stated in much of the literature: had a more positive self-concept, a greater degree of personal autonomy and self-esteem, were more mature, more liberated and had achievement oriented and had a higher level of self-actualization than nonprofessional women (Yogev, 1983, Surette, 1967). Hall and Gordon (1973) found that women who held jobs, even if they were not exciting and challenging careers, were more satisfied

with their lives than full-time homemakers (1973).

Homemakers, in contrast to career women, were now made out to be less mature, less self-actualized and as having a lower self-esteem. Hall and Gordon (1973) from their research state that, "The least happy women were displeased with their abilities as homemakers and did not have jobs to support their egos" (p.227).

As demonstrated in these statements, a drastic transformation had occurred in how homemakers were perceived by society in the late 1960's and 1970's, compared to the decade previously. Women now needed a job to maintain their ego, whereas previously, their egos were sustained and supported by fulfilling their feminine mystique and their "innate nature" of mothering and nurturing.

#### Masculinity Vs. Femininity

In the literature there was, as well, a reorganization in the understanding of the dichotomy of masculinity vs. femininity. Ironically, considering the feminist drive against male controlled institution, masculine women became those ascribing to a feminist viewpoint (Wiley, 1978). Feminine women became those

exhibiting conservative traditional behaviours.

Feminine women were found to have a lower self-esteem, were more introverted, held onto conservative attitudes about the role of women hence they liked housework and took full responsibility for child care and homemaking and were not pursuing an education (Hoffman, 1979). Feminine women were quiet, passive, dependent, weak, inhibited, submissive (Wiley, 1978), and were more inconsistent in their ideology (Smith, 1981). Some of these characteristics had already been applied to these women in the earlier decade, however with different, more positive assumptions.

Masculine women however, were found in the literature to have had more liberal attitudes towards women than feminine women (Hoffman, 1979). Masculine women were more independent, aggressive, competitive, ambitious, active and dominant (Wiley, 1978). According to some authors, women accepting the foundations of feminism were found to be less authoritarian, more autonomous, more self-accepting and had a greater sense of personal efficacy than women ascribing to traditional values and mores (Smith, 1981; Cherniss, 1972). The highly regarded, modern woman, encompassed elements which



were previously exclusive to the male role or the deviant female role (Wiley, 1978).

### Gender Inequalities

The dichotomy and inequality in the portrayal of women remained in the 1970's, it merely assumed a new identity. In the 1940's through the 1960's women who worked in the home were considered by many in North America, as subscribing to their natural role. However, in the 1970's it was women who worked outside of the home whose roles were considered to be preferable.

Ruth Hubbard (1988) speaks to inequalities in her following quote,

"Inequalities that are bad come not from the fact that different people do different things, but from the fact that different tasks are valued differently and carry with them different amounts of prestige and power" (p. 3).

Women's work throughout history has been devalued and unacknowledged. Their work in the home goes unrecognized in the Gross National Product and therefore holds no value in the standard descriptions of the economy (Gergen, M., 1988). Until 1978, the most widely used

index for measuring socioeconomic status in Canada (Blishen and Carroll cited in Mackie, 1983), omitted female occupations all together. Seldom does a scholar or historian note the efforts of the sisters, mothers, wives and daughters of the "great men in history". And in the 1970's, along with the new values ascribed to the roles and duties taken on by women, those women who gave in to societal pressure and attempted to fulfil their "feminine mystique", were devalued on that merit.

#### Larger Social Perspectives in the 1970's

The reasons why opinions and realities around women and work changed between the 1950's and the 1970's are diverse. Ironically, despite the opposition towards married women working outside of the home, the biggest increase of women in the work force was in the 1950's (Woloch, 1984). Between 1940 and 1964, in the United States, married women in the labour force increased 244 percent (Kaley, 1971). This mainly comprised of part-time or casual work and often held the significance of extra family "pin money". Women were already in the labour market but it was the attitudes towards their working which were changing.

As women were statistically living longer, had smaller families and with advanced technology reducing previous time consuming jobs in the home, it was understood by some academics that the traditional woman's role no longer occupied a significant enough portion of a woman's life span (Helson, 1972). Many women who were married at a young age and started families at that time could realistically have their last child in kindergarten before they were 35 years old. As well, with the availability of increasingly effective birth control, women began to have more choice around timing of childbirth and limits to the size of their families. With this availability of time, more women were able to seek work and education beyond the home.

In delineating the realities of these "career women", women who held down two full time jobs (at home and in the office), one must address the positions that they held. Women's employment has only increased in the lower echelon occupations, not in the professional classifications. From 1950 to 1968, the percentage of women in all professional technical occupations decreased from 40 percent to 37 percent (Kaley, 1971). According to Coser (1971), women were well represented in jobs

where the hours were long and rigidly controlled (not allowing for the flexibility of maintaining a family). Women held positions where workers had little control and decision making power and thus, were viewed as being replaceable. And yet, because of women's cultural mandate to their family (to maintain and nurture), it would be difficult to obtain and sustain a demanding career. As stated by Coser (1971),

The normative priorities for working women who have a family are ambiguous: if they live up to the normative requirement of caring for their families in situations of unexpected demands (such as illness) they introduce a disruption in their place of work; if they do not live up to this normative requirement, they introduce a disruption in the family (p.542).

Along with maintaining the opposing categories of "housewife" and "career woman" in the late 1960's and 1970's, academics, scientists and scholars provided a more sociological understanding of why women took on the roles they did. For example, Helson (1972) states in her article,

The studies in the late 1960's and early 1970's say

that it is naive for an individual woman to blame herself for failure, or very modest success, in a profession. The problem is social, remedial and the institutions must change (p.42).

There was talk about and a movement towards solidarity against the institution and a movement toward limiting the focus on sex differences or differences between women. "What is needed", says Calson (1971-72 cited in Helson, 1972),

...is not to try to ignore or eliminate these differences [sex differences] but to reduce the overvaluation of the masculine, which is actually thwarting the best development of the field of psychology (p. 42-43).

Coser, in 1971, states that the conflict is derived from a new set of demands placed on women. "...professional women are expected to be committed to their work "just like a man" at the same time as they are normatively required to give priority to their family" (p.535). These newly liberated women, aspiring to careers, who are now described as being self-fulfilled and actualized are still bound to a cultural mandate which frustrates these ambitions - a cultural mandate

which still gives priority to the family. Subsequently, a woman was now expected to hold down a job, but as well, ensure a secure home environment for her husband and children.

### Summary

A society's endorsement of what is truth impacts on a society's power structure, the expectations for and interpretations of various human behaviours and the foundations of individual belief systems. Upon accepting this assertion, one may then expect that the transformed role expectation of women between the 1940's to the 1970's would hold a great deal of significance in affecting women's lives. During this time, expectations of women transformed from an image of "the happy homemaker" and aspirations based on the virtues of the "feminine mystique" to a negation of this and a movement towards becoming a career woman, partner and mother. The literature demonstrates a dichotomy which played the attributes of the "homemaker" against the "career woman" and "masculine" traits against "feminine" traits. The question addressing how this change played itself out in the lives of women who became homemakers in the 1940's,

1950's and 1960's is significant. They made choices as young women based on the options made available to them. These choices, only a few years later, transformed into a different reality for other, younger women. In keeping with the workings of dichotomies, the values attributed to the characteristics of the homemaker and of femininity were played out against the characteristics of career woman and masculinity, and lost.

#### Limitations in the Research

The inconsistencies found in research can, to a degree, be attributed to methodological inconsistencies. For example, in the studies cited on the sex-role identities of women, a diverse selection of instruments were used to determine aspects of personality. The various investigators used vocational tests, personality tests, interest, attitude and value scales, the masculine-feminine scale, or adjective lists. The utilization of these various instruments often provided conflicting results.

Some of the scales were grounded in a philosophy contrary to popular academic opinion. For example, with the use of the masculine-feminine scale, those women who

scored high on the feminine traits, would automatically score lower on the masculine traits. These scales were grounded in the understanding that masculinity and femininity were polar opposites, as opposed to complementary domains of traits and behaviours as argued by other researchers (Tipton, 1976).

Other studies used adjectives as a method of categorizing masculine and feminine women. Typically it was the male attributes that were regarded as healthier than those typifying traditional female behaviours (Wiley, 1978). One of the problems using this methodology was that it was the researcher who predefined and prescribed the adjectives rather than having the participants define their own. In this way a popular view was maintained by the use of mutually exclusive possibilities. For example, terms typifying male behaviour included aggressiveness, rationality and dominance; while women were typified as emotional, sensitive and dependent. Underlying this research was the assumption that sex-role stereotypes are related to self-concepts and personality development (Deseran, 1982).

Another inconsistency is that much of the research



done on sex-role identity was conducted with either children or college aged students in middle class North America. Little has been reported about the character and adjustment of women past college age (Hoffman, 1979), or women living in a range of life circumstances -such as various geographic or cultural contexts. The problem with this approach is that conclusions about the realities of women and their sex-role identities are drawn based on the perceptions of those who are not personally involved in the unique life circumstances or in several decades of human female lives.

Chapter 3  
Methodology

Feminist Research Methodology

In keeping with the previous criticisms made about the way in which women have been portrayed in research historically, this project will approach research from a feminist research perspective.

Feminist research emerged from the women's movement of the 1960's. The ideological basis to this study's understanding of "feminism" includes, as stated by Maguire (1987): (a) the belief that women universally encounter some form of exploitation or oppression; (b) the commitment to understand and explore the nature of this oppression; and (c) the commitment to work individually and together in order to challenge and end these forms of oppression.

Feminist research is based in the premise that traditional forms of research do not express the needs or the experiences of women (Maguire; Stanley & Wise, 1983; Meekosha, 1989; Smith, 1990). Traditionally, research has focused on the public, visible and official members

of society, while marginalizing those in the unofficial and less visible domain; i.e. those spheres usually assigned to women (Smith, 1990). These generalizations made from male focused research are then routinely applied to women, without consideration that they operate in a different social arena. Because of these oversights regarding women, many of the issues important to women are left uncovered.

Feminist research works towards including subjects into research methodologies. However, the creation of inclusive research implies not only the application of minority groups and women into available research methodologies, but also, it is the creation of a technique grounded and sensitive to personal human experience. It is research done for, not on women.

### Objectivity

Feminist research challenges a number of the premises on which traditional research is based. It, for example, challenges a critical aspect of empirical research - the maintenance of objectivity. In traditional research the scientist is perceived ideally, as an independent observer who minimizes any relationship

between him/herself and the subject of study (Alexander, 1982 cited in Gergen, K., 1988). As long as science is neutral and uninvolved, the subject is not assumed to be influenced by the researcher and the data collected are assumed to be reliable.

However, according to feminist qualitative researchers, the assumption that the researcher and the researched can remain objective within the collection and analysis of data is to deny the essential social aspect of human nature. A relationship is indeed present whether it may be considered close or distant.

For example, there are many conflicting results indicated in the previous literature review on attributes ascribed to career women and homemakers over the decades. In some studies, career women appear to be less well adjusted and more dissatisfied than the housewives (Wagman, 1966; Osipow & Gold, 1971; Gysbers et al., 1968); and in others studies, the contrary is indicated and it is the housewives who are maladjusted (Hall & Gordon, 1968; Yogev, 1983; Surette, 1967). This dissension in the research suggests that the interpretation of research findings, at least partially, is dependent upon the researcher's values and social

context (Yogev, 1983). The acceptance of research findings and interpretations depends very much on the larger political, historical and cultural context. Studies that are in conflict with the dominant thinking of society receive very little attention and are seldom published (Yogev, 1983).

The acknowledgement of the unity between subject and object is the essence of feminist methodology (Gergen, M., 1988). Objectivity, the belief that nature and natural phenomena are isolated objects, is challenged by feminists. Ramazanoglu (1989), in disputing the power of objectivity states,

The enlightenment conception of reason as separable from emotion allowed emotional researchers to assume the superiority of objectivity over subjectivity and mind over body, culture over nature, man over woman." (p. 438).

Subjectivity and context cannot be stripped away if nature is to be understood, and knowledge is to be used in a healthy nonabusive manner.

Contrary to traditional researchers, feminist scholars acknowledge the underlying intent and potential biases of the researcher in their academic pursuits.

They insist that the researcher has an inevitable bearing on their research as a result of their values, motives, material conditions influencing the choice of topic, the nature of the problem to be researched, the methodology, the interaction with the object of the research, and the findings and interpretations (Adam, 1989). Feminist scholars recognize that all research is being conducted for a reason; whether utilizing research to prove the effectiveness of silicone breast implants, or to imply the harmful effects of traditional research methodologies on the emotional well being of subordinate groups in society. Because biases are present in research, feminist scholars espouse that intentions should be recognized and acknowledged within the research (Meekosha, 1989).

#### Inclusive Knowing vs. Exclusive Knowing

Another premise in which feminist methodology is grounded in is the assumption that many scientific methodologies utilized today are dependent upon the premise of male knowing as opposed to inclusive human knowing. The development of the rationally structured discipline of science, meant that science became divorced

from everyday experience, and the context from which it occurred. Therefore, conclusions could be drawn regarding certain phenomena recognizing only the dependent factors selected by the researcher or scientist. Because many of these factors are recognized as significant because of their presence in other previous pieces of research, they are enmeshed in the biases of history.

For example, Karen Janman (1989), discusses Horner's (1968) concept of women's "fear of success". At one time this notion became the answer to a substantial number of incidents of women's underachievement in society. It was understood that women centred around the motive to affiliate rather than to achieve. Subsequently, they identify with the roles of mother, wife, and homemaker more readily than that of career woman.

Women were understood within the context of a male dominated society. Because of this, if they could not excel by male standards, they were understood as not achieving or being unmotivated. If a woman did not want to, nor could excel in a professional field it was explained as a result of individual characteristics rather than the social environment. However, what has

been hailed as "the fear of success", was really a fear of deviation from sex-role standards. "Fear of success" may in fact be a fear of displaying an inappropriate sex role" (Yogev, 1983).

### Everyday Knowledge

In the securing of knowledge, many empirically based researchers conduct their experiments outside the subject's contextual realm. Studies are carried out in laboratories. The researcher, by controlling for the irrelevant variables, assures the security that the study has internal validity and thus enables the researcher to make cause and effect predictions, and generalize the findings to a larger population. The traditional researcher attempts to establish general laws of human functioning. The researcher studies the researched, removes the subjects experience from their natural context; and denies that the scientist brings life experiences to the research task (Gergen, K., 1988).

The female experience can largely be seen and heard from the perspective of the everyday experience. Women throughout history have been powerful players within the home, within the realm of 'everyday' life. However,



women's work has often been trivialized, ignored and undervalued. The domestic site remains within the domain of women, and because the domestic is on the periphery of scientific knowledge, women have remained outside the realm of knowledge development (Matthews, 1982).

Feminists have long been arguing that it is the personal and everyday experience which is important in research. This point of view is supported by Karl Marx's assertion that history and social relations are a process that exists only in people's activities. His methodology insists that the discovery of relations and processes can only be found in the actual activities of people (1973/1844 as cited in Smith, 1990). Accurate, comprehensive research, depicting the complexities and contradictions of life demands a methodology open to the everyday occurrence. As Frigga Haug (1983) writes,

The day-to-day struggle over the hearts and minds of human subjects is located not only within social structures, the pregiven forms into which individuals work themselves, but also in the process whereby they perceive any given situation, approve or validate it assess its goals as proper and worthy, repugnant or reprehensible (p. 41).

The everyday experience, in essence, refers to the exploration of a moment grounded in the insiders perspective (Smith, 1990). It attempts to highlight the complexity, the ambiguities and the contradictions of the relations between the subject and the world (Berger-Gluck & Daphne, 1991). It is the realization that life experiences cannot be explained in a linear fashion. One factor does not necessarily constitute the existence of another. And in feminist research, it is the application of this principle into research practice.

#### Political Agenda

Another premise on which feminist research is based, and how it differs from other methodologies is that it includes a political agenda. It recognizes and acknowledges in its analysis the social and political realm from which its participants "are coming". This is supported in Ramazanoglu's (1989) statement, "... we do not have to accept the level of experience as a full understanding of what is going on in people's lives" (p.435). For so long the acquisition of knowledge has been enmeshed within the male interpretation of reality, that it would be insufficient to record the female

experience without acknowledging this presence.

However, feminist scholars must not impose a general theory of oppression on all their female participants. Not all women share the same experience, or are oppressed in the same manner. Smith (1990) warns feminist researchers in the following quote,

We must not do away with them by taking advantage of our privileged speaking to construct a sociological version that we then impose upon them as their reality. We may not rewrite the other's world or impose upon it a conceptual framework that extracts from it what fits with ours. Their reality their varieties of experience, must be an unconditional datum. It is the place from which inquiry takes place (p. 25).

For feminist scholars this interpretive authority imposes a dual expectation on their research intent; the empowerment of women and the application of a political context. Because of this political agenda inherent in feminist research, one must be open to the cultural and personal diversity of their participants. All people, and in this instance, women, must tell their own stories in their own words (Berger-Gluck & Daphne, 1991).

The irony implicit in the feminist agenda is the political nature from which it approaches its research interpretations. The researcher holds the political vision of a sexist culture; a vision which may not be considered valid by its research participants. As eloquently expressed by Katherine Borland,

Lest we, as feminist scholars, unreflectively appropriate the words of our mothers for our own uses, we must attend to the multiple and sometimes conflicting meanings generated by our framing or contextualizing of their oral narratives in new ways (as cited in Berger-Gluck & Daphne, 1991, p. 73).

Heeding these warnings to feminist scholars, one must pose the question of how one can present the words of women and yet not relinquish the feminist responsibility of providing their interpretation of the experience. One solution would be for the researcher to acknowledge and become aware of their biases prior to doing their research. Another solution may be to include the participants in the research interpretation. Traditionally research subjects are left ignorant of the researchers intentions and bias, in fear their knowledge may contaminate the findings. Feminist scholars on the

other hand welcome such perspectives.

### Story Telling

Story telling has been one method utilized by feminists in the acquisition of qualitative research. It is the illustration of a reality through the words and experiences of the individual, or a group of individuals. In order to recognize the possibilities of this oral history interview there must be a shift on the demands of obtaining information. It is not so much dependent on asking the "right" questions, but rather in recognizing the process and the unfolding of the participant's viewpoint. Because of the interactive nature of the interview, the researcher is able to ask for clarification. What is often missing in research is the individual's own interpretation of their own experience, or their perspective on their life and activity. Marie Francoise notes:

"Stories highlight the complexity, the ambiguities, and even the contradictions of the relations between the subject and the world, the past and the social and ideological image of women..." (as cited in Berger-Gluck & Daphne, 1991, p. 89).

Because of the expansive possibilities of stories, they allow for one's own experience to become a source of knowledge, along with sources such as, reviews of historical documents, newspaper and magazine articles and fairy tales. Berger and Luckmann applaud as well the significance of this "everyday knowledge". In their book, The Social Construction of Knowledge, they state,

...theoretical knowledge is only a small and by no means the most important part of what passes for knowledge in a society...the primary knowledge about the institutional order is knowledge on the pretheoretical level. It is the sum total of what everybody knows about a social world, an assemblage of axioms, morals, proverbial nuggets of wisdom, values and beliefs, myths and so forth... (Berger & Luckmann, 1966, p. 65).

Traditionally, research has focused on questions and answers. Questions are derived from the minds of researchers, and the answers mirror the limitations of the inquiries. With the use of stories, individuals include a whole array of personal, significant experiences that are safe from the limitations that may be established if left only to the imagination and

boundaries of the researcher. The understanding of the individual is pivotal in the understanding of the whole. As Frigga Haug explains, "...if research limits itself to the general and ignores the particular, it will be impossible to ever discover the conditions of production of universal human phenomena" (1983, p. 44).

### Validity and Reliability

An additional obstacle in feminist research is the procuring of a theory that is scientifically valid and politically effective (Ramazanoglu, 1989). For feminist research to be effective it needs to be recognized by authoritative powers as valid. The research could then be utilized by populations beyond the feminist sphere. However, in procuring this empirical validation, feminist scholars must remain true to their standpoint that the power of reason cannot be separated from subjectivity and emotion. Following this, the methods and guidelines in which validity and reliability are secured must be aligned with qualitative as opposed to quantitative research.

Lincoln and Guba propose four constructs which qualitative research should adhere to in defending its

value and logic, these include:

1. Credibility - To demonstrate that the research design accurately represents and describes the subjects and their perspectives. A qualitative study which utilizes in-depth description in its exploration of a process, social group or social interaction will be so embedded with data from that setting that it will ensure its validity.

2. Transferability - Because results in qualitative studies are grounded within the context (for example: the intent of the study, the participants, the time place of the study, the researcher's interpretations and research design) the transferability of research findings can be problematic. This, however, can be amended by the researcher clearly stating the parameters of their research project, and in this way presenting to what extent findings may be generalized in the future. Another way of strengthening a qualitative study's usefulness for other settings is to triangulate results with multiple sources of data. This means using more than one source of data to demonstrate a single point.

3. Dependability: This refers to the researchers' efforts to account for changing conditions in the



phenomenon under study as well the changes in the design as the depth of understanding increases.

4. Confirmability: This refers to the assurances that the results are enmeshed within the data as much as possible as opposed to the researchers own biases. Guba and Lincoln (1985 cited in Marshall & Rossman, 1989) propose some of the following procedures in addressing this construct: (a) have a research partner critically question the researcher's analysis; (b) continual search for negative instances; (c) checking and rechecking the data (d) taking value-free notes; and (e) asking questions of the data (Lincoln & Guba, 1985 cited in Marshall & Rossman, 1989).

## Grounded Theory

### Grounded Theory and Feminism

Considering the limitations of traditional research, feminist scholars must seek out a methodology to address their concerns. Grounded theory is one such method which begins to do this. It echoes similar statements about traditional research and moves on to apply a research methodology addressing these problems.

Grounded theory is qualitative as opposed to quantitative research. As the names imply, quantitative data justifies its reliability and validity through repetition, time and large pools of research subjects. Qualitative, on the other hand achieves its strength via the depth of descriptive data it can provide. Qualitative data aims to explore a problem or describe a setting, a social group, a pattern of interaction or a process of change and growth.

Grounded theory stresses the discovery of a theory; contrary to deductive reasoning which relies on available theoretical frameworks. Subsequently, because it does not rely on previous, possibly sexist literature, it leaves room for the development of feminist grounded theory.

As a way of making discoveries of new ways of understanding, grounded theory interrelates data collection and analysis. The researcher begins his/her analysis right after the first bit of research has been collected. The inquiries and interviews are built upon one another. All seemingly relevant issues of one observation or interview are to be included in the next and following interviews. This flexible research process

allows the researcher to be guided by the data into examining a variety of avenues. This is how the research can be one of discovery.

Because of these and other methodological stances, grounded theory echoes many of the concerns of feminist researchers. For example:

1. As stated by feminist scholars, traditional forms of research, because they are grounded in male understanding, do not express the experience of women (Smith, 1990). Subsequently, because of this, a technique is necessary so that it is grounded and sensitive to all personal human experience.

Grounded theory maintains the belief that sensitivity to the individual experience is pivotal in good research. The groundedness of this approach aids in the assurance that the researcher is analyzing what they actually observe in their data. As expressed by Corbin and Strauss (1990), "Grounded theory seeks not only to uncover relevant conditions but also to determine how the actors respond to changing conditions and to the consequences of their actions" (p.5). This methodology maintains the belief of determination - actors make choices about their perceptions, based upon their

contextual environment. It is not the "truth" which is sought out, but rather the understandings and reactions individuals have of their situations. The researcher looks to the participant's viewpoint for the explanation of interaction, process and social change.

In grounded theory, rather than looking for answers, the researcher looks to the processes of understanding. How is it that participants realize their understandings of the research problem? For example, if a population is subordinate in the societal format of understanding it will more than likely emerge within the findings of the analysis, as opposed to remaining hidden in the findings, and reflected as an inadequacy of the subordinate group (as is what often occurs in research which imposes ways of understanding on participants).

2. The objectivity, upon which traditional forms of research are established, are based upon the false premise that research and the researched can remain separate, distinct and unaffected by one another. Feminist research recognizes that there is indeed a relationship between the subject and the researcher, as well a relationship between the research question and the researcher. More over, the researcher's perspectives,

understandings and personal experiences will have an impact on their interpretation and the administration of research questions.

Grounded theory echoes this feminist conviction, and calls for the researcher to play an active not a neutral role in their work. . . Because the researcher and the researched are so immensely interactive, the researcher should care very deeply about their work. According to Strauss (1987), the lived experience of the researcher has been underplayed by philosophers of science, to their own detriment. As he states, "The mandate to use experiential data gives the researcher a satisfying sense of freedom, linked with understanding" (Strauss, p. 11). In grounded theory, it is the lived experience of the researcher which shapes their research question, their approach to data collection, their development and understanding of the research process and in their analysis of the data. This includes the researcher's philosophical stance, school of thought, methodological strategies and personal experiences, values and priorities (Charmaz, 1990). Lofland and Lofland (1984) in their book state, "As sociologists, we "make problematic" in our research matters that are problematic

in our lives" (p. 9).

Because of the strength of the relationship between the researcher and his/her data, it is vital that they examine and explain their theoretical premises, biases, assumptions and intentions at the beginning of the research project (Lofland & Lofland, 1984; Strauss, 1987; Knafl & Howard, 1984). Chapman (1990) reiterates this by stating that because of the interaction that takes place in research, the researcher should be aware of their roles and the impact of those roles. For example they should ask themselves: How is what is being observed affected by my presence? What am I failing to see or understand because of preconceived notions and understandings?

To further ensure this awareness of self in research, the researcher should include in their write up how the data collection and analysis techniques were carried out, the method, time and length of the study, how the subject became a subject, the researcher's frame of mind and the researcher-subject relationship (Knafl & Howard, 1984).

3. Feminist researchers begin their projects with a political agenda: to acknowledge the oppression to

which women are subjected as a result of patriarchal systems. All research projects originate with an objective. Feminist scholars advocate that this intent be let known to the reader.

As indicated earlier, grounded theorists hold to the conviction that there is a political, philosophical or personal agenda behind a research project. As a result of this, it is only good research that the reader be made aware of these assumptions.

4. Traditionally based research methodologies often limit themselves to researching those aspects of life which are tangible and observable; and subsequently, often neglect to observe the complexity of situations. Feminist research seeks to understand the context of the "everyday". This refers to the ways in which individuals understand, from where they develop their understandings, and their reactions as a result of these understandings. Consequently, feminist researchers may then seek to acknowledge factors which are not necessarily tangible nor measurable.

As asserted by Strauss (1987), founder of grounded theory, one of the deepest convictions of this methodology is that social phenomena are complex; despite

the fact that most social research works to explain happenings in relatively uncomplex terms. One of the key jobs of a grounded theory researcher is to bring forth and articulate complex, possibly latent meanings behind incidents (Lofland & Lofland, 1984).

Grounded theorists hold the understanding that perceptions are not static, rather they evolve in response to changing conditions. Subsequently, for a researcher to understand more fully the realities around their research question they must build change into the research process (Corbin & Strauss, 1990). This point, echoed by Charmaz (1990) in her article, "Grounded theory assumes that making theoretical sense of social life is itself a process as well as a study process" (p. 111). Process is built into the research as well as into the results. This is done by looking for processes which are occurring in the contextual environment of the research question; as well the process which occurs as more data is collected and as ways of understanding evolves. For these discoveries to be made and for the researcher to be open to the often unanticipated directions of change and process, the research methodologies must be permeable and open to change.



### Grounded Theory Methodology

Because the methodological thrust of grounded theory is towards generating new ideas and discoveries it is difficult to have set, established, committed lines of research (Strauss, 1987). It is a style of research which analyzes data through coding and comparing findings. As a way of providing a general format, Charmaz (1990) breaks this methodological process up into four phases:

1. creating and refining the research and data collection questions;
2. raising terms to concepts;
3. asking more conceptual questions on a generic level; and
4. making further discoveries and clarifying concepts through writing and rewriting (p.1162).

#### In The Beginning...

The research project begins with a question. Grounded theory may start with a set of experiences in which a researcher wishes to explore. It may begin with an insight, which sparks interest to further study. It

may start with a researcher seeing something occurring sociologically, and then wanting to interpret it. According to Charmaz (1990), the researcher can then, through exploring the thematic questions, move on to asking a set of interview questions that tap into people's issues and discover how it effects their lives. Chapman and Mclean (1990) explain this process in the following quote,

In attempting to understand the point of view of the subject, the interpreter begins by attempting to describe what is important to the participants:

What are their goals, desires, concerns and intentions as they relate to the research problem?

The interpretation then moves beyond individual to relate their accounts to the larger cultural world and social conditions in which they operate. In particular, how do the structures and power dynamics of that world support or thwart purposeful individual action (p.132)?

The researcher may then go into prior research findings to seek out how others may have addressed this query and to discover whether or not this is an area lacking in observation. Grounded theory generally looks

towards areas of study which are lacking in understanding or are saturated by research and may require a new perspective. An initial literature review would work towards explaining why this is an area worthy of study.

Grounded theory is unlike many other research techniques which begin with a sound hypothesis, supported by prior theoretical frameworks, and works towards substantiating their premise. It begins not with a hypothesis, but rather a question. Grounded theory does not seek out prior frameworks to pursue answers, but to the data and the perceptions of those involved. It does not neglect to look into other research, but rather does so at a different time and with a different intent. Grounded theory looks towards other research as a way of understanding its generated data more thoroughly, and subsequently, looks towards other research in the midst of a project rather than at the start. Delaying the literature review is an important aspect of grounded theory. The researcher may threaten their objectivity and openness to new and unanticipated perceptions of the participants by immersing him/her self in previous theory and literature around the research question. The less a researcher becomes locked into preconceived notions and

hypotheses about their research question, the less likely they are to impose their own perceptions onto the research findings.

### Data Collection

Data collection can be generated through a variety of sources. It, for example, can be compiled through the use of documents, interviews, observations, stories, magazines or newspapers. A researcher may choose to use one source of information, or may use a combination of them. Decisions of this manner can be made throughout the research process, and are dependent upon the avenues in which the data leads.

### Sampling

Subjects or documentation for research are not sought out in the typical manner of research. Usually, in research, random sampling is utilized so that all members of a population have an equal chance of being selected. However, in grounded theory, it is the incidents, events and happenings which are being sampled, not the individuals. Subsequently, it is opportunistic or purposive sampling techniques which are employed. In

this manner, participants are selected because of their availability to the researcher as well their ability to articulate and explain the phenomena under study (Corbin and Strauss, 1990). The researcher looks towards participants with as wide a range of characteristics as possible (for example, characteristics which do not fit with the emerging theory). In this manner, emerging theories and concepts are challenged and elaborated upon.

Because sampling emerges as the research proceeds, this technique precludes specifying one's entire sampling design prior to the data collection (Knafl and Howard, 1984). Sampling decisions are dependent upon the availability of participants, the incoming data and the developing theory. Subsequently, the collection of data may be modified according to the advancing theory. In this manner, false leads are dropped and more penetrating questions can be asked of more appropriate participants (Noreger Stern, 1990).

### Analysis

After the first piece of data is obtained, analysis will begin. Analysis is pivotal in grounded theory. Good and constant analysis ensures a solid and

comprehensive theory. It begins after the first bits of data are collected. It is important that collection and analysis occur simultaneously for four reasons. Firstly, it enables the researcher to capture all the potentially relevant aspects of a topic as soon as they are perceived. Secondly, these aspects can then be used to shape the preceding data collection, by incorporating these factors into future observations or interviews. In grounded theory all seemingly relevant issues must be incorporated into the next and following interviews. These issues are to be qualified by noting the conditions in which these phenomena occur, the form of action or interaction they take and consequences that result (Corbin & Strauss, 1990). Thirdly, this process of collecting and analyzing data simultaneously ensures that the researcher remains grounded in the data and open to discoveries. If a researcher finds themes occurring in the data, they are obligated to follow up on them, and this can often lead the research into unanticipated directions. If the initial research question appears to be irrelevant during this analysis, then new ones can be asked.

Grounded theory is qualitative research which

achieves its strength through the depth and richness of the data collected. This richness is not achieved by merely collecting or ordering mass data, rather, this depth is secured through the organizing of the ideas which is done through the process of data analysis.

### Coding

Analysis is done by systematically and intensively analyzing the data. Analysis remains grounded in the data by examining it line by line. This initial analysis is called coding.

A code means a label which is applied to certain data. Coding serves to label, separate, compile and organize data. It is the application of codes to the data, as opposed to applying data to codes. The codes must be grounded within the data. This examination includes the search for key ideas, concepts, phrases or for the negation of phrases, processes, actions, assumptions and consequences. According to Charmaz (1990), the search for processes, rather than topics, leads to greater analytic precision.

### Open Coding

The initial phase of coding done in the analyzing of data is called open coding (Strauss, 1987). This is scrutinizing the data line by line or even word by word. The intent behind this beginning analysis is to open up the inquiry and develop a tentative interpretation. The researcher is looking for what they can discover in the data. Coding line by line moves the researcher away from making general interpretations of the data, and into thinking in terms of explicit concepts and their relationships. An example of open coding may be for example, a woman talking about her experience as a young woman during her first pregnancy may state, "I was so aware of this child I was carrying, and the enormous responsibility I felt towards it". Codes for this may include: awareness and responsibility.

Continually questioning the data helps the analyst from getting lost, set or stuck concepts. Strauss (1987) suggests the following coding paradigm as a way of questioning the data:

1. conditions (look for cues like the words: because, since, as, or phrases like "on account for"
2. interaction among actors; strategies and tactics
3. consequences (words like because, the result was,



etc) (p.27-28).

Charmaz (1990) provides further suggestions in this initial coding phase that the researcher should look for and code for issues that participants ignore or gloss over, in vivo codes (participants direct wording, may include slang), the general context, central participants and their roles. Moreover, the researcher should keep in mind the following questions from the beginning of data analysis: What study are these data significant to? What category does this incident indicate? What category or property of category, or what part of the emerging theory does this incident indicate (Strauss, 1987)?

The analyst should not assume the analytic relevance of any traditional variable or face sheet information (i.e. age, race, social class, gender) until it emerges as relevant. Every code must earn its way into the theory by being repeatedly present in interviews, documents and observations. No matter how enamoured a researcher may be with a certain concept, if it is not present in the data, it must be discarded.

### Categories

Once the data are coded, they are compared with

other data and assigned to categories, according to their obvious fit (Noreger Stern, 1990). Categories are simply coded data which seem to cluster together. Categories are higher in level and are more abstract than the codes that they represent. These categories become the cornerstone of theoretical development.

### Axial Coding

The next stage of coding is axial coding. This is the analysis done around one category. Using the coding paradigm (mentioned earlier), the researcher is able to accumulate additional knowledge about the relationships between that category and other categories. The purpose of this stage of coding is to build and clarify a category by examining all that it covers, discovering any variations and to break up the category. This focused coding helps to provide the groundwork for developing explanations and predictions around the research questions.

### Selective Coding

The goal of grounded theory is to generate theory - core categories are the foundation from which theory is

generated. Selective coding is the coding which occurs around a core category - the category which represents the central phenomenon of the study. This core category could arise from one of the other categories, or it may require a more abstract term in order to provide an adequate description. According to Strauss (1987), the researcher should continually look for or be alert to bringing forth a core category while coding data. A core category is a central code which is related to many other categories; it appears frequently; relates easily to other categories; and, it has implications for a more general theory.

During this phase, the research can go into other theoretical works in an effort to expand and elaborate these categories.

### Memowriting

While the researcher is sampling and coding their data they should also be writing reflective notes describing categories and links between categories (Chapman & MacLean, 1990; Charmaz, 1990; Strauss, 1987). This is called memowriting. Memowriting should occur throughout the research process, starting with the first

interviews or observations. - Memowriting gives the researcher the opportunity to:

1. engage in extended on-going dialogue with self and with the data;
2. break the categories into components and elaborates the codes;
3. separate themselves from the research;
4. rethink, revise, toss out, organize and present the data in a variety of ways; and
5. link their work with other theories by integrating them into the analysis and discussion.

#### In The Final Stages of the Report...

The researcher becomes aware of the closing of the project when the concepts and core categories become saturated. All the indicators add up to the same thing. In the final write up the researcher has two choices, to write up the data separately or to combine it with a commentary from other literature and sources. As commented by Burnard (1991) the first approach is more pure and the latter more practical and readable in that it presents the findings as well a comparison of previous works.

## Thesis Methods

### Summary and Background:

The focus of this thesis is the impact of the changing societal expectation on women who are homemakers today, and who were homemakers in the 1950's, 1960's and 1970's.

As previously discussed in this paper, gender role expectations are dependent upon their social context and environment. These expectations emerge from the accepted knowledge base of a society. The objectivity and "truth" of this knowledge should be challenged as a result of its subjective conception. Historically, it is those individuals who hold power in society, typically men, who endorse what is deemed to be considered truthful and significant and what is not. Underlying this endorsement of knowledge is the motive to maintain a position of power. Consequently, many of the emerging ways of understanding would sustain their leadership.

The impact of one group imposing their ways of understanding and being on other, subordinate groups, creates double binds. Expectations may be placed on a subordinate group which do not "fit". Such has been the

case for many women. Historically women have not played a strong role nor have they been given the credit in delineating socially accepted truths. Traditionally, it is the voices of men which are heard in history books, academia, art, literature, religion and so on. All these sources work toward creating a way of understanding - knowledge. A knowledge which becomes accepted in a society and is often-endorsed by all as an acceptable way of ordering the world. Because it is a knowledge generally created by one gender and imposed on another, it does not incorporate all the realities of the subordinate group - women (not to mention other minority groups). An example of this double-bind comes alive in the role dichotomy of homemaker and career woman.

I became interested in this issue when I first started learning about feminism. This was in 1984-85, when I was working on my Bachelor of Social Work at the University of Calgary. Along with my developing understanding of women and their roles in society came countless discussions with various people about my changing ideas. Among these discussions were ones which occurred with my mother, Edna Neufeld, who, on these occasions, would express her displeasure with the

feminist movement for negating or minimizing her experience as a homemaker. From these talks, I became interested in the impact the women's movement had on women who did not seek careers beyond the home. My interest became focused upon women who, because of the social pressures of the 1950's and 1960's, found it difficult to make any decision about their life direction, except to work within the home. Having had these limited choices, I wondered then, and still so today, how these women feel now about their life choices, and what impact these decisions had on how their perceptions of themselves. How did these women learn their appropriate roles (if in fact they recognized these roles as such)? What choices did these women understand themselves to have? What consequences did they assume were behind these choices? Did they perceive a change in role expectation over time? If so, what was that change? How did it make itself known to them? What was the impact of that change on them? In retrospect, how do these women feel about the choices they had and made? If they could, how would they do things differently?

My preconceptions going into this project were that socially accepted academics as well as the feminist

movement had not given these women their due credit, support, nor the recognition for their work within the home. Many of these women abided by their social imperative - they married, had children and worked within the home. If they did not, and sought out a career or avoided marriage, they were subject to disapproval, because they were disregarding the "natural" order of mother and wife. As times changed and women working outside of the home became more accepted by society, women who worked within the home were no longer seen as the healthy woman, reaching her natural potential but rather, the woman, afraid of success, and enmeshed in the weakness of her femininity. For these women, the rules around roles changed.

The generation preceding this writer was a generation of women whose voice has seldom been heard in the formation of theory, in any field, specifically in this case, that of deriving gender roles and expectation. As with any subordinate group in society, more powerful, assertive groups have imposed themselves and their beliefs upon them. Consequently, because women, and in particular these women, have not been accounted for in the construction of much of the academically acclaimed



pieces of knowledge on gender roles, it was an important endeavour to seek out their thoughts on it.

### Methodology

Interviews with nine women were conducted to gather information for this project. The number of women interviewed was dependent upon the amount of incoming data and, at the point in which the emerging categories became saturated. (Emerging categories refers to the concepts which arise from the data. An example of a category may be, "care giver"). Saturation is reached when no new information on the characteristics of the categories emerges (Field & Morse, 1985).

Analysis of the data obtained from these interviews adhered to the guidelines of grounded theory. This methodology refers to the process of simultaneously generating and analyzing data and of constantly comparing the incoming data with previously obtained data. A brief overview of these methods includes:

1. Data collection
2. Open coding of the data - Opening up the data for inquiry by scrutinizing the data line by line or even word by word. At this point the researcher is looking

for explicit concepts and their conditions of occurrence, relationships with other concepts and the consequences of their occurrence.

3. Applied to Categories - Clustering together into categories coded data which seem to fit together, or refer to the same notion.

4. Axial Coding - Analyzing around one category. This includes breaking down a category and examining all that it covers and searching for any variations.

5. Core Coding - Searching for a few central categories which represents the central phenomenon under study.

6. Theoretical Sampling - Going into other theoretical works to expand and elaborate on the core category(ies).

7. Memowriting - Writing reflective notes describing categories and their links. This function should occur throughout the research process.

8. Final Write-up - Writing up the data in combination with a commentary from other literature and sources.

A further explanation of this process of research can be found in the grounded theory section of this paper

(pp. 47 - 61).

The computer program Qualpro (Impulse Development Company), a program designed to manage qualitative data, was used to aid in the work of organizing the incoming data.

### Format of the Interviews

#### Participants

##### Homogeneity

Research is best carried out with groups of people who are relatively homogeneous (Krueger, 1988). Homogeneity can be sought out in terms of education, family, age, social class, occupation, gender and age (Krueger, 1988; Morgan, 1988). The particulars of this homogeneity are determined by the purpose of the study. The researcher needs to decide who it is they want to hear from and then look for participants who have those characteristics. However, the researcher too needs to invite individuals with sufficient variation among them to allow for contrasting opinions. As stated by Morgan, "...the goal is homogeneity in background, not in attitudes" (47).

The homogeneity which brings this group together is

their experience as young women growing up in the 1950's and 1960's in Canada. These are women who spent much of their lives working in their home, situated within a urban setting. Some of these women may, at some points in their lives, have worked outside the home, however what is of significance is that they perceived their job of homemaker to have been their primary career.

### Sampling

In grounded theory it is the incidents, events and happenings which are being sampled, not the individuals. Subsequently, opportunistic or purposeful sampling techniques are used (Corbin & Strauss, 1990). Following this manner, subjects are selected because of their availability to the researcher as well their ability to articulate the phenomena under study.

Participants for this study were sought out through the use of snowball sampling and purposeful sampling. Snowball sampling was utilized to begin with. This refers to asking the initial participants about other individuals who would be appropriate for the study (Field & Morse, 1985). Participants, if they do know of appropriate individuals who may be interested in this

project, were asked to fill out a consent form specifying the names and phone numbers of potential participants, giving permission for myself to contact them (see appendix C). Sampling for this project began with an interview with one woman who I had contact with through my place of employment (Women's Health Clinic). This woman was involved with various programs of the clinic (as a volunteer and as a client).

Snowball sampling was employed to generate a rich data base and a series of concepts or categories which begin to explain this phenomenon. Purposeful sampling was then employed. With this second sampling technique, respondents who most furthered the development of the emerging theory were selected - for example, participants who had specific knowledge or understanding of the phenomenon under study.

The participants in this study ranged in age from 52 to 64. They came from a variety of ethnic backgrounds, including German, Dutch, Mennonite, English, Irish and Flemish. Three participants were married at age nineteen, one at twenty-one, two at twenty-three, one at twenty-four, one at twenty-six and one at twenty-seven. Eight of the nine participants were married at the time

of the interview, and one was divorced. All participants were married one time. All participants had children, five women had two children, two had three, one had four and one had six children. All participants considered being a homemaker their primary occupation, with four also working outside of the home part time during some point during their marriage. Five of the participants finished highschool, and four had some post highschool education.

#### One-On-One Interviews

The tool used in eliciting information for this research project was one-to-one interviews. These interviews were set up in a semi-structured format. This flexible outline was of utmost importance in gathering emerging, open and rich data from the participants.

As Patton states, "The purpose of an interview in qualitative research is to find out what is in someone's mind not to put things in their mind" (1980 cited in Maguire, 1987, p. 134). To do this it is important that the researcher does not go into the interview with a clearly laid out list of expected topics, but rather that he/she approach it with a general, flexible format. The

focus is not on preselecting the right questions, but rather on the interaction, the process and the unfolding of the subject's point of view. The interactive aspect of qualitative interviews opens up the discussion for expansion and clarification.

In this research project each participant was asked a series of open-ended questions. In keeping with the procedures of grounded theory, these questions were subject to change as the interviews proceeded, and as some concepts became more meaningful, and others became irrelevant. The initial interview format can be found in Appendix A. This initial interview format was pretested, so as to better ensure the relevance of the original questions. In this appendix, it will be found that there are many potential questions, however it must be noted that the purpose of this interview format was to provide a place for the interview to begin; as well, to ensure that the issues the researcher wanted to address would be asked of the participant. However, the direction of the responses was dependent upon the thoughts and experiences of the woman being interviewed as opposed to meeting any specific criteria held by the researcher.

The interview format was altered after the second

interview because of the information collected deemed it so. This second format can be found in Appendix B.

The location of the interviews was dependent upon the choice and the comfort of the participant and of the researcher. Some of the interviews were held either at the home of the participant or the researcher, and others were held at this researcher's place of employment (Women's Health Clinic). All interviews were audio taped and were transcribed by the researcher.

Each interview began with a brief discussion of the research project. In this dialogue the following factors were addressed:

1. Explanation of Qualitative Research - I explained briefly to the participant what qualitative research was and how it is carried out (qualitative research seeks out thoughts, ideas, processes and experiences of various phenomenon and through the use of tools, such as interviews, works to understand representative individual's understanding of such incidents).

2. Audio Taping and Note Taking - I explained to the participant the purpose of audio taping and note taking during the interview (in order to capture



everything that the participant is saying and for the purpose of this research methodology). It was explained that participants have the right to shut off the tape at any point during the interview. As well, participants had the opportunity to review the notes immediately after the interview and could add any additional or clarifying points.

3. Confidentiality - Each participant was assured of the confidentiality of the information shared in this project. This was assured by having only myself transcribe the audio tapes. A code number instead of a name was assigned to each participant prior to the interview being transcribed. Any identifying information (i.e. names, locations, specific dates) was altered on the transcript.

4. Consent forms: Consent forms were given to each participant to sign - giving myself permission to audio tape the interview, transcribe it, and utilize it as part of the projects' data and possible publication (see Appendix C). These release forms were given to the participants at the time of the interview. They were first given the opportunity to read it over, and then the researcher went over it once more with them prior to

signing.

5. Description of what information was being sought: I explained that I was interested in was the participants' experiences and memories of growing up in the 1940's and 1950's and what it meant to be a young woman then and what it means to be a woman now and what, if any changes, have occurred and how they see these changes impacting on them. It was stressed that there were no right or wrong answers and that the research was seeking their feelings ideas and thoughts.

Participants were then asked if they had any questions or concerns before going into this discussion.

#### After the Interview

Following the interviews, the discussions were transcribed within a two week period. Three to four weeks after the interview, participants were given a copy of the interview transcript, and were then provided with the opportunity to add additional thoughts or explanations. Following Macguire's (1987) example of interview follow up, I asked participants the following questions:

1. Are there any changes you would like to make?

Any thing that you would like to take out or clarify or add?

2. How did you feel about the interview?

3. As you read this transcript, what ideas or insights do you get? (p. 137).

Participants then either wrote out their responses to these questions or went over them with myself, either on the phone or in person. The period in which participants reviewed the transcripts was a time limited opportunity (seven to ten days), so that I was able to continue on with their data analysis. Eight of the nine women responded to this, and none of the eight women wanted alterations made on their transcripts.

The data obtained from this study (tapes and transcripts) was stored in a secure, locked file cabinet at the home of this researcher. A master list of the participants and their consent forms were stored in a separate secured file cabinet, also at the home of this researcher. This confidential information shall all be destroyed following the completion of this project. All of the participants were made aware of this.

Participants will all receive a copy of the project results following the completion of this study.

### Confirmability

Phillip Burnard (1991) suggests the following methods to offset any potential researcher bias in interpreting the data. He first proposes that the researcher have a colleague, who is not involved in the project, but who is familiar with content analysis, read through three transcripts and identify category systems. From this, the researcher can compare the results with their own and discuss the similarities and/or differences.

A second check Burnard (1991) proposes is to go back to three of the research participants with their transcripts and have them identify the major points that they see emerging. From this list comparisons can be made with the researchers findings, and the results can be discussed.

I submit in the case of this study that these actions occurred in assuring confirmability in this project. Two colleagues, who were familiar with content analysis contributed their time to this project and assisted in analyzing the data. Because all the participants reviewed the transcripts following the interviews, they all had the opportunity to highlight

key/important concepts.

Furthermore, by adhering to the guidelines of grounded theory additional assurances were made that the research findings were confirmable.

I am sensitive to the fact that many of the experiences and memories being discussed occurred more than twenty years ago and may have been altered and coloured with time. In this instance this time gap was considered a strength. Not only were these memories likely modified with time, the selectivity they represent is important. The study anticipated that those memories would be elicited that bridge the consequences of the changed societal expectations and the personal experiences of the participants. Frigga Haug addresses the impact of memory work in research in her following statement, "Our basic premise was that anything and everything remembered constitutes a relevant trace - precisely because it was remembered - for the formation of identity" (50).

A more detailed account of this research process can be found in the following section.

### The Research Process

This project began with a query on women who grew up and made many of their major life choices in the 1950's and the 1960's. My initial questions focused around the impact the feminist movement had on these women's ways of being - whether the movement was something that encompassed the needs of these women, and if it was a movement that left room for their voices to be heard?

My initial assumptions going into this project were that women of this generation seldom had a voice in the construction of socially accepted knowledge of themselves and were victim to assumptions being made about them by others with more powerful voices. Furthermore, these were accepted ways of being which evolved over time. During the 1950's, when it was important that these women abide by their domestic imperative and become wives and mothers, their deviation from these roles meant risking their acceptance within society. In the 1960's and 1970's, with the onset of the feminist movement, women who worked within the home were considered not to be living up to their full potential and subsequently, were considered to be unmotivated.

My reasoning in the beginning was that in order to understand the impact of the transforming role expectation on women of this generation it was first

important to understand the perspective from which these women were based. What were their ideas of self and their roles grounded in? How were these ideas being reinforced in their lives? What became obvious from the perspective of these questions was that it was not about individual women, but rather about a society of women and men who embraced the roles of appropriate behaviour. Because this was seen as a social pattern, the literature review began with a sociological perspective on where knowledge stems within a community and how and why that knowledge is accepted by its inhabitants.

This then moved onto a discussion of what the literature asserted the characteristics of the 1950's and 1960's generation of women to include. What became apparent from this review was that many studies were conducted by scholars on these women indicating their characteristics. What also became evident was the exclusion of the women's voices themselves in the final analysis of defining who they were. Because of this oversight in much of the prior literature marking the attributes of women, it became of significant importance that this study include, as much as possible, the participant's judgments and beliefs in the analysis. So

in order for this study to achieve this, the literature review moved onto a discussion of feminist, qualitative research, focusing primarily on the inclusive attributes of the methodology. The specific qualitative methodology which lent itself the most to the purposes of this research project was grounded theory.

Upon deciding upon the research intent, and its methodology, came the next step of this project, the development of the interview questions. Initially this query was posed to a class of social work graduate students. A summary of this thesis literature review and proposal were presented to a university class. Utilizing their perspectives and opinions, a discussion on possible research questions was held. In combination with the results from this exercise as well as questions I had, a starting questionnaire was developed.

The questions were broken up into three categories:

1. What was the social context from which the women of the 1950's and 1960's made their life choices
2. Did participants perceive a change in social expectations of women over time, if so, what were those changes, and how did they feel about them?
3. How do participants now feel about what they are



doing in their lives, and if they could would they have done anything differently in their lives?

These questions were tested for their appropriateness in a mock interview conducted with a colleague. There were no significant changes made to the questions after this.

The first two interviews with participants were then conducted. Both these women were sought out through personal contacts. After each interview, notes were taken, marking my initial impressions, noting any points which appeared to be of initial significance, and any new questions which may be of significance in the following interviews. The interviews were then transcribed and coded.

I then met with a colleague to discuss the emerging codes, and together brainstormed the depth and potential of the codes at this formative stage. The themes which began to emerge as significant at this point included: choices, the evolving love relationship, children, working outside of the home, change, career, "it just happened", personal power, isolation vs. community, marginalization of contrary perspectives, influence and control. Questions which emerged, to keep in mind, for

the subsequent interviews included:

How were these women's voices expressed?

What choices do their daughters now have, how are they different, and how are they the same?

How do participants feel about themselves, in light of what is now available to women?

Do participants feel that they made choices?

What were the circumstances around their marriage choice and child choice?

Do they feel they played a part in the changes in society? What supports did participants feel they had as young women, and what supports do they feel they have now?

Changes were then made to the interview questionnaire, reflecting these queries. It was discovered as well, from these first two interviews, that some of the questions asked of the participants were too general, making responses difficult. For example, one question which participants were asked was, "What was life like for women of the 1950's and the 1960's?". It was found that because of how general this question was that it was difficult to answer. Because of this, it was

then broken down into the following two more specific questions: "Did you feel any peer pressure to be a certain way?", and "What kinds of opportunities were made available to you?".

The next three interviews were then conducted. Contacts with these participants were made through personal connections as well through recommendations of women made by the first two participants. Each interview was transcribed by this researcher shortly after they were conducted. Participants were sent a copy of the interview, and were then contacted by myself to discuss their responses to the interview. At no point throughout this research process did participants make any changes to their interviews. The major comment made by participants was how difficult they found reading the scripts. It was difficult because they never saw before a document directly quoting their conversation, and they did not realize the grammar which appeared in the spoken word compared to the written word (there are many more pauses, and incomplete sentences, etc.). Because of this uneasiness around reading the transcripts, subsequent participants were warned of this prior to their reading their transcript.

After contact was made with participants on their comments on the transcripts their interviews were coded. Some of the codes which were established in the initial interviews were used, as well, some new codes emerged. Upon completing these three more interviews, another colleague of mine was consulted to discuss and brainstorm the potential and depth of these emerging codes.

Through this contact it was discovered that many of the emerging codes discovered by myself were substantiated and reiterated by my colleague. The major codes at this point included: family planning, busy, notion of self in the context of family, support, isolated and lonely, choices, finances, importance around getting married, what it meant to be a mother, expectations (participants voiced that they didn't have many choices and therefore didn't really understand the notion of social expectations of themselves, they just did what was available), patterns of life styles, the role of men, the process of decision making, work, the contradictions apparent in the women's liberation movement, homemaker vs. housewife and the home was the fortress.

What began to emerge at this point was that many of the

concepts on the formation of knowledge, drafted in the literature review of this project, were being echoed in the information being collected in the interviews.

Because of the depth and quantity of data that was already being collected with these five participants, a meeting was held with Shirley Grosser, my advisor, and it was decided that nine or ten interviews would suffice for this project.

Simultaneously with the last four interviews being conducted, the emerging codes developed from the interviews, were being organized and categorised. At one point when I felt totally inundated in the amount of data being collected, the need of some new organizing format became apparent. There were so many codes and categories that it became difficult to know what it was that was there. Moreover, it was difficult to utilize the supports of any colleagues in deciphering the codes because there were just too many, and being spread out on hundreds of sheets of paper it was difficult to organize or understand, or even to explain the collection of ideas to anyone. So at this point I wrote out each of the codes on large pieces of construction paper, a summary of the supporting comments made by participants, and where

these comments could be found in the transcripts.

Upon completion of this massive organizational task, each of the codes and its comments were cut out. Codes were then combined together with other, supporting codes, in order to create categories. These categories were transcribed again onto another piece of construction paper. In this transcription, the categories were summarized, and the properties and qualities of each of these categories were included. At this point there were close to 50 existing categories.

Some of the themes which began to emerge at this point included: pattern, deviation, better, self responsibility, undifferentiated self, feeling of choice. To help organize and decipher some of these ideas in formation, another colleague was consulted. From this day long dialogue, a theory began to emerge from the data which explored the ways in which these participants made their life choices in view of the context in which they lived. It became apparent from the data that what was present was a collection of concepts which denoted the context in which these women made their life choices, how these life choices were accepted and how these ideas were then perpetuated by these women, despite emerging social

views to the contrary. A core variable, so to speak, emerged. This variable, as was expected earlier on, closely aligned itself to some of the concepts on the formation of knowledge discussed in the literature review. So the concepts elaborated upon in the literature review established a format by which the results from the data could be explained.

## Chapter 4

## Findings

Summary of Research Intent

The research questions addressed in this project were fashioned around the lives of women in the 1950's and the 1960's who became homemakers and continued to be such, despite the societal change in the late 1960's and 1970's which encouraged women to not only maintain their jobs as homemakers but to take on careers outside of the home as well. This project began as an exploration of these women's perceptions of change over time and worked to discover the impact these transforming socially constructed role expectations had on their ways of being. The questions in this research project included:

First Section of Questions

- \* How did they learn their appropriate roles within society?
- \* What choices did they understand they had?
- \* What were the assumed consequences behind these choices?
- \* How did these women feel about their life choices and what impact did these decisions have on their perceptions of themselves?



### Second Section of Questions

- \* Did they perceive a change in role expectations over time? If so what was that change?
- \* How did these changes make themselves known to them?
- \* What was the impact of these changes?

### Third Section of Questions

- \* In retrospect how do these women feel about the choices they had?
- \* If they could, would they do things differently?
- \* How do they feel about the choices women now have?

### Discussion of Section One Questions

The theory which interprets the findings of the first set of questions in this research project is one which explores the ways in which individuals mold their lives, attitudes, behaviours and beliefs around the society surrounding them. It is a theory which initially emerged from the concepts gathered from the interviews conducted with the participants in this study. It was then discovered that these ideas closely aligned themselves with the concepts discussed in the literature review, focusing specifically on the discussions on knowledge formation. These concepts were supported by

the writings of Berger and Luckmann (1966), Ramazanoglu (1989), Gergen (1988), Haug (1983), Smith (1990), Hubbard (1988), and Gluck and Daphne (1991). The theory which emerged from the data gathered in this study uses the concepts of these authors, however orders the ideas in a way reflective of the concepts which emerged in this study.

This theory has four major components, and are as follows:

1. Knowledge is power; Power is knowledge
2. Ideas are maintained in a social context
3. Knowledge is conceived subjectively, but is perceived as objective
4. The marginalization of contrary perspectives

This theory is best understood in terms of a cyclical formation. One begins with a knowledge source (knowledge is power), and then moves onto how that knowledge source plays itself out within a given community (social context), to how individuals within that community embrace that knowledge (objective acceptance), and then how that knowledge is held onto despite opposing viewpoints which may threaten that knowledge source (marginalization) (see Appendix E for

diagram). These components will be further elaborated upon in the following pages.

A. Knowledge is Power and Power is Knowledge

The first of the four components addresses the base in which ideas are formed. Knowledge is power and power is knowledge. This knowledge source can stem from a number of different origins. For example, it can arise from tradition, culture, media, science, medical influences, political stances, families or personal experiences. The heading knowledge is power and power is knowledge is appropriate, in that traditionally it is those individuals within a society or community who have power who are the ones to establish the knowledge base of a community (Fee, 1981).

There are various levels of acceptance within differing sources of knowledge. Some sources of knowledge are embraced by all or most individuals within a given society, and some are held by only a few individuals. So for example, one piece of knowledge within a society may state that women are the naturally inclined gender to provide primary care to children. This may be a knowledge source accepted by a majority of

those within a society. If so, chances are it will be expounded upon by various sources of knowledge within that society and could then be supported by institutions such as tradition, religion, science and the media. Another level of knowledge is one which may not be accepted by the majority of those within a society, but is however, strongly adopted by those of a smaller community.

Depending upon the degree of acceptance and the consequences of non acceptance of the knowledge it can be more or less difficult to transform. A knowledge or belief which is deeply accepted and played out in many different contingents of a society would be very slow to change. However, a knowledge which is accepted by only a few and has limited consequences upon its rejection may be quite quick to change.

So essentially, the knowledge source is that in which ideas and concepts are grounded. It can be something which is embraced by most within a society or can be something which is understood and accepted by only a few. A knowledge source which is slow to change is strongly embraced and is one which may have profound consequences upon its rejection.

The Knowledge Source Expounding the Roles of Women in the  
1950's and 1960's

As already discussed in the literature review of this project, the knowledge expounded upon in the 1950's and the 1960's promoted the domestication of women. As examined in the literature review, this concept represented itself through the media, literature, and research done on women, and subsequently became a wide spread expectation on how women were to live out their lives.

The following section of this paper will illustrate the concepts which emerged as relevant from the words and experiences of the participants in exploring how this notion of domestication played itself out in their lives.

B. Ideas are Maintained Within a Social Context

This component, ideas are maintained within a social context, addresses how a knowledge source is maintained and played out within a given society. The primary assumption here is that ideas, roles, norms, laws and social patterns are created to fit within a knowledge base. When this occurs, institutions and structures within a society are such that they maintain and

perpetuate a knowledge base. The social context is that which manifests the knowledge source. The more factions of a society which declare and reinforce a certain piece of knowledge, the stronger that knowledge will be in the minds and hearts of its individuals.

#### Application of theory into results

From the data gathered in this study, a number of categories emerged as being relevant when depicting the structure of society when these women were young and making decisions regarding their life direction. These categories included: choices available, finances, pressure to be a homemaker, work - when it was acceptable, marriage choice, children choice, marriage relationship, power dynamics within the marriage relationship, men's role, support and vulnerability of women within the marriage relationship.

#### Limited Choices Available

Women in this study identified that there were few life choices available, "it was either a or b." (2), as one women commented. Another women stated that she felt that was not even available, rather, there were no

choices,

When I grew up, there were no choices, I don't think women even worked (03).

However, for the most part, women identified their career choices to have been one of two options, a nurse or a teacher. As stated by one woman:

It was important to become a nurse or teacher, because those were about the few positions you could get a job (5).

Despite some participants acknowledging some career options, they all discussed the overriding pressure which influenced women to become homemakers. For most women, jobs were something that they did until they married and had children.

Well, it was until you found the right man (work and education) (01).

An assumption existed that women would eventually marry and have children, and these relationships would then dictate their primary role. Subsequently, many women did not put much energy or importance into their education. This factor, that women did not pursue their education or other careers could be grounded in that:

1. Not many educational choices were made available

to women.

...and we didn't have the choices in school either, we only had about grade 10 education in the small town...so there wasn't too much available (9).

...when I was a teenager you would never hear of that (a woman going in to be a lawyer or a doctor), you would hear of a girl going into nursing, but that would be about as far as she would go (9).

2. It wasn't expected or encouraged that women would pursue an education.

In those days it was an exception if you wanted to go to University...it didn't seem as if it were a priority (2).

We were never encouraged to go to University. It was never talked about (1).

3. Education would be pursued in isolation of other young women.

None of my friends went to University... (2).

4. There were few career options for women to choose from.

It wasn't as important to finish high school as it is now. If you could get a job and make something of yourself it wasn't as important to finish high



school (5).

5. Work would be a temporary condition due to the pressure to work within the home.

There was not much encouragement for a woman to get an education, because she would just get married anyways (1).

So as far as choices available in regard to career or educational pursuits for women, few were available, and if they were available, they were not encouraged or readily accessible.

#### Pressure to be a Homemaker

All the women in this study spoke of the social expectation or the assumption that they would become a wife, mother and homemaker. Some addressed this by stating that this was what most of their friends did and subsequently, felt peer pressure to do the same. As one participant states,

They were all wanting to get married. Seems to me, that was most of my friends' goals then, to get married (02).

Other participants stated that being a homemaker was just what women did,

You were supposed to have a family and be married....getting married and having a family were what women did (04).

Being a homemaker was the one obvious and non-debatable life choice that women had. This role was accepted by the women in this study as being the "proper" choice, and for some, the natural choice to make,

You became a homemaker, it was something you didn't have to defend...it was the natural thing to do (06).

It was expected and it was something you accepted, I mean it didn't enter your mind." [not to become a homemaker] (6).

The women in this study spoke of how once a woman was married, and especially upon having children, it was expected that they would stay home and care for their children.

It was just the acceptable thing to do, to get married you, you had your steady person, you settled down, you start a family (07).

Another woman comments on this by saying,

...he was the traveller, and I was the 19 year old and I stayed home and I baked the cookies... I was

just the mom (4).

It was an exception if a woman did go out to work. Women addressed this when they spoke of the few individuals that they knew who were working outside of the home.

Most of them were like myself, quit their jobs to stay with their children...one friend out of ten that kept on her job and she didn't have any children (09).

Women discussed the social pressures present which reinforced the notion that women should work within the home. For example, whether or not a woman worked within the home, became a reflection of who these women were. One participant stated that women who worked outside of the home were considered to be selfish and self centred, and those who worked within the home, giving. Another participant spoke of how her husband reacted to her thoughts of seeking out employment,

He told me I guess when I did go to work, don't think what you will make, if you have to do it for yourself, if you have to get out, then to go ahead and do it because I only made minimum wage anyways (4).

For this woman the option of working outside of the home was enmeshed in the subtle message dissuading her from it in that it was a selfish act. Women's work was as well acknowledged as selfish by the fact that their working took jobs away from men.

Other pressures to work within the home were elicited through family members. Some of the women in this study spoke of their husbands either disapproving of them, or not allowing them to work outside of the home.

My husband didn't approve of me working, he wanted me to be home. But he didn't say anything until after I had left my job and he said that he was glad that I was home again, because the children need me at home (6).

One thing is that he wouldn't let me work. He said that his mother never had to work and he didn't want me to work (9).

It was made clear from the experiences of the participants that becoming a homemaker was the only real choice available to the young women of this time. This was made known to them by presenting itself as the one obvious, and thus the most undisputed choice, as well as the potential social depiction of them if they were to

choose otherwise.

Had to Make a Choice Between Work and Home -  
Mutually Exclusive

Women spoke of the choices available as being limiting and mutually exclusive.

There seemed to be blind folds, like there was nothing else, except that, no other arrangement, there seemed to be. You got married, had children and your homemaker's role, or single and you had your own career, and house, or whatever, apartment, and that was it, and your friends, and that was about it, kind of thing, you had nothing also, no other diversity (07).

Women who pursued their careers, often did so at the expense of raising a family. It seemed for some participants that to choose to work towards a career meant that they would relinquish their opportunity of raising a family.

You didn't have to make a choice between them...I think the women who worked were really truly career oriented, like they would rather work than raise a family (08).

If women did both, sought out work as well as raised a family, they would suffer the judgements of society.

It was kind of a norm that a homemaker was respected because she stayed home with her children and it was kind of more negative to go out and work (05).

Another participant spoke of her reaction to a neighbour who said that she would rather work than stay home with her children,

And she openly admitted that they she did not want to be a home with her children, she wanted to pursue her career... And then I openly said well why in the world did you have children, if you got married and didn't want children, then why didn't you do something about it, if your career is more important than your children (6).

#### Work - When it was Acceptable

When speaking about working outside of the home, the participants in this study discussed when it might be appropriate for a woman to be both a mother and an employee. At no point did any of the participants speak

of women working for any reasons of personal satisfaction. This may, to some extent, be a result of the types of jobs available to women. These were, for the most part menial labour positions with minimum wage (Coser, 1971). But even though these were the positions that were available, women who worked outside of the home, aside from those women who worked under the conditions being discussed here, were regarded by many participants as being selfish and neglectful of their children.

Participants saw it as being acceptable for a woman to work outside of the home when their work conditions could operate around their family obligations, as demonstrated in the following quotes,

...well one girlfriend used to crochet, to make things to sell on the side, like tupperware parties, things like that used to really be the thing. Anything that had to do with in the home stuff (7).

I did sell Avon for a while, and I did do that when the time suited me, in and amongst the family (8).

The other situation when it was okay for women to work

outside of the home, as these two participants pointed out, was when it was necessary for the financial survival of the family.

I can see a woman who's on her own and raising children, then that's a different story (4).

...a mother should stay home, unless she is forced to go to work (6).

However, even those women who are "forced" out to work, because of economic reasons, participants spoke of it being better if they could be financially supported and remain working within the home.

But there are some mothers who are single, mothers who have to work, and it would be nice if they had enough money to look after their own kids (3).

Another participant spoke of how it was as well acceptable for a woman to work to support her husband through school, in order for him to get a better paying job.

Work was something that homemakers would mold around their responsibilities within the home. To work meant that one did not neglect their families, and if a woman did work the primary excuse would be that she was a single parent and worked for the financial survival of



the family. Family was always to come first.

As a parent your children should always come first (5).

And my husband didn't approve of me working, he wanted me to be home. But he didn't say anything until after I left my job and he said that he was glad that I was home again, because the children need me at home (6).

Even though a woman may have worked outside of the home, it was maintained that it was still her primary responsibility to care for the home and for her children.

I think it must be a lot of stress on a girl to take her child at daycare, take it home, and if she has a husband who works as hard as her, and the house is piling up with mess (4).

### Finances

When speaking about financial well being, all but one participant shared the same message,

We had nothing, we were very poor when we started off (1).

Another participant shared her experiences in her statement,

A lot of hard times when we first got married and had our first baby, we had to save for an undershirt, it was really tough...But you do it (8). Furthermore, for some women, financial independence was not obtained until shortly before they were married. Those who came from financially less well off families, spoke of relinquishing their pay checks to their parents until they were twenty one.

With the economy the way it was in those days, I had to leave school and I worked in a general store until I was 21 (6).

### The Marriage Choice

This section discusses the context in which these women decided to get married. As previously stated, it was an over riding assumption in society that women were to marry and have children. Subsequently, the choice was not grounded so much in whether or not one would get married, but rather who it was that they would marry. As one woman commented, she didn't make many choices, rather she felt things "just happened", but the one important choice that she felt that she did make was around who it was that she was going to marry.

When discussing the context in which women made their marriage choices, a minority of the women who participated in this study said that they had dated their husbands for a few years before marrying them, and subsequently felt that they knew them quite well. The reasons they identified for marrying were grounded in making an informed choice, and knowing their partners. Their expectations of married life followed in that they were looking towards a life of moderation in which they would buy a home and have children. One woman in describing her expectations of marriage stated,

No big expectations really, I didn't want a million dollar house, nothing like that, to have a comfortable life and bring my children up (8).

However, the majority of women spoke about not really knowing their husbands before making the decision to marry. As one woman stated,

I knew him quite well, but quite well as a teenager, just looking at all the good points and not what life will really be like (05).

When asked about what was involved in their choice of marriage, it was ascertained that there were a number of significant factors which influenced their choices.

These factors included: it was the right time (pressure to marry young); being "in love"; holding onto the "marriage dream"; and, searching for a way to have more control over one's own life.

a. The Right Time

We were very poor, but the time was right (01).

As ascertained from the interviews, some women discussed how they felt there was a "right" and a "wrong" time to marry. The circumstances around the correctness of the marriage timing, was largely determined by the age of the woman. In this study three women were married at 19, two women at 21, one woman at 23, one at 24, one at 26 and one woman at 28.

In regard to the correctness around the marriage age one participant stated,

...the younger the better (7).

There were however, circumstances in which one could be too young. This woman, then went on to talk about a friend who married at 16, and this was too young, and so the marriage was kept a secret until they were age appropriate.

There was such an acceptance of women marrying young that, for some, marrying young was more important than

any personal uncertainties or misgivings regarding the marriage choice. A few participants spoke of their parents' hesitancies regarding their marrying so young, but these feelings were overshadowed by the pressure to marry by a specific time.

She thought 21 was too young (the participant's mother), but she knew that that was the cycle (02).

Another woman spoke of being warned by her priest not to marry the man she was engaged to, and her response to this was,

But I could never see myself being single at that point of my life, it was totally out of the question. Like he was sort of sentencing me, you miz [sic] well send me to prison, like that was sheer torture, as far as I was concerned (7).

Subsequently, there was a great deal of pressure placed on women to marry by a certain age. The women who identified age as being a significant factor in their marriage choice, and yet did not marry by what they felt was the age appropriate time, felt a sense of urgency around their getting married.

And I had been a bridesmaid, bridesmaid, bridesmaid, and I thought when is it going to be my turn (02).

Another woman stated,

If you didn't get married past the age of 20 because you were getting older. I don't know, it's just the feeling you got, pressure on you, you had to find, you had to date, you were looking for that mate (07).

b. The Dream

Some of the women in this study who didn't know their partners well before marrying them identified their reasons for marriage as being built upon a dream notion of what life would be like being married. One woman recounted that despite the fact that she did not know her husband to be, they really did love each other. Other women spoke of their attachment to the impending life style that marriage would bring.

I thought it was wonderful, I could just stay home all day and do nothing, and have children, and live a life of leisure (02).

Another woman stated that,

The main thing in life that you were supposed to have a family and be married and I thought everything was wonderful (4).

These women spoke of their expectations of the men that

they were going to marry, and their thoughts of who they would be. These impressions were rooted as well in the realm of the dream world as can be noted in the following quotes:

I had this vision of prince charming come riding in, and was suppose to sweep you off your feet and were suppose to live happily ever after (07).

Another woman stated,

He had been working on his own, and he had a car, and nobody had a car in those days, I mean it was wonderful, this man knew everything (04).

#### c. More Control Over Things

For some women their expectations of marriage included the notion of marriage bringing on a dream like life style, but as well would provide either a solution to problems they were living in with their families of origin, or would provide them with some authority, so they could take more control in their lives. For example, as one woman stated,

But I thought getting married at nineteen was the answer to everything (04).

Another woman commented when speaking of what marriage would bring for her,

I didn't really have a home, and so I could have a home life that I could call my own (3).

Another woman, in speaking of her fear of her family dying off, because there were few children or young people, spoke of how marriage would provide her some leverage in holding her family together,

That was the fear of being on my own totally. And living with such an older generation, and I would rather have something of my own, and I wanted to enlarge that family group. Like if I had a family of my own, it would be nicer, I could keep this going... I thought I would have more control over it (7).

As discussed in this section on marriage choice, participants addressed the conditions in which they sought out their life partners. For most participants these decisions were grounded in the pressures of getting married and the promises of the hopes and dreams of the future rather than on the qualities or characters of their spouses and on their relationship.



Children Choice

For the participants in this study, the time which lapsed between marriage and the birth of their first child were: 13 months, 15 months, 18 months, two years, three years, three years and four years.

Having children was not something that the participants identified as something that they decided to or not to do. Having children was rather something which "just happened" to couples, often early on in marriage. As one woman commented,

... it was happening to everybody else, it wasn't frowned upon, you expected it, it was a possibility because you were married (08).

It just happened in those days, it wasn't a surprise, you didn't have the same opportunities that you have now, to make those choices (08).

Another woman stated,

We were in our early twenties and everyone had children right away (02).

When speaking about their thoughts around having children most women commented on the lack of control around choice. This was something which was due primarily to the lack of adequate birth control. As one

woman stated,

I don't think we planned it, maybe we did, I can't even really remember. I mean in those days there were no such things as diaphragms or anything (04).

Another participant stated,

We wanted the children, and today I think young people can plan their families. There wasn't the thing of birth control (06).

Some women wanted children soon after marriage, so that this lack of control was not a problem, whereas for other women, who hoped to wait a few years, this did pose an inconvenience for them. Unplanned pregnancy was spoken about by them as a minor inconvenience in that none of the women, in retrospect, begrudged having the children, it was just something which happened too soon, and something which they had no control over. As one woman commented,

There weren't many that said I want to get married and have a baby in 10 months, but it did happen (01).

This woman however, stated later on that her feelings would have been very different had the birth control never worked and she would have continued to have

children. So at some point in time, this woman did feel that she did have some sense of control over her body and the whole birth control process.

Some participants did wait a few years before having their children. One woman was married in her mid twenties, and at that time had access to birth control, and made the decision to wait before having children because of problems in her marriage relationship.

Another participant who didn't have children until after a few years of marriage, was having difficulties getting pregnant, and as a result of this felt very left out and isolated from her community. Even though pregnancy wasn't something that women necessarily planned, it was something that was expected to happen. If pregnancy didn't happen, this circumstance could have been seen as a source of isolation. For this woman there was a sense of a "right" and a "wrong" time for having children and getting pregnant. The right time was being in one's early twenties, and married, and the wrong time was later on in life or before marriage. As she states,

And you didn't, I didn't indulge in pre-marital sex, oh no, you didn't, you lived in fear of getting pregnant, that was it, what did we know of disease

(2).

Here again is the sense of not having any control over the pregnancy occurring, there was no birth control, and hence no sense of having any personal control over it happening, or not happening.

Even with the one permanent method of controlling birth, a hysterectomy, it was out of the hands of the women and in the hands of their physicians. As one participant commented, it was not a decision entrusted to individual women but rather to their doctors. As she indicated, it was the doctor who decided that a woman indeed did want children, and secondly that she would not be allowed to follow through with the operation until she had had "enough" children, a number determined by the woman's doctor to be no less than three.

#### The Marriage Relationship

The important point made by one of the participants - that it was who they married which was the most important choice that they made - was reinforced when discovering the dynamics and roles expected within the marital relationship. What became apparent, when any of the participants discussed women's roles and

responsibilities within the marriage relationship, was that the maintenance of the relationship as well as the fulfilment of the emotional needs of family members, was the woman's responsibility. Women were handed the responsibility for the success and happiness of a family unit. As one woman stated,

I had to make sure that everything was secure and happy, no matter how tired you were that other people were always important first. They had to be taken care of, and always worrying if something happened (5).

Moreover, not only were women responsible for the emotional state of the family unit, they were to place the needs of their family before their own. One participant identified clearly that it was the woman, not the man, who was responsible and was to place their children's needs before their own,

When women have children, the children need to come first I think. It is their responsibility, they are dealing with a human life (6).

In discussing this profound responsibility women had for the emotional stability and happiness of their family members, some participants spoke of the energy they

expelled in determining and meeting the needs of others.

As one woman commented,

...women were washing walls, they were doing all sorts of things for their husbands and all the meals that they would get ready for them...oh I waxed my floors this week and my husband thought... We were always doing things for our husbands (2).

It was, in fact, a woman's contribution to the relationship, as another woman stated, that she would make everything nice for her husband for when he came home from work. Another participant said that if a woman didn't make everything fine within the home, her husband had no reason to come home from work.

...but if you have a real messy house, why should a husband come home after work. If you have a bitching house then why should he come home from work. No way, a man has to get up every morning, shave every morning, get dressed, go to his job and has a wife and two or three kids and a mortgage, I mean there's a lot of pressure on a man (4).

So, according to a number of participants in this study, it was in essence the responsibility of the woman

to keep her marriage relationship together, and she could do this by keeping a clean and stable home. If there should be problems within the marriage relationship, it was up to the woman to keep it together. One woman commented on this,

...if you got married and things didn't work, then you worked at it and worked at it and made it work and stayed in the relationship... the wife, the wife [who worked at it] (2).

And if there were problems that weren't resolvable it was because the woman wasn't working hard enough at keeping the relationship together. As one participant stated,

...if they [women] put as much work into their marriages as their work then there may not be so many separations and divorces (4).

#### Power Dynamics within the Marriage Relationship

Those participants who spoke to the power dynamics within the marriage relationship either acknowledged outright that the man was the one who made the decisions in the family or that decisions were made equally with the husband remaining head of the home. For example,

Because I'm very much in that pattern that you are

a support to your husband (1).

I have always let him make the decisions (4).

I have just always felt like I was the back half of the two of us, like he makes the decisions and I have gone along (4).

One participant spoke of how men having the control over making decisions in the family was something which was generally accepted within society.

Subservient. I think mainly that [when describing marriages of the 1950's and 1960's] (2).

Other participants spoke of how they felt they made equal decisions in their relationships and yet also spoke of their husbands having the control over final decisions. For example, as one participant stated,

...women should have an equal say, but the final decision I leave to my husband. It's simple. [Too] many women wear the pants in the house (3).

Another woman spoke of how within her relationship decisions were made mutually. However, this woman spoke as well of how, in the decision of whether or not she would work outside of the home after marriage, despite her wanting to, her husband would not allow her to.



### Men's Role

When speaking about the role expectations of men within the family unit it was clear in all interviews with participants that men were responsible for the financial well being of the family. As one woman stated, ...they just assumed they were the supporter of the family (8).

A good relationship was one in which the husband provided good financial support and was a good father to the children,

I couldn't have asked for a better husband, he was a wonderful provider and a wonderful father to the children (9).

Another woman spoke of how before she met her husband she was involved with another man, who because it was assumed by his parents could not adequately support her, his family actively worked towards ending the relationship.

Participants' reactions to this role arrangement varied. For some participants, they felt that men had a great deal of responsibility in fulfilling their roles. For example,

Everything revolves around him and he has to see to it that we have food and clothing and a roof over

our head, that just every aspect is on his shoulders... (6).

One participant pointed out that the responsibility was so much so with the men that it did not allow for women to assist in securing financial stability within the family. If a woman did work to help out the family financially, it was recognized as a failing of the man.

...it almost seemed like there was a taboo against it, like almost like the guy should be bringing in the bread and the wife should be staying home, that kind of thing... It was kind of slander, almost on him, because he couldn't support the family... (7).

Another woman felt that within that accepted role, men had more freedom than women to partake in other activities outside of the family. Other women commented on feeling isolated within their role, and not spending much time with their husbands,

I always felt like a hotel, cook whenever he got home you know, the kids and I ate, and then I always had to have food ready (3).

I thought my marriage was a bit lonesome, because my husband was away quite a lot...and with the little ones it was a little bit lonesome (8).

Another woman commented on how what he did felt very separate from what she did,

...as far as the marriage, he did his own thing, he went to his own meetings, his own jobs, and never interfere with him when he is at work (4).

Regardless of any possible negative feelings women may have had about this role arrangement, none commented that it should have been any other way, rather, it was just the expectation that men would,

...get a job and support the family, basically that (5).

To get anything more in a relationship, aside from being a good financial support, was over and above their basic expectations. As commented on by one of the participants,

...and you were pleased with that (providing financial support). Some fathers were more involved with their children than others, but that was just personality and opportunity (8).

Those who did have more in their relationship considered themselves an exception to the rule and were fortunate. For example, one woman commented about her relationship with her husband, where she felt she

received a lot of emotional support from him,

There really aren't many husbands like mine, I'm really convinced of that, he was just really great, even though he worked long hours, we had a great relationship [when talking about the early stages of their relationship (1)].

Another woman as well commented on her good fortune that her marriage was one where she received additional support from her husband,

I don't think everyone was as fortunate as I was... in the sense that with the marriage (6).

Again it is important to note that despite the fact that the participants perceived the maintenance and establishment of a happy healthy marital relationship as the woman's responsibility, they did not hold themselves responsible when it did happen, but rather spoke of this condition as an act of good fortune.

### Support

The section support addresses what participants in this study identified as being the supports available, or the lack of supports available to women working within the home.

From the data collected a number of concepts became apparent. The first point focuses not so much on what supports were available, but rather on how support was perceived. Some participants, when discussing support, expressed the importance of managing problems and difficulties on their own, and felt encouraged by their communities not to seek out external supports.

...I think people were frowned upon, we didn't have things like self-help groups or things that women would go for support anywhere. I think that people were expected to work through things themselves.

Be strong. Work it through, handle it (02).

Because of this pressure to work things out on one's own and not seek out support, the additional pressures of keeping others from knowing that problems may have existed was as well acknowledged by some participants.

Yes, and not only your self, your family, God forbid the neighbours would. I think people were very conscious of what the neighbours would think of anything (02).

Subsequently, with this attitude, there was the pressure to make everything look perfect within the home.

The nicer home you had the better you were looked upon. The more, if you were a good cook, housekeeper, kids clean...Perfect wife, perfect homemaker... (07).

Furthermore, as expressed by this woman, a pressure was felt from those around to find out other's inadequacies or imperfections.

It seemed that everyone was looking for dust on top of your shelves before they came into your house (07).

As some participants spoke of their active attempts at maintaining the secrecy of problems and upholding a good image in their community, other participants made no mention of the availability of emotional support. For these participants, when asked about support, the supports which were acknowledged and discussed were ones which made the physical act of homemaking more manageable, for example, assistance in babysitting or exchanging recipes.

#### Community Support

Despite the fact that it was significant for women to maintain a good image within the community, and

prevent others from becoming aware of any significant problems, it was within the community that most women found support.

At that time there was good community, a lot of women stayed home, so you went "coffeeing", and taking your children to different areas (05).

I think on our street alone there were only two gals who worked outside the home. The rest of the mothers stayed with their children, and then you get involved (06).

Participants spoke of how these relationships were associated around the role of homemaker. These women were held together by the fact that they all were working within the home, and many of the friendships were grounded within these family roles.

We would all get together and have our knitting parties and what not, and for our children we were making them (8).

Another woman mentioned a similar scenario,

And my girlfriends who had children before me, we all get together and have our knitting parties and what not and for our children what we were making them....around the children mainly (the

relationship) (9).

Support was Dependent Upon:

As one participant discussed, if one were to leave the community they would risk losing their support systems. Subsequently, women who moved around a great deal and/or who were never established within a community, were isolated from this source of support.

We moved a lot, so no, I really didn't have a very strong support system (1).

When discussing other factors on which support was dependent, some participants discussed that to receive community support one had to behave or think in a certain way. As one participant expressed,

...maybe you didn't get to know them because their principle or their outlook in life wasn't the same (08).

Subsequently, the availability of support was something dependent upon fitting in with the community. Those who did not fit in and yet lived in the community felt the isolation of being different. One participant who felt isolation, because she was working at home and was childless (not of her own choice), described her



experiences of this,

I would just listen to them, say what they had done, they were washing the walls, they were doing all these sorts of things for their husbands... and they all had children at that time...I was so left out (02).

Isolation from community support was as well dependent upon how well one with problems was able to avoid social scrutiny. When participants addressed issues, such as teen pregnancy, they spoke of how families with unwed pregnant daughters would hide or isolate them from others in fear of having the whole family judged.

...growing up it all seemed to be hush, hush, the girls were sent away to have the baby...It was very private, it was shameful...it said something about the family... (09).

From these results it can be ascertained that support within the community extended itself to the maintenance of family unity and was available to those who were able to uphold a good image in society. For those who suffered difficulties surpassing that which could be maintained in the community sought professional

support.

### Professional Support

Derived from responses from the participants who sought out professional help, the overwhelming message they received was that women seeking assistance were responsible for the problems they were bringing forth. Every woman who spoke of going for support to a doctor or any other professional, such as a priest or a social worker, was given the same message - it was her problem and was hers to resolve. This was the case for this woman, who when addressing difficulties she was having as a result of living with an abusive alcoholic husband, commented,

I tried to go to the priest and Alanon, but they were no help, they didn't seem to understand what I was talking about...they would say, well if you can't correct that, then they'll come in and take your family. No support for you at all ... Everything has to be my fault, like I should have done something, and what can I do and what should I do (07).

This was what another participant said after going to a

doctor because she was feeling depressed due to problems in her marital relationship,

And then I went to a doctor, because I thought I had gallstones or something, and he put me on this diet and he gave me nerve pills because my nerves were bad and he asked what was the problem, and I told him and he told me if my husband didn't play golf and curl, he'd be here getting nerve pills (4).

She was then sent by a friend to Alanon, where it was demonstrated to her that she was fortunate because she really didn't have problems compared to what others were experiencing,

And I had a neighbour whose husband was an alcoholic and she said come along with me to Alanon, and you will find out that you don't have any problems (4).

One woman spoke of her experiences when she sought out professional help after enduring a number of pregnancies, miscarriages and births in a short time span. After the birth of her last child, she suffered from bouts of depression. She was not perceived by her practitioner as physically and emotionally exhausted and likely suffering from post partum depression, needing rest and support. The prescribed treatment for her were shock treatments.

It is not surprising that given the interplay of these social perceptions and expectations, that women were inhibited from seeking out support. Pressure to "handle things on one's own", to make things look fine, the isolation experienced when one did not fit into the norm, and the woman blaming reactions of helping professionals upon the expression of difficulties, all conspired to discourage women working within the home from seeking out help. As one participant noted,

I think it was an isolating role (being a homemaker)  
(05).

#### The Vulnerability of Women within the Marriage Relationship

Few participants spoke of the vulnerability that existed within the relationship arrangement, despite the vulnerability inherent in their roles. They were given the immense and unrealistic expectation of being responsible for the successes and failures of their marriage relationship. They were financially dependent, in that most did not work outside of the home, and if they did, they had limited choices as to what they could do, often at jobs which paid little. The women who did

work outside of the home were subject to public scrutiny and judgement for being neglectful mothers. So for many women, they really had no choice but to try and keep families together because of the susceptible position they and their children would be in should their husband leave them. Despite these realities, only few women acknowledged, or possibly even recognized, their position of vulnerability.

Although, some participants did allude to the vulnerability of the female position. One woman spoke of vulnerability in the sense that if they had a "good marriage relationship", inferring a woman who had a supportive and respectful husband, then the relationship pattern worked. If however, a woman did not have a "good marriage relationship", the pattern did not work and the woman was in a position of susceptibility to her husband,

If it's a good marriage, I don't think it's much of a problem, but if it's a bad marriage then there's a problem (1).

This participant goes on to discuss how her husband's career successes were hers as well, because of the support she had provided him (she put him through school) and through her emotional support. She went on to state

that she could accept this as her success because he never walked away from her. It would have been different, however, if he would have left and the relationship not worked out, it would have been no longer her "success".

Another participant addressed the vulnerability of women when she said the reason women stayed in relationships, even though they may not have been happy and healthy, was because of the vulnerability they felt in that the situation,

Maybe she doesn't have the funds to make the break, and she's too insecure (2).

This same participant spoke of her feelings of helplessness and lack of options because of the homemaker role in making a change in the marriage relationship,

My life is not going to change, you know I'm satisfied with it, and I don't know what my alternative is (2).

I don't think divorce was as easy as it is now (2).

Another participant spoke of her fears and feelings of vulnerability before actually making the break in her marriage relationship,

I had to do something, and I didn't know what I was

going to do, because being a full time homemaker....  
you're not really trained, like I let all my  
training go, so I had to start all over again (7).

And one other participant spoke of how she felt vulnerable now in her life, fearful of something happening to her husband, and being unaware of what securities he may or may not have established for her.

#### Summary

From data obtained a number of categories emerged as being significant when addressing the social context upon which young women of the 1950's and 1960 made life choices. There were few life choices available to women, they had the option of a limited number of career or job choices; they were not, however, encouraged to pursue these options as their first priority was expected to be marriage. The natural and expected thing to do was to marry, have children and work within the home. If a woman were to work within as well as outside of the home, she was subject to public scrutiny and labelled a "neglectful mother". There were only a few conditions under which it was acceptable for a woman to work outside

of the home, and these were all grounded in the maintenance and survival of her family. For most of these participants, they made their choice in a marriage partner based on dreams and unrealistic expectations. In regard to choices around having children, there were few. Birth control was ineffective and unavailable when most of these women were first married and subsequently, it was an expectation that children were soon to follow marriage. The power dynamics within these relationships were such that the husband held the final word in decisions, and the woman's role was to create and maintain a secure and happy home environment, with the failure of the relationship remaining on her shoulders. The supports available to women were found primarily within the community. However, there were limitations on support because an unwritten rule existed which discouraged women from opening up too much about their difficulties. If a woman faced a problem beyond what she could cope with on her own she could seek out professional help, but she would likely be held responsible for the problem and she would become the target of change.

If a community or society has strict boundaries



which greatly limit the range of appropriate behaviours, it is likely that that community will isolate itself from other ideas or pressures in order to maintain these boundaries. As reflected in the section on supports available to women, it became apparent that they were isolated in their exposure, as well as in their opportunities to pursue other ways of being.

### C. Knowledge is Conceived Subjectively but is Perceived as Objective

This moves us to the third component of this theory which speaks to how the ideas or knowledge pieces are received. This element asserts that despite the fact that knowledge is subjectively conceived by individuals and power sources (it doesn't necessarily hold any absolute truth), it can be objectively accepted as being the absolute truth. Furthermore, there are various levels of objective acceptance. The more embraced an idea or concept is, and the more impact an idea has on the lives of individuals, the stronger the objective acceptance will be.

This objective acceptance grows out of the second component of this model, the social context. It is the

acceptance of notions established in the social context. Once objective acceptance has been achieved, the social context may no longer need to remain to reinforce the belief system as it has already been accepted. However, if an idea is not objectively accepted and the social context evolves or changes the knowledge or idea shall change or dissolve as well.

This section will explore how participants received and implemented the values and mores of the social structures into their own lives. From the data gathered in this study, it became apparent that participants did in fact embrace many of the socially contrived expectations of women as their own expectations and held onto them despite the changing times.

When addressing the various elements and personal reactions to the social structures, the expectations and the attitudes of the 1950's and 1960's, participants in this study directly and indirectly addressed the notion of objective acceptance. All of the participants abided by their social imperative, and followed through with the expected roles of becoming wives, mothers and homemakers. In doing this, the social roles and expectations of women espoused by society and its institutions were, to varying

degrees, embraced by the participants as their own. For some women, these were positions adopted for that time period and may have been challenged, and for other women these roles were maintained and are still upheld in present day.

This section will address how it was that these women reacted to the social roles expected of them, and the process by which they accepted them as their own, most without objection.

#### Objectively Accepted

Throughout the interviews there were numerous statements where participants spoke about various decisions they made where they merely stated their acceptance of these patterns as essentially "just the way that you do things." For example, as one woman pointed out,

I didn't even ask if I like this situation or not, I just did it (1).

I mean I didn't resent it, I think sometimes when I look back we were so busy just being able to live from one thing to the next that I don't think I ever sat back to think whether I liked this or not (1).

Other women commented in a similar manner of acceptance in the following statements,

I would never talk back, I was perfect (2).

I thought mothers were suppose to teach kids. But if you want to get married and have kids then you should stay home and enjoy them (4).

...in those days you stayed home with your babies... (8).

...they [men] just assumed they were the supporter of the family (8).

...you didn't dare at that time, it was a sin, to live common law, it was terrible (7).

Some women further accepted these ways of being as not only the pattern of the way things were done within their society, but as well the natural way of things. For example,

...when you became a homemaker, it was something that you didn't have to defend. It was the natural thing to do (6).

Another woman spoke of her role of homemaker as being acceptable within her own nature,

I'm very domestic by nature, so for me I was content to be a homemaker (1).

In regard to how it occurred that role expectations were objectively accepted, two concepts emerged as being relevant. Firstly, how many options were actually presented and secondly, how behaviour expectations were molded into patterns.

#### Options Available

From the interviews with participants the concept of expectations emerged as being significant in relation to how and to what extent one might accept a presented lifestyle. The first point which emerged from the data was the notion that if one did not have many choices or expectations placed on them, they were more likely to merely accept what was being offered to them. This concept is demonstrated in the following quote,

...we never had the choices and the expectations were there that we automatically fell into (1).

This participant further elaborates,

We didn't know we should have all sorts of expectations, because they had never been offered to us. You just took life as it was (1).

Another participant discussed her objective acceptance of not learning to drive a car because it

wasn't expected of her to learn,

I didn't learn to drive a car until after I was married. It just wasn't expected. I don't know. My dad never offered (2).

So if there were few choices available or offered, one would be more likely to accept them without hesitation. Subsequently, for the women who participated in this study, for them to objectively accept socially ascribed roles, it was significant that there were only few options available.

#### A Pattern

Another concept which emerged as being significant, in the way and degree to which participants accepted role expectations, was the degree to which behaviours were perceived as patterns. For example, some participants spoke of these role expectations as being larger than themselves, and were in fact a pattern of being, within their community or society. As one participant stated, when discussing the role dynamics within her marital relationship,

...I'm still very much in that pattern that you're a support to your husband (1).

In this statement it can be derived that the way she related to her husband was not necessarily based in her own desires as it was in a social way of being.

Another participant described the pattern of expectations she experienced in the following statement,

There seemed to be blindfolds, like there was nothing else, no exception, no other arrangement, there seemed to be, you got married, had children and your homemakers role, or single and you had your own career and house, or whatever, apartment, and that was it, and your friends, and that was about it, kind of thing, you had nothing else, no other diversity (7).

For this woman, the patterns were twofold and clearly set. Women were to maintain the acceptable lifestyle of either the married or single woman, a lifestyle with clearly established and rigid boundaries. Again it was a way of being which was unquestionably larger than herself, and beyond her own questioning at the time.

Other participants spoke of this pattern in the context of, "well everyone was doing it, so that is the way it is to be done". This can be illustrated in the following quote where this woman is discussing the timing

of children,

It just happened, but in those days it wasn't a surprise, you weren't, you didn't have the same opportunities that you have now...because it was happening to everybody else, it wasn't frowned upon, or you expected it was a possibility because you were married (8).

In another statement she commented,

...don't forget, we were all in the same boat at the same time, so it was just a general (8).

Another woman talked about acceptable marriage age in the context of "that's just what everyone did",

...very young by today's standards, but not then, that was the norm, and that's what you did (2).

And this woman acknowledged this larger pattern in the following statement,

They just got married and had kids. We didn't plan that but neither did a lot of other people, they just had lots of kids (1).

Some participants spoke of the general acceptance of roles and ways of being though out society. It was not only women who respected their natural imperative, but rather no one challenged the boundaries,



...there was a respect for the roles that people played, there was a respect for your parents and there was the respect for the elderly, much more than there is today. If something went wrong we had to answer to our parents and we look up to our parents (6).

There was also a pattern which presented itself as being the acceptable and unacceptable way for women to act, especially in the terms of premarital sex. Participants spoke of this in terms of being a "good" and "bad" girl. For example,

...nice young girls don't do things like that (2). You didn't fool around at all, not if you wanted to be a good girl (7).

...you wouldn't fool around. You were looked at as cheap and vulgar, your name was tarnished if they suspected you for fooling around (7).

Patterns emerged as a significant factor in these participants' acceptance of the values and mores espoused by social institutions in a number of instances. They identified patterns as being the reasons for doing things as far as getting married, their marriage role dynamics, and basically their life choices, such as, having

children, social roles, acceptable and unacceptable behaviour. These were not behaviours and choices grounded in any personal or individual dream or hopes, but rather these behaviours and choices were grounded in what was expected of them. As was discovered from the data, women did what was expected, without necessarily seeing what they were doing as expected because they were not presented with any choices and didn't perceive any options. As some participants elaborated, to have expectations, one needs choices, otherwise expectations become, "just the thing to do".

#### D. Marginalization of Contrary Perspectives

This then brings us to the final component of this theory, the marginalization of contrary perspectives. When a concept or idea is objectively accepted or when it is an idea encouraged by the powers of a given community, in order to maintain this acceptance, all contrary or opposing perspectives or ideas are to be marginalized in a way that they will no longer challenge the original knowledge piece. The way in which this can be done is that factors may be played out until they become

uncontradictory, a smokescreen may be drawn over reality, individuals may play their lives out in two or more conflicting spheres, or contrary ideas may merely be marginalized and rejected (Hubbard, 1988).

Marginalization is the process by which individuals internally control and maintain a socially accepted knowledge source, sometimes at the expense of their own personal perspective (Haug, 1983). The more severe the consequences upon rejecting a given belief system, the more motivation there is to marginalize contrary perspectives and to objectively accept the belief system. So in the case of a knowledge source where deviation from it would infer insanity, one would be strongly motivated to accept the knowledge (Berger & Luckmann, 1963).

As was discovered in the data, it was determined that one may be motivated internally or externally to marginalize contrary perspectives. If there is objective acceptance of a belief system the marginalization is far more internally motivated, but if there is not objective acceptance and yet ideas continued to be marginalized this implies that the motivation is external. The basis on which behaviours can be externally marginalized are through the use of things such as, the need to be

accepted, or the fear of the consequences (for example, a threat of harm). A belief system which does not allow for much variation means that individuals will be required to marginalize more of themselves to maintain the belief and continue to be accepted by a society.

For example, in a given community, women who are considered acceptable are those who nurture and care primarily for their children. Those who do not enjoy caring for children, or have aspirations to the contrary, will either have to marginalize their own feelings and needs or not marginalize these feelings and risk their rejection within society.

As was stated earlier, when behaviours are internally marginalized, the social context no longer needs to remain for ideas to be reinforced and maintained. However, when the social context is not internally accepted social pressure will exist and will marginalize those individuals who deviate from the norm. The more precise and narrow a knowledge source or way of being is, the more perspectives one has to marginalize and the more difficult it becomes.

From the data gathered in this study it became apparent that participants internally marginalized

contrary perspectives. As well, participants were externally marginalized if they deviated from their expected roles. These were roles which were established in the social context and were then objectively accepted by the participants as their own. Findings shall be presented under these two categories - ways in which participants internally marginalized their own feelings and thoughts and the ways in which diverging behaviours were externally marginalized by society.

#### Internally Marginalizing Feelings

This first section addresses the ways in which participants internally marginalized their own feelings that they may have had about aspects of their situations which did not fit the community standards. One participant, when talking about her feelings during that time, acknowledged her own suppression of emotions.

I think there are many times in my life where my emotions were shoved down, and I don't even know how to put a label on my emotions I feel, of how I feel and why, or if I'm even supposed to be feeling like that (7).

The rest, despite not stating directly that they

suppressed feelings, acknowledged it in more subtle phases and discussions, perhaps without their own awareness. The categories which emerged as being significant from the data exploring this idea included, "better", "lucky", "self responsibility" and "busy".

### Better

The code better emerged as being significant in internally marginalizing feelings, in that it appeared to be one process of rationalizing away negative or unacceptable feelings one may have felt about a situation. This was framed in such a way that what opportunities and possessions participants had were better than what they had known before, or were better than what others had.

This is a concept which acknowledges the context in which things occur. When one considers the approach of reaction within a context, two options of comparison are available. One may move in a direction of comparison where others have more or where others have less. If one approaches their situation in relation to where others have more, they may be more inclined to want more for themselves. However, if one is to compare themselves to

those who have less, they have little choice but to be satisfied and grateful for what they have or where they are.

The participants in the interviews, when speaking of their lives as young women, would look at themselves in the context of having things better than before, and subsequently, felt they should be satisfied with what they had. Examples of this from the participants are as follows,

Even though we had nothing, in so many ways our life we had so much more than our parents. I grew up on a farm where we never had... (1).

In many ways life was so unfair where as we didn't make many choices and felt we didn't have many choices, but we did, far more choices than our parents had (1).

Another participant speaks of this in her comment,

I had a beautiful house. I had things that my parents, my dad had worked for years for them to have. And everything came very easy to me, and I was in a fog, I was enjoying all this (2).

Another participant notes,

My parents just came through the depression and the

war was on when I was small, and it was nice not to have those things to worry about, to be able to work ahead, and to have the chance to improve yourself, and to have a nice home and comfortable, and clothe your children and feed them. That would be great (8).

Other women spoke of being liberated in their position,

I thought finally I was liberated where I didn't have to do a man's job and take the slacker jobs (being a homemaker) (5).

We still felt liberated because it was a step up from where we came from, and even though you look back and it was nothing (1).

Furthermore, other participants spoke as well of going into their marriages with no money, having to save for a bottle of milk, or meagre necessities.

On no occasion did any participant speak negatively of their feelings at that time about that situation. It was either better than what others had or was something they just did, they lived through it, built from it, and on occasion found their living through it with a sense of pride.



...even though times were hard, we always had what we needed (1).

We worked together, and we appreciated, when we were able to buy something new, we appreciated it so much, because we worked hard for it, we appreciated it. Nothing was handed to us on a silver platter (6).

...compared to other places, we are very lucky...  
Canada was the land of milk and honey (3).

### Lucky

When participants spoke of their position as being better than most, what they saw as theirs was theirs because of good fortune and not theirs because of their own efforts. They were "lucky".

For example, as previously discussed in the section on the social context of these women's lives, women were the ones who were held responsible for the failures in their marriage relationships as well for the emotional well being of their family members. If there were problems in their marriage, they were held responsible for that socially. It may have inferred that they were not good housekeepers, or that they placed other things

in priority of their marriages. However, when participants spoke of success in marriage relationships, it was spoken of as something of their own good fortune. For example,

I don't think everybody was as fortunate as I was...In the sense that with the marriage, the children you know, and that it was a marriage that worked out (6).

Another woman spoke of her problems in her relationship in terms of her good fortune. She could have had worse difficulties:

The biggest problem was that we weren't communicating, but I didn't have a wife abuser, I didn't have an alcoholic, which were somethings that other women had, so I had to be thankful for what I had, in things weren't that bad (4).

Lucky emerged as being significant as well when some participants spoke of the supports that were available to them,

I was very fortunate that we were in a position that we were able to have that kind of help (2).

...but I was lucky my husband had an elderly lady friend...and she came to stay with me for a week

while he was away (8).

What was occurring in this pattern was that women were marginalizing away their own sense of power. As they defined themselves as being not responsible for their environment or their positions that they saw as being positive or strong, they handed over the responsibility to the larger society or community and their husbands. What was positive came from the pattern of life, however, what was negative or problematic most often was accepted as coming from themselves. This form of attribution can be identified in the following section, self responsibility.

#### Self Responsibility

When the women spoke of difficulties within their lives, they used a different measurement than when they spoke of good fortune (good fortune was seen as being a result of luck). The women perceived themselves as responsible for problems in their lives. The primary basis for their responsibility was because they placed themselves in those situations. Again, the participant's reactions were similar as those when they discussed feeling fortunate. Questionable or negative feelings

were pushed aside. Despite the social context which shaped their lives and their perceptions of themselves, they did not question their social milieu. The participants assumed responsibility for their own situations as their context expected them to do so.

This section addresses the process by which individuals took personal responsibility for problems because of their own perceived weaknesses, and because of the context of within which the problem was occurring.

When personal experience is seen within a context, it can no longer be objectively accepted, because one is then able to explore the possibility of a challenge to the social infrastructure. However, if one focuses the blame only on oneself, one is not in a position to doubt or test the structure. The foundation is secured and maintained by women's acceptance of personal responsibility. So, for example, in terms of marriage difficulties, some participants spoke of placing themselves in that marriage situation for so many years, or placing themselves in a situation of submission, and subsequently being responsible for any negative feelings they may have as a result.

But then I did put myself in that position for 37

years (2).

I have always let him make the decisions (4).

I have always sat back, and that has been the role

I have taken (4).

In these comments, participants disallowed themselves the opportunity to discuss either what was happening in the relationship or their feelings about it. They focused only on how they put themselves into that situation. Their analysis does not take into consideration the context in which they made these decisions. For example, the pressure young women felt during the 1950's and 1960's to get married in the absence of options, put them in the position that they really had no choice but to marry. Once married they responded to social expectations making that marriage work because divorce or separation were not real options. Marriage provided social scrutiny.

In the process of taking responsibility for situations over which these women really had little control, they were able to marginalize any contrary analysis of the situation should the situation be challenged.

Self responsibility is further demonstrated in the

manner in which participants spoke of the choices they made in their lives, and how they held themselves responsible for the lack of options available. For example, despite all that worked against a woman who tried to have a family and career (negative social sanctions, lack of support), participants spoke of their pushing aside some of their dreams in order to work at home as a choice they made. For example,

To be an opera singer (childhood dream). I've never pursued it...But after we were married, that was never even, I never blamed my husband for that, I never wanted to pursue that (1).

This participant's dream was reframed as "I never pursued it", despite there never being any real opportunities to pursue it.

In terms of education, one participant spoke of her being too much of a follower. That was why she never went to university. None of her friends did. This participant did not consider how isolating attending University would have felt, as a minority within the school system. For a woman to have continued school was by far the exception and she would have had to have been strongly motivated. Another woman stated that she could

have gone to University if she wanted, no one said that she couldn't go. No one, however, said that she could go either.

Another woman took sole responsibility for her situation when she said that her husband placed the decision of whether or not she would pursue her career in her hands, despite him not supporting the choice that she would work. She saw this as being her choice despite the fact that she didn't have the supports necessary to enable her to work outside the home. Nor did she comment on the social reactions she would likely have encountered if she were to work outside of the home.

Another participant spoke of how she saw most of the choices she made having been made for her, but that she didn't resent it because it was her nature to comply rather than fight. Again the responsibility lay with her. She did, however, recall one occasion where she did challenge a choice being made for her. It was a challenge she soon retracted because of feelings of guilt, that she should not be challenging it, and then resigned herself to the decision as being the right thing to do anyways.

I could not do that. I tried to do or at one point

to really, not that I wanted to buck it, but I just felt I couldn't do that but I just didn't. I felt incredibly miserable, until I said, yah, we'll do that if that's what you really think we should do, And it ended up being an okay thing to do (1).

Another participant spoke of being personally responsible for difficulties in her life when she talked about how not being married by a certain age was a personal failing.

That there was something wrong, like I had failed somewhere, and why couldn't I get anybody. Like there was damage to me somewhere You know, damaged goods I was getting thrown around so much that nobody wants me then, you know, well I can't be very good, that kind of feeling (7).

One participant spoke of social conflict being a result of women challenging the social structure, and how things would be fine if women didn't challenge the bigger structure. The problem is not the structure, but rather those individuals who don't comply with it.

...all men are men right, and are content, and there's not the differences there, where as with women there still are these women who are still .



content with what has been considered as women's role and that's where the rub comes. Some are really content to be that and others aren't (1).

One participant spoke of how in later years she saw society as having put her in a position of responsibility for her problems at that time. But because at that time she did not have that analysis to understand her circumstances, she blamed herself.

No support for you at all, it's like if you can't correct it then you're responsible. No sympathy, no understanding. That's exactly what they said to me, if you can't do something about it then they're going to take your family away (7).

These examples demonstrate participants holding themselves responsible and not feeling they had an option to challenge their surroundings.

Other women marginalized their feelings by merely accepting that it was the way things were done, and one just does it in that way. This process of marginalization is demonstrated in the following statement by one participant as she speaks of not necessarily feeling good about her marriage situation, but seeing no alternatives and accepting it.

...my life is not going to change, you know I'm satisfied with it and I don't know what my alternative is (2).

Other participants spoke of how there may have been problems, but they got through them and were stronger as a result. Another spoke of the difficulties she had with her pregnancies and then of her resolve around it by her statement,

...but you do it (8).

### Busy

A number of participants spoke of their lives being so busy that there wasn't the energy to think or notice what they were doing or feeling. Being busy became a means to which one was able to marginalize messages contrary to what was going on within their own communities by isolating themselves from opposing viewpoints or feelings.

Sometimes when I look back, we were so busy just being able to live from one thing to the next that I don't think I ever sat back to think whether I liked this or not (1).

Another woman states,

I was tired, mentally I was tired raising the children (2).

And another participant talks about her isolation from the outside community being a result of her being busy within the home,

I stayed home and I baked the cookies, and I probably didn't even have time to read the newspaper when my kids were little (4).

Other participants spoke of their busy lives in the home as being overwhelming, to such an extent that they didn't have the strength to look outside of themselves,

I was so loaded down with my own things (7).

I was so wrapped up in my own life in the house and I know it was out there but I didn't have the energy or the strength (2).

The chores and responsibilities working within the home appeared to be such that it focused inward rather than outward. Being busy isolated these women from contrary perspectives and ideas which could have challenged their frame of existence.

### External Marginalization

This section addresses the ways in which diverging behaviours and ideas were marginalized, and women in the 1950's and 1960's were influenced to behave in a conforming manner. One participant saw these social guidelines as being narrow and strict. There were many behaviours which were not seen as being appropriate for women, behaviours such as not marrying, not having children and exercising independence by pursuing a career. From the data, it became apparent that the primary need which was targeted to maintain control was the need to fit in, to feel accepted. The more behaviours are regarded as inappropriate in a society, the more that one needs to marginalize behaviours and ideas to maintain the social order.

Participants in this study discussed the reaction women faced when they did not conform to socially accepted mores. As indicated by the data, women who did not conform were subject to being isolated from their communities.

What happened to girls who didn't do things properly? Oh, they were outcast... (7).

One participant discussed her feelings around this when

she was not able to have children when all of her friends were,

Outsider...I used to cry a lot...I wanted to belong, I didn't know where I belonged (2).

I was on the edge, I was on the outside all the time, I had nothing in common with them (2).

Other participants spoke of the expectation of young women to marry and the implications of isolation when one did not adhere to these guidelines.

...they would have gotten a job in a dry goods store and would have done that for the rest of their lives, until a later time in their lives that they could decide they could do something (1).

I think that they were very unhappy...lived a very lonely, single life. And I think she became very isolated from what was going on (2).

Another participant spoke of her personal experience of feeling isolated because she was not married,

...like I was the single friend, kind of the odd person out (7).

This participant then spoke of her feelings when she was being counselled not to marry her fiancée,

But I could never see myself being single at that

point of my life, it was totally out of the question. Like he was sort of sentencing me, you miz [sic] well send me to prison, like that was sheer torture, as far as I was concerned (7).

It was not that she couldn't live without this relationship, rather, she couldn't live not being married.

Another participant mentioned how an individual would not be embraced within a community if they had diverging ideas,

...maybe you didn't get to know them because their principle or their outlook in life wasn't the same (8).

Another participant recited a similar example when she discussed the reaction to living common law at that time,

...you would be shot out of the social circle, they would have nothing to do with you (7).

Subsequently, one could surmise that for women to maintain or establish a community support system ( the primary support available to women who worked within the home) they would need to maintain the status quo and not deviate to any degree in thought or action.

Other participants spoke of the importance of conforming to social standards when they discussed the reactions young women faced when they had children "out of wedlock". If pregnancy were to occur, these women would be sent away from their communities to have their children, the babies would be put up for adoption, and not a word would be said within the community.

There was one girl that we knew that was really, that she had a child out of wedlock, and it was very hush, hush, and if anything like that went on it was very quiet, and you didn't talk about it. And she was even one of the girls in our group, there was four of us, and all of a sudden she disappeared (2). Everything was just shame on you, you know [having a child out of wedlock] (9).

As indicated by participants, it was judged as a personal flaw when one did not conform to socially acceptable mores. As expressed by some participants, women who were not married were seen as not successful, as old maids, unwanted, or as losers. They were not married because of some personal imperfection. Moreover, women who were sexually active before marriage were subject to personal humiliation,

You wouldn't fool around; you were looked at as cheap, vulgar, your name was tarnished if they suspected you for fooling around...(7).

Other participants spoke of how women who wanted to work outside of the home and had children were viewed as selfish, and as inadequate mothers. Women who worked within the home were viewed as being more giving. They were encouraged to remain in the home because of what appeared to be respect.

Isolated. but it didn't feel bad because you weren't working and that, no one looked down upon you. They respected you for being a mother...(5).

One woman spoke of her personal reaction to being isolated from her community as a result of her inability to fit in. She felt isolated because as a newly married woman she was unable to have children while the other women in her community did, and as a way of fitting in she would pretend that she was "normal",

My closest friend had two little boys and I would go over there as much as I could and help her with the children. We brought a crib, so we could have one of the children sleep over, I bought a .



stroller, I went through all the motions, it was like I was the child's parent. And every once in a while I would get one of the boys, and he would stay with me for the day, or she would come over with the two boys and they would have their afternoon nap, and we would play house (2).

Participants spoke as well of the professional reaction they would encounter if they were unable to cope with problems in their lives and sought support outside of their families and communities. One participant went to her family doctor to discuss her marital problems and feelings of dissatisfaction. She was prescribed nerve pills and told that if her husband wasn't out all the time partaking in social activities he would be here getting nerve pills. Another woman went to her doctor because of severe post partum depression, having had seven pregnancies in a span of a few years. As a result of her confiding in her difficulties to him she had her children taken away for a short time and was sent in for shock treatments. Another participant went for support because of the physical abuse she was suffering at the hands of her husband, and was told by the social worker that if she didn't sort things out, she would lose her

children.

In all these instances one theme was common, women were held personally responsible for the problems they were having. The social reactions women faced in all of these scenarios included blame. Intervention focused on "fixing" the woman as contrasted to contextualizing the full dynamics of the situation. The situations which created these problems would not be challenged, but rather the women who did not fit in or cope, were the ones who were challenged. It was the individual women in these situations who would be marginalized and isolated as a result of diverging from the expected norm. As can be derived from these examples, it was the consequence of isolation and the threat of not fitting in which provided pressure in controlling participant's behaviour.

#### Limited Communication

Participants, when talking about the openness of feelings and expressions, responded that people did not talk about problems. Some other participants even recognized the presence of pressure not to talk about problems,

...people were frowned upon (for talking about .

problems), like we didn't have things like self-help groups, things that women would go for support anywhere (2).

Subsequently, with a lack of understanding of how oneself as well as how others were feeling there would be a feeling of isolation. If a woman was experiencing difficulties in her life, and if she wasn't aware that others may be going through similar things, she would be more likely to assume responsibility for that problem and see it as an inadequacy within herself rather than as a symptom of a larger problem. The marginalizing of contrary perspectives was achieved by a combination of having learned to internally marginalize one's own feelings and by having contrary behaviours externally marginalized. The act of internally marginalizing one's feelings and sense of power was accomplished by participants taking the stance that the positive situations which existed in their lives were theirs out of good luck and what was negative was there because of their own personal inadequacies. By this process it was difficult for participants to challenge their social environment without first challenging their own ways of perceiving the world. This framework was created and

encouraged by social pressures to behave in certain ways, personally motivated by the need to fit in and to be socially accepted.

#### Summary

What has emerged from the data is a sequence of steps or a pattern by which a range of social expectations were adopted and maintained by these women. These steps are elaborated upon and affirmed through the words and thoughts of the participants who engaged in this study. The pattern which emerged to answer the first section of questions addressed in this research project: What choices were available to these women when they were young and how did the women perceive and incorporate these options into their own lives. As was explained, this pattern consisted of the following steps: knowledge is power and power is knowledge; ideas are maintained within a social context; the objective acceptance of knowledge and the marginalization of contrary perspectives. The interplay of this cycle maintains and perpetuates the existence of ideas and concepts, often, despite the presence of a changing environment.

So despite the change in roles and expectations of women beginning in the late 1960's, these women continued to maintain their old roles. This phenomenon will be elaborated upon in the second set of questions addressed in this research project.

### The Change

This section addresses the second set of questions established in this research project. These questions include: Did participants perceive a change in role expectation over time, if so what was that change? How did it make itself known to them? What was the impact of that change on them?

When discussing whether or not a change occurred in relation to what was expected of women, all nine participants agreed that there definitely was a transformation. One participant, who saw her life choices as a young woman being very similar to those her parents experienced, noted that what has happened in the past thirty years was a phenomenal amount of change. Similarly, when asked when they saw the change occurring most identified it as developing approximately twenty to twenty five years ago, in the late 1960's and early

1970's.

When asked what they perceived the change to entail, participants spoke of it as being a change of significant proportions. One participant expressed this by stating the change occurred when all the rules switched.

I don't know, kind of like one extreme to another, like you weren't suppose to be here any more, like you were supposed to be going and looking after your home at the same time (7).

Participants spoke of how women were no longer being expected to work only within the home but were expected as well to balance a career. Other women spoke of how it was a change of women's priorities. It centred around women's dissatisfaction of working within the home and then no longer placing their children as a priority, but rather, replacing those priorities with career aspirations.

Another woman spoke of it not being so much the personal expectations of women changing, but rather the external expectations placed on women. As she noted, the change focused around the assumption that women were becoming as capable as men and that a network was forming that embraced that concept. It was a change where

options for women began opening up, as she states,

I think people were more educated. Maybe more, things were more available. There weren't restrictions on everything. People were more aware. Life in general was more open (2).

### The Women's Liberation Movement

When asked what participants thought about the movement which propelled these changes into being, the women's liberation movement, the majority of the reactions were filled with scepticism and intimidation. Some participants spoke of the feminist messages as being confusing and illogical. Many participants, when commenting on the women's liberation movement, marginalized those women who partook in it and their ideas. For example, one woman saw the notion of equality being inconsistent with the natural order of things. She explained that men and women were indeed different and it was a struggle against the natural order of things to claim that they were the same. Other participants spoke of the movement stemming out of individual frustrations rather than any comment on society. It was the women involved with the women's liberation movement who were

frustrated and unhappy with themselves that were grasping onto this mind set as a way of feeling better about themselves. Other participants saw the philosophy as being extreme and not reflective of what was really going on. One participant couldn't believe that women were even struggling with such ideas,

I was so content to be at home with my children, I couldn't see there was a lot of things said that I just couldn't believe that a women would even believe that, I was from the old school (6).

Other participants regarded the feminist movement as being a threat to femininity, and the ways in which women would be treated in society. There was a fear expressed by a majority of participants that they would no longer be treated like ladies. For example, as this one participant commented,

I don't like it, I think it's nice for a man to treat a woman like a lady, to say thank you to them. And I think once they started women's lib they lost all that (4).

Furthermore, if someone held onto feminist beliefs they could not expect to be treated like a lady as that would contradict their message of equality.



But if they want equal status then they also have to do equal work and not expect you know, it used to be a guy would open a door for a girl and you can't be one expecting a guy to open the door for them. And there were people like that (3).

Another participant commented,

They wanted to be equal to men and yet at the same time they're kind of contradicting themselves because they still wanted to be lavished with all kinds of things. So they wanted equality but they also wanted some things to stay the same (6).

Participants who were more inclined to embrace the feminist message at that time recalled feeling sceptical as well. They noted that of what they heard there were some good ideas in the movement, but that the social realities were so much entrenched that the feminists were fighting a losing battle.

But society has done that, and I don't know if the feminist movement can do that... I don't think that is right, but I think in many ways that's reality. At this point that is reality (1).

Another participant commented,

My feelings were good luck to them, but they are

fighting a losing battle (2).

And a finally a woman, who embraced some of the feminist platforms stated,

I thought that was kind of good, but what good is it going to do us, kind of thing, you know, it didn't really have that big of an impact, and maybe because I was so loaded down with my own things. But it just felt, well that's good, I'm glad that everyone is getting behind us and going with it but how far is it going to get us (7).

Several other women spoke as well of being loaded down with their own issues and worries that they didn't have the time or energy to put into the movement, or to really study what it was about.

#### What the Women's Liberation Movement Said about Homemakers

When participants were asked about what the women's liberation movement comment was on the roles of homemakers, participants overwhelmingly responded that they felt isolated from the movement and that the commentary on the value of the homemaker role was negative. The negativity was based primarily on the

notion that homemakers were not living up to their potential and for them to do that, they would need to be working inside as well as outside of the home. As one woman commented,

I think that the feminist movement feels that those who lean towards that [homemaking] feel as though you're really missing something up here if you just want to be a homemaker, come on, get into the game (1).

Another participant commented;

I was boring because all I was a homemaker. Like get a life or something (2).

Another participant felt that the movement indicated that the role of the homemaker was something that didn't require any special talent, but rather was something anyone could do.

So a homemaker isn't judged very high and so no matter what your qualities are, you are judged the same. For instance, a doctor is always judged, oh well, but if a doctor were a homemaker, a doctor homemaker, but if it's just a homemaker, well anybody could do that (5).

Participants felt that with the change, the work

that women did within the home was marginalized and viewed as not important any more. Participants indicated that at least when they were younger there was a feeling of respect for the work that women did within the home.

But it didn't feel bad, you weren't because you weren't working and that, no one looked down upon you. They respected you for being a mother, which I don't think people do now. If you are a homemaker and at home, I don't think you get respect from a lot of people, the appearance of respect. It's just a homemaker, but then you did have respect (5).

Some participants spoke of the movement working for some, not all women.

No I don't, I think it totally isolated us. I think it was geared to women who were in college or working or in that field (2).

Moreover, the steps that were being taken by the women's movement were not focused on the improvement of the lives of women who worked within the home, but rather focused on the improvement of mobility for women so they could work outside of the home. So, for example, as one woman commented, energies were being spent on day care

subsidies and tax breaks.

For women to feel included in the movement, participants believed that they would need to be a part of the working force outside of the home. When participants were asked whether or not they personalized any of the messages of the women's movement, most stated that they didn't want to pursue a career and subsequently, the movement would not speak to any of their needs.

I am at the point where it really doesn't affect me. A lot of what they are doing is good, for equal pay for equal work, but since I have no intentions of ever challenging the work force, at my age, it doesn't make me as mad (5).

Another participant commented,

I never saw too much about it, I never thought about it because I knew it was never going to happen to me. I kinda thought that this shouldn't be, that women should be ladies (4).

#### How Participants Now Feel about their Life Choices

The third set of questions spoke to how participants felt in retrospect about the choices that they had, and

if they could, would they do things differently.

Some participants said that they wouldn't have done anything differently.

I was very happy with them [my choices]. I think my friends are too. We're all still married and I think we've, well we've got together quite often and our life is our children (9).

All of the participants said that they never regretted the children that they had, and for many, they saw the rearing of their children as being one of their greatest successes.

...if nothing else, I was a good mom (4).

As one participant noted the impact that the work she did would have on the memories of her children,

...to see the kids smile. They'll remember that when they grow up and that's important to me. It's an input into their lives... (1).

Another commented in a similar way, recognizing the impact of the small and yet important aspects of home life,

And even our kids, I know I've heard my son saying my mother was always there for us. We'd come home for lunch from school and the first thing they would

say would be Hi Mom, and I was there for them (6).  
Another participant commented,

...it's important but I'm glad I stayed home, when you see them do silly things and when they cut their teeth (4).

When some of the participants noted things that they would have done differently in their lives, they spoke of the ways in which they made their choices. A few noted that they would have selected their marriage partner in another manner. As one participant stated, she wouldn't have married as young, and would have married more out of the dynamics of the relationship as opposed to marriage being, "the thing to do." Another participant spoke of wanting to have had more realistic expectations of the marriage relationship.

Another woman spoke of wanting to have raised her children differently. She felt that there is so much literature on child rearing available now, and regretted not having access to such material then.

Other participants spoke of how they would have wanted to value themselves more, and have felt more positive about themselves. As one woman commented,

That was my biggest downfall, was going into this

marriage and not thinking something of myself. I need this pair of earrings and not to go crazy and buy expensive things but not to be afraid to spend a dollar on yourself, because it makes you feel awful good to put on a pair of earrings you bought (4).

### Personal Changes

An important aspect of this theory, examines who challenges the socially accepted sources of knowledge. It may be those who have a difficult time fitting into the social context and are discriminated against as a result. So in this case, they may adhere to the objective acceptance of the idea and yet suffer as a result because they do not fit. They may not discontinue marginalizing contrary perspectives and themselves, but they may at some point be more open to accepting a contrary perspective. Those who challenge the objective belief system may also be those who through some external source or life event have been exposed to other ideas and ways of being. Or the challengers may be those individuals who are willing to suffer the consequences of deviation or who may be less affected by or fearful of



the consequences.

The individual or group of individuals who cease to accept the objectiveness of an idea or knowledge base, may be viewed by the larger society as the deviant, but if their ideas gain force and power through numbers or through securing a position within the power base of society they may become the new creator of knowledge or may challenge the knowledge source enough to begin changes within the social context.

It became apparent with some participants, when they discussed the third set of questions, that their ideas were evolving. Some participants spoke of this phenomenon as a change which occurred within themselves. This was a change which no longer allowed them to adhere to all the rules and mores of their previous lives, a change which challenged some of the marginalizing processes they had previously upheld. The changing ideas focused primarily around their ability to begin to appreciate themselves and to acknowledge their own worth and sense of personal power.

Those participants who spoke of this transformation, acknowledged that the point of change occurred with various incidents. Some participants spoke of the change

happening because of their working outside of the home. Despite the negative response participants had towards the women's liberation movement and its messages, some participants did choose to work outside of the home. Of those who did, most did so on a part time basis and one woman worked on a full time basis. The reasons for taking on jobs outside of the home, as these women stated, were because of the pressure they felt from society to work, because of financial reasons, or because their children were growing up and they wanted something to occupy their time. All, who did work outside of the home, found it to be a positive experience and one which counterbalanced some of the negative feelings around working within the home. It was in the context of this topic, changes, that participants began to speak about some of their negative experiences of working as a homemaker. This was a significant point because participants were no longer as strongly marginalizing contrary perspectives to uphold the sanctity of being a homemaker. It was slowly becoming not the only choice for themselves. Those who addressed this, spoke of it in terms of feeling more positive about the worth of what they did. As one participant commented on the impact

working outside of the home had on her,

Once I started working outside the house that was when I began to realize that I am \_\_\_\_\_ I can have a mind of my own (2).

Yes it did, that was the beginning, I began to do what I thought was important (2).

Another participant spoke of how working outside of the home helped her to realize more of her potential and helped her to feel less isolated,

...it's important that you are capable of doing something other than just being at home. If you just stay at home it often limits you from doing a lot of things you can do. Probably get in a shell where it gets hard to go out (5).

She goes on to say how working within the home made her feel as though she wasn't capable of doing things.

I had to do something outside of the home, be something, be independent again, and be capable of doing something again (5).

Other participants who spoke of this change within themselves, attributed it to seeking out help and speaking with a counsellor. The change was more around obtaining a knowledge of themselves, finding out that

what they were feeling was "normal", and developing a realization of their rights. Another attributed it to her age, and the transformation beginning in her forties, where she found herself needing to find something else to do, with her children growing up and becoming independent.

A question which emerges here is, whether or not these women always felt what they did was not important or was it because of changing social values that they no longer viewed their life work as important? In pondering this question, one can perceive it as emerging from a bit of both. Along with the societal change in role expectations, homemakers were no longer being as validated for working within the home. However, this may have been a time as well, where they were provided the opportunity, both personally and socially to challenge some of the work that they did do and to examine their feelings about it.

This change played itself out, as described by this participant, as the women who choose to be homemakers now are the ones who are marginalized.

Other participants spoke of the frustrations women are now up against because of the number of choices

available. Whereas for women in the 1950's and 1960's, their choices were limited and thus simple.

...there's almost an over abundance of them. Right now, women don't have to get married they can live on their own, if they want to have a family they can get artificially inseminated and have a child and bring it up on their own, and they can choose to have that child. Like when I had my son I was considered to be old and I was only 40 when I had him and now women are having children when they are near 50 never mind 40's. They can have all this even without a husband, they can establish their career, they can decide on a time they want to have a family, if they want a family, they can live in common law relationships, they can have marriages if they want. There are all kinds of choices out there. It seems to be mind boggling (7).

Another participant commented on how it was great that there are so many choices now, but having all these choices must as well be frustrating. So essentially, it is fine to have all of these options, but one must not negate the pleasures of simplicity.

Other participants pointed out that despite there being so many choices, women are set up because the jobs aren't there. So women now spend a lot of their time and energy working towards a career and yet there aren't the jobs available in those fields.

Another participant spoke of the fact that women are set up to believe that they have all these options and yet are still responsible for the family at home, hence the creation of a "super woman" image.

I wonder how many choices they have. They feel that they have to go out to work to help the family along. It doesn't seem to be a choice to stay at home without a lot of trouble now adays. It depends on what area of choice you are talking about (8).

Other participants spoke of how the situations may have changed, but women really haven't.

I think their choices are the same as mine were at that time even though there are uh [sic] listen every person is an individual and they have a choice of their own unless as I said there are some that have no choices, but I'm talking about a marriage with children, it's their choice they can go one

way or the other (5).

...people haven't changed (6).

A final participant spoke of relationship choices that are now available to women. She talked of how women are now making marriage decisions based on a friendship and partnership they establish before going into the marriage.

They had a different relationship than us, I don't know. They were like friends, very close friends, and they compliment each other. And they both have their own careers, and a family and they seem to, so far, balance it (2).

From the words of some participants it became apparent that they saw young women of today facing much different stressors.

#### Summary

As expressed in the data, all participants perceived a change of significant proportions between the 1950's and 1960's and the 1970's. Women were no longer expected to work only within the home, but to balance a career as well. When asked about the movement which propelled many of these changes, women's liberation, most participants

spoke of it with cynicism. Some felt that the proposed changes were unnecessary, the voice of a few unhappy women, extreme, threatening to the present female role, or inconsistent. The few participants who were sympathetic to the movement were sceptical of the possibility that these changes could be made.

When asked about what the women's liberation movement said about women who worked within the home, all participants said that their work was devalued. They felt that the movement worked more for the rights of women who worked outside the home.

When asked if they would do things differently, if they had the chance, some said no and others said that they would have made life choices differently. This later group of women were generally those women who did not marginalize contrary perspectives as strongly as the first group. When addressing this change it was largely a phenomenon of change around their personal attributes, and valuing themselves more. Generally, this change was instigated by them being exposed to more options and ways of being, outside of their home environment. It was also a time in which participants spoke of negative feelings they may have had around their role of



homemaker. When speaking about choices women now have, participants had mixed feelings. Some felt the abundance of choices to be confusing and overwhelming, but as well, potentially positive.

## Chapter 5

## Discussion

The first question addressed in this research project, exploring the ways in which women of this generation accepted their roles, emerged as highly significant in explaining the data collected. It arose as a core variable which provided an explanation to how concepts, which have evolved from the knowledge sources within a society, are perceived, accepted and maintained within that society. The process of development of social knowledge is a significant theory because in order to understand the acceptance of knowledge within a community one needs to examine methods of knowing rather than just the end product, knowledge (Smith, 1990; Adam, 1989).

This theory has been grounded within the words gathered from a group of women who participated in this study, who discussed their experiences and choices as young women in the 1950's and 1960's. It consists of four major components:

1. knowledge is power and power is knowledge;
2. ideas are maintained within a social context;
3. knowledge is conceived subjectively, but is

perceived as objective; and

4. the marginalization of contrary perspectives.

This theory is best understood in terms of a cyclical formation. One begins with a knowledge source (knowledge is power), and then moves on to how that knowledge source plays itself out within a given community (social context), to how individuals within that community embrace that knowledge (objective acceptance), and then to how that knowledge is held onto despite opposing viewpoints which may threaten that knowledge source (marginalization). It is a cyclical formation in that knowledge is not a static entity. It evolves. So, depending upon whether marginalization is internal or external, the cycle eventually moves again onto the knowledge source.

1. Knowledge is Power and Power is Knowledge

The component identified as knowledge is power and power is knowledge addresses the source of knowledge. It is not necessarily absolute or objective knowledge but rather ways of understanding and ordering the world which emerge from the power sources of a given community or society. It is those who hold power within a society who are in positions to establish the ways of being and

knowing within that society (Ramazanoglu, 1989; Hubbard, 1988; Fee, 1981; Smith, 1990). These sources may include certain individuals or it may include institutions, such as politics, science, or religion. Hence, the label knowledge is power and power is knowledge.

In the case of this study, the knowledge sources of the 1950's and 1960's had a limited number of clear and mutually exclusive options available in denoting appropriate behaviour for young women. Women were to be mothers, wives and homemakers, were to place the needs of their families over their own and were discouraged from seeking out life options outside of the home. Women who rejected this life choice were viewed as misfits and unfeminine. In the literature review of this project, it was determined that women were stereotyped and labelled based on the grounds of whether or not they worked outside of the home. In the 1950's and the 1960's women working as homemakers were viewed as more feminine, giving, natural and tolerant (Surette, 1967; Gysbers et al., 1968; Rand, 1968). Career women on the other hand were in need of counselling, impatient, masculine and lacked in close relationships with families (Gysbers et al.; Helson, 1972; Wagman, 1966). Furthermore, the

working woman was considered to be depriving a man of his salary and thus threatened the sanctity of the family (Gluck, 1987; Woloch, 1984; Frieden, 1963). The factors effecting womens' lives of this generation were echoed, reiterated and expanded by the words of the women who participated in this study.

## 2. Ideas are Maintained in a Social Context

The second component of this study, that ideas are maintained within a social context, speaks to how ideas are maintained within a given society. As discussed by Berger and Luckmann (1966) in their book The Social Construction of Reality, ideas are not created in isolation, rather they are constructed within a social context. This includes the patterns, mores and laws within a society which perpetuate the knowledge source. This is that which defines how a knowledge piece will play itself out within a given community. Knowledge is dependent upon the social context and social context is dependent upon socially constructed knowledge (Berger & Luckmann). To understand the social context one can look to the institutions of a society and how these institutions respond to particular issues. Theoretical knowledge is by no means the most important method in

which knowledge and understanding is passed down within a community. Rather, it is the sum total of what everyone within that community believes to be true, and can be illustrated through things such as values, beliefs, roles, myths or morals (Berger & Luckmann, 1966).

For the women in this study, the categories which emerged as being significant when exploring the social context which perpetuated the beliefs of women's roles at that time included: choices available, finances, pressure to be a homemaker, work outside of the home (when it was acceptable), marriage choice, children choice, the marriage relationship, men's role, support, and vulnerability of women within the marriage relationship.

From the interviews held with participants, the following reality unfolded when addressing the context in which they made their life choices. First and foremost it became apparent that women of this generation had few life choices available to them. As far as career choices, there were a handful of options, but it became obvious from the words of the participants that it was considered a priority to get married and to have children, rather than pursue a career. Work was

something women did until they became a homemaker.

The lack of career opportunities for the women in this study played itself out in both subtle and obvious ways. For example, post highschool education for women was not encouraged; education would be pursued in isolation of other women; there were few career options open to women; women with children who worked outside of the home were subject to social scrutiny and the label of a neglectful mother; there were derogatory connotations that the man was unable to financially provide for his family when his wife worked and there were few or no opportunities to make work more accessible for women, such as day care, or maternity benefits. It was an environment, however, which molded women towards homemaking. There was peer pressure for women to marry and marry young. The role of homemaker was considered to be the "appropriate" and "natural" thing to do. The only situation where work was acceptable for women who had children was when it "helped out" or was for the "survival of the family", and where the work situation still maintained that for the woman, the family came first.

Who a woman decided to marry played a pivotal role

in designing how her life would unfold. The marriage relationship was one which elicited a great deal of control over women's lives because of the dynamics of that relationship. The man was considered to be the head of the home, implying that ultimately it was he who made final decisions within the home. Because women were discouraged from seeking employment outside of the homes, they were financially vulnerable to their marriage partners. Because it was their assigned responsibility to maintain a happy and stable relationship, women held social responsibility for the emotional stability of their family unit. Subsequently, women were pressured to place the needs of their family before their own. If the family unit did not stay together, they were then responsible for the failure and were financially at the mercy of their husbands.

Regardless of the significance the marriage choice had on the quality of life the women subsequently led, the marriage choice was based primarily on dreams of marriage (i.e. being swept away by their prince), marrying at the right time (young), and searching for ways to gain more control in their lives.

As far as having children, women identified a lack



of choice. Because effective birth control at that time was not available, having children was an expectation after marriage. Women were held primarily responsible for the care of children. A man's role within the family was to provide financial stability, and if they also provided assistance in raising children, that was considered an asset.

Supports primarily available to the homemakers were those that reinforced work within the home. The participants found their support within the community. Having support depended upon living in the community, not diverging too much from the norm. Community support primarily focused around the chores of daily life. It extended itself to the maintenance of the family unit and was available to those who upheld a "good image" within that community.

Those participants who addressed emotional support, stated that it was important to try and manage difficulties on ones own, and they spoke of the pressure to make everything "look good". Women who did have difficulties managing things on their own, and who sought out professional help received the message that they were responsible for the problems within their families, and

it was they who needed to change. The message that they were the ones responsible for the emotional stability of their families and that they were to place their families needs over their own was reinforced.

If a community or society has strict boundaries which greatly limit the range of appropriate behaviours, it is likely the community will isolate itself from other ideas or pressures in order to maintain these boundaries. As reflected in the section on available supports, it became apparent that women were isolated in their exposure, as well as in their opportunities to pursue other ways of being.

So, in addressing the concept of social context it was this environment of limited choices and support which molded society's expectations of women and their roles.

### 3. Objective Acceptance of Knowledge Despite its Subjective Conception

The third component of this theory, the objective acceptance of knowledge despite its subjective conception, maintains that despite the fact that the knowledge asserted within a given community does not necessarily possess elements of absolute truth, it can be accepted by its inhabitants as being absolute truth. The

reality of everyday is taken for granted as truth (Berger & Luckmann, 1966).

Participants when talking about their reactions to the choices which they saw as available to them, spoke of them as "just the thing to do", or the "natural" choice. They spoke of these life styles in such a way that they were objectively accepted and were the proper choices to make.

Whether or not knowledge will be accepted objectively can be dependent upon a number of factors. For example, it can be dependent upon how many institutions within that community espouse the particular view point. It is likely that the more institutions promote a particular belief system, the more deeply imbedded that idea will become within a society and the more individuals will embrace the concept. As stated by Berger and Luckmann, "...the more conduct is institutionalized, the more predictable and thus the more controlled it becomes" (1966, p. 62).

In the exploration of the context in which women made their decisions in the 1950's and 1960's, it became apparent that most institutions promoted the same view of appropriate behaviour for women. Subsequently, women

were more likely to objectively accept the life choices being offered to them.

Whether or not an idea is objectively accepted within a community may depend as well on the consequences of non acceptance (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). If there are severe consequences of non acceptance it is likely that there will be pressure for individuals to internalize the knowledge as one's own. For example, the women in this study, when young, objectively accepted that it was inappropriate for women to work outside of the home when they were married and had children. The consequences upon non acceptance of this belief system included being isolated from their support systems and being subject to social scrutiny. Working outside the home was considered selfish, neglectful and unfeminine. It is therefore not surprising that because of this consequence of non-compliance that these women upheld society's expectations of women and did not work outside of the home.

A third factor which encourages objective acceptance is the degree to which behaviours are molded into patterns - patterns which are bigger than the individuals who live them. Participants spoke of this in terms of

"it's what everyone else is doing" and so it is what should be done. So again, it is not so much personal choice, as it is patterns of ways of doing things, and you either do what the pattern allows, or don't and suffer the subsequent marginalization. This factor is supported in the writings of Berger and Luckmann, they state,

...all human activity is subject to habituation. Any action that is repeated frequently becomes cast into a pattern, which can then be reproduced with an economy of effort...

(53).

Participants in this study identified a forth aspect determining whether or not a notion could be objectively accepted. This factor demonstrated that acceptance was dependent upon how many options were available. If there were not many options to choose from, it was more likely that that notion would be accepted as the truth. If however, there were many explanations or pieces of knowledge on a certain issue, it was less likely that a community would embrace objectively one knowledge source. In the case of this research, it became apparent from the interviews with

participants that there were few life choices available to women during the 1950's and 1960's and so most women fully embraced the notion that their place was within the home as their own.

Once objective acceptance has been achieved, the social context may no longer need to remain to reinforce the belief system. The social context need only remain long enough for those within a given society to adopt or objectively accept that piece of knowledge. Berger and Luckmann (1966) address this in their discussion of the environment where change is possible. Initially in the process of accepting a new world view or change it is most effective if inhabitants are either physically or emotionally separated from the environment which reinforces their old world view. Once they have internalized and accepted the new view, they can return to their old environment and still maintain their new way of thinking. If however, that knowledge piece has not been objectively accepted by the inhabitants of that community, and the context changes, it is very likely that the knowledge will as well. This begins to explain how the women in this study continued to work within the home as homemakers, despite the fact that the social

context was evolving in that women were considered more successful if they worked both inside and outside of the home. These women had internalized their roles as homemakers as their own, and despite the world changing around them, it was not a change which, as will be elaborated upon later on in this discussion, embraced their needs or desires.

#### 4. Marginalization of Contrary Perspectives

This then moves us into the fourth component of this theory, the marginalization of contrary perspectives. This is when a concept or idea is objectively accepted or when an idea is enforced by the powers of a given community. In order to maintain the idea's acceptance, all contrary or opposing perspectives are marginalized so as not to challenge the original knowledge.

Marginalization is the process by which individuals internally control and maintain a knowledge source or when external factors encourage them to do so. A new idea or concept may emerge in a community, become more accepted, or may be promoted by the power sources within that community. Initially the idea is externally maintained by that emerging structure. While inhabitants of that community may not accept the notion initially, as

it becomes more familiar it may become more accepted. If or when that concept becomes objectively accepted and incorporated into the social context by the inhabitants of that community, that idea no longer requires strict external reinforcement, rather that idea becomes perpetuated and maintained internally by the individual members of the community. As Berger and Luckmann (1966) explain, any radical departure from that accepted knowledge is then considered a deviation from reality. When this occurs, contrary perspectives are marginalized and rejected by the inhabitants personally, whereas prior to its objective acceptance, those ideas may have been marginalized externally.

For example, in the case of this study's participants paralleling the literature review, the 1940's and the 1950's were known to be a time of domestication of women in North America. This was a time during World War II, when women were recruited to the work place as a means of replacing the men who were off at war. The working woman was considered to be a patriotic citizen, aiding her country. Once the war was over, and the men returned home, the message to women reversed. The returning soldiers wanted their jobs back,



and so the women were strongly encouraged to return to the home (Woloch, 1984; Gluck, 1987). At this point there was a surge of propaganda from the media, politicians, clinicians and scientists proclaiming the virtues of the homemaker, and disclaiming the femininity of the career girl (Helson, 1972). Motherhood became idealized, placed on a pedestal and became the one choice presented to women (Frieden, 1963). This was a role definition externally presented to women. As was discovered in this research project, it was a concept which played itself out in many constituencies of society, was the one real and limited life choice available to women, and women who rejected it were subject to social scrutiny and isolation. Because of these pressures, women soon adopted this role choice as their own.

The ways in which contrary views were marginalized by participants in this research project included qualities of both internal and external marginalization. Internal marginalization is a process where individuals work themselves into a social structure where they do not determine the rules but rather are subservient within them, and where their participation in this system

actually solidifies the system itself (Haug, 1983). Often what happens is that in order to maintain the social system individuals will marginalize their own personal feelings and reactions which may conflict with the major views.

When addressing internal marginalization in this project it appeared that what was primarily disregarded by participants were negative feelings that participants may have had about their situations. They did this by identifying what they had as being better than what others had before them. They marginalized themselves as well by negating their personal power by seeing the causes of their successes grounded in "luck" instead of their own doing, and also by taking blame for any problems which were occurring in their family's lives. As discussed in the literature review, individuals who maintain beliefs contrary to their larger society may feel more comfortable or feel they have more control if they assume personal responsibility for the clash of beliefs rather than view themselves at the mercy of a dominant culture (Unger, 1988).

The women who participated in this study were further separated from emotions by crowding their lives

with daily chores, isolating themselves from their feelings and occurrences of the world outside. Participants, when speaking about their personal feelings, did not address them within any social context. Rather, incidents were spoken about in terms of luck or self responsibility. Had these situations been addressed within a social context, it would have been far more difficult for these women to have objectively accepted the knowledge source or marginalized their own emotions. In the practice of marginalizing, individuals' experiences may be played out in two separate conflicting spheres, one which is framed in the dominant social perspective and the other through the realities of their personal experiences. Hence, the personal experience may be muted at the price of remaining congruent with the more powerful perspective (Anderson, Jack, 1991, Gluck; Haug, 1981).

As was discussed earlier, during this time there were few acceptable lifestyles open to women of this generation. Belief systems which didn't allow for much variation meant that individuals would have to marginalize more of themselves in order to fit in. The narrower the span of appropriate behaviour, the more one

had to marginalize.

External marginalization was grounded in the threat of isolation. Participants who didn't fit the acceptable social norm, spoke of feeling isolated from their community, of not fitting in. Furthermore, divergence from the norm was interpreted as a personal imperfection as opposed to being judged as a consequence of a larger social context.

### Change

Because knowledge is not a static entity, but rather an evolving one, there is a point in time where change does occur and the marginalizing powers begin to break down, allowing new ways of viewing the world to emerge. Such was the case with the identification of appropriate behaviour for women. With the onset of the late 1960's, the feminist movement began to push its way into American consciousness (Frieden, 1963). Along with this came a change in expectations of women. The expectation that women were to meet all their needs through being mothers and wives began to dissipate and was replaced with the growing expectation that women were to find fulfilment outside of the home. The attributes assigned to the career woman versus the housewife transformed into a

completely different picture than what had existed a decade earlier. Career women were no longer deviant and sexless, but rather were considered to have higher self esteem, were more self actualized and satisfied with their lives than homemakers (Yogev, 1983; Surette, 1967; Hall & Gordon, 1973). Homemakers, on the other hand, were described in the literature to be less mature, less self-actualized and had a lower self esteem (Hall & Gordon). Feminine women were now viewed as quiet, passive, dependent, weak, inhibited and submissive (Wiley, 1978). Masculine women were now considered to be independent, aggressive, competitive, ambitious, active and dominant. The highly regarded woman encompassed qualities which were at one time exclusive to the male role or the deviant female role (Wiley).

According to Berger and Luckmann (1966), the most important condition of change is the presence of a social base serving as the "laboratory" of transformation. For change to occur, this structure is to be introduced to the individuals by significant others with whom they will establish strong identification. These significant others are then guides to this new world view.

Because of the negative connotations ascribed to the

homemaker and to the feminine woman in the late 1960's, it was difficult for homemakers to embrace or feel a part of the ever growing feminist movement. The necessary element of the new knowledge being presented by a significant other as described by Berger and Luckmann (1966), was not present in this case. This can be verified through the words of the study's participants as they discussed their feelings about the feminist movement and the changes it brought.

The women interviewed in this project felt that the impact of the feminist movement devalued the work that they did within the home. Some commented that at least the work that they did prior to the onset of this movement had the appearance of respect. Now as women working within the home, they weren't doing enough and not living up to their potential. Because of this reaction, most participants regarded the feminist movement with scepticism and intimidation. Comments were made about the women's movement, noting that the messages were confusing and illogical. For example, the quest for equality was not natural as men and women are created differently, or that the movement was the result of a few women who were dissatisfied with themselves, or that if

one were to embrace the messages of the women's movement, women could no longer be treated like ladies.

When participants were asked how they now feel about the choices they made as young women, the responses varied. Some participants stated how when they were young, things were very simple and uncomplicated, one knew what it was that they were to do in life. Some women said they wouldn't have done anything differently, others said there were some choices they would have made in another way. For example, some said they would have wanted to raise their children in a more informed manner, others said they would have wanted to make their decision of their marriage partner based on the quality of the relationship rather than on the fantasies of marriage and others said they would have not married at so young an age. One theme, however, that appeared the same for a number of participants was the wish to have paid more attention to self.

Participants who spoke more openly about the things they would have done differently, especially when noting the value of their own wisdom, were women, who through time had become less isolated. They were women who either began working outside of the home on a part time

basis, or sought out support through counselling. After such experiences, this appeared to be a time when women started speaking out about some of their negative feelings about the impact of their roles within the home. These included reactions such as feeling boxed in or that they didn't feel as though they had a mind of their own or that they were capable of more. These transformations were reflected most in the words of advice they handed down to their daughters. This included statements such as, "listen to yourself", "trust and please yourself" and "like yourself", attributes they themselves never expressed as young women.

When participants commented on choices now available to women, many stated that despite the fact that there appears to be more choices available, that isn't necessarily the case. Women are given the impression that they can do any job, but those opportunities aren't made available to them. Some participants commented that there is still pressure by society to make the right choice. Women are now expected to be super women, holding down both a career and a family. To make the choice to just have a family is the wrong choice. Other participants commented on the benefit of having only



limited choices when they were young women and how women now are impacted by too many choices, making life very complicated.

#### Application to Social Work Practice

The theory which emerged from this research project is significant to the practice of social work in that it demonstrates a process in which individuals adapt and conform themselves and their lives to their surrounding environment. It is a meaningful discovery because it demonstrates that in order to understand an individual's behaviours and attitudes one cannot look solely to that individual for their origins. The outcomes of this study demonstrate the impact and influence of the environment and context on the meaning of self. This is supported by Frigga Haug in her book Female Sexualization,

... the day-to-day struggle over the hearts and minds of human subjects is located not only within social structures, the pre-given forms into which individuals work themselves, but also in the process whereby they perceive any given situation... (40).

It is the process of adaptation to which this

thesis lends its focus. In this process there is a knowledge source, stemming from the powers of a given society, and the significant social structures building themselves around that knowledge source. Depending upon the significance and consequence of that knowledge piece, degree of acceptance by its inhabitants; whether the knowledge is objectively accepted by its inhabitants; and the ways in which they themselves maintain it through marginalizing contrary perspectives. It is this process by which individuals mold themselves to their environment.

Social work practice often engages in work which seeks to join clients in a process of understanding the self. When an individual understands how and why a behaviour or attitude of theirs exists, they may be more open to controlling, challenging, choosing or changing it. This position is echoed by Haug in her following statement,

...identifying the ways in which individuals construct themselves into existing structures, and are thereby themselves formed; the way into which they reconstruct social structures; the point at which change is possible (40).

When working towards change it is important to understand the process by which a concept or idea is accepted. When this knowledge exists, intervention can be applied at strategic times in suitable ways. In applying this theory to the process of change, the clinician may better understand an individual's adamant rejection of some ideas when one understands that they may objectively accept the threatened concept as the absolute truth, and perceive themselves as subject to harsh consequences should they reject the concept.

To illustrate this more clearly, one can consider a woman, who as a young child, lived in a family where anger was displayed through violent behaviour. The source of knowledge in this case was this woman's father, and what knowledge demonstrated was that anger was dangerous and frightening. The social context in which this child lived supported the idea that anger was dangerous. When her father was angry all the members of her family cowered and she had witnessed on numerous occasions her mother being either verbally or physically assaulted. This woman, as a child quickly learned to objectively accept that anger was dangerous, for anyone who would challenge her father's anger would suffer the

severe consequence of his anger escalating. As this woman grew up she learned to marginalize any other possible meaning one could attach to anger except for fear and danger. Even though as an adult, she no longer lived with her father, and lived with a gentle and non violent partner, she still reacted to anger with fear, and believed that she herself could not express anger without endangering those around her. So even though the social context no longer existed for this woman she still maintained and held onto the knowledge source, her objective acceptance of it, and her marginalization of contrary expressions of anger.

For change to occur in this situation and for this woman to begin to accept other outcomes of anger aside from danger she would need to understand the process by which she came to this conclusion. For this woman the knowledge source and the social context were indeed real, they did teach her to fear anger, and it was her fear which may have helped her survive that explosive situation. However, she could begin to challenge her objective acceptance that anger can be expressed only through violence, and consider instead that anger may not equate with violence. She might consider that it was her

father's anger that became violent. Once she is able to perceive other expressions of anger, she may slowly be able to let go of her marginalizing of contrary perspectives.

In this example, it is the objective acceptance of a knowledge source which needs to be challenged in order for change to occur. To confront this acceptance one may need to delve deeper into why this knowledge is so deeply embraced. In this research project, it was discovered that for objective acceptance to occur at least one of the following conditions needed to exist: the idea was entrenched and perpetuated within the social context; severe consequences followed nonacceptance; the idea was enmeshed within the patterns of society; and participants lacked other options. In the case of the child growing up in an abusive home, the consequences of her not accepting that anger was dangerous were very severe. A pattern existed which was larger than herself. A pattern existed which dealt with conflict because everyone in her family played a role around the emotion of anger. Her father was the one who was allowed to get angry, and when he was angry the rest of her family moved into the role of submissiveness. And finally, in the instance of the

context of her family, no other possible expression of anger was made available. To begin challenging her objective acceptance of anger being a dangerous emotion, this women may begin by looking closer at the reasons she believes anger to be dangerous and at how her social context has changed, and then she may decide whether or not she wants to hold onto her reaction to anger.

One may also look at a situation where a concept has not been objectively accepted and yet an individual or a group of individuals still marginalize contrary perspectives. This may be the case where the social context which perpetuates an idea still exists and implements harsh consequences upon non acceptance of that idea. An example of this may be the case of women and society's endorsement of appropriate and inappropriate body sizes. In this case a woman may believe that society's endorsement of what women's bodies are to look like in order to be considered attractive is unrealistic. She may believe and advocate for social acceptance of women of all shapes and sizes. And yet despite her belief system, she may marginalize, for herself, any other body size than that which society accepts as being attractive. In the case of this scenario, for change to

occur in this woman's way of perceiving herself, it is the social context and its powers of marginalizing women's bodies which need to change for acceptance of herself to occur.

#### Personal Footnote

Some interesting personal discoveries were made from the process of this research project. Initially I approached this research question with the perspective that women who made major personal life choices in the 1950's and the 1960's were victims of their generation. They were deceived into a lifestyle where they weren't given the option to live to their full potential. They weren't like the middle class, educated women of the next generation, who have numerous options and are above the devastating powers of socialization. True, they were misunderstood and were provided only a few life options, but it wasn't a matter of deception that they accepted it for themselves. According to the participants it was only "natural" that they believed so and, according to the process by which ideas are accepted and perpetuated, that they accepted these life choices as their own. Women of this next generation are still enmeshed within

social expectations that persuade them to act in certain ways. The ways may be different from those of the previous generation, but the process by which these ideas are accepted or rejected remains.

So what was discovered in this thesis, and what emerged from the voices of the women of the past generation, was the process by which they understood and accepted their life choices and embraced them as their own. From this discovery, this process can be extended to identify the ways in which human beings reproduce social structures by shaping themselves into those structures.

#### Limitations and Possibilities for Future Research

By qualitative research using an indepth description showing the complexities of variables and interactions, the research cannot help but be valid, within the parameters established in that research. Subsequently, a limitation of this project is established by these parameters.

What this project describes are the thoughts and experiences of women between fifty and sixty-five who work, and have throughout their married lives, worked



within the home. It does not address the experiences of women beyond these parameters. However, this limitation lends itself to future possibilities for this research. The social context in which other groups of women made their life choices could be elaborated upon and explored. For example, one could move forward and speak to women of this era who had different experiences. One could speak to women who never married, or women who raised children on their own after a separation or loss of their partner, or women who pursued their careers as well as worked within the home.

Another limitation in this study is inherent in the conflict which exists in the canons of grounded theory and the requirements in writing a thesis. An important aspect in grounded theory states that in undertaking a research project the researcher should be, as much as possible, neutral. Subsequently, in grounded theory, the researcher is to conduct their literature review as they collect their data, and review other sources of information as it pertains to their emerging codes and categories from their data.

In the case of this study, the literature review strongly echoed the words of the participants, as well

provided a structure on which to base the theory which emerged from the data. The literature review and the data collection were two separate undertakings and it was, to some degree, a coincidence that they reflected upon each other so closely. Had the literature review been worked on at the same time as the data was being collected and analyzed, it is likely that a similar piece would have emerged. However, one never really knows to what degree it would have varied, had it had the opportunity to be guided by the incoming data.

The theory which emerged from this study was one which explored the ways in which individuals are socialized and adapt to roles and expectations around them. This was illustrated through the experiences of the women who participated in this study. A future possibility for their research could be expanding upon and further testing this theory with other situations and populations.

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Appendix A  
Interview Questions

Face Sheet Information

Age:

Place of Birth:

Married, Single, Divorced or Widowed:

Ethnic background:

Your age at marriage(s):

If you have children, how many and their ages:

Primary Occupation:

Have there been times that you have worked outside the home, if so, when and where?

Education:

QUESTIONS

A. Exploration of life in the 1950's

Questions may include the following:

1. What was life like for women in the 1950's and early 1960's?
2. What was expected of you when you were 20 years old? How did you know - who told you (families/society)?



3. What were the consequences of not doing or doing what was expected? Do you remember examples of this, either with yourself or with other women?
4. How did you feel about these choices?
5. What were your goals/dreams when you were 20 years old?

B. Exploration around the change in women's roles

Questions may include:

1. Did expectations of women change over time
2. If not, how were the expectations maintained?
3. If so,
  - (a) When, how did you find out?
  - (b) How did you feel about the newly available choices? For example, did you see them as being choices?
  - (c) What was now considered proper/improper behaviour for women?
  - (d) What happened to women who did things properly? Improperly?

C. Exploration of how participants now view their choices

May ask the following questions:

1. How do you feel, in retrospect, about the choices you had and made?
2. Do you feel you had the opportunity to do/be everything that you wanted to do/be?
3. How would you do things differently if you could?
4. How do you feel about the choices women have now?
5. What do you think you would be doing if you were twenty now?
6. In retrospect, what do you see as some of your successes?
7. What dreams do you have for your daughters and granddaughters?

Appendix B  
Questionnaire Two

Face Sheet Information

Age:

Place of Birth:

Married, Single, Divorced or Widowed:

Ethnic Background:

Your age at marriage(s):

If you have children, how many and their ages:

Primary Occupation:

Have there been times that you have worked outside the home, if so when and where?

Education:

A. Exploration of life in the 1950's

Questions may include:

As a young woman in the 40's, 50's and 60's, did you feel any social or peer pressure to be a certain way or do certain things?

What kind of opportunities do you feel were available to you?

What was dating or courtship like for you?

What kind of factors do you think were present around when you got married?

What expectations did you have around marriage?

Were your expectations met, or did you have some surprises?

What was your role as wife, what was expected of you, by whom?

What were the circumstances around the birth of your children, was it something that you planned or something that just happened?

How did you feel about your role as a mother, how did it change your life?

What does it mean to be a homemaker, if you like what does the job description entail?

Do you remember making a choice to become a homemaker, or

was it something that just happened?

What kind of supports did you have as a homemaker?

What were the expectations for men, how were they different from women?

What happened to those women who didn't get married or have children?

B. Exploration around the change in women's roles

Questions may include:

Was there a time that you saw the expectations for women changing?

Was there a time where you felt pressure, either from your friends or family or from society to do or be something different, other than a housewife?

When was that, and what were the changing pressures?

If things didn't change, than, have your supports for the

work that you do change?

Did you see that expectations around proper or improper behaviour change for women?

Do you recall when the women liberation movement started gaining momentum?

Do you feel that movement spoke to you and some of your needs?

How do you feel they incorporated women who worked within the home?

C. Exploration of how participants now view their lives

Questions may include:

How do you feel in retrospect about the choices you had and made?

Would you do things differently if you could, how? for example, if you were 20 again, what would you be doing?

How do you feel about the choices women now have?

How do you feel about your role as a homemaker now?

What kinds of supports you do have now as a homemaker?

What do you see as some of your successes?

If you could give some advice to women of the next generations, what would that advice be?

What dreams do you have for your daughters and granddaughters?

## Appendix C

## Interview Consent Form

This certifies that I, \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ agree to participate in the research study conducted by Valerie Neufeld, a Masters student at the University of Manitoba. The study is being supervised by Shirley Grosser, who is a professor at the University of Manitoba.

I understand the objectives of this project are to explore the perceptions of fifty to sixty-five year old female homemakers around the transforming role of women in North America, focusing primarily on the changes which occurred between the 1950's and the 1970's.

I understand that I am eligible to participate in this project because I am between the ages of fifty and sixty-five and consider my primary career as being a homemaker and have worked primarily within a urban setting.

I understand that participation in this project will include one interview and one follow-up meeting or contact. The follow-up session, which allows for my



response to the initial interview, will occur a week to ten days after the initial interview and may happen, dependent upon my preference, over the phone, in person or in writing.

I will participate in the interview and follow-up session under the preceding conditions:

- \* I will allow the interview to be tape recorded. I understand that the interview is being taped so that nothing is missed and so my words are not changed or misunderstood. I can turn off the recorder anytime during the interview.

- \* I have the right to withdraw from the project without prejudice.

- \* I agree to allow Valerie Neufeld to use the information from the interview in the research project, report and publication.

- \* I understand that my privacy and confidentiality will be protected by applying code numbers to names and disguising any other identifying information. Code numbers and names shall be kept in separate locked drawers. All this master information will be destroyed upon the completion of this project.

\* I am aware that raw data shall be reviewed by two auditors and the thesis committee, who will not be informed of my identity.

\* I understand that I will receive a written transcript of the interview to review and may then suggest modifications for accuracy, clarity, or new information.

\* I understand that I will receive a copy of this consent form.

\* I understand that I will receive a written report of the findings of this project upon its completion if I so wish.

If I should have any questions, I am aware that I may call Valerie Neufeld, at 772-9942 or 947-1517.

My signature below indicates that I have read and understand the preceding information and am willing to participate in this study.

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ I would like a copy of the results Yes

No

## Appendix D

## Potential Participant Consent Form

This certifies that I, \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ agree to refer to Valerie Neufeld, a Masters student at the University of Manitoba, the names and phone numbers of individuals for her to contact regarding their possible participation in her research project. I understand that Valerie will use my name in that discussion, stating that I referred her to them.

My signature certifies that I understand the preceding information.

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

# Theory Diagram

