



## Volume One

### **(No) Sex in the City: Celibate Young Wāhine From Protestant Christian Churches in Aotearoa**

**Zavier Burnett**

**Geography, Tourism & Environmental Planning, University of Waikato, NZ**

The popular television sitcom *Sex in the City* reflects a society focussed on sexuality. It depicts all heterosexual women as sexually active (Marshall and Morris, 1995). Brown (1980, 2) argues that being sexually active is constructed by popular culture as a “normative practice”. This paper draws upon my research from my Geography Honours directed study which examined the rōpū of people that resist this normative depiction (Brown, 1980). In particular, I am interested in young unmarried women from Protestant Christian Churches because they are actively encouraged to be celibate (Brown, 1980).

#### **Horopaki**

Celibacy has increasingly gained the attention of popular culture as a ‘trendy’ choice to celebrate religious faith and avoid sexually transmitted infections such as HIV/AIDS. Many of the reasons for this shift in values about sexuality, especially women’s sexual activity outside of marriage, stem from feminism. The body, in particular the female body, became a subject of intense debate during the rise of the feminist movement in the 1970s. At this time the oral contraceptive pill and other more reliable forms of contraception were becoming available and increased women’s abilities to choose when they wanted to become pregnant. These factors have contributed to the freedom of women to explore their sexuality and challenge the dominant ideology that stated that sex should be reserved for marriage only.

Throughout the 1990s sexuality became an increasingly popular focus of human geography. There are several aspects of sexuality that geographers have grappled with: geographies of lesbian wāhine (Valentine, 1998) and gay men (Brown, 2000), the heterosexuality of everyday space (Bell et al., 1994), geographies of HIV/AIDS (Johnston et al., 2000), queer geographies (Valentine, 1998) and geographies of heterosexualities (Krensky and McKay, 2000). A common kaupapa of such studies is that different experiences of sexuality have been marginalised by a hegemonic heterosexual discourse. Like those groups whose behaviour is non-normative, celibate voices have been given little attention in geographical literature. The mahi that has been conducted on this issue within churches has focussed on Catholicism and the clergy (see *Electronic Journal of Human Sexuality*, 1999). In my study I listen to the voices of Christian young wāhine from Protestant Churches, who thus far have been missing from consideration.

#### **Research Kaupapa and Research Pātai**

In this project I attempt to understand views about celibacy, or abstinence as it is also referred to, by heterosexual, unmarried wāhine (22 to 28 years old) from Protestant Christian Churches in Aotearoa. My pātai aroaro are:

- 1: What are my research participants’ understandings of celibacy?
- 2: Why are my research participants celibate?
- 3: Where do these celibate bodies go and how do they feel in different wāhi?

My research participants’ experiences of celibacy can be situated within several discourses. Obviously, their Christian values are prominent, however their educational and family backgrounds

are also significant. By considering my participants' views within a Christian framework, their celibacy could be read as solely an act of obedience to God. Moreover, in some regards, my rangahau participants are 'retro' and could be called conservative. However, I believe that the issues are more complex and in this paper I avoid simplistic or essentialised analyses.

I am interested in the intersection of different and sometimes contradictory discourses that shape my participants' complex perceptions of celibacy. Poststructural feminist theories are especially relevant to my research. Weedon (1987) suggests that poststructuralism has multiple meanings. First, 'poststructural' is a term that refers to a period of time after structuralism, which is defined as:

a set of principles and procedures originally derived from linguistics and linguistic philosophy which involve moving 'beneath' the visible and conscious designs of active human subjects in order to expose an essential logic which is supposed to bind these designs together in enduring and underlying structures that can be exposed through a series of purely intellectual operations (Johnston et al., 2000, 797).

Unlike structuralism, poststructuralism more fully considers the importance of individual agency. Johnston et al. (2000, 625) suggest that poststructuralists "draw on and extend important insights of structuralism, especially (a) Saussurian linguistics and (b) Althusser's critique of the humanist subject".

Poststructuralists argue that structures largely determine hegemonic discourses. However, these structures are simultaneously challenged and conformed to by human agency. Althusser recognises the significance of spoken and unspoken language as a rich text that constructs humanity, which draws upon essentialised and social constructionist approaches. Thus, poststructuralism considers the complex web of connections between language, agency and subjectivity.

Poststructuralists are interested in the instability of language and discourse, and the different meanings that they construct for individuals (Docker, 1994). Poststructuralism originates from Derrida's and Foucault's theories about discourse, power and language (Weedon, 1987). In this context, language and meaning are interconnected and construct society and structure (Weedon, 1987). Poststructuralists attempt to 'unpack' such texts to comprehend the meanings that society has given them.

Using this perspective to deconstruct my participants' narratives, I analyse the representations and power relations that have shaped their identities. In attempting to understand the various discourses that have shaped my participants' understandings of celibacy, I have learned that the most predominant of these discourses is that of Christianity, a powerful narrative in the Western world.

My participants' experiences of celibacy could be viewed as merely conforming to a religious discourse, rather than as informed choices that demonstrates their autonomy and human agency. If read in this light, my research participants might merely be called conservative. However, if I read these narratives and give thought to the way that Christian discourse intersects with other discourses, such as a woman's choice to choose her heterosexual activity, a more complex picture of celibacy emerges.

Part of my poststructural feminist approach is to create a body of mātauranga that makes women's voices, experiences and lives present (Reinharz, 1992). Given that there is limited contemporary academic research about young women from the Church,[1] the way that I have created space for my participants' to share their kōrero is significant. Furthermore, this project is unique in that it seeks to consider the role of power relations and gender within a culture that has traditionally been dominated by hetero-patriarchal discourses.

The power of language is important in my poststructural feminist reading of my participants' stories about celibacy. As a researcher and participant in this project, I have become increasingly aware,

like other feminists that “finding one’s voice is a crucial process of research and writing” (Reinharz, 1992, 16). Thus in my written and verbal communications, I do not seek to be absent and removed. For instance, I have referred to my participants by their first or middle names (or pseudonyms that they selected) rather than using a numbered system (Reinharz, 1992)

In attempting to deconstruct power structures and analyse the results for this research, I became increasingly aware of the way that my involvement in this project (as a researcher and participant) has shaped its direction (England, 1994). I am a born again practicing Christian. I am actively involved in my Church communities and am interested in working out how my Christian principles influence my relationships with other people including those who are not the same gender or sexuality as I am. I am a heterosexual, unmarried and celibate young woman. Therefore, in this study, I occupy the position of the researched and the researcher. I perceive my position as helpful because it enables me to be sensitive and understanding of my participants’ experiences. As an ‘insider’ in the research, I was able to encourage my participants to elaborate on issues that I was already familiar with given my involvement in the same community.

My Christian ontology means to me that justice and equality are important for all peoples. One rōpū should not dominate another. This underpins my interest in conducting research with a rōpū of people who have a valuable contribution to make to understandings of sexuality within the discipline of geography.

When considering power structures that may have shaped my participants’ experiences of celibacy, I sensed that by analysing their narratives that I was engaging with another power struggle, that of the researcher as ‘all knowing’. For example, I was responsible for choosing which kaupapa to discuss and quotes to be used for presentations and this paper (England, 1994). Although these are complex issues, England (1994) suggests that they can be resolved by continuing a relationship between the researcher and the researched for the purposes of feedback. Given the ongoing nature of my relationships with my participants, this has been possible to a certain extent.

It would have also been helpful to share “the prepublication text with the researched for feedback and writing ‘multivocal’ texts that ‘give voice’ to the researched by, for example, including lengthy quotes from their interviews” (England, 1994, 86). These issues could be explored in further research.

### **Huarahi Mahi**

Feminism also influenced my choice of qualitative methodologies: semi-structured interviews and autobiography (Bryman, 2001; Longhurst, 2003). This use of different sources of information, or triangulation, adds more validity to the findings (Valentine, 1997). I interviewed six participants and I kept an ongoing journal to document my views in a self-reflexive manner.

Qualitative approaches are highly compatible with feminist objectives (Holloway, 1997). Bryman (2001, 268) states that:

qualitative research allows women’s voices to be heard; exploitation to be reduced by giving as well as receiving in the course of fieldwork; women not to be treated as objects to be controlled by researcher’s technical procedures; and the emancipatory goals of feminism to be realized.

Thus the choice of qualitative methodologies is deliberate. Valentine (1997) postulates that qualitative research allows researchers to be non-objective. This allowed me to create supportive environments for my participants to talk about their perspectives and experiences.

Initially, I intended to use a snowball sampling method. However, I used purposive sampling technique instead because it became clear that given the sensitivity of this kaupapa, women were more likely to participate if they knew me directly. Sarantakos (1998) defines the purposive sampling procedure as one whereby the researcher is instrumental in selecting potential research participants. “The researchers purposely choose subjects who, in their opinion, are thought to be relevant to the research topic” (Sarantakos, 1998, 152). As I am a regular attendee of a Protestant

Church and know several unmarried young wāhine in Kirikiriroa and Tāmaki-makau-rau, I approached a couple of wāhine from my church in Kirikiriroa and Tāmaki-makau-rau initially to see if they might like to be involved with the project. I chose people who I thought would be suitable. I do not perceive this to be overly problematic, in the sense of being unrepresentative or biased, because this is an exploratory piece of research which is seeking in-depth views rather than attempting to be representative.

Tolich and Davidson (1999) discuss the feelings of uneasiness that qualitative researchers can experience when asking people to participate in their mahi. While selecting my participants, I felt uneasy about negotiating participation. The following entry in my autobiographical journal reflects these feelings:

I'm gonna approach 2 girls from my cell group to participate and I already emailed my big cuz in Christchurch and a couple of friends in Auck. [I] feel a bit stink 'cause they may feel that they have to [participate] since I'm their friend, but I do need participants.

I overcame these feelings of uneasiness because of the very positive response from the women that I asked to participate. Elsie[2] sent me a text in response to my request for her help with this study. She was very excited about my work and said that she felt privileged that I asked her to be involved.

In the end my rangahau participants included seven heterosexual and unmarried young wāhine. Five were involved in tertiary education, one was a youth pastor and one an educator.

The ages range from 22 to 28 years old. Several different denominations were represented, including two from Anglican Churches, three from Baptist Churches, one from a Pentecostal Church and one from a Presbyterian Church. All of these young wāhine were city dwellers currently living in either Tāmaki-makau-rau, Kirikiriroa or Ōtautahi.[3]

Upon conducting my pilot interview with two friends, I decided that given the sensitivity surrounding this topic, I would not host a focus rōpū. This quote from my diary discusses the tension that led to this decision:

Did my pilot interview over tea last nite and I don't feel that it went particularly well. I liked the way that it opened up a forum for discussion, it did, however lead to some uneasiness.

We were discussing what celibacy means. Pearl said that for most people it means no sexual intercourse or penetration. When I asked Pearl what that meant for her, she clarified that it meant no touching (under clothes), and massages allowed only on shoulders, hands, feet and head. She then said that holding hands was fine but that she wasn't sure about kissing. She then asked Francene (who has a boyfriend) whether she thought that kissing was alright and whether she kissed her boyfriend. I repeated the question to Francene and said that she didn't have to answer. She went unusually quiet and said in an embarrassed tone "yes".

Francene decided to leave before the end of the pilot interview and Pearl and I prayed for her at the end of our interview because we were concerned that we may have hurt her feelings. Pearl and I talked with Francene the next day and explained that we did not want to make her feel uncomfortable and were merely interested in her opinions. The tension was eased and I learnt about the sensitivity of this issue for some people, which ultimately shaped my research design.

Moss (2001) suggests that autobiography in geography is a qualitative method that feminists use to gain an appreciation of women's experiences. I have included my experiences in this rangahau because I am a member of the research population and am interested in this topic. This journal has created a space to be reflexive about the process. It has also enabled rich, detailed information that is private (and may not be expressed in an interview setting) to be collected in a non-invasive manner (Moss, 2001). By keeping an ongoing diary, I have been able to communicate in my own language, without having to conform to grammatical and spelling protocols (Tolich and Davidson,

1999). As with the interviews, the location where the recording was conducted was significant (Tolich and Davidson, 1999). Therefore, this journal was helpful as I was able to write about celibacy at different times and in different wāhi such as in my office at the university, my bedroom and in my garden at home.

### **Kitenga**

My participants recognise that by choosing to be celibate prior to marriage that they occupy the position of the 'other' in a sexually saturated society. This finding is interesting because a couple of decades ago my participants' attitudes were commonplace. Unmarried young women identifying their celibacy as not normal is a relatively recent phenomena, which I will unpack in the following discussion.

In my readings of my participants' narratives, I have encountered a diverse range of views on how young women practice celibacy. Notwithstanding differences, they share some similar ideas. For example, the importance of being celibate prior to marriage, remaining sexually pure by creating appropriate boundaries in romantic relationships and having different feelings about their celibacy in different spaces. I explore these under three themes, which I have titled using reoccurring phrases that the participants have used.

'Try before you buy?: No sex outside of marriage' is the first major kaupapa that I address. 'Try before you buy' is a phrase that was often used by participants to refer to friends who were sexually active prior to marriage. My participants believed that celibacy means that sex should only occur inside of marriage. I investigate the reasons why my participants have come to this conclusion by looking at their representations of God's call to save sex for marriage, the importance of role modelling and support by parents, friends and other family members and their enjoyment of being celibate.

In talking with participants, boundaries were a significant issue in defining celibacy. Therefore, the next section about sexual purity (in dress and behaviour), surveillance and saving oneself for a future husband is titled 'DON'T cross that line, baby: boundaries in romantic relationships'. Participants talked about saving themselves for their future husbands. Although this may seem old fashioned, it can also be understood as a choice that they have made about their bodies and the way that they will be treated. Therefore, my feminist reading is useful here as it acknowledges the fact that women are involved in shaping their sexual identities. In this theme, there is a strong emphasis on what is inappropriate behaviour for an unmarried Christian female. A range of different opinions will be discussed.

Issues of space are discussed in the next section on 'home and away: comfort zones'. This theme outlines the way that my participants feel as celibate bodies occupying different spaces such as home, Church, pubs, night clubs, work places and at special events such as weddings and Christenings.

### **'Try Before You Buy?': No Sex Outside of Marriage**

Several of my research participants' referred to the phrase 'try before you buy', suggesting that celibacy means that it is wrong to 'try before you buy', and that sex should only occur inside of marriage. Although this belief was common in Aotearoa prior to 1960s, there has been a radical shift towards people engaging in sexual relations prior to marriage .

In contemporary Aotearoa, being sexually active is constructed by popular culture as the normative practice (Brown, 1980). My participants' responses differ from these normative views about heterosexuality. They are aware of this difference and state that God commands sex to be reserved for marriage only and their beliefs are supported by friends, parents and other family members. Their enjoyment of being celibate is another issue that helps explain why they do not wish to engage in sex.

Most of my participants discussed Christian principles from the Bible as reasons to reserve sex until marriage. Susan was very passionate about this issue. She said:

I'm totally convinced that God has ordained sex for marriage only and that His command in the Bible is to stay sexually pure until you are married that you are to have the person who is your husband or if you're a man, the person who is your wife as the one that you reserve that for. So yeah, to make the life choice to commit to that. And also for some people to continue that throughout their lives if marriage is not the thing that's for them to stay that way while they're here on Earth.

Susan demonstrates a clear understanding of the Biblical basis for her decision to be celibate prior to marriage. She also acknowledges that for people that do not marry, celibacy is a status to maintain for life. Instead of saying 'save sex for sex marriage' my participants often used the phrase 'DON'T try before you buy' to express themselves. In the pilot interview I found similar results. It is difficult to conclude why my participants' communicate by avoiding using words with sexual connotations in this manner, and this could be due to social conditioning that has taught them to be chaste and silent about sexuality.

A key reason that my participants offered for 'not trying before buying' was the support and role modelling that they received from parents, friends and family members. Another thread that was woven into discussions surrounding this kaupapa was the desire to make their friends and families feel proud of them.

In speaking about her traditional and religious family background, Elsie discussed the importance of her parents in shaping her views about celibacy. Elsie said 'I've never slept with someone ever in my life and I think my parents having that strong view and telling me about that and praying for me did really help'.

She uses the words 'I've never slept with someone' to explain her virginity and suggests that her parents are largely responsible for her sexual status. Earlier in the interview, Elsie raised that she did not always expect to be celibate prior to marriage suggesting that she has made a shift from her own expectations to those of her parents'. By returning to views that her parents' hold, Elsie's attitudes could be read as reproducing or repeating her parents' conservative attitudes.

Fluer and Fee felt that they would embarrass and disappoint their families if they did not practise celibacy prior to marriage. This could be due to the fact that both of their families regularly attend more conservative denominations in comparison to the other participants. Furthermore both families believe that it is sinful to engage in sexual relationships outside of marriage.

Lara and Susan spoke openly about their enjoyment of celibacy as a reason for wanting to 'keep their pants on'. Susan placed worth on single-hood and celibacy as a period of time to mature and develop ones self-worth and identity.

I personally think being single's really healthy especially when you're young because just this huge thing of knowing who you are 'cause you have to know who you are to be confident in life. You have to know who you are to make wise decisions.

Susan's use of the words 'single, healthy, young and confident' in the same sentence is significant. By communicating in this manner, Susan is suggesting that it is not possible to be 'healthy, young, confident *and* sexually active'. These comments may reflect her limited personal experience with romantic relationships, but also her values about sexual activity amongst young people. She said later in the interview that celibacy was normal and healthy for her and this was supported by her Church and family backgrounds, where it was wrong (read unhealthy) to have sex outside of marriage.

### **DON'T 'Cross That Line' Baby: Boundaries in Romantic Relationships**

In a world where anything seems to go in romantic relationships, my participants were determined to remain sexually pure in the way that they dress and behave. For example, Lee talked about keeping her thoughts and actions 'clean', which is influenced by the types of movies and language that she exposes herself to. A significant component of this kind of purity means to create

boundaries in romantic relationships that are not crossed. A couple of participants talked about the importance of keeping boundaries in place in order to remain pure for God or for their future husband. An interesting finding here is that participants were likely to behave differently with their partners when others were present; communicating the notion that surveillance changes behaviour.

The issue of sexual purity in dress and behaviour raised the most interest in my interviews. In my presentation to the Youth Group at Hillcrest Baptist Church, Kirikiriroa I also received questions about this kaupapa. There are a variety of different stances particularly in regards to physical behaviours in romantic relationships that will be discussed in the following section that reflect the differences in denomination, that is more liberal versus more conservative.

Lara was very specific in terms of appropriate dress and behaviour for celibate women. 'I think that sex – oral sex, touching, petting, wearing sexy underwear and nightwear, full body massage and maybe kissing should be reserved for marriage'. She focuses on 'inappropriate' dress and behaviour, which communicates the message that it is wrong to dress and behave in a sexually provocative manner prior to marriage.

Fluer told the following story about her experiences at a recent camp that she attended to explore her values about appropriate boundaries.

At Easter Camp this guy was talking to us and he said, 'my first piece of advice is keep your pants on!' I just laughed! I was talking to a girl later about that and she said, 'you know, that's such good advice!' It never occurred to me to take my pants off, you know for me that's a huge thing but for other people that's still not sex. But for me that would be well on the way; way further than I'm comfortable to go! Maybe I am a prude; I grew up in Southland after all.

Fluer's kōrero reflects the diversity of opinions of what constitutes celibacy by referring to a sermon about 'keeping your pants on'. Despite the fact that Fluer and the girl that she talked about attended the same Church, they had different experiences of celibacy. Although Fluer was shocked that her experiences were so different in comparison to the girl that she referred to, she suggests her rural upbringing in a small conservative Southland town as a reason for the difference. Later in the interview, Fluer talked about how her views about celibacy are normal in her hometown and that 'for other people maybe keeping your pants on or off is okay and actual penetration is not. For me, that'sso *not*. I'm a keep your clothes on [girl]'. The issue of modest dress is therefore significant in Fluer's understandings of celibacy.

Lara became aware of differences in expectations for physical boundaries in romantic relationships between unmarried couples while attending a Church of a different denomination. She elaborated:

It's about the whole denominational thing. I was in a Pentecostal Church and there was this couple that were just going out and they like did this big pash at one stage. I thought flip, I've been going to an Anglican Church in Auckland and there's no way that people would pash! The biggest thing you'd do would be to hold hands and hug and maybe a kiss on the cheek.

Thus Lara is alluding here to physical behaviour that prior to marriage would be socially unacceptable and offensive in her Church culture. Amongst more conservative Church attendees, I found this to be common.

A difference in physical behaviour in romantic relationships when under surveillance was an unexpected issue that arose when talking with Claire and Lara about boundaries. Claire raised the issue of how she and her boyfriend behave when under supervision of family members and friends as opposed to when they were alone.

The thing for me is *not* how far I can get from the line without crossing it, but how far can I get away from it. Like in my relationship with Ian, if we're home we'll sit on the same sofa together if other people are around, but we'll sit on different sofas if we're home alone.

Claire established a 'line' of being supervised by others from her family in order to protect her sexual purity. I find this perception interesting given that the Bible teaches that God watches over all our activities and protects us from harm. Why then does Claire not trust God to watch over and protect her sexual purity? Furthermore, why does she not trust her own ability to survey her activities?

The main reason that Elsie gave for not 'crossing that line' was so that she would be whole and complete as a mate for her future husband. Lara disagreed, and discussed this issue in relation to a young woman's conference that she had recently attended:

Reference was made throughout the conference to waiting for the 'right man' to be your husband and to 'waiting on the shelf'. I personally find these concepts quite disturbing. Why is it that it is not okay to be a single young woman? Perhaps the tensions that exist in society that communicate that women should be sexually active are reinforced in the Church but only in the confines of marriage and so if you don't want that then you are an usual case.

Both Elsie and Lara discussed the issue of saving oneself for a future husband as reasons for not 'crossing that line', although interpreting it differently. Lara's comments reflect a feminist interpretation of celibacy; that is, she is celibate for herself, not for a potential husband.

### **Home and Away: Comfort Zones**

At home or at Church, my participants are in their comfort zones and their identity as a celibate person is regarded as 'normal' given their unmarried status.

Their celibacy is not challenged in these spaces due to the conservative and religious discourses that are encouraged by generational hierarchies that construct celibacy prior to marriage as a normative practice. However, at pubs, night clubs and non-Christian work places, some of my participants perceive that celibacy is regarded as an abnormal practise. This is perhaps due to a more youthful and sexualised atmosphere which tends to dominate these places.

The way that my participants talked about their experiences and feelings in relation to their celibacy at special occasions such as Christian weddings and Christenings is also of interest because they also felt 'out of place'. This next theme unpacks the places that my participants feel comfortable and do not feel comfortable in regards to their celibate identities.

Elsie and Lara felt very comfortable as celibate young women at home, Christian conferences and camps and at Church. According to Lara, 'in places like at home, at Church or whatever, it's like you say, quite normal [to be celibate]'. This 'normality' that Elsie and Lara refer to is a cultural construction based on Christian values of saving sex for marriage. They were aware that these values were not upheld in other places, for example night clubs.

In comparing night clubs to Christian conferences and Churches, Elsie concluded that she felt more respected and relaxed in Christian settings.

There's a safety around people that you trust and around guys in a Christian conference. At a [Christian] meeting it's this massive different atmosphere, around Church people there's a lot more respect [for women].

Elsie felt more respected as a woman in Christian settings and less likely to be subject to unwanted male attention and gazes. Therefore, in spaces where celibacy was taken for granted, my participants felt more physically and emotionally safe.

These were places that the majority of my participants felt uncomfortable, which they explained was largely due to their values about sexuality and celibacy. During times at university, Lara spent time in pubs with friends but did not feel comfortable because she was considered a 'nerd' by people that were trying to 'hook up' with others from the opposite sex.



This experience was common. Although Elsie loves dancing, she said that she would never go to a night club because she felt too uncomfortable. I find it interesting to consider her impressions of what kinds of activities and attention she would be given if she frequented one of these places given that she has never attended one. Perhaps her impressions have been shaped by conservative Christians that are very judgemental about such activities as dancing. However, Elsie maintains that her decision is based on removing herself from situations where she could be subject to unwanted male sexual attention.

Fluer talked about her friends and their choice to be celibate prior to getting married. They were subject to a lot of negativity in their respective non-Christian work environments because of their decision to be celibate. This finding was common where people worked in non-Christian spaces. I think that this is due to the fact that celibacy has become a less common practise of sexuality in non-Christian environments.

The way that my participants talked about their experiences and feelings in relation to their celibacy at special occasions such as Christian weddings and Christenings is also of interest because they felt out of their comfort zones. Lara reflected on her experiences at a wedding as a celibate body at the celebrations. She said: 'I just went recently to John and Linda's wedding in England. In that place I felt like it was weird to be celibate, weird to be single'. Lee and Susan also felt out of place at weddings. Susan said that there were a couple of times a year that she felt uncomfortable with her celibacy and this was usually when attending weddings. It is not surprising that my participants felt uncomfortable at weddings and Christenings given their purpose is to celebrate the fact that a couple are about to become sexually active or have been sexually active. It is in this context that my participants became aware (either at a subconscious or conscious level) that they did not conform to these practices.

### **Ngā Whakarāpopototanga**

My findings illustrate a diverse range of how young women practice celibacy. For instance, the importance of being celibate prior to marriage, remaining sexually pure by creating appropriate boundaries in romantic relationships and having different feelings about their celibacy in various spaces. My participants said that they felt quite comfortable to be celibate as a young wahine at home, Church and at Christian conferences or camps. They felt less comfortable at pubs, night clubs and non-Christian workplaces. I read these different feelings in different places within a hegemonic heterosexual discourse that constructs heterosexual young wāhine as sexually active.

As I have read and deconstructed my participants' narratives, I have become increasingly aware of the scope to conduct further research with unmarried young people from Protestant Christian Churches in Aotearoa addressing spatial and sexuality issues. In particular, I would like to extend this project by considering a broader cross section of people. I think that it would be interesting to conduct interviews with homosexual and male members of the Church to gain a greater understanding of gendered constructions of celibacy.

Furthermore, given the relationship between celibacy and sexuality, it would be essential to ask participants to define 'sex'. Although this maybe a sensitive topic for some people, it would allow clearer conclusions to be made as to meanings of sexuality and celibacy. This may prove challenging given that my participants avoid the use of words with sexual connotations. However, this avoidance is important within a poststructural analysis as poststructuralists are interested in silences and the reasons for them. My participants recognise that by choosing to be celibate prior to marriage that they occupy the position of the 'other' in a sexually saturated society. In examining the reasons given for their choices, I have encountered a diverse range of views on practices of celibacy.

### **Mihi**

Thank you to my research supervisor, Dr Kathryn Besio, for her helpful guidance with this study. Thanks also to my Church communities for their input in this rangahau project. Young people, members of the clergy, congregation members and the young wāhine from the Protestant Christian Churches that chose to be involved have greatly contributed to my work. Thank you.

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1) Academic research that has been conducted on women and the Church has focussed on Catholicism and older women from the clergy. For example, see Yokarinis (2002).

2) I have given pseudonyms to my two friends that piloted my interviews to protect their identities.

3) I emailed consent forms to my participants prior to the commencement of this research. At the beginning of the interviews, we signed these consent forms and discussed pseudonyms. Three participants wished to keep their identities confidential and their names and the people that they talked about have not been made known to anyone other than me. They will be referred to in this paper using pseudonyms that they have selected. Three others wished to be referred to by their middle names and two wanted me to use their real names. All of the participants that referred to people like their boyfriends gave them a pseudonym and I did all I could to protect their identities. My participants have all asked for a copy of my dissertation or a condensed, more simplified version of it. I made these available free of charge and delivered these via email as an attachment or in the post.

### Glossary of Māori Terms

<b>Aotearoa</b>	New Zealand
<b>āpitianga</b>	appendices, appendix
<b>āria</b>	theoretical framework
<b>horopaki</b>	context
<b>huarahi mahi</b>	methodologies, methodology
<b>kaupapa</b>	theme, topic
<b>Kirikiriāroa</b>	Hamilton
<b>kitenga</b>	findings, results
<b>kōrero</b>	comments, data, stories
<b>mahi</b>	task, work
<b>manu</b>	bird
<b>mātauranga</b>	knowledge
<b>mihi</b>	acknowledgements
<b>nā</b>	by
<b>ngāhere</b>	forest
<b>ngā whakarāpopototanga</b>	conclusions
<b>Ōtautahi</b>	Christchurch
<b>Paenga-whā-whā</b>	April
<b>pātai</b>	question
<b>pātai aroaro</b>	focus questions
<b>pūtake</b>	source
<b>rangahau</b>	research
<b>rārangi mahi</b>	contents
<b>rārangi rauemi</b>	reference list
<b>rīpoata</b>	report
<b>rōpū</b>	group
<b>Tāmaki-makau-rau</b>	Auckland
<b>tauirā</b>	student
<b>tīmatanga</b>	introduction
<b>wāhi</b>	location
<b>wahine</b>	woman
<b>wāhine</b>	women
<b>waitara</b>	abstract
<b>whakaaro</b>	thought(s)
<b>whānau</b>	extended family

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