

Copyright is owned by the Author of the thesis. Permission is given for a copy to be downloaded by an individual for the purpose of research and private study only. The thesis may not be reproduced elsewhere without the permission of the Author.

**PATRIARCHS, PADDOCKS AND THE PERSONAL:
FIVE WOMEN FROM THE WHAREHUIA/TE POPO
DISTRICT TALK ABOUT THEIR LIVES**

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the
degree of Master of Social Work

in the Department of Social Policy and Social Work

Massey University

Lesley Norma Pitt

1998

There is a she
inside of me
deep, deep down
locked away
screaming
screeching
seeking a voice
some words
so she can tell
the world
the stories she knows.

Lesley Pitt

Abstract

The aim of this research was to explore and celebrate the daily lived experiences of rural women. The life stories of four women, from the rural district of Wharehuia/Te Popo in central Taranaki, were gathered in unstructured, in-depth interviews. My life story was written and incorporated as data.

I spent my childhood and adolescence on my family's sheep and beef farm in the Wharehuia/Te Popo district. Later, as a social work practitioner, I worked in rural and semi rural areas. This thesis was inspired by an awareness that life for women (and men) in these communities was unique and worthy of recognition.

The focus of the study is on women. It reflects my gender and identity as a feminist. My feminist values influenced the methodology and theoretical concepts used to add meaning to the narratives. I have included post structural ideas which are of personal interest and relevant to the stories. The five themes used to structure the literature and data are: patriarchy, private and public worlds, women and work, diversity and difference, and power.

The participants discussed the way in which patriarchal ideology had influenced their lives, affecting their intimate relationships as well as their public activities. Much of their lives have focused on the domestic realm of home and family; more so for the older two participants. The younger women were more involved in the public world of paid work. All the women worked hard and had diverse work patterns. Power issues had an impact on all aspects of their lives. The respondents talked about the way they used power to which they had access, positively and productively. There is a tension in their stories between wanting to belong and fit in and a recognition of their own uniqueness. This uniqueness reflected the diversity among rural women.

The study ends with a consideration of its relevance to social work; the use of story telling, the relationship between theory and practice, and the opportunity provided by the women for practitioners to learn from their stories.

Dedication

I dedicate this thesis to a wonderful rural woman, my mother.

MARGARET ELIZABETH (PEGGY) PITT

(NEE LEES)

Born: 17 February 1933

Died: 21 November 1991

Acknowledgments

I am deeply grateful to Gwyn, June, Marie-Ann and Margaret. I feel honoured by the trust you have placed in me and all that you shared. I appreciate your generosity, integrity and humour. Exposing your lives in a public way was an act of courage. Without your participation this research would not have been possible.

I would like to thank my thesis supervisors, Mary Nash and Rachael Selby, who patiently read draft after draft of this document. I appreciated your support, encouragement, and feedback.

While working on this project I have been employed as a Graduate Assistant in the Social Work and Social Policy Department at the Turitea campus of Massey University. Friends, colleagues and students in the Department have been supportive and affirming throughout this (thesis) journey. I have particularly enjoyed the stimulation of being with you all.

I also want to thank Viv Patterson, who inspired me to start studying for my Masterate, and has been such a wonderful friend. I have appreciated your practical advice and availability as a 'sounding board'. Another friend, Andrew Boon, gave me honest, constructive and useful feedback. I may not have wanted to hear it, but it was particularly helpful at a crucial time.

My sister Barbara kindly gave up her time to proof read the whole document and Hannah has rescued me from formatting, a task beyond my limited computing skills.

I want to acknowledge the tutors and women in my creative writing group at the Open Learning Centre. You were accepting, challenging and gave me honest feedback which helped develop my writing skills.

Finally I would like to thank Phil, Margaret, Maria, Ava and Trent Swan for so generously sharing their home, and their lives, with me.

CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	iii
DEDICATION	iv
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	v
INTRODUCTION.....	1
Overview	1
The Five Themes.....	3
Geographic Context.....	4
Map of Taranaki	6
Photographs of the Wharehuia/Te Popo District.....	7
Historic Context.....	10
The Respondents	12
Orientation to the Chapters	13
 CHAPTER ONE: METHODOLOGY	 15
Introduction.....	15
Sample Selection.....	17
The Interviews	17
Data Analysis.....	19
Story Telling.....	20
Reciprocity.....	21
Putting Myself Into the Project.....	22

Ethical Issues.....	23
Conclusion.....	24
 CHAPTER TWO: DISCOURSE AND THEORETICAL CONSTRUCTIONS	25
Introduction.....	26
Patriarchy	26
Private and Public Worlds.....	30
Women and Work.....	33
Diversity and Difference.....	37
Power	40
Conclusion.....	42
 CHAPTER THREE: PATRIARCHY	44
Introduction.....	45
Male Power.....	46
Patrilineal Farm Succession.....	47
Education.....	48
Religion.....	50
Farming Industry.....	51
Family	51
Sexuality	54
Conclusion.....	56

CHAPTER FOUR: PUBLIC AND PRIVATE WORLDS	58
Introduction.....	58
Childhood.....	59
Motherhood and the Private Sphere	61
Marriage	64
Conclusion.....	64
 CHAPTER FIVE: RURAL WOMEN AND WORK.....	 66
Introduction.....	66
Housework.....	67
Farmwork.....	68
The Intersection of Work and Leisure.....	71
Voluntary Work	72
Caregiving.....	74
Paid Employment.....	76
Conclusion.....	80
 CHAPTER SIX: DIVERSITY AND DIFFERENCE	 81
Introduction.....	81
Childhood.....	82
Adolescence.....	83
Adult Experiences of Differences.....	84
Conclusion.....	87

CHAPTER SEVEN: POWER	88
Introduction.....	88
Power in the Public Sphere	89
Power Issues and the Garden.....	91
Power in the Public Sphere	91
Economic Power.....	93
Conclusion.....	95
 CHAPTER EIGHT: RELEVANCE TO SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE	 96
Introduction.....	97
Story Telling and Social Work Practice.....	97
The Application of Feminist and Post Structural Ideas.....	100
Understanding the Daily Lived Experience of Rural Women.....	102
Final Words.....	103
 BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	 104
 APPENDICES.....	 113
Appendix One: Letter to Respondents.....	113
Appendix Two: Ethics Proposal.....	115