



THE UNIVERSITY OF
WAIKATO
Te Whare Wānanga o Waikato

Research Commons

<http://researchcommons.waikato.ac.nz/>

Research Commons at the University of Waikato

Copyright Statement:

The digital copy of this thesis is protected by the Copyright Act 1994 (New Zealand).

The thesis may be consulted by you, provided you comply with the provisions of the Act and the following conditions of use:

- Any use you make of these documents or images must be for research or private study purposes only, and you may not make them available to any other person.
- Authors control the copyright of their thesis. You will recognise the author's right to be identified as the author of the thesis, and due acknowledgement will be made to the author where appropriate.
- You will obtain the author's permission before publishing any material from the thesis.

**Stories of resistance to religious authority:
A discursive analysis**

A thesis
submitted in fulfilment
of the requirements for the degree
of
Doctor of Philosophy
at
The University of Waikato
by
David Crawley



THE UNIVERSITY OF
WAIKATO
Te Whare Wānanga o Waikato

2014

Abstract

Abuses of power within certain religious communities have become a matter of public concern in recent decades. Less well known are the stories of people within local Christian communities who experience practices of religious authority which do not make headlines, but which nonetheless diminish the possibilities of their lives. Feminist analyses have highlighted the historical, cultural, and theological roots of the oppression of women in Christian communities, but work remains to be done on understanding how other subjugating practices, which oppress women and men, and resistance to such practices, are produced in religious contexts.

This study asks (1) how it is that regimes of power and knowledge can subvert the call to freedom and justice which is pervasive in longstanding streams of Christian tradition, and (2) what has enabled some people to resist the practices of religious authority constructed by such regimes. In responding to these questions this thesis adopts a poststructuralist conceptual framework, drawing particularly on Foucault's theorisation of knowledge, power, and subjectivity. In addition to Foucauldian ideas, poststructuralist feminist discussions of human agency, and Sampson's (1993) notion of monologic and dialogic power relations, strongly influence the theoretical and ethical stance of this study.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with nine people, from a variety of Christian communities within New Zealand, who at some time had found it necessary to resist everyday practices of religious authority within their contexts. The interviews focused on their accounts of the subjugating practices they had encountered, the effects of those practices on their lives, and their acts of resistance.

A discursive approach to narrative analysis was developed and applied to transcriptions of these interviews. This analysis identified a range of discursive technologies which had contributed to the subjugation of the participants and protected the hegemony of discourses which supported subjugating practices.

This study concludes that (1) monologic power relations within religious communities are a primary indicator of problematic discourses and practices of authority; (2) the "Man of God" discourse and its variants inevitably subvert freedom and justice; (3) sexual abuse by religious leaders belongs to a spectrum

of discursively produced entitlement practices; (4) the embodied effects of subjugation bear witness to ethical hopes and intentions, and are instrumental in producing resistance; and (5) repeated exposure to a range of religious texts and rituals both supports and subverts people's subjectification within the dominant discourses of a religious community.

Acknowledgements

This research journey has taken me through some challenging terrain, academically and personally. There have been highs, lows, cul-de-sacs, seasons of lostness, and times of pleasurable discovery. I am more grateful than I can adequately express to those who have encouraged me to press on, especially to my wife, Sarah Penwarden, a fellow traveller on the doctoral path. I am fortunate indeed to have a partner who has not only been understanding—tolerating my many disappearances behind the study door—but has actually understood what I've been trying to do, and offered helpful critique along with encouragement to persevere.

I am grateful, too, for fortnightly breakfast get-togethers with Lex and Donald, also fellow travellers. The countless conversations we have had over bacon and eggs about our projects, and the times their questions have helped me find a way through one dense tangle or another, will be rich memories for years to come. Other family members and friends have also encouraged me through their regular enquiries as to progress, and I look forward to having other things to talk to them about soon.

The inspiration for the approach taken in this project came through my study of narrative therapy at the University of Waikato. My encounters with Dr Wendy Drewery and Dr John Winslade in that context suggested that they would be excellent supervisors for a project such as this, and I thank them for their willingness to guide me in that way. I have learned an enormous amount from their wisdom and experience. I appreciate John's rich background in practice and his enjoyment of exploring new ideas and connections. I admire Wendy's incisive thinking, and acknowledge how much this thesis has benefited from her consistent call for greater rigour and clarity in my writing. I am grateful to them both for persevering with me for more years than any of us expected this might take.

I also acknowledge the support of Laidlaw College, which made this project possible through the provision of time and financial support. My former Head of School, Tim Meadowcroft, and the Academic vice-principal, Martin Sutherland, have encouraged and prodded me in equal measure.

Finally, I acknowledge with gratitude the women and men who willingly allowed themselves to be interviewed for this study. They offered not only their time and their stories, but also their affirmation that this was an important project which addressed concerns close to their hearts. Listening to their stories connected me with others I have heard over the years—stories of courageous resistance to patterns of religious authority that were diminishing people’s lives. Stories like these were the catalyst for this research journey, and, in times of self-doubt, they have inspired me to continue it to completion.

Table of Contents

| | |
|--|-----------|
| Abstract | iii |
| Acknowledgements | v |
| Chapter 1: Introduction | 1 |
| 1.1 Beginnings | 1 |
| 1.2 The research questions | 3 |
| 1.3 Theoretical framework | 3 |
| Power, knowledge and Foucault | 3 |
| The problem of agency | 4 |
| Poststructuralism and Christian faith | 6 |
| 1.4 Methodology | 9 |
| 1.5 Overview of thesis structure | 10 |
| Chapter 2: Problematic practices of religious authority: pre-modern, modernist, and feminist perspectives | 13 |
| 2.1 Pre-modern perspectives: behind closed doors | 14 |
| 2.2 Modernist paradigms: truth, professionalism and psychology | 16 |
| Doctrinal truth | 16 |
| “Spiritual abuse” | 17 |
| The professionalisation of pastoral ministry | 18 |
| Psychological models | 20 |
| Evaluation | 21 |
| 2.3 Feminist analysis | 23 |
| Gender inequalities as historically and culturally situated | 23 |
| A nostalgic desire for patriarchal privilege | 23 |
| Ministerial and sexual power | 25 |
| Theologies which support domination | 26 |
| 2.4 Rationale for adopting a poststructuralist conceptual framework | 27 |
| Chapter 3: Theoretical and ethical orientation | 31 |
| 3.1 Poststructuralist paradigms: discourse, power and subjectivity | 32 |
| Poststructuralism | 33 |
| Discourse | 34 |
| Power/knowledge | 36 |
| Subjectivity | 41 |
| 3.2 Subjectification: the discursive production of identity | 43 |
| Discursive positioning | 43 |
| Embodied inscription | 44 |
| Self-surveillance and confession | 45 |
| Mastery and submission | 47 |
| Storying and intertextuality | 49 |

| | |
|---|------------|
| 3.3 Agency and resistance..... | 51 |
| Agency and discursive complexity | 52 |
| Agency and re-authoring..... | 54 |
| Agency and resistance..... | 57 |
| 3.4 Ethical stance: freedom and justice..... | 58 |
| Derrida, Levinas, justice and relation to the other | 60 |
| Foucault, freedom and participatory agency | 62 |
| Sampson and dialogic power relations..... | 65 |
| 3.5 Concluding comments | 68 |
| Chapter 4: Research Methodology and Design | 69 |
| 4.1 Discursive narrative analysis | 70 |
| What is narrative? | 70 |
| Discourse analysis | 72 |
| The social construction of narrative | 74 |
| Summary of discursive narrative analytical strategies | 82 |
| 4.2 Further thoughts on reflexivity | 83 |
| My positioning in the project | 84 |
| My positioning in relation to the participants | 86 |
| A note on excluded voices | 88 |
| 4.3 Research design | 90 |
| Ethical considerations | 90 |
| Introducing the participants..... | 94 |
| Generating the data | 95 |
| Methods of analysis..... | 98 |
| 4.4 The question of validity | 102 |
| 4.5 Concluding comments | 104 |
| Chapter 5: Discourses of “covering” and “submission” | 107 |
| Introduction to results chapters..... | 107 |
| 5.1 Cathy’s story | 108 |
| Beginnings..... | 108 |
| Discursive positioning and its effects | 110 |
| Agency and resistance..... | 116 |
| 5.2 Bill’s story..... | 123 |
| Beginnings..... | 123 |
| Discursive positioning and its effects | 123 |
| Agency and resistance..... | 124 |
| 5.3 Jenny’s story | 128 |
| Beginnings..... | 128 |
| Discursive positioning and its effects | 129 |
| Agency and resistance..... | 134 |
| 5.4 Selina’s story..... | 138 |
| Beginnings..... | 138 |
| Discursive positioning and its effects | 139 |

| | |
|--|------------|
| Agency and resistance | 143 |
| 5.5 Discussion points..... | 145 |
| First research question | 145 |
| Second research question..... | 146 |
| Chapter 6: Discourses of separation, knowledge and authority | 147 |
| 6.1 John’s story..... | 147 |
| Beginnings: born into belonging | 147 |
| The discursive shaping of identity: chosen and separate | 148 |
| Conflicted positioning: life in two discursive worlds..... | 150 |
| Resistance and rejection: life beyond the EB | 155 |
| 6.2 Lynne’s story | 159 |
| Beginnings: the promise of power and knowledge..... | 159 |
| “Like the spirit of a python”: the processes of discursive subjection..... | 160 |
| The long path out: questions, refusals and realisations | 166 |
| 6.3 Discussion points..... | 171 |
| First research question | 171 |
| Second research question..... | 172 |
| Chapter 7: The discursive construction of call and conflict..... | 175 |
| 7.1 Andy’s story | 175 |
| Beginnings: the value of persons | 175 |
| The discursive construction of success and entitlement | 176 |
| Damage and rage, resistance and resignation | 180 |
| Summary..... | 185 |
| 7.2 Sarah’s story | 185 |
| Hopeful beginnings: “our priority is for people” | 187 |
| The disciplinary power of the status quo and its effects..... | 187 |
| The struggle for authority and its discursive construction..... | 190 |
| 7.3 Martin’s story | 193 |
| The discursive construction of priesthood: “another Christ”..... | 193 |
| The discourses of celibacy revisited | 194 |
| The discursive construction of Martin’s dilemma and its effects..... | 195 |
| Deconstructing the binary and reimagining vocation | 198 |
| 7.4 Discussion points..... | 205 |
| First research question | 205 |
| Second research question..... | 205 |
| Chapter 8: Shining a discursive light on subjugating practices of authority and resistance in Christian communities | 207 |
| 8.1 A reflexive pause: regarding ethical intentions and hopes | 207 |
| 8.2 Discursive technologies of subjugation and hegemony | 210 |
| i The construction of monologic subject positions | 211 |
| ii The discursive construction of “serviceable others” | 214 |
| iii Discursive practices of entitlement..... | 217 |

| | | |
|--|---|------------|
| iv | Disciplinary practices of power | 219 |
| v | Mutually-reinforcing discourses of authority and submission | 222 |
| vi | Personal identities are subsumed under community narratives..... | 223 |
| vii | The positioning of leaders to view difference as trouble | 225 |
| viii | Taken-for-granted ways of knowing | 227 |
| ix | Discursive support from the wider social context | 228 |
| | Concluding comments..... | 229 |
| 8.3 | Accounting for resistance | 230 |
| i | The felt effects of subjugation and discursive contradiction..... | 230 |
| ii | The resources found in alternative knowledges | 235 |
| iii | The tenacity of ethical hopes and intentions | 240 |
| iv | “Lines of flight” toward life | 243 |
| | Concluding comments..... | 247 |
| Chapter 9: Concluding reflections | | 249 |
| 9.1 | Reflections on the research design..... | 250 |
| 9.2 | The contribution of this thesis | 251 |
| 9.3 | Final word..... | 255 |
| References..... | | 257 |
| Appendices | | 269 |
| | Appendix 1: Letter of information and invitation to join research | 269 |
| | Appendix 2: Questionnaire for potential participants | 271 |
| | Appendix 3: Criteria for selection of participants..... | 273 |
| | Appendix 4: Consent form..... | 275 |
| | Appendix 5: Sample interview questions | 277 |
| | Appendix 6: Follow up letter and response form for participants | 279 |
| List of Tables | | |
| | Table 1: Strategies for analysis and reflexive considerations | 82 |
| | Table 2: Analysis iteration 1..... | 98 |
| | Table 3: Analysis iteration 3..... | 101 |

Chapter 1: Introduction

In the Bible, prophets and teachers repeatedly contend with their religion's failures and false claims. . . . Jesus challenged the Temple authorities who oppressed his people: "You have made my father's house a den of thieves!" Judaism and Christianity claim that life is good and that there is an author of life who wants our freedom and joy. Our religious heritage gives us the imperative to confront it when it fails to foster life or advocate for justice. (Brock & Parker, 2001, p. 9)

This thesis is born of a concern I have held for some years about practices of authority within some Christian communities, namely practices which "fail to foster life" and which subvert, rather than advocate for, justice. It engages with narratives produced through interviews with nine people, each of whom had a story to tell of their resistance to such practices within their own religious communities.

1.1 Beginnings

Within the complex and contradictory history of Christianity, some voices have called for a denial of this life in favour of the next, while others, echoed above, have affirmed the goodness of life in this world and the importance of pursuing freedom and justice in the here and now. Almost exactly fifty years ago, at the time of writing, Martin Luther King Junior added his voice to the latter group in his famous address at the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, D.C. There King drew on biblical imagery, together with the espoused founding principles of his nation, to outline his dream and support his call for freedom, justice and a place "at the table" for his people and for "all of God's children" (Collins & Young, 1999, pp. 402-403).

The problem addressed in this thesis is by no means on a par with the political struggle epitomised by King's life and death. But my rationale for engaging in this study does share common ground with his speech, including its call for freedom and justice,¹ and its biblical allusions. Like Brock and Parker, the feminist theologians cited above, I undertake this project with the conviction that

¹ What I mean by the terms "freedom" and "justice" is clarified briefly in section 1.3 below, and is outlined in more detail in Chapter 3.

embedded within my religious heritage, which I own as Christian, is a call to take action when it, or any other rationality, is used to support oppression, injustice, or exclusion.

In my present work as a lecturer in spirituality in an inter-denominational theological college, and as a spiritual director (operating in a private capacity), I experience disappointment and anger when I hear people describe how the accomplishment of their lives has been constrained or disrupted by practices of religious authority in the very communities where they had hoped to find acceptance, respect and support. I use the term “authority” broadly in Weber’s sense, as referring to the kind of power which is exercised by one person or group over another, and is legitimised by a principle held to be binding on those over whom power is exercised (Kronman, 1983). Rather than focusing on particular classifications or structural features of authority, however, my interest is in the way authority itself is produced within religious settings by particular ideas or beliefs. In particular, the stories I have heard in the course of my work have raised questions for me as to how it is that authority comes to be constructed and exercised in ways that result in the subversion of freedom and justice, when ethical imperatives to uphold freedom and justice pervade Jewish and Christian traditions. I name this question, not as someone outside of the religious systems in which people encounter these difficulties, but as a privileged insider whose own assumptions and practices with regard to authority need to be interrogated.

As much as I am concerned to pursue the question of what it is that produces oppressive practices of religious authority, I am equally intrigued by the presence of hope and defiance in the stories I have heard. Martin Luther King Junior spoke of a kind of hope and faith that supports people “to work together, to pray together, to struggle together, to go to jail together, to stand up for freedom together” (Collins et al., 1999, p. 403). In undertaking my research, therefore, I sought out people who had stories to tell of their own resistance to oppressive forms of religious authority. This thesis presents my engagement with the stories of nine such people who, in different ways, all found themselves needing to trouble what was being taken for granted in their communities in relation to religious authority. As I interviewed them, each person generously offered an account of their ethical hopes and intentions for their life in community, their

experiences of subjugating practices of authority, and their resistance to these practices.

1.2 The research questions

Motivated by the concerns outlined above, and influenced by theoretical ideas discussed in the next section, I approach this study with two main research questions in view:

- i Within Christian communities, how is it that some regimes of power and knowledge can subvert the call to freedom and justice which is pervasive in longstanding streams of Christian tradition?
- ii What has enabled some people to resist the practices of religious authority constructed by such regimes?

These questions could be addressed in a variety of ways, and I briefly outline my own approach in the next three sections. In section 1.3, I introduce some of the theoretical ideas that form the conceptual framework for the project. In section 1.4, I describe the methodology which underpins my work with the participants' stories, namely discursive narrative analysis. In section 1.5, I provide an overview of the structure of this thesis document.

1.3 Theoretical framework

Chapter 3 provides a detailed elaboration of the theoretical and ethical frameworks within which I have pursued my research, but a sketch of key ideas is provided here. Chapter 2 reviews other approaches which have been taken to the issue of problematic expressions of religious authority, and offers a rationale for adopting the ideas introduced here.

Power, knowledge and Foucault

In 2001, I enrolled in a postgraduate diploma in narrative therapy (Monk, Winslade, Crocket, & Epston, 1997) at the University of Waikato, New Zealand. This marked my first serious encounter with poststructuralist ideas, including Foucault's (1965, 1970, 1972, 1973, 1977a, 1978, 1982; Foucault & Gordon, 1980; Foucault & Martin, 1988) compelling account of the ways in which power operates within social systems. As I wrestled with Foucault's ideas, I was struck by their potential usefulness for addressing my perplexity concerning the practice

of governmentality within some Christian communities (Dean, 1999; Hodgson, 2009). I was also intrigued by the way he used features of the pastoral relationship to illustrate the production of self-government (Foucault, 1982; Hook, 2003).

Foucault's analytics of power suggested a way to transcend pathologising discussions of the misuse of religious authority, in which people are analysed in terms of personal deficits, or categorised in the language of "perpetrator" and "victim." In Chapter 2, I offer a brief discursive history of approaches to the problem of oppressive practices of religious authority, including those that take a pathologising approach. Rather than locating the abuse of power within individuals, in psychological or spiritual terms, Foucault's power-knowledge theorisation invited consideration of the ways in which the operations of power and authority in religious communities are constructed at the level of language and dominant discourses.

Given its use in the previous sentence, I need briefly to define what is meant by the term "discourse," pending a more detailed discussion in Chapter 3 (section 3.1). Burr (2003) offers an accessible description of discourse which will suffice in the meantime:

A discourse refers to a set of meanings, metaphors, representations, images, stories, statements and so on that in some way together produce a particular version of events. It refers to a particular picture that is painted of an event, person or class of persons, a particular way of representing it in a certain light. If we accept the view . . . that a multitude of alternative versions of events are potentially available through language, this means that, surrounding any one object, event, person etc. there may be a variety of different discourses, each with a different story to tell about the object in question, a different way of representing it to the world. (p. 64)

So, for example, I refer above to a variety of ways in which people might make meaning of a Christian leader's abuse of power and position. As each person or group gives their "particular version of events," different discourses are dominating the process of making meaning—psychological theories, theological beliefs, philosophical ideas, and so on. Hence I refer to the "discursive history of approaches" which I intend to present in the next chapter of this study.

The problem of agency

Alongside the promise of new insights, my encounters with Foucault left me with

a question as to where human agency—the notion of a choosing human subject—fitted, if at all, in poststructuralist accounts of personhood. In listening to people describe their encounters with oppressive practices of religious authority, I had been struck by the agentic ways they had eventually managed to challenge, question or leave these situations. Reflecting on how to account for these examples of agency and resistance, given Foucault’s power/knowledge analysis, eventually gave rise to my second research question.

In grappling with the social dimensions of power and this question of agency, I have found the work of several feminist poststructuralists (Burman, 1996; Butler, 1992, 1995, 1997, 2001, 2004; Butler & Scott, 1992a, 1992b; Davies, 1991, 1994, 2004; Davies, Browne, Gannon, Honan, Laws et al., 2004; Davies, Browne, Gannon, Hopkins, McCann et al., 2006; Davies & Davies, 2007; Davies, Dormer, Gannon, Laws, Rocco et al., 2001; Davies, Flemmen, Gannon, Laws, & Watson, 2002; Davies & Harré, 1990, 1999; Drewery, 2005; Drewery & McKenzie, 1999; Drewery & Monk, 1994; Drewery & Winslade, 1997; Hollway, 1989, 2006; Weedon, 1997) to be especially useful. When I first considered how to approach this project, I was aware that many people in the Western social context might answer my question about the possibility of resistance in terms of a humanist understanding of personhood and agency. The heroic struggle to discover and assert one’s “true self” is a taken-for-granted narrative, woven firmly into our social fabric. As Davies (1991) has argued, however, such an account fails to reckon on the inherently social nature of persons “as beings discursively produced by their times,” even in their attempts to be “authentic” individuals (p. 42). On the other hand, while strongly rejecting the humanist paradigm, Davies resists the hopelessness that accompanies purely deterministic accounts of personhood, in which agency is an illusion and resistance is merely an effect of power. Agency, she suggests, is derived not from “the essence of the person in question but from the positions available to them within the discourses through which they take up their being” (p. 52).

I explore these and other ideas about agency, and its relationship to resistance, in Chapter 3 (section 3.3). The theorisations reviewed there inform my analysis of the interview narratives, and are drawn on again in the main discussion chapter (section 8.3).

Poststructuralism and Christian faith

Before concluding this brief introduction to the poststructuralist ideas taken up in this project, I want to acknowledge the challenge they pose for Christians—like myself—who have experienced lifelong immersion in environments where notions of absolute truth and a true self are taken for granted. I was brought up in a Presbyterian family, and in young adulthood attended a variety of theologically conservative churches. (Presently I am a non-ordained member of an Anglican church.) My own approaches to truth and epistemology were certainly tested and reshaped by my engagement with the social constructionist epistemology which underpins narrative therapy. The critical stance adopted by poststructuralists toward all taken-for-granted knowledge, and their rejection of notions of knowable objective realities, directly challenge religious beliefs according to which a divine being has revealed truths which are absolute, that is, true independently of their historical and cultural production. Equally problematic for some Christians' notion of truth is the poststructuralist assertion that the very language in which such truths are expressed does not describe pre-existing objective realities, but is a form of social interaction which constructs our knowledge of the world and ourselves. Some Christians also hold essentialist notions of personhood, according to which each individual has a unique God-given identity and purpose. Such ideas are congruent with (and, I suspect, influenced by) the humanist paradigm, but at odds with poststructuralist accounts of identity as fluid, contradictory and socially constructed.

This is not the place for a comprehensive discussion of the relationship between poststructuralist and religious viewpoints, and such viewpoints are in themselves complex and varied. Briefly, however, I want to indicate how I position myself epistemologically and ethically, as a Christian who appreciates the critical power of poststructuralist ideas. I see this as important not simply on behalf of transparently declaring my positioning as a researcher, but because both epistemology and ethics emerge as key issues of concern in my analysis of the participants' narratives.

In a discussion of discourse and realism, Parker (1992, pp. 28-34) suggests that things may be thought of from the point of view of three possible object statuses: ontological, epistemological, and moral or political. Things in the *ontological* realm—bodily aspects which form the material basis for thought, as

well as the physical and social environments that structure our lives—are taken to exist independently of human thought processes and language. However, no direct knowledge of, or talk about, such things outside of discourse is possible, because all thought involves a constructive process. This is what Parker means by the *epistemological* status of things. Some things may further be attributed a *moral or political* object status. This granting of moral or political status is constructed by discourse, but through language it may be afforded a reality which can affect the lives of people (attributions of various categories of mental illness, or intelligence, or employability, for example). When such discursively constructed moral or political categories are treated as if they have ontological status, the effects for those to whom such categories are attributed can be oppressive.

In taking up this perspective, Parker (1992) aligns himself with “critical realism,” as opposed to what he describes as “the most rabid anti-realist” forms of poststructuralism (pp. 36, 41). He argues that a thorough-going anti-realist stance undermines the possibilities of engaging in historical analysis of the development of discourses, and of confronting and transforming social structures. On the other hand, for Parker, taking account of the existence of social structures “outside sense” supports these possibilities.

This model of social structure, then, is one in which people are unaware much of the time of the conditions in which they act. However, the realist view does not explain away the activities of individuals as active agents, dissolving them into sets of biologically based or conditioned behaviours or as subject positions in discourse. . . . Because of the existence of society as something that stands always already there in relation to persons, it is not possible to say that we create society, rather we must either *reproduce* or *transform* it. (p. 37; emphasis in the original)

I find Parker’s ontological, epistemological, and moral/political distinctions helpful in articulating my own positioning. I stand with a religious tradition which ascribes ontological status to a divine reality, or divine relationality, usually referred to as “God.”² This, in the language of my tradition, is a stance of faith. Epistemologically, however, I join with longstanding Christian traditions which accept that no direct knowledge of the mystery called God is possible. Stockton (1992), writing as a poststructuralist feminist with a Master of Divinity degree,

² For the sake of simplicity, I mostly use the term “God” whenever reference to deity is being made in this thesis, rather than “my god,” “her god,” “their god,” etc. No hegemonic definition or universally agreed meaning is implied.

acknowledges that it may seem strange to many that “Judeo-Christian people of the Book can be linked to the failure of human meaning and to discourse on what exceeds human sign systems” (p. 118). In addressing this apparent contradiction, she points to the opacity of some of the biblical texts which speak of God or Jesus, suggesting that “these revelations purposefully and divinely cause human meanings to fail their familiar transparencies in order to open up some meaning that can only appear as discourse in excess of established discourse” (p. 118).

Poststructuralist ideas, together with theological traditions of “unknowing,” invite me toward epistemological humility. I take up this stance for three reasons. Philosophically, I find social constructionist theorisations of language and meaning-making compelling. Ethically, the theological heritage with which I identify privileges the call to compassion and justice above the claim to knowledge and certainty. Experientially, I have witnessed the damaging effects of epistemologies of absolute certainty when they have supported practices of entitlement and control, sometimes in the name of God, and left hegemonic structures and strategies unchallenged. This last point is at the heart of the findings of this thesis, and illustrates Parker’s argument regarding the oppressive effects which may be produced when certain moral or political (or theological) attributions are regarded as beyond question.

Questions are sometimes also raised as to the possibility of taking up an ethical position within a poststructuralist philosophical framework. Some ethicists maintain that poststructuralism is logically incompatible with a foundationalist basis for universal ethical norms (Popke, 2003). Others nonetheless undertake their work with commitment to an ethical position, such as justice (Derrida & Caputo, 1997), or responsibility to the other (Levinas, 1999), which is taken as a given. I observe that the critical power of poststructuralist theorisation is frequently exercised on behalf of a clear ethical intention, whether in relation to feminism, psychology, counselling, education, health care, criminology, the workplace, or other domains. For those who pursue such projects, Parker’s emphasis on the material effects of oppressive social structures which require critique and transformation appears tacitly to be assumed. In my case, to regard the stories I have heard about the oppressive effects of certain practices of religious authority as socially constructed narratives does not alter my conviction that there churches where such events occur and diminish people’s lives. Nor does

it undermine my ethical commitment to work for change in such situations, on behalf of freedom and justice.

In Chapters 3 and 4, I outline in more detail the ways in which I see my ethical stance in this project as joining not only with religious imperatives to pursue freedom and justice, such as those that guided Martin Luther King Junior, but also with ethical intentions reflected in the deconstructive work of poststructuralists such as Foucault (1988) and Derrida (1997). In those chapters I also acknowledge the influence of Sampson's (1993, 1998, 2003) work on monologic and dialogic power relations, and of Levinas' (1999) ethic of unconditional responsibility to the other, on the development and articulation of my theoretical and ethical stance in this study.

1.4 Methodology

The participants in this study were selected from people who responded to an information sheet (Appendix 1) which I had distributed to counsellors and spiritual directors. The main criteria for selection were that they should have a story of their own resistance to religious authority to tell, and that the events which they would describe should have occurred at least twelve months previously (to lessen the risk of re-traumatisation). What follows is a brief outline of the main concepts which underpin my approach to analysis. The methodology I adopt in my engagement with the nine stories of the participants in this project is outlined in detail in Chapter 4, and described only briefly here.

I refer to this methodology as discursive narrative analysis. By *narrative*, I mean talk (whether spoken or written) which has the intention of telling about life and events. In particular, I view narrative as a means by which people give structure and meaning to their lives and identities (Riessman, 1993; Sparkes, 2005). My interviews with the participants were intended to provide an opportunity for them to engage in this process of structuring and meaning-making in relation to their experiences of resistance to religious authority. The interviews were recorded and then represented in the form of typed transcripts, and this constitutes the data for my analysis.

I offer the results of this analysis in Chapters 5, 6, and 7, where I re-present sections of the participants' stories and engage in discourse analysis with my two research questions in mind (hence the term *discursive* narrative analysis). This is

not a socio-linguistic/conversational form of discourse analysis (Georgakopoulou, 2007; Moissinac, 2007; Polanyi, 1985), but a study of the participants' narratives as effects of particular discursive contexts (including but not limited to the religious communities they describe). At the same time, in re-presenting those aspects of the interview narratives in which discursive influences are especially apparent, I attempt to bring forward the narrators' own voices and to preserve a sense of how they have imparted order and meaning to their stories. I regard this as a strategy for contributing to processes of change within Christian communities. While realising that any ethical aspirations pursued in a doctoral project need to be modest, and secondary to its contribution to academic knowledge, I stand with Lincoln (2005) in her call for research in the social sciences to show commitment to "social purpose and social justice" (p. 26).

Bringing narrative analysis and discourse analysis together in this way is not a common approach in qualitative research, although it is certainly not unknown (Chase, 2003; Peterson & Langellier, 2006; Riessman, 2002, 2003; Smith & Sparkes, 2008; Sparkes & Smith, 2007; Taylor, 2005, 2007). In Chapter 4, I provide an extended discussion of the strengths and potential pitfalls of this approach, acknowledging the concerns of some poststructuralist writers that a focus on personal stories may overwhelm the social and political scope of discourse analysis and default to humanistic paradigms of subjectivity (Fish, 1993; Hook, 2001, 2005). Mindful of these concerns, I turn to discourse analysis in the hope of shining a light on the ways in which powerful ideas about religious authority may circulate and position people within Christian communities, and of opening space for people in those communities to reconsider and resist such ideas.

The research design by which I implement this methodology is also explained in detail in Chapter 4. There I identify particular areas of my chosen approach which required reflexive checking throughout the research process. I also name other areas for reflexive awareness, such as my own positioning in relation to the participants as a Pākēha heterosexual male who holds a privileged position of responsibility in a Christian ministry training context.

1.5 Overview of thesis structure

Chapter 2 offers a brief discursive review of various ways in which people have tried to understand and address situations in which religious authority is used with

harmful effects. I draw on feminist perspectives which highlight some of the shortcomings of the other approaches surveyed, and argue the benefits of applying a poststructuralist analysis to local stories of resistance to religious authority.

Chapter 3 sets out the theoretical and ethical orientation of this project, elaborating on ideas which are introduced in the first two chapters. These ideas include poststructuralist notions of discourse, power and subjectivity, the discursive production of subjectivity, the possibility of human agency, and the relationship of agency to resistance. The final section of the chapter proposes that freedom and justice, as they relate to the issues addressed in this project, may best be thought of in terms of a dialogic ethic for relationship.

Chapter 4 presents the methodology—discursive narrative analysis—and the research design adopted in this project. The challenges of combining narrative and discursive approaches to analysis are acknowledged and addressed. The participants are introduced, details of the research method are described, and strategies for attending to issues of reflexivity and validity in the research are outlined.

In Chapters 5, 6, and 7, the results of applying discursive narrative analysis to transcripts of interviews with the participants are presented. Sections of each participant's story are re-presented, together with tentative analyses of the discursive construction of the practices of authority and acts of resistance described in those sections. Each of these chapters concludes by summarising points of interest to be taken up in the detailed theoretical discussion undertaken in Chapter 8.

In Chapter 8, the analyses of Chapters 5, 6 and 7, and the theory of Chapter 3, are drawn together in a discussion of what this project has shown in relation to the two research questions with which I began. I begin with a reflexive review of certain assumptions which, my analysis revealed, I had brought to this project. I then outline and theorise several discursive technologies of subjugation and hegemony which became evident through my analysis. The third main section offers theoretical reflections on the production of resistance as described by the participants, drawing both on Foucauldian understandings of the micro-politics of power and more the expansive notions of the “body without organs” and “lines of flight” in the work of Deleuze (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987; Deleuze & Parnet, 1987).

The thesis concludes in Chapter 9 with brief reflections on the strengths and limitations of my research design, and a summary of the main contributions of this study.

Chapter 2:

Problematic practices of religious authority: pre-modern, modernist, and feminist perspectives

In the previous chapter, I introduced this project with reference to my own story and the stories I have heard people tell about the effects on them of certain ideas and practices of religious authority. This gave rise to my first research question: “Within Christian communities, how is it that some regimes of power and knowledge can subvert the call to freedom and justice which is pervasive in longstanding streams of Christian tradition?” This question is only one expression of a concern that many people have felt, throughout the history of religion, in relation to the abuse of power and position. Some 2,600 years ago a Hebrew prophet lamented the way in which “the shepherds of Israel” were abusing the privileges of leadership:

You eat the fat, you clothe yourselves with the wool, you slaughter the fatlings; but you do not feed the sheep. You have not strengthened the weak, you have not healed the sick, you have not bound up the injured, you have not brought back the strayed, you have not sought the lost, but with force and harshness you have ruled them. (Ezekiel 34:3–4, New Revised Standard Version)

Similar accusations continue to be levelled at some religious leaders in the 21st century. The media in the New Zealand context are quick to highlight situations in which Christian leaders appear to be enjoying excessively wealthy lifestyles at the expense of their less wealthy church members. Sexual abuse of children and other vulnerable people in the care of Christian clergy and caregivers has emerged as another area of public concern over the last three decades.

It is beyond the scope of this chapter to provide a comprehensive survey of the many and varied ways in which religious authority has functioned within a multitude of church structures over two millennia of Christian history. My intention is rather to sketch a discursive history of ways in which people have tried to understand and address situations in which religious authority has been used with harmful effects. Focusing most closely on the last 100 years, this review is broadly historical, although the approaches surveyed are not always historically discrete. In the latter part of the chapter, I draw on a range of feminist perspectives

which highlight the shortcomings of the approaches surveyed. In light of these critiques, I then argue for the distinctive contribution of the approach taken in this project of drawing on poststructuralist ideas in analysing stories of resistance to religious authority.

The literature reviewed in this chapter deals primarily with issues raised by my first research question (section 1.2). I engage with literature relevant to the second research question—concerning the possibility of resistance from a poststructuralist perspective—in the course of the theoretical discussion in the next chapter (section 3.3).

2.1 Pre-modern perspectives: behind closed doors

Prior to the first so-called Christian Emperor, Constantine the Great (c. 272–337 AD), Christian communities were often marginalised and sometimes persecuted within the Roman Empire. While they were not yet politically powerful, these communities, like most human organisations, wrestled internally with the issue of authority and how it should function. The significance of the issue is suggested by the attention given to it within early Christian documents. The New Testament, for example, contains a significant body of teaching—asccribed to Jesus himself—regarding the humble attitude required of followers of Jesus. As he washed his disciples’ feet, so they were to serve one another in humility. With an intertextual nod to the prophet referred to earlier, a first-century letter to church leaders exhorts them to “tend the flock of God” and not to seek “sordid gain” or “lord it over” those in their charge (1 Peter 5:2–5). The author emphasises that the model to imitate was to be found in the stories of their humble founder, their “chief shepherd,” Jesus Christ. In the same passage, younger people are urged to “accept the authority of the elders,” and all are told: “clothe yourselves with humility in your dealings with one another.” They are reminded that, “God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble.” Such encouragements and warnings suggest that the appropriate use of religious authority was regarded as a spiritual matter, and that problematic situations were the result of pride or greed in the leader. The issues were to be dealt with within the community, with accountability and sanctions entrusted to God.

When Christianity became the official religion of the Empire under Constantine, the Christian narrative was invoked to legitimise ecclesiastical and

political power on an international scale. This was still the case centuries later, when Henry VIII challenged the authority of the pope in Rome over the matter of divorce. Yet the question of how that power was exercised within particular Christian communities, and its effects on its members, remained a matter for the Church to deal with behind its own closed doors. Evidence from medieval and renaissance documents, for example, indicates that Roman Catholic clergy were not regarded as being subject to secular law. Child sexual abuse by priests is known to have occurred in this period, but, because clergy were the responsibility of the Church, the perpetrators were tried in ecclesiastical courts under Canon Law (Schoener, 1995).

Media investigations into clergy sexual abuse over recent decades have revealed that many churches (not only Roman Catholic) followed the same “behind closed doors” approach late into the twentieth century, maintaining secrecy and silence as much as possible (Pauling, 1999). In telling the story of her own experience of sexual abuse within a New Zealand Anglican context, for example, Deans (2001) describes a meeting with her church hierarchy in 1990, at which she claims that the archbishop

stated that the church had its own law, which was separate and different from secular law. He said that as priests of the church we did not have recourse to civil law and that judgement would be meted out by the law of the church. He then informed us that the law of the church differed from civil law in that it was concerned with forgiveness and reconciliation rather than with prosecution and punishment. . . . We were left with no redress. . . . We had become victims of the church twice over. (p. 96)

More recently, an article in the *National Catholic Reporter* claimed that secrecy “about all clerical sex is sacrosanct within the system” (Sipe, 2010, p. 23). Soon after Pope Francis took office, it was reported that he had directed the Vatican “to act decisively on ecclesiastic sex abuse cases and take measures against paedophile priests” (“Pope orders Vatican officials,” 2013, para. 1). While that was hailed as progress by some, this newspaper article notes that survivors of clergy abuse were quick to point out that this directive amounted to an in-house conversation, rather than the beginning of a public and transparent process.

While this longstanding pattern of dealing with problematic uses of religious authority within the confines of the Church reflects a desire to protect its

public reputation, it also suggests that the source of the problem has continued to be viewed primarily in terms of personal morality and spirituality. At various points in the Church's history, however, there have been moves to bring reform, not only to individual leaders, but also to its institutions. The Protestant Reformation was a major example of such a movement, and heralded the Church's transition into the modern era.

2.2 Modernist paradigms: truth, professionalism and psychology

Doctrinal truth

The cluster of events which comprised the Protestant Reformation can, in part, be viewed as acts of resistance against the monolithic power of the Roman Catholic Church of the 16th century. These events enacted a religious discourse which was extant before the Reformation, but became more pervasive as Protestantism fragmented into a multitude of denominations and splinter groups. According to this discourse, it is incumbent on believers to separate themselves from religious authority structures which are no longer upholding "biblical truth." The primary point of concern is the maintenance of doctrinal purity (as defined by the separatists), rather than the effects of authoritative practices in the lives of people. From the time Martin Luther famously nailed his 95 theses to the door of the church at Wittenberg, to the present, the result has been the founding of more than a thousand new Christian denominations (Day, 2003), each protesting against some perceived infidelity to biblical truth on the part of those from whom they are separating.

This desire to lay claim to *the* truth can be seen as an expression of the epistemological foundationalism which, prior to postmodernity, characterised post-Enlightenment Western thought. The systematic, propositional form in which competing versions of theological truth have generally been framed is consistent with the emphasis on rational thought and scientific principles in the same era. Purity of adherence to particular formulations of the truth now became the primary litmus test for the proper practice of religious authority, rather than resonance with the narrative tradition within which Christ represented the model of humble, compassionate leadership. The horrors of the Spanish Inquisition (1478–1834), the bloody thirty years war in Europe (1618–1648), and the violent

religious divisions of 16th–17th century Britain, all represent extreme versions of the hegemony of particular regimes of doctrinal truth (González, 2010).

Throughout the 19th and early 20th centuries, developments in natural science and biblical criticism saw an erosion of confidence in such truth regimes. More recently, there have been attempts to approach theology and biblical studies within a postmodern framework (Grenz & Franke, 2001; Vanhoozer, 2003; Ward, 2001). Nonetheless, discourses of doctrinal purity and separatism still prevail in some sectors of the Christian church. At the time of writing, there is considerable debate occurring within some of the major Christian denominations in New Zealand on the questions of ordination and marriage of people in same-sex sexual relationships. Some congregations have signalled their intention to withdraw from their denomination if such measures are approved. One Anglican church leader has warned that proposals being considered by his denomination could “divide parishes in New Zealand and—if adopted—cause a schism with the international faith” (Fisher, 2012). In all of these debates and schisms, little or no importance is attached the question of how religious authority, or power relations generally, are being performed. The concern for truth has its ethical dimensions, but these concern norms for personal morality, which are perceived to be biblical, rather than a call to practices of justice and compassion (which some would argue is more thoroughly biblical than isolated texts concerning sexual relations).

“Spiritual abuse”

Over the last two decades, there have been attempts within the Christian community to address problematic forms of religious authority under the rubric of “spiritual abuse.” Using descriptive terms such as “abusive” and “toxic,” this literature shines a light on the harmful effects of some understandings and practices of religious authority within Christian communities (Blue, 1993; Damiani, 2002; Dasa, 1999; Dupont, 2004; Enroth, 1992; Johnson & VanVonderen, 1991). The primary solution offered by these authors is, again, for churches and their leaders to adopt what they regard as a more a biblical approach in handling power and position. However, the focus is on ethical practice, rather than doctrinal purity. The authors draw on New Testament material, concerning the example and teaching of Jesus, and wider biblical material concerning justice and appropriate uses of power.

At the risk of over-simplifying this approach, I suggest that it is characteristic of most attempts over the last 30 years to address the issue, in that it represents a *paradigmatic* model of diagnosis and prescription. I employ the term “paradigmatic” in the sense used by Parry and Doan (1994), who in turn attribute it to Bruner (1986). Bruner compares narrative and paradigmatic modes of cognition, where the former values meaningfulness and the latter truthfulness. There is a narrative aspect to the spiritual abuse literature, in that it often features personal accounts and places the Jesus narrative at the centre. Nonetheless, it tends to use these narratives in a paradigmatic way, contrasting what is occurring in problematic situations with the *true* paradigm of Christian leadership.

The professionalisation of pastoral ministry

Even more clearly paradigmatic in style are attempts to address problematic practices of religious authority within the frameworks of professionalism and psychology. These approaches mirror a trend in recent decades toward the use of social scientific models in Christian pastoral care training. In a discussion of Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) programmes, Lee (2002) notes that over the last century, pastoral care training for ministers and chaplains in the United States has followed developments in other disciplines of care:

The history of pastoral theology as an applied discipline follows the changing demographics and consequent socio-political developments of the US at the turn of the century. . . . The new professionalization of law and medicine helped to elicit concerns in the 1920s about what skills beyond liturgical practice were imparted in divinity schools that would equip ministers for their work with the faithful. As the fields of psychology and psychoanalysis bloomed in the US, ministers and seminarians embraced personality theorists like Erikson, Freud, and Murray (Capps, 1979). Pastoral psychology then joined with pastoral theology as the fundamental elements of pastoral care. (p. 341)

Lee’s comments are applicable to similar developments in the New Zealand context. The website for the New Zealand Association of Clinical Pastoral Education , for example, indicates that its courses “integrate pastoral work and theology, with relevant medical, psychological and behavioural sciences.”

Given this move in pastoral training toward professional, psychological and therapeutic models, it is not surprising that these paradigms have also gained

prominence in efforts to understand and address problematic expressions of religious authority over the last 30 years. In the same time period, it has been the issue of sexual abuse by trusted religious leaders which has captured public concern and forced churches to look more closely at the issue of power relations generally. While there is no excuse for the poor record of the churches in dealing with sexual misconduct, one study suggests that in this too they were following the social sciences: “The psychological and psychiatric communities in the 1960s and 1970s were not focused on the damage to patients and the need to expose the problems related to therapist-patient sexual involvement” (Gross-Schaefer, Feldman, & Perkowitz, 2011, p. 225). Although the scope of this study is much broader than the problem of sexual misconduct by people with religious authority, it is this issue which features in much of the available academic literature dealing with abuses of power in religious contexts. Much of the remainder of this section therefore draws on this literature, while keeping the wider issues in view.

It was in the 1970s that feminist perspectives and published research began to play a key role in drawing attention to abuses that were occurring in medical and other therapeutic contexts (Pope, 2001). From that time, and more particularly from the second half of the 1980s to the present, significant research, publication and efforts to refine professional codes of ethics have been focused on addressing sexual misconduct by health care professionals. Beyond the bounds of professional associations, the issue has also become the subject of litigation and law reform (Ailsop, 2006; Allen, 1996; Birchard, 2000; Rodgers, 1995). All of which has anticipated, and strongly influenced, the ways in which churches have tried to come to terms with their own ethical and legal responsibilities as organisations to which people look for help and guidance (Gross-Schaefer et al., 2011).

Initially, the field of spiritual care was not caught up in the explosion of public concern around sexual exploitation in other caring professions, despite “evidence that religious officials have higher rates of sexual misconduct than other caring professionals” (Birchard, 2004, p. 81). In this period, churches and other religious communities continued mainly to deal with the issues behind closed doors, and the media was reserved in its handling of abuse in religious contexts. By the 1990s, legal indictments of clergy were beginning to capture public attention, but it was not until 2002 that people became aware of the extent

to which Catholic church authorities had been protecting abusive priests (Frawley-O'Dea, 2007, p. 195). Legal cases involving clergy began to make headlines in New Zealand at around the same time. An article in the New Zealand Herald in 2002 ("Judgment day for nine black sheep of the faith," 2002) named nine priests or religious brothers who had gone before the courts, charged with sex offences since 1990. The article indicated that others had been investigated by the police, with no further action being taken. Some of these were "dealt with internally by the Catholic Church."

If media attention and criminal prosecutions in relation to sexual abuse by clergy have followed the pattern of other helping professions, so have institutional efforts to address the issue. Religious denominations and organisations have been engaging in developing professional associations, codes of ethical practice, improved training, procedures for claims of sexual harassment or abuse, and indemnity insurance (Clark, 1993; Fortune & Poling, 1994; Gross-Schaefer et al., 2011; Pauling, 1999). The nature of these efforts as work in progress is highlighted by the fact that "the first article to compare a variety of religious organizations' codes of conduct when dealing with clergy sexual misconduct" was published only in 2011 (Gross-Schaefer et al., 2011, p. 223).

Psychological models

Alongside this emphasis in recent decades on training and professionalism in ministry, psychological models have increasingly been invoked to make sense of, and address, situations where the use of religious authority has been problematic.

Some of these approaches focus primarily on the psychology of the individual self. They draw attention, for example, to Freudian notions of transference and counter-transference (Celenza, 2004; Kennedy, 2003; Muse, 1992), the role of sexual addiction or "predilection" (Birchard, 2004; Plante, 2006), variations on themes of "neediness" and "deficit" (Birchard, 2000; Cooper-White, 1991), role identity theory (Pooler, 2011), and various forms of psychological profiling of those responsible for abuse (Blanchette & Coleman, 2002; Francis & Baldo, 1998; Francis & Turner, 1995; Plante & Aldridge, 2005). Cooper-White (1991) takes the view that there are identifiable "internal dynamics" at work in male ministers who abuse women, as well as some "learned susceptibilities that incline women to overlook, forgive and tolerate a pastor's

sexual exploitation” (p. 198). In some cases, a distinction is made between religious leaders who are naïve or poorly trained and those with “personality disorders” that “predispose” them to abusive behaviours (Francis et al., 1995). Such analyses suggest that the way to address the problem is a mix of better training and appropriate therapeutic help for those concerned.

Other psychological approaches treat Christian communities as social systems, often looking to family systems theory for their paradigm (Benyei, 1998; Bowen, 1978; Davis, 2008; Friedman, 1985; Friedman, Treadwell, & W., 2007; Giesbrecht & Sevcik, 2000; Howe, 1998; Lebacqz & Driskill, 2000, p. 133; Richardson, 1996, 2004). It is not unusual to find writers on the subject of problematic forms of church leadership calling on an eclectic mix of psychological theories, including individualistic and systems paradigms, in their analyses. Minnich-Sadler (2005), for example, combines family systems theory with constructive-development theory: “Constructive-development theory deepens my understanding of individual thought and relational processes; family systems helps me pull it all together in the context of the congregation as a whole” (p. 8).

Evaluation

Some of the developments outlined in this section have benefited people whose lives have been negatively affected by practices of religious authority. The spiritual abuse literature and the increased emphasis on professionalism in ministry have both helped to move the issues out from behind closed doors and to strengthen structures of accountability for Christian leaders. Together with the use of psychological models, these approaches have also offered those who have been oppressed or abused some ways to name and evaluate what has happened to them. This in turn has supported some people in taking action to challenge abusive leaders, or to remove themselves from destructive circumstances (see, for example, Deans, 2001; Grace, 1996; Noll & Harvey, 2008). There is less evidence that the quest for doctrinal purity, or its accompanying separatist strategy, has helped to address problematic practices of religious authority. The stories represented in Chapters 5, 6, and 7 tend to suggest that these approaches can become part of the problem, when leaders take it on themselves to impose “the truth” on their congregations.

In terms of helping to answer my research questions, however, these approaches have a number of limitations. Those that trace the problem to some kind of deficiency in particular leaders—whether moral, spiritual, theological, professional, or psychological—tend to pathologise the individuals concerned and divert attention from wider social and historical factors which may be complicit in the subversion of freedom and justice in Christian communities. With the therapeutic context in mind, Paré (2012) observes that “when we overlook culture, we have nowhere to turn to explain people’s difficulties but the people themselves” (p. 20). This leads to a focus on “dysfunction and deficit,” while contextual factors are rendered invisible. The turn to systemic paradigms, such as those based on family systems theory, addresses this weakness in part, but only in part. Freedman and Combs (1996) suggest that the systems metaphor both highlights and obscures certain things about families:

It has given us useful ways to talk about the processes by which people connect in patterns that transcend individual bodies. . . . However, just as the idea of individual minds in individual bodies once limited our ability to conceptualize and work with mind as an interpersonal phenomenon in family systems, the idea of “family systems” now can limit our ability to think about the flow of ideas in our larger culture. (p. 2)

In their review of developments in family therapy, the authors trace a shift from a focus on individual minds and actions, to an exploration of interpersonal psychological dynamics within social systems, to the interrogation of taken-for-granted ideas within the wider social context about gender, identity, power, rights and duties. Their summary points to the kind of analysis which is missing from the approaches reviewed so far in this chapter: one that asks how the regimes of knowledge and power which become problematic are constructed and maintained within their social contexts. Such an analysis is less intent on identifying deficits in particular individuals or groups, and more engaged in critically evaluating the taken-for-granted ideas embedded in church and wider societal culture that produce unhelpful practices of religious authority.

This kind of analysis is not entirely absent from the literature. In the next section, I summarise the perspectives of a number of feminist authors who further highlight the inadequacy of individualistic and psychological accounts of what is

happening when religious ideas and practices become complicit in the oppression of women.

2.3 Feminist analysis

In what follows, I highlight four aspects of feminist analysis of power relations in Christian communities.

Gender inequalities as historically and culturally situated

In the 1970s, a growing number of Christian women in the west began to express concern at fundamental inequalities between men and women in their churches' teachings and practices. Inspired by the wider feminist movements of the 1960s, Christian authors began to call for change. Bammert (2010) notes the early influence of a book published by Scanzoni and Hardesty (1974), entitled *All we're meant to be: A biblical approach to women's liberation*. The authors argued that many of the biblical texts used to support patriarchal practices belonged to particular historical and cultural contexts, and could not be regarded as normative or predicated on essential differences between men and women. So, Bammert suggests, they demonstrated "how conservative orthodox positions on the role of women are value laden rather than objective, promoting an epistemic skepticism that lays the groundwork for their feminist activism" (p. 159).

Feminist scholarship in biblical and theological studies has flourished since those early beginnings, offering more radical critiques of patriarchal traditions and structures of oppression endemic to religious contexts (Brock et al., 2001; Brown & Bohn, 1989; Schüssler Fiorenza, 1983, 2001, 2007; Schüssler Fiorenza, Collins, & Lefébure, 1985; Tribble, 1984). Such work highlights the inadequacy of efforts to address oppressive practices of religious authority which focus only on internal psychological processes, or local systemic factors, while overlooking the historical and cultural roots of gendered forms of inequality and oppression. Several of the stories re-represented in this thesis show how much consciousness-raising work is still required in this regard, in the 21st century.

A nostalgic desire for patriarchal privilege

Predictably, feminist challenges to male privilege in Christian contexts have often been met with resistance and hostility by those in privileged positions of

authority. Writing in the mid-1990s, Fortune and Poling (1994) suggested that sexual abuse by men in Christian ministry was at that time on the increase, and argued that this abuse was a punitive response to the efforts of women to challenge male power:

I believe that clergy sexual abuse is a part of this same backlash against the liberation of women with the purpose of the reassertion of male dominance. . . . Many complainants about clergy sexual abuse are women who are training for ministry and other forms of religious leadership in the church. As I review the dozens of cases of clergy sexual abuse I have heard about personally, I am astounded at the number of women whose careers have been damaged or derailed because they were abused by mentors serving as gatekeepers of the church's power. (p. 58)

Poling (1994) further argued that patriarchal motives were evident in the way abuse by clergy was covered up and abusers were protected by church leaders. While more recent efforts to require clergy commitment to professional and ethical practices mean that there are now more safeguards against such overt assertions of male power in many churches, a hankering after the past can still be discerned. Having interviewed twenty women pastors from diverse Christian communities in the USA, Bammert (2010) concludes that the continued predominance of masculine authority finds support through social longings for a warmly remembered yet imaginary stable past:

Perhaps what many church communities offer is a return to the past where family values are honoured, the "home" provides nurture and comfort, basic needs are met, and there is a sense of care among neighbors. Repercussions for living in this imagined past are reinforcement of antiquated oppressive structures, systemic and attitudinal, resulting, for example, in gender hierarchies that naturalize male dominance and female subordination. (p. 174)

Bammert suggests that women, as well as men, are drawn to communities which maintain gendered hierarchies because those communities focus on traditional values and family life, despite the cost for women being "intractably high" (p. 157). This cost is reflected not only in power imbalances within church structures, but in domestic situations where women are expected to adopt a submissive, and supposedly biblical, stance in relation to their husbands. In a study of the experience of white Pentecostal women in Australia, Fraser (2003) writes of

battered women who “cannot escape their devastating shame without first enduring the additional torment of arrogant and insensitive androcentric voices’ invasive and humiliating emotional pressure to persevere in their marriages” (p. 145).

Ministerial and sexual power

In addition to churches’ historical inclination to deal with clergy misconduct behind closed doors, sexually abused women face a further injustice when they are blamed for preying on their ministers. Schoener (1995) cites several romantic novels, written in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, which portray innocent young ministers being ensnared by the seductive ways of women who seek their counsel on ostensibly spiritual matters. The persistence of this tendency to blame women is reflected in Deans’ (2001) account of her personal experience of sexual abuse in the New Zealand church context. She points out that the displacement of guilt from male perpetrators to female victims has a long history in Jewish, Christian and Muslim religious discourse. Women are held responsible for men’s desires, while “men’s so-called ‘red-bloodedness’ is given cultural and religious acceptance” (p. 167).

Addressing the problem of clergy sexual abuse, Kennedy (2003) points out that it is those who approach ministers for pastoral help who are in the vulnerable position. Moreover, the trend toward therapeutic models of ministry (referred to in the previous section) means that the women who seek help may wrongly believe that their ministers have a level of training and skill equivalent to an accredited counsellor: “Women in the Church have been hoodwinked to believe in the vast power of the priest or minister. This has become profoundly dangerous” (pp. 234-235). That danger is increased when clergy with limited training attempt misguided therapeutic interventions. Reflecting on factors in the sexual abuse which she and others experienced from a particular priest, Deans (2001) speculates on the influence of therapies which were vogue in the 1960s and 1970s:

My guess is that he was influenced by the sexual revolution of the sixties and seventies, when women’s sexuality was put under the microscope by Kinsey, Masters and Johnson, and Shere Hite and these investigators declared that women were now free from sexual inhibitions. . . . This is about the time that R, as far as

we can ascertain, began to engage sexually with women in his care as part of their ‘therapy’. He seemed to assume that all women were sexually liberated and, if they were not, then he would teach them how to be sexually liberated with him if they were privileged enough to have been chosen by him. (p. 138)

Kennedy (2003) rejects the argument that clergy who misuse their position to sexually exploit women in this way must have some pathological dysfunction:

It is as if they have, because of their desires, no way of accessing responsible behaviour. What the medico-pathological model does not account for is the deep cultural and ingrained patriarchal misogyny within the male clerical system. If such men are truly disturbed and pathological it would follow that the Church authorities should be careful to remove them from ministry. (p. 232)

The risk of sexual exploitation by those in positions of religious authority is further increased by certain theological beliefs, as the next and final aspect of feminist analysis shows.

Theologies which support domination

The role of religious beliefs in supporting domestic violence against women, noted above in relation to Fraser’s (2003) discussion of Australian Pentecostal contexts, features in research in other Christian contexts (Bent-Goodley & Fowler, 2006; Cooper-White, 2011; McMullen, 2003; Nason-Clark, 2000; Wendt, 2008). This in turn is part of a wider pattern of discrimination based on certain readings of the Bible, as Monroe (2009), writing as an African American lesbian Christian, observes: “The Bible has played a salient role in discrimination against many people at different times in the United States. Both religious intolerance and fundamentalism foster a climate of spiritual abuse that exiles people spiritually for the rest of their lives” (p. 185).

Beyond the interpretation or use of particular biblical texts, feminist analyses of patriarchal practices in Christian contexts point to the influence of ideas and images which pervade religious life (Brock et al., 2001; Brown et al., 1989; Furlong, 1991; Stockton, 1992). A combination of negative images of women (such as Eve the temptress) and predominantly male images of God, for example, supports the belief that men are inherently closer to God than women, and that women need to be controlled and guided by men. Certain theological interpretations of the crucifixion of Christ emphasise the anger of God against his

disobedient children, with the Son suffering a violent death in place of those children. Fortune and Poling (1994) argue that abusive relationships are not an aberration of the church's theology, they are inherent in the very symbols of that theology: "A sexual relationship between a male clergyman and a female parishioner replicates the dynamics of the drama between a patriarchal God and an obedient, self-sacrificing Jesus standing in for a sinful humanity" (p. 39). They therefore call for a commitment on the part of the church to deeper change—not merely to the policies and procedures of professionalism—including a willingness "to challenge the patriarchal core of our collective religious life" (p. 26).

2.4 Rationale for adopting a poststructuralist conceptual framework

This brief overview of feminist perspectives underlines the concerns which gave rise to this project. It highlights ways in which freedom and justice for women have been, and are still, subverted by the practices of religious authority in many Christian communities. It also reinforces the conclusion arrived at in the previous section (2.2), that efforts to understand and address this disturbing history need to go beyond the use of psychological, professional and theological paradigms which identify deficiencies in particular individuals or communities. Weedon (1997), writing more generally about patriarchal power relations, argues that they "exist in the institutions and social practices of our society and cannot be explained by the intentions, good or bad, of individual women or men. This is not to deny that individual women and men are often the agents of oppression, but to suggest that we need a theory which can explain how and why people oppress each other" (p. 3).

The feminist discussions cited in the previous section suggest that explaining the "how and why" of women's oppression in religious contexts requires analysis of its construction by historically and culturally situated ideas, language, powerful vested interests, and theologically produced notions of personhood and power. Poststructuralism represents a "field of critical practices" (Butler et al., 1992a, pp. xiii-xiv) which is well suited to this complex task. Weedon (1997) agrees that poststructuralist theory is useful in relation to feminist interests because it can "address forms of social organization and the social meanings and values which guarantee or contest them," and at the same time offers "a theory of the relation between language, subjectivity, social organization

and power” (p. 12). This description of the critical power of poststructuralist ideas points to its usefulness in relation to the particular concerns of this project—not simply those which overlap with feminist interests, but the wider question of “how and why” the practices of religious authority have oppressive effects for women *and* men in Christian communities. I am not suggesting that men and women have suffered to an equal extent in this regard, but I undertake this project on behalf of all those whose lives are diminished by such practices, including people who may not easily identify with either gender (Monroe, 2009). While I draw substantially in this study on the work of poststructuralist feminists, particularly Butler, Davies, Drewery, and Weedon, I also look to Foucault, Derrida, and others whose interests are not identified with feminism.

There is another way in which this project extends beyond the feminist analyses referred to in the previous section, and it relates to my second research question, concerning the possibility of resistance to religious authority (see page 3). Poststructuralist feminist authors have much to say that is helpful in theorising agency and resistance, and I draw heavily on that work in the next chapter (section 3.3). In feminist discussions of specifically *religious* contexts, however, the focus appears to be more on the construction of oppression, and its effects, than on resistance to such oppression. While some attention is given to the role of Christian movements in advocating for justice for women, and to the stories of women who have contributed to such movements, less attention is given to everyday stories of women’s resistance at the “grassroots” level. I am not sure why this is the case. Perhaps the task of highlighting the ongoing subjugation of women within religious communities has greater urgency than foregrounding women’s stories of agency and resistance. Whatever the reason, my intention in this study is to re-present women’s and men’s accounts of their resistance to religious authority, and to enquire into the “how and why” of these accounts.

I conclude this chapter with a brief summary of my rationale for adopting a poststructuralist conceptual framework for this study, and my hopes for what this will contribute:

- i Pre-modern approaches to problematic practices of religious authority tended to regard the issue as a matter of personal morality and spirituality. The question of “how and why” such practices occurred needed no further

explanation. They were to be dealt with before God and behind the closed doors of the church.

- ii Modernist analyses of these issues, framed in terms of deficiencies in individuals or groups, and reliant on professional, psychological or theological paradigms, have brought a wider awareness of the problem. However, they tend to pathologise individuals and communities, while leaving the contributions of taken-for-granted ideas and vested interests in the wider church and social culture unexplored.
- iii Feminist discussions extend their analyses into this neglected territory, highlighting the historical, cultural, and theological roots of the oppression of women in Christian communities. This represents a significant step toward answering my first research question, although the concerns behind that question are not restricted to gendered forms of oppression. While there is an extensive feminist literature dealing with the question of agency, this has not yet encompassed an enquiry into women's agency or resistance in religious contexts.
- iv Poststructuralist theory offers an approach to analysis which is able to address the social construction of oppressive practices of religious authority, including, but not limited to, their gendered aspects (my first research question). In theorising the interrelatedness of knowledge, power, and subjectivity, it also suggests a way to think about the question of how people are able to resist such practices (the second research question).

In Chapter 3, *Theoretical and ethical orientation*, I develop a poststructuralist conceptual framework, and an ethical orientation, for this project. In Chapter 4, *Research methodology and design*, I explain in methodological and practical terms how this theoretical and ethical orientation informs my analysis of the participants' narratives of resistance to religious authority.

Chapter 3:

Theoretical and ethical orientation

In the previous two chapters, I have outlined the issues arising from my context which have motivated this project and the research questions which emerged from those concerns. I have argued that a poststructuralist analysis of problematic experiences of religious authority has the potential to shed fresh light on the subversion of freedom and justice in Christian communities, without rehearsing the individualising, psychologising, or pathologising approaches often applied to these issues. The four main sections of this chapter set out the theoretical ideas and ethical stance which underpin the way I approach such an analysis in this project.

The first section interacts with Foucault's (1988) work on his own question, "What are the relationships between truth, power, and self?" (p. 15). This provides the framework for discussing poststructuralist notions of discourse, power and subjectivity, which are in turn taken up in the formulation of my research methodology, discursive narrative analysis, in Chapter 4. In the second main section, I explore several aspects of the discursive production of subjectivity, laying out a number of ideas which inform my analysis of the narratives produced in my interviews with the participants in this project. These first two sections provide the conceptual framework within which I address my first research question, "Within Christian communities, how is it that some regimes of power and knowledge can subvert the call to freedom and justice which is pervasive in longstanding streams of Christian tradition?"

The third main section of the chapter engages with poststructuralist discussions concerning the possibility of human agency and its relationship to resistance. I explore several ideas, including discursive complexity, intertextuality, and re-authoring, each of which has relevance to my second research question, "What has enabled some people to resist the practices of religious authority constructed by such regimes?"

The final section of this chapter returns to an issue implicit in the first research question, namely, what is meant when I refer to *freedom and justice*? Drawing on the theoretical ideas of the previous sections, together with the ethical

reflections of Derrida, Foucault, Levinas and Sampson, I suggest that the notion of dialogic power relations provides a useful way to address this question.

3.1 Poststructuralist paradigms: discourse, power and subjectivity

In my initial acquaintance with narrative therapy, it was Foucault's power/knowledge paradigm which first suggested the potential of applying a poststructuralist analysis to the issue of religious authority. Here I give further precision to the terms *poststructuralism* and *discourse*, before presenting my understanding of Foucault's analytics of power and its relevance to this study. To add further clarity to these descriptions, I contrast poststructuralist ideas with those of liberal humanism.

In western societies—including New Zealand society and its Christian communities—liberal humanism is embedded in much taken-for-granted thinking about personhood. White (1997) summarises some of these key ideas as “the will to truth, the repressive hypothesis, and the emancipation narrative” (p. 220). He notes that, among those positioned by such ideas, there are commonly heard laments such as, “What is it that stands in the way of us becoming truly who we really are?” (p. 221) In the latter half of the 20th century, this mix of psychological and humanist discourses was not infrequently harnessed to religious themes of selfhood, authenticity and liberation of the true self. White's critique of what he regards as narcissistic tendencies within liberal humanism is balanced by his acknowledgment that the emancipation narrative has often supported people in their resistance to oppressive forms of authority. This is evident in the stories of some of the participants in this study who spoke of the need to be true to themselves as a factor in their resistance. In my analysis, I argue that there was more than a desire for authenticity at work in their acts of resistance, but I also want to echo the tone of respect in White's (1997) comments concerning “humanism's achievements”:

I would like to emphasise that this critique is not a criticism of all that humanism stands for—it is not a disqualification of all of those ways of being and thinking in the world that humanism is an emblem for. And this critique does not constitute a disqualification of many of humanism's achievements on a personal and social level—in the support that many persons have drawn from it in challenging the various acts of domination they are being subject to, and in the significant role that

it has played through its employment by the various human rights movements that have challenged different forms of discrimination and oppression. (p. 234)

Having acknowledged this picture with regard to humanism, I turn to a review of selected poststructuralist ideas and highlight further inadequacies within humanist accounts of personhood, power and change.

Poststructuralism

Poststructuralism is a stream of postmodern thought, characterised by a particular view of language and radically opposed to the liberal humanist view of personhood. The humanist paradigm begins with the thinking, feeling, choosing, human subject as the primary entity within the social order. On that view, language is a tool used by people to give expression to thoughts, feelings and meanings which originate in their inner worlds. This view was challenged by structuralist philosophers such as de Saussure (1966) who argued that in using language to make meaning, human beings participate in something beyond individual, conscious intention. Language is a system of signs with socially agreed meanings. Therefore human experience and meaning-making are ultimately shaped by social structures. *Poststructuralists* take a further step in the decentring of the individual by focusing on language, rather than on social structures (which themselves are interpretations made in language), as Jones (1997) explains.

Derrida, considered by some to be the ‘creator’ of post-structuralism, emphasised that we cannot reach outside language; that everything is mediated by language and meaning. Not only that, but we can never *fix* meanings; they are deeply contextual and shifting, endlessly taken from other meanings which are taken from others, and so on. There are a range of historically and culturally specific possible meanings, so researchers/thinkers can never get to the final, ‘real’ meaning or structure of a society or action or text. (pp. 264-265; emphasis in the original)

For poststructuralists, then, personality, experience, and identity are effects of language, and the “psychological centre of gravity” is located in the social realm, rather than in the essentialist core self of humanistic understanding (Burr, 2003, pp. 53-54). Poststructuralists’ particular interest is in language as a site of variability and potential conflict. So “we are drawn into a view of talk, writing

and social encounters as sites of struggle and conflict, where power relations are acted out and contested” (Burr, 2003, pp. 54-55).

This last statement of Burr’s shows why poststructuralist ideas are often taken up on behalf of projects of social change, and why I consider them to have particular ethical force for this project. Words, language, and meaning-making are objects of central importance within religious contexts, especially where any or all of these are considered to be God-spoken and sacred. To control meaning and interpretation signifies dominance in an ordinary social sense, but in a religious community it may also imply a divine right to exercise authority over others. As suggested in the previous chapter, part of the contribution of a poststructuralist account of what is occurring in such communities is to shift the analysis from the internal psychological and/or spiritual worlds of individuals to what is being constructed in the language and dominant discourses of their contexts.

Having mentioned *discourse*, a term used in the previous two chapters with minimal definition, I now expand on the particular (Foucauldian) understanding of that term which is central to this study.

Discourse

The poststructuralist concern with language and the way it constitutes our knowledge of the world leads naturally to an interest in the ways in which it is structured to produce these effects. According to what rationalities do history, culture, and language operate within social systems, beyond individual intention and awareness? In Chapter 1, I noted Burr’s (2003) view that a discourse “refers to a set of meanings, metaphors, representations, images, stories, statements and so on that in some way together produce a particular version of events” (p. 64).

For Foucault (1972), discourses are “practices which form the objects of which they speak” (p. 49). In introducing his archaeological project of delving into the discursive strategies which produce taken for granted knowledges or “unities,” Foucault (1972) explains his intention.

I shall take as my starting-point whatever unities are already given . . . but I shall not place myself inside these dubious unities in order to study their internal configuration or their secret contradictions. I shall make use of them just long enough to ask myself what unities they form; by what right they can claim a field that specifies them in space and a continuity that individualizes them in time;

according to what laws they are formed; against the background of which discursive events they stand out. (p. 26)

He goes on to contrast a form of discourse analysis which is concerned with language and its rules and structures with his own project of interrogating the ways in which discourse constructs what is spoken:

The question posed by language analysis of some discursive fact or other is always: according to what rules has a particular statement been made, and consequently according to what rules could other similar statements be made? The description of the events of discourse poses a quite different question: how is it that one particular statement appeared rather than another? (p. 27)

Here Foucault alludes to the relation between discourse and power in ways that again bear directly on my research. Foucault's "quite different question" is closely allied with my concerns: what are the discursive strategies which construct oppressive practices of religious authority in some Christian communities? How do such practices achieve the subjugation of knowledges about the possibility of power relations which could enhance freedom and justice? These questions are addressed in detail in my discussion of the findings of this study (Chapter 8). In anticipation of these specific findings, I note Parker's (1992) helpful summary of three aspects of the relation of discourse to institutions, power and ideology:

Discourses support institutions. The discourses of an institution, which exist in its texts, speech, symbols and practices, structure and reproduce the institution. Other discourses which might subvert the institution are likely to be suppressed.

Discourses reproduce power relations. As explained below, the discourses which support institutions also structure power relations. In some Christian churches, as I show in my findings, the position of a leader is supported by a discourse of submission, in which the language of leadership includes ideas of being chosen and specially endowed by God to exercise authority over the congregation. This supports protocols as to who may speak, how and when they may speak, and what authority will be attached to their speech.

Discourses have ideological effects. At a particular place and time, a discourse may function with ideological effects (rather than *being* an ideology per se). Parker suggests, for example, that Christian discourses function in an ideological way if they support racism as a dominant world-view. The same can

be said of their role in maintaining patriarchy. Alternatively, other Christian discourses have been invoked by movements opposed to racist and sexist ideologies and practices.

Finally, although I have referred to discourse(s) doing things (constructing, reproducing, subjugating and so on), these effects need to be understood as occurring through human actions and within social systems. Davies and Harré (1990) therefore speak of *discursive practice*, by which they mean “all the ways in which people actively produce social and psychological realities” (p. 45). So while discourse is more than the ideas people intentionally produce, or have awareness of, human communities and practices are nonetheless the means by which discourses reproduce, evolve, and vie for dominance. Even at the micro-social level of individual conversations, people find themselves participating in discursive struggles which transmit and transform discourse (Moissinac, 2007). In approaching the stories of the participants in this project, I am concerned with both the macro- and micro-social spheres of discursive practice, understanding with Winslade (2005), and others before him, that the personal is also political:

Because there is a range of possible meanings, we often find ourselves in the middle of a contest about which meanings will prevail. The discursive field of contested meanings that is thus established can be thought of as a political field. (p. 354)

Whether considering a participant’s account of their relationship to their community or world-wide movement, or of a conversation between individuals, my analysis seeks to shed light on the discursive struggle that is represented in their description. The political significance of “a discursive field of contested meanings” indicates the presence of power relations, and it is to the relationships which exist between discourse and power that I now turn.

Power/knowledge

Foucault’s aim was to provide an analytics of power which was contextual and historical, rather than a general theory of power. He was inclined to trouble any such unified theory, as I have indicated above. Nonetheless, there are consistent threads in his writings about power which are pertinent to this project. As I have suggested already, the shift from thinking of power as the possession of certain individuals or groups to Foucault’s notion of power circulating in social systems,

inextricably connected with the dominant discourses of those systems, offers a fresh way to think about the operations of power in religious contexts.

In order to highlight some distinctive aspects of Foucault's analytics of power, and their potential application in this study, I here point out several contrasts with liberal humanist perspectives on power. My starting point is a helpful set of comparisons offered by Davies and colleagues (Davies et al., 2002). Some of the areas of contrast which they develop are rather closely interconnected, so I streamline them here into three categories.

i *Power circulates throughout social systems*

A taken-for-granted idea about power is that some people possess more of it than others, and that it is these people who can be said to have agency. In this view, generally taken up within the humanist paradigm, the operations of power tend to be conceived of as unidirectional and hierarchical, with power manifesting itself in the effects of some (more powerful) subjects acting on other (less powerful) subjects. In contrast to these assumptions, Davies et al (2002) suggest that, for Foucault, power itself "has no essence; it is simply operational. It is not an attribute but a relation . . . a set of possible relations between forces which passes through the dominated forces no less than the dominating" (p. 297). Here the authors are citing Deleuze (1988, p. 24), with minor modifications. In Foucault's (1980) own words, power

must be analysed as something which circulates, or rather as something which only functions in the form of a chain. It is never localised here or there, never in anybody's hands, never appropriated as a commodity or piece of wealth. Power is employed and exercised through a net-like organisation. . . . In other words, individuals are the vehicles of power, not its points of application. (p. 98)

Here Foucault depicts power as being always in motion, and not in a fixed location or relation to discourse or subjectivity. Moreover, the workings of power may be conceived as being like multiple lines of force in a "field of force relations" (Foucault, 1978, p. 101), continually changing in their relationship to each other.

People within the discursive networks by which power circulates within social systems are therefore viewed by Foucault as active participants, rather than passive objects. This highlights one of a number of paradoxical aspects of

poststructuralist thought. The paradox in this case is that those whose lives are being constrained and constructed by the operations of power within a community are at the same actively participating in the maintenance of those operations. How this is so will become clearer in the second and third points to follow.

Discussions of the use and abuse of religious authority often conceive of power in unidirectional, hierarchical terms. This project is an attempt to provide a more nuanced consideration of the particular fields of force relations evident in the stories of my participants, including the discursively produced institutions and practices through which such fields have been constituted, and the effects on those who participate in these institutions and practices. In pursuing this aim, I note Deleuze's (1988) suggestion that the key question is not so much, "What is power and where does it come from?", but "How is it practised?" (p. 60).

ii *Power operates through freedom and productivity*

Foucault maintains a distinction between violence and relations of power. Violent domination acts directly on the other in a way that closes off all possibilities. It is the brute, destructive force of one person exercised against another. For Foucault, this is the power of the old order—the centralised power of the king (1977a; Foucault et al., 1980). In contrast, the kind of power relationship envisaged by Foucault in post-monarchical societies necessitates that those involved are recognised as acting and having a degree of freedom. "Power is exercised only over free subjects, and only insofar as they are free" (Foucault, in Dreyfus & Rabinow, 1982, p. 221).

For Foucault, again paradoxically, it is while this freedom remains, while there is the possibility of refusal or revolt, that power can subject an individual to government (Dreyfus et al., 1982, p. 253). Rose (1996) summarises Foucault's understanding of the way power thus both shapes and depends on human subjectivity:

We often think of power in terms of constraints that dominate, deny and repress subjectivity. Foucault, however, analyzes power not as a negation of the vitality and capacities of individuals, but as the creation, shaping, and utilization of human beings *as* subjects. Power, that is to say, works through, and not against, subjectivity. (p. 151; emphasis in the original)

Davies et al (2001) speak of the “ambivalent project of subjectification . . . the processes through which we are subjected, and actively take up as our own the terms of our subjection” (p. 167). This is a particular expression of the previous description of subjects actively participating in the circulation of power while also experiencing its effects.

Even where power is not outright domination, there can be a tendency in liberal humanist thinking to view it as negative and oppressive in the way it suppresses the autonomy and core identity of the individual. On this view, power inevitably corrupts and distorts the truth, and is best given away in order to empower the powerless (Davies et al., 2002, p. 297). In contrast, Foucault (1980), who refers to these ideas as the “repressive hypothesis,” insists that power is also *productive* in its effects.

If power were never anything but repressive, if it never did anything but to say no, do you really think one would be brought to obey it? What makes power hold good, what makes it accepted, is simply the fact that it doesn't only weigh on us as a force that says no, but that it traverses and produces things, it induces pleasure, forms knowledge, produces discourse. It needs to be considered as a productive network which runs through the whole social body, much more than as a negative instance whose function is repression. (p. 119)

Foucault is not distinguishing here between repressive and benevolent forms of power. Rather, he is arguing that it is mistaken to assume that power works in inherently repressive ways, or that people accept the curtailment of their freedom because they are powerless to do otherwise. Even power exercised with repressive intent operates within a social system in ways that are productive. The effects (forms of knowledge, discourse, pleasure, pain, resistance, identity and so on) may or may not be considered to be positive, but they are not simply a negation:

Power would be a fragile thing if its only function were to repress, if it worked only through the mode of censorship, exclusion, blockage and repression. . . . If, on the contrary, power is strong this is because, as we are beginning to realise, it produces effects at the level of desire—and also at the level of knowledge. Far from preventing knowledge, power produces it. (Foucault et al., 1980, p. 59)

The issue of freedom, in the way Foucault speaks of it, has particular relevance in social systems such as churches in western societies. Belonging to, or leaving, a particular church community is a matter of choice for adult members. Most of the

participants in this project stayed for long periods in churches where they were experiencing significant discomfort. However, this was a seldom a consequence of outright domination. Nor were their experiences uniformly negative. My analysis of their accounts shows how the practices of religious authority both presumed and produced the ideas which held them there. This anticipates the final point I want to highlight in relation to Foucault's power/knowledge paradigm.

iii *Power relations presuppose and actualise knowledge*

Foucault's (1980) account of the relationship between power and knowledge is very pertinent to religious contexts where, as I have suggested, truth and knowledge are often the focus of much attention. While humanism may hold a view of knowledge as being neutral and outside of power, Foucault understands knowledge and power relations to be inseparable and productive of one another. Power relations both presuppose and actualise knowledge. The lines of force operative within power relations call people into alignments in which they see and speak in certain ways. These ways of seeing and speaking are in turn performative of certain types of power relations. So the knowledges and the power relations constructed by dominant discourses cohere and buttress one another.

Foucault points out that there are specific forms of knowledge (*rationalities*) which make any particular form of power seem reasonable or inevitable. These rationalities are integral to the dynamic of governmentality, that is, "the way in which the conduct of individuals or of groups might be directed . . . to structure the possible field of action of others" (Foucault, in Dreyfus et al., 1982, p. 221). The rationalities which give meaning to a situation assist people to perform the operations on their own bodies, thoughts and conduct which are necessary for them to become, or remain, appropriate(d) subjects within given networks of power relations. In some religious contexts, for example, such rationalities might be spoken of as "spiritual principles." Such principles might typically include the God-given authority of leaders and the spiritual consequences of submitting/not submitting to their authority. These rationalities are transmitted both explicitly and implicitly, producing submissive subjects and thereby a self-sustaining nexus of power and discourse.

A further category of knowledge which deserves specific mention is expert knowledge. With reference to Foucault's (1977a) work in *Discipline and Punish*, Hook (2003) notes the objectifying and disciplinary aspects of expert knowledge:

The criminal, for example, became a species to be known, the crime something to be exhaustively coded and classified. . . . Here one finds a particular object-relation of knowledge to be duplicated throughout the human/social sciences: one in which the individual is known and specified through the categorial knowledge to which the finer details of specific and individual cases are ceaselessly contributed. (p. 609)

To name and codify a human being as belonging to a particular species of the criminal class is an action of disciplinary power; and this taxonomy of crime at the same time supports the exercise of—indeed the need for—such disciplinary force. Disciplinary power functions not only through the objectifying effects of expert knowledge, but also through humanisation, individualisation, “psychologisation,” and confessional practices. While the sphere of crime and punishment may seem remote from the religious domain, such disciplinary strategies are recognisable in my participants' accounts, as I show in Chapter 8.

It is evident from the discussion so far that the notions of power, knowledge, discourse, subjectivity and governmentality are closely interrelated in Foucault's analysis. Having given some attention to power and discourse, I now consider poststructuralist conceptualisations of subjectivity.

Subjectivity

The term *subjectivity* is used in a variety of ways within different paradigms. I use it here to suggest the psychological awareness that people appear to have of themselves *as selves*. This includes their ideas, metaphors, self-narratives, desires, hopes and fantasies (Burr, 2003, p. 119). It is in their accounts of subjectivity that humanist and poststructuralist perspectives are particularly at odds with one another. Davies (1991) suggests that in humanist paradigms the individual has (or should pursue) a continuous, unified, rational identity. On this view, early socialisation is followed by the individual's internalisation of values which, in healthy adults, is the internal core on the basis of which coherent, rational choices can be made. Stories are versions of events that occur in the real world, and an important distinction is made between true and fictional stories. In contrast, as

Davies (1991) points out, poststructuralists view subjectivity as “constituted through the discourses in which the person is being positioned at any one point in time” (p. 43). These discourses are often contradictory, and so, therefore, is subjectivity. In Davies’ view, there is no individual I, other than that spoken into existence by discourse. Similarly, stories are “the means by which events are interpreted, made tellable, or even liveable. All stories are understood as fictions providing the substance of lived reality” (p. 43). Henriques et al (Henriques, Hollway, Urwin, Venn, & Walkerdine, 1984) offer a view of subjectivity in similar terms:

We use ‘subjectivity’ to refer to individuality and self-awareness—the condition of being a subject—but understand in this usage that subjects are dynamic and multiple, always positioned in relation to the discourses and practices and produced by these—the condition of being subject. (p. 3)

Alongside subjectivity, poststructuralist writers also refer to *subjectification* and *subjection*. In simple terms, I take subjectification (sometimes referred to as subjectivation) to mean the process by which discourses act on people to produce them as subjects. Dominant discourses make certain subject positions available to people, and the process of subjectification is continued in their taking up and mastery of these positions. Subjection is a term sometimes used to describe the state of being fully installed into the subject position(s) prescribed by dominant discourses. So Davies et al (2001) write of subjectification as “the process through which we are subjected, and actively take up as our own the terms of our subjection” (p. 167). A further related term is *subjugation*, which is perhaps a stronger way of expressing the idea of subjection. Drewery (2005) notes that when people converse, for example, the effects of certain ways of speaking

are to constitute, or produce, a relationship in which the meanings of one are hidden and/or not understood. The outcome of this is to subsume the meanings of the one into the meanings of the other. Selves or identities produced in such a way are already inscribed by the meanings of those who determine, without the offer to negotiate, the terms for continuing in conversation. Such interactions, therefore, produce subjugated subjects. (pp. 311-312)

The ways in which I understand discourse, power relations and subjectivity to be interrelated are central to the approach taken in my analysis, as I show in outlining

my research methodology and design (Chapter 4). In the next main section I therefore explore the processes of subjectification in some detail.

3.2 Subjectification: the discursive production of identity

There are various ways in which discursive processes of subjectification can be understood and described. Here I outline five particular approaches which inform my analysis and discussion of the participants' accounts: discursive positioning, embodied inscription, self-surveillance and confession, mastery and submission, and storying and intertextuality. I view these as five vantage points from which to view the same complex process, rather than as entirely discrete aspects of subjectification.

Discursive positioning

Willig (2000) regards positioning theory as a “set of conceptual tools with which to explore the relationship between discourse and subjectivity” (p. 556). This echoes an influential description of positioning offered by Davies and Harré (1990):

We shall argue that the constitutive force of each discursive practice lies in its provision of subject positions. A subject position incorporates both a conceptual repertoire and a location for persons within the structure of rights for those that use that repertoire. Once having taken up a particular position as one's own, a person inevitably sees the world from the vantage point of that position and in terms of particular images, metaphors, story lines and concepts which are made relevant within the particular discursive practice in which they are positioned. (p. 46)

Alongside a “conceptual repertoire” and a “structure of rights,” a particular subject position often also provides a set of duties, associated storyline(s) and categories of identity (Harré & Slocum, 2003; Slocum-Bradley, 2010a, 2010b). The language of subject positions and positioning, then, offers a way to speak of the (re)production of power relations and subjectivity through discursive practices such as speech. The discursive contexts in which positioning occurs determine the repertoires of ideas, practices, storylines, categories of personhood, entitlements, and obligations which are associated with available subject positions. With regard to subjectivity, Davies and Harré (1990) speak of “imaginatively positioning oneself as if one belongs in one category and not in the other” and developing “a

sense of oneself as belonging in the world in certain ways and thus seeing the world from the perspective of one so positioned” (p. 47).

The term “position call” denotes a social exchange, usually a speech act, which invites a person into a particular subject position, as Drewery (2005) explains:

In conversation, interactions can be characterized in terms of the positions that are offered, and the positions that are taken up. It is this invitation to take up particular positions that we have termed a ‘position call’ (Drewery & Winslade, 1997). (p. 314)

Such a position call may be accepted by the person to whom it is issued, or it may be refused (explicitly or otherwise), leading to the negotiation of new subject positions (Bamberg, 2004, p. 335; van Lagenhove & Harré, 1999, p. 17). For example, suppose a man in a heterosexual marriage says to his spouse, “Where are my socks?” This may be experienced by the person spoken to as a gendered call into the position of domestic assistant. A response like, “I’m sorry, I haven’t washed them yet,” might constitute an acceptance into that subject position (depending on tone, facial expression, etc). A refusal might be explicit—“I’m your wife, not your housekeeper!”—or indirect, through humour for example—“What did your last slave die of?”

The possibility of refusal suggests a degree of indeterminacy as to the outcome of positioning events. It also raises the question of agency, which is addressed in the next main section (3.3). As outlined in that section, however, the possibility of agency does not imply a return to the idea of an autonomous self, “actively negotiating his or her way through available accounts in order to live a meaningful life” (Rose, 1996, p. 177). Rather it testifies to the likelihood that subjects have been and are positioned within an array of discursive contexts and histories. Associated with the complex nature of positioning, experiences of subjectivity are characterised by a “shifting, contradictory multiplicity and fragility” (Davies et al., 2004, p. 363). This in turn creates the conditions in which agentic positions may be taken up.

Embodied inscription

Earlier I cited Drewery’s (2005) account of the relationship between ways of speaking and the production of subjugated subjects. In describing that process, she

suggested that selves or identities produced in this way “are already inscribed by the meanings of those who determine, without the offer to negotiate, the terms for continuing in conversation” (p. 312). Reflecting on his work on sexuality, Foucault (1980) describes the embodied nature of such inscription:

What I want to show is how power relations can materially penetrate the body in depth, without depending even on the mediation of the subject’s own representations. If power takes hold on the body, this isn’t through its having first to be interiorised in people’s consciousnesses. There is a network or circuit of bio-power, or somato-power, which acts as the formative matrix of sexuality itself as the historical and cultural phenomenon within which we seem at once to recognise and lose ourselves. (p. 186)

This notion of inscription speaks to the effect of repeated experiences of positioning within dominant discourses, so that even when a person is no longer compelled to assume a particular subject position within a discourse, they may still carry with them the embodied force of the repertoires of meaning associated with that discursive position. As Foucault notes, this process transcends conscious awareness and cognitive understanding. Pfohl (2007) argues that “restricting the study of social construction to the realm of cognition limits our analytic appreciation of the complex operations of knowledge by which effective constructions wield their power” (p. 658). One consequence of this complexity, as Davies (1991) observes, is that the translation of new cognitive positions into everyday practice is not easily achieved. Attempts to practice new subject positions come up against “the inscription in one’s body of the ways of being that are appropriate to the subject positions usually taken up” (pp. 49-50).

The embodied effects of positioning emerged as an important theme as I engaged in the analysis of my participants’ accounts, highlighting the importance of paying attention to the process of inscription. I offer further comments on the significance of embodied effects in my discussion of agency and resistance (section 3.3).

Self-surveillance and confession

Foucault draws on aspects of religious life to illustrate the strategies of subjectification which operate in secular social contexts. The pastorate, for

example, provides a way of thinking about governmentality, the shaping of subjectivity to a common end, while the confessional offers a model of the micro-politics of subjection. Here I briefly explain these analogies and highlight the relevance of Foucault's analysis of the religious practices to this study.

Hook (2003) summarises three forms of pastoral power which Foucault uses to illustrate the rationality of the state. First, the role of the pastoral shepherd is to watch over his or her flock with close, individualised, loving attention, and so to ensure their progress toward salvation. This implies knowledge of the conscience and an ability to direct it (see below on the confessional). Second, the shepherd is an intermediary of a greater religious structure, and so leads with an unquestionable authority. Accordingly, the flock's relationship to the pastor is characterised by complete obedience and dependence. Third, the pastor bears the responsibility for the destiny of the flock, and is bound by a complex moral tie to each member. The pastor's exercise of authority is therefore not simply about maintaining control. It is, as for the flock, a matter of obedience and accountability (ultimately to God).

This analysis has been applied by Hook and others (Dean, 1999; Rose, 1996) to psychological forms of care, but Foucault's discussion of religious governmentality has direct relevance to this project in its own right. As I show in Chapter 8, there are striking parallels between the three elements of the pastorate outlined above and themes which emerged in my analysis of my participants' accounts. In many religious contexts, these dynamics of pastoral leadership and subjectification are given particular force by notions of an everywhere-present and all-seeing God. This can be illustrated by reference to Foucault's (1977a) application of the Panopticon model of prison, described by Hook (2003) as

a watchtower within the prison, into which the outsider cannot see, and that thus assures that prisoners know at all times that they *may* well be under surveillance. Prisoners, or 'souls' more generally, thus come to operate as if under constant surveillance, taking on a self-policing role over themselves, hence power-relations are reproduced, implemented from within the internal position of the subject (p. 611).

To believe that "God is watching us," monitoring even private inner thoughts, is to live in a permanent state of panoptical self-surveillance and self-subjectification. My analysis chapters show the critical function exercised by

practices of religious authority in the discursive production of self-surveillance for some of the participants in this project. This connection between belief and subjectification provides a further illustration of Foucault's power/knowledge paradigm.

Allied with self-surveillance is the practice of confession. In *The History of Sexuality*, Foucault (1978) describes the dynamics of the confessional (as developed within Roman Catholicism) to explain the subtle operations of power and discourse in the social production of subjects. In making confession to a priest, a person (a penitent) is *subject* in several senses. In an active sense, as a speaking subject, the penitent discloses the inner workings of conscience. The penitent is also the subject of the confession being made, and in this is subject to religious discourses concerning sin, its consequences and the means of grace. The priest acts on behalf of Christ in granting absolution, thereby guaranteeing the subject position of the penitent before God (as the ultimate Other).

This understanding of the way in which subjects, and in particular their sexuality, are both constituted and governed through disclosure of their inner selves is applied by Foucault (1965, 1970, 1973, 1977a, 1978) to a range of other disciplines, including medicine, psychiatry, and psychoanalysis. In each case, as Weedon (1997) observes, "the subject of the discourse is at once constituted by it and subjected to it, and she has her position as subject guaranteed by the 'expert' enquiring voice" (p. 116). The interpretations offered by this voice enable the individual to know the truth of the self even more deeply, in the terms of expert knowledge and/or normative discourse (Hook, 2003). While the traditional practice of confession did not feature in my participants' accounts, the principle of disclosing one's private world to another, for their authoritative interpretation, was evident in some cases. In non-Catholic contexts, confession is most often considered to be something which a person makes to God directly, and this connects closely with the panoptical sense of living one's life constantly under the gaze of God. Either way, whether in the context of disclosure to another, or in direct relationship to their God, self-surveillance, and confession are effective means of subjectification.

Mastery and submission

In outlining Foucault's theorisation of power, I noted the paradoxical way in

which subjection is achieved through subjects' apparently free participation in a power/knowledge regime: "Power is exercised only over free subjects, and only insofar as they are free" (Foucault, in Dreyfus et al., 1982, p. 221). I also cited Foucault's (1980) argument that power operates through the production of "effects at the level of desire—and also at the level of knowledge" (p. 59). This suggests that people who are actively engaged in the production of their own lives—through participation, pursuing their desires, and gaining knowledge—are at the same time being inscribed as subjects within their social systems. Drawing on Althusser's work, Butler (1997) describes this paradoxical simultaneity of submission and mastery:

The more a practice is mastered, the more fully subjection is achieved. Submission and mastery take place simultaneously, and it is this paradoxical simultaneity that constitutes the ambivalence of subjection. Though one might expect submission to consist in a yielding to an externally imposed dominant order and to be marked by a loss of control and mastery, paradoxically, it is marked by mastery. . . . In this view, neither submission nor mastery is *performed by a subject*; the lived simultaneity of submission as mastery, and mastery as submission, is the condition of possibility for the emergence of the subject. (pp. 116-117; emphasis in the original)

The interwoven nature of mastery and submission can be related to the previous section, which considered the production of self-surveillance as an aspect of subjectification. Suppose, as was the case for several participants in this study, that according to the discourses of a religious community, a person's wellbeing is premised on keeping their life—including their actions, inner thoughts, and even their desires, "right" in the sight of God. These are, in the words of Davies et al (2001), "the conditions of possibility—the discourses which prescribe not only what is desirable, but what is recognisable as an acceptable form of subjectivity" (p. 172). Then self-surveillance and confession become practices to be mastered in order to achieve the life the person desires, and, at the same time, this mastery ensures their submission to the dominant religious discourses of their context.

There is a fundamental aspect of mastery to which Butler pays particular attention in her work, namely achieving *recognition of one's own existence* as a subject. In Butler's (1997) view, this explains the subject's vulnerability to subjugation.

Bound to seek recognition of its own existence in categories, terms, and names that are not of its own making, the subject seeks the sign of its own existence outside itself, in a discourse that is at once dominant and indifferent. Social categories signify subordination and existence at once. In other words, within subjection the price of existence is subordination. . . . Subjection exploits the desire for existence, where existence is always conferred from elsewhere; it marks a primary vulnerability to the Other in order to be. (pp. 20-21)

In speaking of “the desire for existence,” Butler is not referring to an individualistic form of subjectivity outside of discourse, but to something that is irreducibly social.

If one accepts Spinoza’s notion that desire is always the desire to persist in one’s own being, and recasts the *metaphysical* substance that forms the ideal for desire as a more pliable notion of social being, one might then be prepared to redescribe the desire to persist in one’s own being as something that can be brokered only within the risky terms of social life. . . . If the terms by which “existence” is formulated, sustained, and withdrawn are the active and productive vocabulary of power, then to persist in one’s own being means to be given over from the start to social terms that are never fully one’s own. (pp. 27-28; emphasis in the original).

The final sentence in this quotation usefully captures the interconnectedness of power, discourse and subjectivity. It also pinpoints a key factor in several participants’ accounts of having stayed for years in Christian communities in which they experienced considerable discomfort. When the social terms of one’s ongoing existence include warnings about the spiritual (perhaps even eternal) consequences of failing to submit to God’s appointed leaders, then life itself can seem to be in the balance and the possibility of removing oneself from the situation remote.

Storying and intertextuality

The operations of power/knowledge are evident not only in specific instances of positioning, inscription and submission, but also in the stories people tell about their lives. This idea informs an exercise in collective biography undertaken and described by Davies et al (2002):

We set out as archaeologists of our own lives, searching for moments in which power and knowledge might be said, in a Foucauldian sense, to intersect, shape

each other, and act as lines of force in relation to each other. We thus use our embodied selves as vehicles for observing the plays of power and knowledge in relation to the processes of (gendered) subjectification. (p. 293)

In accordance with Foucault's analytics of power, these "lines of force" are not viewed by the authors as having originated from sources external to those who are narrating their lives (such as parents or other powerful figures), but as having been in circulation in their social networks. In the exercise described by Davies et al, such lines are traced in the actualisation of knowledges within the subjectivities of the participants, including particular moral principles and ideas concerning identity. As Sparkes and Smith (2007) observe, "Narratives, in significant measure, constitute human realities and our mode of being" (p. 295). Embedded within the stories people tell, therefore, are artefacts of the discursive regimes which have acted on and shaped their lives.

From the point of view of discourse, stories have more than archaeological significance. The processes of selection, ordering and emplotment entailed in constructing a narrative also reproduce discourse. I explore the relationship between narrative and discourse in more detail in the next chapter (section 4.1). Here I focus on one feature of narrative's production by, and reproduction of, discourse, namely *indeterminacy*. This indeterminacy arises in part because the storying of experience is a complex and selective process. Harré and Gillett (1994) argue that the "relation of symbol to brain function and brain function to behaviour is more subtle than a simple causal production" (p. 122). The conceptual structure available in discourse both "constrains and makes available ways of using information that equip an individual to take genuine initiatives in their life contexts" (p. 122). Moreover, discourse, as text, is not a repository of unambiguous meaning, but may be performed in a variety of ways. White (1990) speaks of the "relative indeterminacy" which belongs to all texts.

The presence of implicit meaning, of the varying perspectives of the "readers" of particular events, and of a diverse range of metaphors available for the description of such events consigns a degree of ambiguity to every text. And, in Isler's (1978) sense, this ambiguity or indeterminacy requires persons to engage in "performances of meaning under the guidance of the text." (pp. 12-13)

People's construction of the narratives of their lives therefore entails a twofold intertextuality. First, the production of the texts of their life narratives is situated

within, and guided by, other texts, namely the stories and discourses of their social contexts. Second, “every telling or retelling of a story, through its performance, is a new telling that encapsulates, and expands upon the previous telling” (White et al., 1990, p. 13). This second kind of intertextuality, implicit in the storying and re-storying of life and identity, is also subject to an element of indeterminacy. As Epston et al (Epston, White, & Murray, 1992) observe, “every telling encapsulates, but is more than the previous telling” (p. 100).

White (2004) therefore argues that the constitutive role of discursive knowledges and practices in people’s expressions of life is not deterministic. He suggests, rather, that life-production and storying take place under “conditions of indeterminacy within determinacy,” and involve “the complexities of the social negotiations that provide the basis of this achievement, as well as all of the personal exertions, compromises, struggles, and dilemmas associated with the production of meaning” (p. 42). This language hints at the possibility of agency, and I develop this connection further in the discussion of agency and resistance which follows.

3.3 Agency and resistance

The work of this chapter to this point bears on my first research question: “Within Christian communities, how is it that some regimes of power and knowledge can subvert the call to freedom and justice which is pervasive in longstanding streams of Christian tradition?” My second research question concerns resistance: “What has enabled some people to resist the practices of religious authority constructed by such regimes?” In speaking of enabling, I am suggesting a view of resistance which entails the possibility of *agency*, which, for now, I will regard as the capacity to exercise choice. Preoccupation with discourse, power, and subjectification can lead to the view that this apparent human capacity is illusory. Some poststructuralists, like Rose (1996), claim that the notion of agency is nothing more than a nostalgic echo of the heroic individual of humanism, and is unnecessary when giving an account of resistance.

Resistance—if by that one means opposition to a particular regime for the conduct of one’s conduct—requires no theory of agency. It needs no account of the inherent forces within each human being that love liberty, seek to enhance their own powers or capacities, or strive for emancipation. . . . One no more needs a theory of agency

to account for resistance than one needs an epistemology to account for the production of truth effects. (p. 35)

For Rose, the discourses and practices which subjectify individuals in conflicting ways are sufficient to explain why opposition to particular regimes arises. Further, the choice to call particular expressions of this conflict and opposition “resistance” is, he suggests, purely a matter of perspective. Such naming can only reflect the interests of those making the call, since poststructuralism allows no transcendental ethical position by which such judgments can be made. Rose’s argument on this point is compelling, but I suggest that to take a position on resistance does not equate to foundationalism. As outlined in the final section of this chapter (section 3.4), I stand in this project with others who take up poststructuralist ideas on behalf of ethical or political projects. I therefore find little value in a view of resistance which has no room for notions of agency, ethical positioning, or political struggle. Some readings of Foucault’s theorisation of power suggest that it leaves little hope of agentic change (Bleiker, 2003; de Certeau & Rendall, 1984; McNay, 1991). However, as I show in the final section of this chapter (section 3.4), Foucault himself expressed the purpose of his work precisely in terms of freedom and change.

In contrast to Rose, Davies (1991) asserts that it is possible to give an account of agency without it being “any of the things that it is assumed to be in humanist thought” (p. 42). In fact, Davies and Harré (1990) suggest that it is a particular strength of the poststructuralist research paradigm that it recognises “both the constitutive effects of discourse, and in particular of discursive practices” *and* the possibility of people “exercising choice in relation to those practices” (p. 46). In this project, I am taking up this hopeful claim for poststructuralist approaches to research, and I see direct parallels between its two aspects and my two research questions.

In what I have already outlined in this chapter concerning “the constitutive effects of discourse,” I have touched on several aspects of theory which speak to the question of agency. In what follows these are recalled, expanded, and connected with the notion of resistance.

Agency and discursive complexity

For most of the participants in this study, the Christian community in which the

events they describe took place was only one of several discursive contexts which had shaped their subjective experience. When people have complex discursive contexts and histories, their subjective experience often involves, as acknowledged above, a contradictory multiplicity of position calls (Bleiker, 2003; Davies, 1991; Davies et al., 1990). In this light, agency could be construed as a person's capacity to recognise multiple positioning in such a way that no one form of discursive practice or positioning entirely captures or controls their subjectivity. Agency in this understanding does not stand outside of discourse. As Weedon (1997) observes, if the subjectivity of the individual is a site of discursive conflict, then "it is a battle in which the individual is an active but not sovereign protagonist" (p. 40). Armed with an awareness of how she or he is positioned *within* discourse, a person is able to utilise the space opened by multiplicity and contradiction to move and choose between discourses. Harré and Gillett (1994) qualify this picture of agency by suggesting that the conditions in which such awareness becomes available to people will influence their capacity to take up the possibilities available to them: "If . . . they are threatened for any departure from a relatively rigid set of signification, then one would expect them to be unable to profit from discursive diversity" (p. 127).

How might a person become aware of their multiple positioning within discourse(s)? One avenue of awareness is through participation in deconstructive conversation, as in some poststructuralist forms of research, or in narrative therapy. Another is suggested by my earlier reference to the embodied effects of inscription. There I observed the effects of repeated positioning within a particular discourse, which linger even after an intellectual rejection of that discourse and complicate the process of change. These embodied effects of inscription can also play a positive role in supporting agency and resistance. When embodied experiences invite a person to question "what is going on," they are more likely to become aware of being positioned within contradictory discourses and eventually to take up a more agentic position. This pattern is identified in my analyses of several interview transcripts (Chapters 5, 6, and 7), and explored further in my discussion in Chapter 8.

This feature of embodied inscription shows that processes of subjectification can become self-subverting in ways that support agency and resistance. As Butler (1997) observes, "What is enacted by the subject is enabled but not finally

constrained by the prior working of power. Agency exceeds the power by which it is enabled. One might say that the purposes of power are not always the purposes of agency” (p. 15). Practices of self-surveillance and confession, for example, might also invite awareness of, and reflection, on what is happening in bodily terms. Similarly, Davies (2000) suggests that when people are subjectified in ways that construct mind/body binaries and privilege rationality, they

can also learn how to use the very powers they gain through being subjected, to turn their reflexive gaze on the discursive practices and the habituated ways of being those practices make possible, making them both visible and revisable, and opening up the possibility of developing new ways of knowing. (p. 168)

The discussion to this point has focused on the agency of individuals, based on their awareness of multiple and contradictory positioning. But in practice, life production and identity are *relational* achievements. The very notion of discursive positioning presumes a social context. Discursive positioning generally occurs within conversation, a process which unfolds “through the joint action of all the participants as they make (or attempt to make) their own and each other’s acts socially determinate” (Davies et al., 1990, p. 45). Drewery (2005) therefore pays particular attention to the relationship between agency and the use of language. Because language is primarily a social activity, “no single individual has complete control over the meanings that are conveyed by the language he or she uses” (p. 319). Rather than thinking of agency as something possessed by individuals in isolation, therefore, it can be thought of actively and relationally, in terms of *participation*. Drewery suggests that “persons who are participants in the conversations that produce the meanings of their lives are in an agentive position” (p. 315).

The concerns underlying this study, as reflected in the first research question, include discourses and practices of religious authority which position people as *non-participants* “in the conversations that produce the meanings of their lives.” In my analysis and discussion I show that repeated experiences of being positioned *without* agency (in Drewery’s participative sense) were integral to participants’ stories of discomfort, distress, and eventual resistance.

Agency and re-authoring

In discussing people’s storying of their lives as an aspect of subjectification, I

noted White's argument that life-production and storying take place under "conditions of indeterminacy within determinacy." From the point of view of a modernist concern for accuracy and definitive statements of the truth, notions of indeterminacy and intertextuality are problematic. As in a child's whispering game, an originally true story—if such a thing existed—is progressively distorted and lost through repeated telling and retelling. In the same way, the endless variety of ways in which identity stories may be told, retold, and remade, would render the finding of a true self a hopeless quest. From the point of view of agentic resistance to hegemonic discursive regimes, however, indeterminacy and intertextuality are potential allies of hope and transformation. Like discursive complexity, indeterminacy contributes to the possibility of agency, where agency is expressed in preferring one telling of one's own story over another. In narrative therapy, for example, this perspective is applied in helping clients to develop preferred identity narratives, and to take a position against problem-saturated stories of their lives and achievements (White, 2007).

As noted already, some pessimistic readings of Foucault's work suggest that it marginalises any possibility of creativity or change. White's (1990) account of the relationship between discourse, power, subjectivity, and narrative provides a hopeful complementary perspective. He cites Geertz to make his point:

For Geertz, the indeterminacy of texts and the constitutive aspect of the performance of texts provide good cause to celebrate:

The wrenching question, sour and disabused, that Lionel Trilling somewhere quotes an eighteenth-century aesthete as asking—"How Comes It that we all start out Originals and end up Copies?"—finds . . . an answer that is surprisingly reassuring: it is the copying that originates. (1986, p. 380; White et al., 1990, p. 13).

Christian writings and sermons are often replete with stories (from biblical and other sources) which people are encouraged to imitate in their own lives. The *Imitatio Christi* tradition, perhaps the best known example along these lines, calls on Christians to produce their lives in "imitation of Christ" (à Kempis, 1957). I noted this theme in the previous chapter, in referring to first century exhortations to church leaders to imitate the humility and servanthood of Christ in the exercise of their authority.

The language of some of my participants also reflected their recalled sense of obligation to produce their lives according to given narrative templates. Over time they found themselves resisting, or reconfiguring, aspects of these given versions of their lives. I view this kind of re-authoring activity as an example of Geertz's "copying that originates." As people negotiate the ambiguous and indeterminate aspects of the stories by which they perform the meaning of their lives, and as they draw on their lived experiences and their imaginations, this process of origination emerges (Epston et al., 1992, p. 100). Depending on the discourses with which they may be re-inscribed along the way, it is a process which offers the possibility of making agentic re-storying moves.

More broadly, Davies (1991) links the idea of agency to *authorship*, in the sense of "speaking and writing in ways that are disruptive of current discourses" (p. 50). This is not authority on what Davies regards as male terms (claiming and enforcing knowledge), but an agentic mobilisation of existing discourses in new ways by "inverting, inventing and breaking old patterns . . . imagining not what *is*, but what *might be*" (p. 51; emphasis in the original). Nor is there any thought here of an agency which exists separately from discourse. A person's ability to speak with this kind of *authority* "does not stem from the essence of the person in question but from the positions available to them within the discourses through which they take up their being" (p. 52). So while agency is the discursive constitution of a person as the "author of their own multiple meanings and desires," this means being "a protagonist inside the storylines she is living out" (pp. 51-52).

I suggest that Davies' notion of agency as *authority* can be viewed as a further kind of intertextuality. I referred earlier to an intertextuality in which the dominant texts (discourses) of a person's context act on, and through, the production of their own narratives. I also noted a second kind of intertextuality which occurs in the telling and retelling of their identity stories, as indeterminacy produces difference. Through the exercise of *authority*, as described by Davies, a third level of intertextuality can be recognised, in which the re-authoring of a person's life story includes a creative subversion and reconstitution of the very texts (discourses) which previously defined the limits of that story. The subversive effects of this re-authoring process may then extend to influencing the way *others* are positioned by those same discourses. This hints at a fourth level of

intertextuality, in which others are recruited to re-authoring processes of their own, as a result of disturbances to the previously unquestioned discursive regimes within which they performed the meaning of their lives. I return to this idea below, in discussing the relationship between agency and resistance.

Agency and resistance

While my second research question is framed in terms of resistance rather than agency, I view these two ideas as closely related. Simply put, resistance is “a specific response to power tactics in a power relation” (Guilfoyle, 2002, p. 86), and I am interested in intentional responses which can be seen as an expression of agency. With regard to positioning, for example, to refuse a position call, or to assume a speaking position when none is offered, is an agentic act amounting to resistance. To re-author one’s life story in ways that depart from the plots constructed by the dominant social discourses of one’s context is an act of resistance. Resistance is embedded in Davies’ (1991) description of agency as the capacity to “resist, subvert and change the discourses themselves through which one is being constituted” (p. 51).

In seeking to offer an account of my participants’ descriptions of resistance to religious authority, I therefore focus on aspects of their narratives which describe agentic responses to discursively produced strategies of power within their communities. In some cases, these were individual acts on behalf of gaining personal freedom from oppressive practices. Other accounts of resistance reflected a concern for others in the community. In a few instances, their acts of resistance reflected a desire “to change the discourses themselves,” to use Davies’ words. Even where such desire is not explicit, however, acts of resistance have the potential to make power visible. Taking up Foucault’s (1980) argument that “resistances . . . are formed right at the point where relations of power might be exercised” (p. 142), Guilfoyle (2005) notes that “resistance is often obvious and visible, while power works partly because it is hidden from view” (p. 107). Even small acts of resistance have the potential to attract notice (and notoriety) in a Christian community, and thus to provoke in others a questioning awareness of discourses and strategies of power that have previously been taken for granted. This is why, as I show in the re-presentation of several of the participants’

accounts, those who resist are often “quarantined,” before they “contaminate” others.

The potential for individual acts of resistance to make visible and subvert previously unquestioned discursive regimes connects with the fourth kind of intertextuality I proposed earlier. When people engage in resistance and the re-authoring of their lives, then there is the potential for the discursive regimes of their contexts to be unsettled, opening space for others to make their own re-authoring moves. As I have declared from the beginning, my hopes in undertaking this project include this kind of unsettling of the regimes of power and knowledge which subvert freedom and justice in Christian communities. In methodological terms, I view my re-presentations and analyses of the participants’ stories of resistance as a strategy for change within Christian communities. As the product of my engagement with those stories, the text that is this thesis is both a product of, and a contribution to, this fourth kind of intertextuality.

In this section I have explored theoretical perspectives on the possibility of agency and resistance, given poststructuralist understandings of discourse, power and subjectivity. These perspectives are integral to the research methodology outlined in the next chapter, and therefore to my re-presentations of the participants’ stories in Chapters 5, 6, and 7. The light they shed on these stories in relation to my second research question, concerning the possibility and production of resistance, is discussed in Chapter 8 (section 8.3).

3.4 Ethical stance: freedom and justice

In this final section of the chapter, I outline more fully the ethical ideas that produced the concerns out of which this project arose. The aim of this discussion is to give greater precision to the terms “freedom” and “justice” as used in my first research question. These ideas inform (i) the issues of concern which are named in that first question, (ii) what I hope to promote through presenting the results of my discursive narrative analysis of the participants’ stories of resistance to religious authority, and (iii) the way in which I have approached the task of research itself. Here I deal with the first two issues. The third is addressed in the next chapter, where I discuss various reflexive strategies intended to help keep my research process in line with the dialogic ethical stance developed in this section.

The first two sections of this chapter highlight the ways in which human lives are produced in social contexts in which power relations, discursive positioning, and processes of subjectification are inescapable. This picture contrasts with other paradigms in which power is considered to be something people can possess, give away and take back. As St Pierre (2000) notes, within such an understanding, power “is often thought to be evil; therefore, those concerned with social justice often try to give away some of their power to avoid domination; they try to ‘empower’ those less fortunate than themselves” (pp. 488-489).

Foucault’s compelling account of the inescapability of power relations shows the inadequacy of these ideas about power, yet the concern for social justice is something which many poststructuralist writers take up. How is this concern for social justice to be expressed, if not in humanist terms? Parker (1992, p. 99) cautions against the temptation to assume that “a simple turn to language,” that is, an abstract focus on discourse, will relieve the material constraints that affect people’s lives. He therefore speaks of the challenge of retrieving “the values of humanism from the traditional functions of humanist discourse” (p. 99). In so far as this means seeking to address the harmful effects (material, social, and psychological) of certain arrangements of power, truth regimes and subjugating practices, I want to take up Parker’s challenge. It is precisely that ethical concern, summarised in my first research question in terms of “freedom and justice,” and applied to the particular case of religious authority, which underpins this project.

I referred to freedom and justice in rather general terms in my first chapter, mentioning resonances between my concerns in this project and the biblical traditions on which Martin Luther King Junior drew, in his call to “let freedom ring.” But similar resonances are claimed on behalf of other projects, including humanistic approaches to psychology focused on “empowerment” and “emancipation” of the individual. Sampson (1993) suggests that at the height of the humanistic movement, a linking of “Eastern religion and philosophy with the Western way of self-contained individualism produced a formula in which the individual’s ego seemed to stand in the way of achieving a fully actualized self” (p. 58). He draws a powerful contrast between the kind of freedom sought by this individualistic movement and others’ simultaneous struggle for basic civil rights.

While the African-American population was listening to Martin Luther King Junior's call to be "free at last, free at last", the humanistic movement also led its cheers on behalf of becoming "free at last, free at last". The words may have been the same, but the aims could hardly be more different. One group was trying to rise up to full citizenship and respect after decades of oppression, and joined together in a genuinely cooperative movement of mutual caring and aid. The other group, already living at the top, still felt empty and so found appeal in a message that gave each one of them, on his or her own, and without much consideration for anyone else, permission to probe their insides, discover their selves and express everything that was truly theirs: a genuinely Dionysian feast for the self. (p. 58)

As a way of differentiating my own ethical stance from the humanist project, I find it useful to connect the language of justice and freedom to ethical positions articulated by Derrida, Levinas, Foucault, and Sampson. In what follows I explore and elaborate on those connections, and give greater precision to the way I am using these terms in this study.

Derrida, Levinas, justice and relation to the other

In a published roundtable conversation, Derrida (1997) reflects on the difference between legal and social forms of justice, and highlights relation to the other as being at the heart of what he means by justice.

I cannot know that I am just. I can know that I am right. I can see that I act in agreement with norms, with the law. . . . But that does not mean that I am just. To speak of justice is not a matter of knowledge, of theoretical judgment. That's why it's not a matter of calculation. . . . Justice, if it is to do with the other, with the infinite distance of the other, is always unequal to the other, is always incalculable. You cannot calculate justice. Levinas says somewhere that the definition of justice—which is very minimal but which I love, which I think is really rigorous—is that justice is the relation to the other. That is all. Once you relate to the other as the other, then something incalculable comes on the scene, something which cannot be reduced to the law or to the history of legal structures. (pp. 17-18)

Levinas (1999), whom Derrida acknowledges here, offers an evocative image when he speaks of encountering the *face* of the other. It is in face-to-face encounter with the other that people are led beyond themselves and can become sensible of their unconditional ethical obligation to the other.

I have always described the face of the neighbour as the bearer of an order, imposing upon me, with respect to the other, a gratuitous and non-transferable responsibility, as if the *I* were chosen and unique—and in which the other were absolutely other, i.e. still incomparable, and thus unique. (p. 170)

In the language of Martin Buber, this is “I–Thou” encounter, as opposed to “I–It” (Buber & Kaufmann, 1970). In contrast, the application of abstract rules by political or legal systems in ways which prevent “the face of the other . . . from being recognised,” and which assign to human beings an “anonymous individuality,” de-faces the other and risks totalitarianism (Levinas, 1999, p. 176). Beals (2007) suggests that for Levinas, “the Other is irreducible to any category of thought—the Other always exceeds any concept I might try to use to ‘capture’ or understand her” (p. 4).

While it would be simplistic to equate these ideas to understandings of justice derived from the religious texts of Judaism and Christianity, it is possible that they share a common genealogy of ideas, especially in light of the Jewish heritage shared by Derrida, Levinas, and Buber. Parry and Doan (1994) suggest that in critiquing western philosophical thought (with its quest for universality), and focusing his ethical challenge on relation to the Other, Levinas recalled “the point of view of the Biblical prophetic tradition that recalls each person to the Other’s absolute claim of responsibility upon him/her” (p. 31). In the roundtable conversation referred to above, Caputo (Derrida et al., 1997) similarly describes the resonance he experiences between Derrida’s description of justice and “biblical notions of justice and care for singularity, as opposed to the philosophical notion, where justice is defined in terms of universality, of the blindness of justice” (p. 20). Derrida’s (1997) response to this observation is that he has “no stable position” on the biblical texts, but can “receive the most necessary provocations” from them, as well as from Plato and other texts (p. 21).

The ethical position which I take up in this project reflects my own sense of the resonance between biblical traditions of justice and Levinas’ call for unconditional respect for the otherness of the other. A lack of such respect is integral to practices of religious authority which characterised both the stories which motivated this project (heard in the context of my work) and the stories of the participants. I hear these as stories of *injustice*. If justice is about relating to the other *as* other, then regimes of power which disregard, incorporate, or erase

the otherness of the other are unjust. It is in support of just practices of religious authority that I re-present the participants' stories of resistance to religious authority in ways that attempt to shine a light on the discursive construction of injustice (Chapters 5, 6, and 7). In this I find a further resonance with Derrida (1997), in his explanation of the ethical intent he holds in deconstruction:

That is what gives deconstruction its movement, that is, constantly to suspect, to criticize the given determinations of culture, of institutions, of legal systems, not in order to destroy them or simply to cancel them, but to be just with justice, to respect this relation to the other as justice. (p. 18)

There is more I want to say to round out this account of justice as regard for the otherness of the other, and it has to do with the conduct of relationship to the other. My first inclination is to say that this means something like, "seeking the good of the other." Yet that is problematic, since the good of the other may not be what *I* think it is. Imposing one's own version of the good, on one's own terms, may in fact disregard the otherness of the other. What the good might mean is, as Derrida (1997) asserts, "something incalculable . . . something which cannot be reduced to the law or to the history of legal structures" (pp. 17-18).

Before returning to the question of what kind of regard for the other *is* implied in my ethical positioning, I consider the notion of "freedom."

Foucault, freedom and participatory agency

If Derrida named justice as integral to his deconstructive project, Foucault (1988), in a 1982 interview, pointed to freedom as a goal for his work:

My role—and that is too emphatic a word—is to show people that they are much freer than they feel, that people accept as truth, as evidence, some themes which have been built up at a certain moment during history, and that this so-called evidence can be criticized and destroyed. To change something in the minds of people—that's the role of an intellectual. (p. 10)

This statement begs the question, "freedom for what?" In the later stages of Foucault's career, the answer, according to one of his colleagues at least, seems to have been freedom for the self to produce the self as an aesthetic project:

Clearly no one will charge him with aspiring to renew the Stoic ethics of the Greeks. . . . In a sempiternal new deal, time endlessly redistributes the cards.

Foucault's affinity with ancient morality is reduced to the modern reappearance of a single card in a completely new hand: the card of the self working on the self, an aestheticization of the subject, in two very different moralities and two very different societies. (Veyne, Porter, & Davidson, 1993, p. 2)

Winslade (2009), drawing on Deleuze's (1995) reading of Foucault, agrees that there is in the Foucault later work an emphasis on "care of the self" and an "assertion of life" against regimes of power/knowledge which constrain the possibilities of life production:

Deleuze attributes to Foucault the working through of an analysis of power relations during the course of his academic career to the point where he reached an impasse. His admiration for Foucault's achievement lies especially in the latter's working through of this impasse to a place of joyful assertion of life, especially in his later work about the care of the self. For Deleuze, Foucault . . . writes with an increasing sense of joy . . . the joy of wanting to destroy whatever mutilates life. . . . It is the pursuit of such joy that animates Foucault's writing and Deleuze's reading of Foucault. (p. 337)

I have a mixed response to the idea that the freedom which Foucault pursued was the freedom to produce one's life as a work of art. On the one hand, I resonate with an ethic of freedom on behalf of life and creativity. It evokes for me some positive intertextualities with biblical themes of *shalom* (the Hebrew word for the kind of peace which enables life to flourish) and Christian texts which proclaim release to captives (Luke 4:18) and an abundance of life (John 10:10). For many of the participants in this project, it was precisely the lack of such freedom which provoked their resistance to the practices of religious authority in their communities. On the other hand, I find that talk of "the self working on the self" too readily evokes the humanist identification of freedom with the autonomy of the individual. It takes me to Sampson's critique of the pursuit of this kind of freedom as a "Dionysian feast for the self." White (2002) argues that the later Foucault's emphasis on the care of the self as "ethically prior" was not at odds with the need to attend ethically to one's relationship to others. He therefore extends Foucault's language of the care of the self to "self- and relationship-forming activities" (p. 75). I am not sure that this is clear in the writings of Foucault himself.

Whether or not White is justified in finding a relational ethic in the later Foucault, I want to take up the latter's poststructuralist strategy for freedom on behalf of life production, but to be clear that, in my own ethical stance, this is not primarily about the production of an *individual* self. In this regard, I stand with poststructuralist feminists such as Davies and Drewery in their relational accounts of agency, as outlined in the previous section. In construing agency as *authority*, Davies (1991, p. 51) does speak of freedom: "the freedom to recognise multiple readings such that no discursive practice, or positioning within it by powerful others, can capture and control one's identity." But it is clear that such freedom is not an individualistic form of autonomy.

The model of the person being developed here is of an embodied speaker who at the same time constitutes and is constituted by the discursive practices of the collectives of which they are a member. Each person speaks from the positions made available within those collectives through the recognised discourses used by that collective, and has desires made relevant by those discourses. (p. 51)

Drewery's (2005, p. 315) description of agency, cited earlier in this chapter, is even more explicitly relational: "Persons who are participants in the conversations that produce the meanings of their lives are in an agentive position." This participatory emphasis stands against humanist notions of the sovereign individual self, since "it is a concept that necessarily draws upon the collaborative (rather than individual) production of forms of language as forms of life" (p. 315). On this view, a person cannot act agentically in isolation from others:

Thus to be positioned agentively is to be an actor in a web of relationship with others who are also engaged in coproducing the conditions of their lives. Such agency does not therefore afford us the freedom to do what we like. Indeed, we never have complete control or autonomy. (pp. 315-316)

Drewery suggests that to act agentically on the world is "less like being the cue that moves the first billiard ball, and more like throwing your two cents worth into a conversation among several people" (p. 316).

It is this participatory view of agency, rather than the notion of a self autonomously producing itself, which informs the use of the word "freedom" in my first research question. This is also the kind of freedom I have in mind when I refer to biblical texts of freedom. Such texts were produced in cultural contexts in

which individualistic notions of the self, or the autonomy of the self, would have seemed strange. As I show in my findings and discussion chapters, an understanding of freedom as participatory agency also resonates with the ethical hopes and intentions which the participants in this study held for the production of their lives within their religious communities. None of them named the intentions which informed their resistance in terms of gaining autonomy or control.

So this project is undertaken on behalf of an ethic of freedom—the freedom for people to participate in the conversations which produce the meanings of their lives. As with the ethic of justice, there is more that needs to be said about the relational quality of that participation. Many of the participants in this study were offered opportunities for conversation which left them feeling more constrained than ever in the production of their lives. In order to address the question of what kind of conversational participation, and what kind of regard for the other, are implied by the ethic of freedom and justice I take up in this project, I turn finally to the notion of dialogic power relations.

Sampson and dialogic power relations

Drawing heavily on the ideas of Bakhtin (1981), Shotter (1990), and feminist authors including Code (1991), Sampson (1993) argues that life and ethics are relational accomplishments which, if they are to be justly accomplished, require unconditional celebration of the other. He describes this as a “dialogic” approach to relationship: “two separable presences, each coming from its own standpoint, expressing and enacting its own particular specificity” (p. 15). Sampson’s account of dialogic relationship presumes an understanding of subjectivity which is entirely consistent with the theoretical position I have developed in this chapter:

The dialogic position challenges the primary Western understanding of ownership over one’s own psychology, over one’s mind, self and personality. Although, when I speak, it is my vocal chords that are vibrating, the voices which I use—the words, if you will—are never mine alone. . . . Furthermore, we not only speak in many voices but participate in a process that is always jointly constructed and jointly sustained or transformed. How can I own myself, my mind or my personality, if all that is presumably mine requires you for its completion? (p. 135)

Sampson contrasts dialogic encounter with “monologic” or self-celebratory interactions, in which the other and the other’s interests are given regard only insofar as they are “serviceable” to the interests of the dominant party:

When I construct a you designed to meet my needs and desires, a you that is serviceable for me, I am clearly engaging in a monologue as distinct from a dialogue. Although you and I may converse together, in most respects the you with whom I am interacting has been constructed with me in mind. Your sole function has been to serve and service me. (p. 4)

The serviceable other may speak, but only on the terms prescribed by the dominant discourse. Monologic power relations are therefore antithetical to the kind of participation envisaged in Drewery’s account of agency. As Sampson observes, “merely having a voice is not sufficient if that voice must speak in a register that is alien to its own specificity, and in so doing lose its desires and interests (p. 11).

If dialogic power relations are essential to an ethic of freedom, where freedom is understood in terms of participatory agency, the same can be said for justice and Levinasian regard for the other. Shotter (2005) speaks of the need for us to “appreciate that another being has a life of its own, not independently of us, but in relation to us” (p. 129). When “the you with whom I am interacting has been constructed with me in mind,” then the specific otherness of the other has been lost. Paré (2012, p. 20) suggests that because people’s ways of making meaning constitute their lived realities, the question of who gets to define meaning is an issue of social justice. The notion of dialogic relationship therefore gives some specificity to justice as the call to have regard for the other. It offers a way of speaking about the good—a relational good—without calling on monologically prescribed definitions of what *is* good for the other.

Some authors turn to narrative, image, or metaphor to evoke a sense of what this dialogic quality of relationship means. These modes of description avoid paradigmatic formulations and allow for spontaneous and creative applications in particular encounters. Sampson (2003), for example, following Levinas and drawing on the biblical narratives of the Jewish heritage which he shares with Levinas, advocates “unconditional kindness to strangers” as a bedrock ethic for human sociality and dialogism. In searching for a metaphor to express this, he considers “the caretaking metaphor most apt; for example, parent-child, teacher-

student, gardener-garden, and so forth” (p. 168). He argues that this metaphor implies an unconditional, non-reciprocal obligation to seek the well-being of the other.

Drewery (2005) supports the intention of Sampson’s argument for the caretaking metaphor, but finds it problematic due to gendered presuppositions about power relations with which notions of care and parenting are inscribed. I would add that within religious communities there are further problems in using the caretaking metaphor. In addition to its gendered associations, such as those alluded to by Drewery, “pastoral care” is sometimes alloyed with notions of pastoral authority which are far from dialogic. Drewery’s own preference is for the metaphor of hospitality for strangers, arguing that this

enables us to see and perhaps deal more clearly with the power valences involved in a contextualized relationship of care. In addition, this metaphor does not presume that we necessarily know what will count as care in any particular meeting of strangers, only what the offerers of hospitality count as care; and more importantly, the notion of hospitality invites a sense of space, and an ongoing relationship with place and cultural context. It also begins with an assumption of difference. (p. 309)

The metaphor of hospitality is closely allied with the biblical tradition of kindness to strangers on which Levinas draws, and is consistent with Sampson’s emphasis on caretaking. Rather than opting for one controlling metaphor, however, I suggest that maintaining a plurality and a fluidity of metaphors is useful in conveying an open-ended sense of unconditional responsibility to pursue dialogic ways of relating to the other. In responding to another who is helplessly suffering extreme pain or deprivation, the caretaking metaphor may be apt. In responding to a client in the counselling room, hospitality may be a more helpful notion, in view of the power differential implied in caretaking.

In the context of this study, which centres particularly on the use of religious authority in Christian communities, it is in the pursuit of dialogic power relations that the ideas of justice and freedom which inform this project come together. Dialogic encounter supports justice, where justice is understood as acting with respect for the otherness of other. Dialogic encounter supports freedom, where freedom is understood as people having the opportunity to participate, using their own voices, in the conversations and processes which

produce the meanings of their lives. I am not suggesting that this provides a comprehensive view of freedom and justice, but it captures both what is ethically important about this research, and what I have learned from the participants, whose own ethical hopes and desires emerged as an important theme in my analysis (see section 8.1).

3.5 Concluding comments

In this chapter I have outlined the theoretical and ethical orientation of this study. The major theoretical ideas have been located in Foucault's analysis of the relationships between discourse, power and subjectivity. I have drawn on these ideas in engaging with various perspectives on the discursive production of identity, and with poststructuralist discussions concerning the possibility of agency and resistance. The ethical concerns which gave rise to this project have been connected with a dialogic approach to the notions of justice and freedom. This work provides the foundation for my research methodology, my analysis and discursive re-presentation of the participants' narratives, and the concluding discussion. In the next chapter, I explain discursive narrative analysis, my approach to reflexivity as a researcher, and the design and method of my research.

Chapter 4: Research Methodology and Design

In the previous chapter I established a rigorous theoretical and ethical framework within which to approach my two main research questions:

“Within Christian communities, how is it that some regimes of power and knowledge can subvert the call to freedom and justice which is pervasive in longstanding streams of Christian tradition?”

“What has enabled some people to resist the practices of religious authority constructed by such regimes?”

I now offer an account of my research methodology and design. Using a semi-structured interview format, I invited ten people³ to talk about their experiences of religious authority and their efforts to resist practices of religious authority which had affected their lives in adverse ways. The transcriptions of these interview conversations provided the narrative data which became the focus of my analysis. This analysis has two aspects. First, I offer a selective re-presentation of the narrative development of each account (Chapters 5, 6, and 7), identifying aspects of the accounts which bear most directly on my research questions, and identifying their discursive aspects for further discussion. Second, in Chapter 8, I step back from the stories, and from the subjectivities of the narrators, to reflect critically on what has been shown in relation to the original research questions.

I refer to this methodology as “discursive narrative analysis.” While this term is not commonly used in the qualitative research literature, there are a number of exponents of narrative inquiry who attend to the social and discursive production of narrative (Chase, 2003; Peterson et al., 2006; Riessman, 2002, 2003; Smith et al., 2008; Sparkes et al., 2007; Taylor, 2005, 2007). As a descriptive label, “discursive narrative analysis” has occasionally been applied to studies which draw on discursive psychology and more technical, linguistically oriented, forms of discourse analysis (Georgakopoulou, 2007; Moissinac, 2007; Polanyi, 1985). However, as I make clear in the next section, I do not draw on these technical approaches to discourse analysis in this project.

In developing this methodology, I have discovered that its dual focus on narrative and discourse, familiar to narrative therapists, creates a number of

³ Of these ten stories, nine are included in this thesis, for reasons explained in section 4.3 below.

challenges for researchers. Some poststructuralist writers are concerned that the inclusion of a narrative focus may result in social and discursive perspectives being overwhelmed by prevalent cultural identities, interpretations, and genres associated with the telling of personal stories in western humanist contexts. I provide a detailed discussion of, and response to, such concerns in the next section.

4.1 Discursive narrative analysis

Narrative research which draws on constructionist ideas is, as Smith and Sparkes (2007) observe, “a varied, ongoing, and contested enterprise” (p. 296). There are no ready-made formulae for undertaking narrative analysis with a discursive focus. In this section I therefore develop my own version of this methodology. To this end, I set out my understanding of narrative, clarify my approach to discourse analysis, and reflect on key aspects of the social construction of narrative. I then summarise my discursive narrative analytical strategies in table form (Table 1).

What is narrative?

There is, according to Riessman (1993), “a considerable disagreement about the precise definition of narrative” (p. 17). As indicated in Chapter 1, I view narrative as talk (whether spoken or written) which has the intention of telling about life and events (Riessman, 1993, p. 17). As Murray (2003) asserts, narratives are performed as a way of giving structure and meaning to our lives: “we tell stories about our lives to ourselves and others. As such we create a narrative identity” (as cited in Sparkes, 2005, p. 192). Conventionally, the structure of an individual narrative has a beginning, middle, and end. These are the rudimentary elements of plot, or storyline, which help to impart a sense of continuity and meaning to a narrative. According to Riessman (2002), “Narration is distinguished by ordering and sequence; one action is viewed as consequential for the next. Narrators create plots from disordered experience” (p. 698). Chronological order is a common way of structuring of narrative, although the linking of events may be achieved in other ways, such as consequential or thematic ordering (Riessman, 1993, p. 17). This variety of ways of ordering narrative was evident in my interviews with participants. Sometimes I would ask a “what happened then?” question, only to be answered with an account of an earlier event, presumably because the earlier

event was important for the person to relate in giving shape and significance to their narrative. Besides words, meaning may be conveyed by narrators' use of tone, volume, silence, body language, repetition and other means. Finally, a narrative is not simply an individual performance, but is co-produced in the context of the relationship between narrator and listener/interviewer, and within a larger social setting (Riessman, 1993, pp. 20-21; Sparkes, 2005, p. 193).

The field of narrative analysis is vast and multi-faceted (Atkinson & Delamont, 2007; Bamberg, 1997; Chase, 2003; Czarniawska, 2002; Fischer & Goblirsch, 2007; Gergen & Gergen, 2006; Gubrium & Holstein, 2009; Josselson, 2007; Josselson, Lieblich, & McAdams, 2003; Peterson et al., 2006; Riessman, 1993, 2002; Sparkes, 2005; Sparkes et al., 2007). There are many potential avenues of narrative analysis which I will not be pursuing, because my interest is primarily in the discourses which are discernible in the narratives produced through my interviews with participants. In other words, in naming my methodology as discursive narrative analysis, the accent is on *discourse*, with *narrative* providing the ground within which I prospect for discursive material.

In the previous chapter (section 3.2), I explored the ways in which subjects and subjectivity are produced by discourse, through processes of positioning, embodied inscription, self-surveillance and confession, mastery and subjection, and storying and intertextuality. Careful analysis of narratives, paying particular attention to traces of such processes in the ways events are remembered and retold, can help to shed light on the discursive regimes which produced them. It is these traces I am listening for through the various iterations of my work with the transcripts, as described below (section 4.3). There is a resonance here with what Davies et al (2002) have to say about the implicit knowledges and rationalities which emerge when close attention is paid to accounts of lived experiences. Describing their own work on the "archaeology of the everyday" in a collective biography exercise, the authors explain that in

choosing to examine gendered social relations in our memories, we do not intend to rail against the powers of patriarchal oppression, but rather to look . . . at the forms of rationality through which the particular relations of power manifested in our memories are constituted and maintained. (p. 299)

In discussing the storying of subjectivity, I suggested in the previous chapter that the telling and re-telling of stories, together with a researcher's own re-telling,

involves multiple layers of intertextuality. The first kind of intertextuality concerns the way people produce the narratives of their lives in relation to stories and other discursive texts within their cultural contexts. A second layer of intertextuality is implied by the way that each new performance of a story includes an element of indeterminacy as it “encapsulates, and expands upon the previous telling” (White et al., 1990, p. 13). In the context of a research interview, such re-tellings are co-productions, meaning that the researcher’s own stories influence (and are influenced by) this second aspect of intertextuality. I put forward Davies’ notion of *authority* as a third kind of intertextuality, in which an agentic re-authoring of one’s identity and life narrative may subvert and reconstitute the very texts (discourses) which previously defined the limits of those narratives (thus troubling the first layer of intertextuality). When this re-authoring process influences the ways in which others perform their identities and life narratives, then a fourth layer of intertextuality may be discerned.

I also suggested in the previous chapter that the research story told in this thesis is both an outcome of, and a potential furtherance of, this fourth kind of intertextuality. Describing my role in those terms understates the editorial and interpretative power which I exercise in re-presenting the participants’ stories. My intention has been to exercise that power with respect for their hopes in participating in this project, but it remains the case that what I present is my own performance. This performance may be viewed as a fifth kind of intertextuality, in which my own life narrative and interests are active in shaping my re-presentation of the participants’ stories. As I have declared throughout the previous chapters, this is not a neutral or objective re-telling, but rather a strategy pursued on behalf of freedom and justice in Christian communities (see sections 1.2, 2.4, and 3.4).

Discourse analysis

Here I want to locate the discursive aspect of my approach to discursive narrative analysis within the variety of approaches which share the description *discourse analysis*. I have indicated already that I am not utilising a linguistic/conversational form of discourse analysis. Following Parker (2005), I also distinguish my approach to discourse analysis from a merely thematic form of analysis. I do note and discuss themes which are present in several of the interview narratives. But where thematic analysis focuses mainly on the meanings which words and phrases

have for those who are using them, discourse analysis is interested in “how words and phrases are linked at the level of discourse” and in the effects which the terms have may have “beyond what people immediately mean by them” (Parker, 2005, p. 99). Like narrative analysis, this kind of discourse analysis cannot be reduced to techniques to be applied in a formulaic manner (Banister, Burman, Parker, Taylor, & Tindall, 1994). Finlay (as cited by Frohmann, 1994) suggests that

discourse analysis is the study of the way in which an object or idea, any object or idea, is taken up by various institutions and epistemological positions, and of the way in which those institutions and positions treat it. (p. 121)

I approach discourse analysis as the study of a text, a point of view, a position call, a social practice, a performance, an embodied response—or a representation of any of these—in terms of the discourses which (a) have constructed it, (b) are reproduced by it, and (c) support the relations of power implied by it. This understanding of discourse analysis is informed by Foucault’s theorisation of discourse and power, as outlined in the previous chapter (section 3.1), as well as by the writings of other poststructuralist authors cited there.

As with my re-presentation of the interview narratives, I undertake discourse analysis with a critical intention and on behalf of change. This is not to say that my main aim is to portray churches in general, or their leaders, in a negative light. Critique, as Foucault (2001) suggests, “consists in seeing on what type of assumptions, of familiar notions, of established, unexamined ways of thinking the accepted practices are based” (p. 456). The original appeal of taking a discourse analytical approach to the issue of religious authority was its usefulness for “showing how powerful images of the self and the world circulate in society . . . and for opening a way to question and resist those images” (Parker, 2005, pp. 88-89). To transpose Parker’s words into this project’s key, and to be explicit about the kinds of discourses I want to analyse, I turn to discourse analysis in the hope of shining a light on the ways in which powerful ideas about religious authority circulate and position people within some Christian communities, and of opening space for people in those communities to reconsider and resist those ideas.

Speaking of my ethical intentions in the research touches on one of the tensions entailed in utilising a narrative form of research on behalf of enquiry into discursively produced social issues. As Koro-Ljungberg (2007) notes, research

which draws on constructionist ideas requires an approach to interview narratives that “involves looking at both the *whats* of the content and the *hows* of the production” (p. 431; emphasis in the original). Content that raises compelling ethical issues can divert attention from the *hows* of discursive production, with the result that narrative accounts may be treated as empirical evidence, heroic tales of individual achievement, or exemplars of universally applicable themes. While respecting the position of Atkinson and Delamont (2006), who call on narrative researchers to “sustain a commitment to an analytic stance, and not a celebratory one” (p. 169), I stand with others who argue that narrative analysis can shed light on historically located discourses, practices and power relations in ways that provoke ethical reflection and response (Smith, 1993; Sparkes et al., 2007). Riessman (2002) argues that work with personal narratives offers a powerful strategy in the study of social movements. In support of this, she cites the potential for storytelling to counteract abstraction, bridge gaps between institutional discourse and the language of people’s everyday lives, and gather communities of action.

Having clarified my understanding of narrative, and my approach to the analysis of discourse, I now consider more closely the social construction of narrative and the bearing this has on my approach to analysis.

The social construction of narrative

As a meaning-making performance, narration is a discursive activity. The social construction of narrative is reflected in Parker’s (2005) suggestion that narrative can be viewed as “the performance of the self as a story of identity,” with this performance being constructed from “cultural resources” (p. 71). Similarly, Smith (1993) refers to the “dialogic encounter of subject and culture” which personal narrative entails (p. 395). Smith’s description underlines two of the elements in Parker’s view of narrative: the subjectivity which seeks life-shape and a sense of identity on the one hand, and the dynamic of discursive production implied by “cultural resources” on the other. Given these discursive aspects of what narrative is and does, I want to highlight the importance of three particular relationships within the social construction of narrative which inform my approach to discursive narrative analysis: (i) history and materiality, (ii) discourse and power relations, and, at greater length, (iii) social and individual subjectivities. While

these three areas are closely interrelated, I address them separately in order to highlight the relevance of each to my methodology, and also as an opportunity to name specific challenges which each poses for a discursively focused approach to narrative analysis.

i *History and materiality*

Drawing on Parker (section 1.3) and Foucault (section 3.2), I have acknowledged in earlier chapters that discourses develop, and have material effects, within particular historical and social conditions. Language and narrative also are rooted in bodily capabilities and situated in history. Pfohl (2007) suggests that it is through the symbolic constructions of language that “humans act economically to reduce the chaos of material flux to relatively stable categories of meaning” (p. 649). While narratives, as social constructions, can never be said transparently to represent the “truth” about materiality or historical conditions, they are constructed in and concern “the world of living energetic matter” which exerts itself in ways that have real effects (p. 651). As Koro-Ljungberg (2007) observes, materiality and embodiment are therefore present in all social interactions, including the research interview.

Additionally, knowing subjects are not only discursive and psychological social beings who construct their sense of selves in relation to discourses and other individuals, but they are also embodied subjects who have a sense of physical body, emotional self, and biological function. Thus it is important to highlight that all knowing subjects are constituted by the historical and cultural context of the interview and the other subjects involved. As a result, power and materiality are ever-present conditions that shape the interview and the relational selves of knowing subjects. (p. 432)

These acknowledgements of materiality—sometimes overlooked in the narrative literature—are important for my research. The embodied effects of positioning, for example, feature as a recurring theme in several of the participants’ accounts. Sparkes and Smith (2007) assert that, “we not only tell stories *about* our bodies, but we also tell stories *out of* and *through* our bodies; the body is simultaneously cause, topic, and instrument of whatever story is told” (p. 302; emphasis in the original). My approach to discursive narrative analysis therefore includes paying attention to participants’ descriptions of their embodied responses to being

positioned within the dominant discourses of religious authority. My assumption is that traces of those discourses, and of other, perhaps subjugated, knowledges, may be discerned in these descriptions.

In paying attention to historical materiality, I include the significance of *events* which are the subject of narrative. While eschewing any suggestion of naïve realism, Parker (2005) argues that

narrative research is concerned with how someone relates events that are about something; that thing may be disturbing or incomprehensible, or it may be an event that brought about an unexpected change that was then viewed, or is now viewed, as positive. We term this thing *event*, and we mean by that something that intrudes or hinders, but which also then becomes a necessary reference point for the narrative. In this way narrative research makes salient the embodied material character of human life. . . . But, this positive or negative event is always seen as interpreted by the subject as agent, as woven into a certain causal structure, as understood in relation to other events and narrated within a particular kind of plot. (p. 73)

Unsurprisingly, given the nature of my interview questions, all of my participants spoke of particular historical events in relation to their experiences of, and resistance to, religious authority. Their narratives cannot be regarded as providing access to these events, other than through discursively produced interpretations and plots (Davies et al., 2007). In analysing these accounts, some of which describe disturbing experiences, I am aware of the challenge of keeping this discursive perspective firmly in view. Nonetheless, the very existence of the narratives themselves is an effect, as Parker notes, of *something* “that intrudes or hinders.” In undertaking discursive narrative analysis, I seek to locate and understand this “something” in terms of the social and discursive contexts which produced the effect, and in relation to the participants’ ethical hopes and intentions which produced a sense of intrusion or hindrance.

In addition, I pay particular attention to connections between the participants’ stories, where similar patterns of intrusion are described. Such patterns may suggest the presence of discourses which are influential across Christian social contexts. At the very least, they signal areas worthy of self-reflection and investigation for any religious community intent on reviewing its own practices of power.

ii *Discourse and power relations*

Personal narratives are, as cited above, “meaning-making units of discourse” (Riessman, 2002, p. 705). From a social constructionist perspective, therefore, it is the meanings that a narrator makes of events, and how these are located in history and culture, that are of particular interest. Bourdieu (as cited in Riessman, 2003) suggests that “narratives about the most ‘personal’ difficulties, the apparently most strictly subjective tensions and contradictions, frequently articulate the deepest structures of the social world and their contradictions” (p. 24).

Narratives are not simply *subject* to discursive influence, they are also an effective *vehicle* for the transmission of discourse and the maintenance of power relations: “Narrative forms of knowledge inform us about why things are the way we apprehend them” (Pfohl, 2007, p. 659). They not only communicate cognitive forms of knowledge, but also convey implicit messages as to how people should feel, how they should behave, what moral judgments they should make, and so on. This is particularly evident in religious contexts, where many sacred texts take a narrative form. As I noted in the previous chapter (section 3.3), biblical stories are not infrequently used as morality tales, in order to influence behaviour. Their moral force is greatly magnified for those who believe such stories to be God-inspired. I return to this point under the next heading.

In line with my earlier comments about discourse analysis, discursive narrative analysis therefore requires attunement both to the discourses embedded in narrative and to the role of narrative in maintaining and reproducing existing relations of power and knowledge. In my analysis of transcribed interview narratives, I have therefore paid particular attention to discursive aspects such as:

- Recollections of explicit ideas or values which were dominant within the participants’ communities, or taken up in their own responses. E.g. “There’s quite a strong teaching about not leaving the church . . . If you leave, you’ve walked away from God” (Jenny); “I don’t have—you don’t have to have things your way. And it’s more important to value people than get your own way” (Andy).
- Taken for granted ideas and moral positions implicit in participants’ descriptions of life in their communities, or of their responses. E.g. “A failure to respect him was a failure to respect God” (Andy); “I’ve got to see him, I’ve

got to confront him. He's just re-abused her. He's totally re-abused her” (Cathy).

- Discourses reflected in participants’ descriptions of power relations, position calls, and their own responses to position calls. E.g. “You have to pleasure me, I am the leader, you have to obey” (Lynne); “I turned myself inside out and upside down and back to front, to be perfect—to be the perfect wife” (Lynne).

iii *Social and individual subjectivities*

As Coffey and Atkinson (1996) observe, “storytelling is culturally situated and relies for its success on culturally shared conventions about language and the hearing of stories” (p. 77). These socio-cultural aspects of the construction of narrative are closely connected with the discursive perspective just discussed. There the main concern was with discourse, power and positioning, as reflected in the interview narratives. Under this third heading, I want to highlight the interplay of social influences and individual subjectivities in the production of narrative.

In addition to “conventions about language and the hearing of stories,” social factors in the shaping of narrative include culturally shared identity categories and storylines (Georgakopoulou, 2007; Riessman, 2003; Sparkes et al., 2007). For example, in my analysis of several of the participants’ accounts I explore the influence of specific biblical narratives. As noted above, sacred stories function as vehicles for theological and moral truths within religious contexts. Where shared knowledge of such stories can be presumed, merely mentioning a name (e.g. “Judas”), identity category (“Pharisee”), or place (“Hell”) is a positioning move which can evoke a storyline, value judgement, or moral warning. So Jenny described to me the consequences of her efforts to challenge her leader simply by saying, “it was just throwing me more and more in the role of—well, ‘Jezebel’ was bandied around a lot.” I was aware of stories in the Hebrew bible about a queen named Jezebel. These narratives cast Jezebel as a rebel against God and a persecutor of God’s chosen prophet. I speculate that Jenny assumed that my knowledge of these texts as an “insider” would enable me to make my own meaning of her narrative at this point. Her recollection that in her community the name Jezebel was “bandied around a lot” suggests that this was a socially shared identity category in her community, with an associated storyline of rebelliousness and making trouble for God’s appointed leaders.

Alongside the acknowledgment of the social construction of narrative and subjectivity, I want to recall my discussion in the previous chapter of the possibility of individuals producing their life narratives with an agentic intention, that is, with *authority*, in Davies' (1991) terms. In Chapter 3 (section 3.3), I noted Davies' argument that a subject may perform her identity as "a protagonist inside the storylines she is living out" (p. 52). In that light, narratives, and the subjectivities they perform, are a product of both authorial intention and social influence. My analysis therefore includes reflection on the ways in which the participants make meaning of their own acts of re-authoring and resistance to the prevailing storylines of their contexts.

Performance is another aspect of narrative production which involves the interrelation of social and individual subjectivities. Peterson and Langellier (2006) emphasise the performative nature of narrative as "both a making and a doing—both *poiesis* and *praxis*, to use the classical Greek terms" (p. 173). So, the authors argue, narrative "is not merely the performance of an underlying communication competence; rather, narrative is performative in that it produces that to which it refers" (p. 174). Again it is possible to view these performative aspects of narration as expressions both of socially available repertoires and of individual agency (in the sense of *authority*).

So, for example, Sparkes (2005) argues that *narrative coherence* is "both artfully crafted in the telling and drawn from the available meanings, structures and linkages that comprise stories" (p. 203). Sparkes and Smith (2007), drawing on Brooks (1984), describe *emplotment* as "an active process by which people creatively engage with and make sense of a story so as to determine what is really going on and what is likely to happen as the story progresses" (p. 303). As an interpretive activity, emplotment involves the interweaving of individual and social subjectivities as personal stories are connected with larger cultural narratives.

In paying attention to participants' subjectivities and narrative performances in these ways, I have encountered another of the challenges which arise when narrative analysis is approached discursively. As I have re-presented their stories, I have found myself at times called into the position of narrating what Smith (1993, p. 394) describes as a "heroic" account. This socially approved storyline—a favourite in popular journalism—tends to reproduce humanistic notions of an

individual self who has struggled against the odds to gain control of his or her own destiny. In so doing, it “constructs a history of the biographical subject that situates the subject outside history” (Smith, 1993, p. 394). To counter this individualising tendency, I have worked at highlighting the relational and discursive aspects of participants’ accounts of their efforts to find agentic places to stand and/or speak. My analysis also probes beyond resonant moments of pathos or courage and brings forward social and discursive influences which have shaped the production and content of each of their narratives.

Before concluding these reflections on the interplay of social and individual aspects of subjectivity in the production of narrative, I want to acknowledge that some poststructuralist researchers completely reject the use of personal subjective experience as a suitable starting point for discourse analysis. In Chapter 1 (section 1.4), I alluded to the argument that such a focus can result in the political being overwhelmed by the personal, and the personal defaulting to a form of humanistic individualism. Hook (2001, 2005), for example, is highly critical of approaches to analysis which include a focus on individual subjects at the expense of Foucault’s concern with history and materiality in relation to discourse. Citing Foucault (1977b), Hook (2005) argues that

genealogical analysis permits “the dissociation of the self, its recognition and displacement as an empty synthesis” (pp. 145–46). Genealogy moves its focus away from capturing a precise category—a precise subject or object—to fixing instead a vector of forces, a network of elements within which an object of knowledge attains epistemological coherence. (p. 16)

This negativity toward the inclusion of the subject is echoed by Fish (1993), who takes issue with narrative therapists White and Epston for what he regards as their selective and flawed use of Foucault. Fish regards their privileging of “the person’s lived experience” as contradicting Foucault: “if there is one thing which Foucault consistently and explicitly does *not* privilege, it is the subject’s experience” (p. 224). For similar reasons, Fish is critical of the prominence given to story by White and Epston, seeing in this a non-Foucauldian confusion of story and discourse.

The assertion that Foucault was unequivocally opposed to the inclusion of subjectivity in analysis has not gone unchallenged. Redekop (1995) has responded to Fish’s criticisms of White’s and Epston’s use of Foucault, noting the irony of

any totalising reading of Foucault, who himself “argued against the totalization of theories and ideas” (p. 310). He also points to Foucault’s presentation of the individual stories of Hercule Barbin and Pierre Rivière, on behalf of his studies (1975, 1980) of the construction of sexuality and madness, noting the sense of outrage and astonishment reflected in Foucault’s comments on these texts. This, Redekop observes, “is a caution against too great a separation between stories and discourse in Foucault’s work” (p. 311). This point is reinforced by the way in which Foucault presents the stories of Barbin and Rivière, with accompanying legal and medical documents. He is explicit in his intention that these stories should be read within, and shed light on, the discursive contexts of their times.

While heeding Hook’s warning against allowing the singular subject surreptitiously to become the centre of meaning and interpretation, I choose in this project to stand with Willig and others (2000; Willig, Potter, Wickham, Kendall, & Hook, 2005) who argue that the personal also has political potency, and whose interest in subjective experience is taken up on behalf of social change.

A better understanding of how subjective experience is constituted through the ways in which we position ourselves within available discourses and practices over time (as Foucault puts it, ‘(...) the history of how an individual acts upon himself’) may help us to think more creatively about how to facilitate alternative subjectivities for ourselves and those we work with. Whilst this cannot be done in the absence of wider social change, such change in turn does not come about without the active involvement of subjectivities. (2005, p. 33)

In reviewing the strengths and weaknesses of personal narrative as a means of challenging “the certitudes of bourgeois individualism,” Smith (1993) reflects on a particular narrative study which “points to the ways in which subjects are situated in multiple discourses of identity,” and so by implication “offers a critique of the myth of unified selfhood” (p. 395). In a similar way, I consider that my re-presentation of participants’ stories—including their accounts of their own subjective positioning with its contradictory and at times confusing aspects—to be an effective strategy for raising awareness of social and historical conditions and their effects, for bringing forward subjugated knowledges, and so for contributing to social change.

Summary of discursive narrative analytical strategies

Table 1: Strategies for analysis and reflexive considerations

| Analytical strategies | Reflexive considerations |
|---|---|
| <p>Treat participants' narratives as effects of <i>particular social and discursive contexts</i> (including but not limited to the religious communities they describe), and offer tentative suggestions as to discursive and historical features of these contexts.</p> | <p>These narratives and my representations of them are discursively co-produced effects, not empirical descriptions of historical contexts or events. Other narrators, and other listeners, would almost certainly co-produce different accounts.</p> |
| <p>Prospect for <i>artefacts of discourse embedded in the interview narratives</i>, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ recollections of explicit ideas or values which were dominant within the participants' communities, or taken up in their own responses; ○ taken for granted ideas and moral positions implicit in participants' descriptions of life in their communities; ○ discourses reflected in participants' descriptions of power relations, position calls, and their own responses (including embodied responses) to being positioned; ○ participants' descriptions of their ethical intentions, their hopes for their lives, their reflections on their identities, and other ways in which they make meaning of their own acts of re-authoring and resistance. | <p>Again, there is a delicate balance here between not claiming an empirical status for participants' constructions of events, ideas, or people's actions and intentions, while respecting them as important aspects of participants' meaning-making and identity work. Nonetheless, all of their accounts reflect the interdependence of religious discourse and power relations. If, as Sparkes (2005) suggests, narrative coherence is crafted from <i>available</i> "meanings, structures and linkages," then those accounts are likely to have embedded within them discursive artefacts which can help to shed light on the kind of cultures in which they originated. These are tentatively named in my analysis. Power relations, position calls and embodied effects are present in the interview situation also, and worthy of reflexive attention.</p> |
| <p>Consider <i>performative aspects</i> of participants' accounts, asking what they suggest about socially available repertoires (e.g. cultural stories) and participants' ways of making meaning (e.g. ways of imparting order to the narrative) and establishing agency and identity (e.g. use of first person pronoun with active verbs).</p> | <p>I am aware that at least one storyline in the interview narratives (authoritative practices—effects—resistance) is an effect of the nature and order of the questions I asked. However, my re-presentation of those narratives in the next three chapters attends to the nuances and variations to this pattern through which participants made meaning of their experiences.</p> <p>As the researcher, I avoid as much as possible re-presenting participants' stories according to socially approved storylines, such as the heroic tale.</p> |
| <p>Note <i>common patterns</i> across participants' accounts of their positioning within the discourses of religious authority within their communities, with a view to offering suggested areas of review for Christian leaders and their communities.</p> | <p>Finding such patterns is not a basis for making universalising claims about the discourses and practices of authority in Christian churches. That said, I suggest in Chapter 9 that the patterns I identify in this study provide a useful basis for self-reflection and investigation for any religious community interested in reviewing its own practices of power.</p> |

Table 1, shown on the previous page, draws together what I have said to this point about my approach to discursive narrative analysis in this project, and about particular challenges posed by combining a focus on discourse and narrative. The left column shows the strategies which I pursue in my analysis of the interview narratives, while the right column highlights reflexive considerations in relation to those strategies (which are discussed further in the next section). Some of the strategies overlap, but I list them separately for the sake of clarity.

4.2 Further thoughts on reflexivity

In an interview published in 1981, Foucault (2001) spoke of his work as being inextricably connected with elements of his own life, experience and perceptions:

Every time I have tried to do a piece of theoretical work it has been on the basis of elements of my own experience: always in connection with processes I saw unfolding around me. It was always because I thought I identified cracks, silent tremors, and dysfunctions in things I saw, institutions I was dealing with, or my relations with others, that I set out to do a piece of work, and each time was partly a fragment of autobiography. (p. 458)

I understand reflexivity in research to refer to a researcher's intention to make such autobiographical elements of their work visible, as far as they are able. As Davies et al (2004) suggest, this entails the development of a critical literacy in which

the researchers understand that they are also caught up in the processes of subjectification and see simultaneously the objects/subjects of their gaze *and* the means by which those objects/subjects (which may include the researcher as subject) are being constituted. . . . Researchers see meaningful actions in the world, analysing them both in their own terms and at the same time, as the result of the constitutive acts engaged in and made visible by the researchers themselves. (p. 361)

I recognise the tension named here, between producing myself as a researcher—a competent critical theorist and discourse analyst—and reflecting critically on the way my subjectivities and research processes have at the same time been constituted within discourse. Pillow (2003) advocates a “move to use reflexivity in a way that would continue to challenge the representations we come to while at the same time acknowledging the political need to represent and find meaning” (p.

192). I see both poles of this tension at work in every aspect of this project: in the ways in which I have positioned myself as the researcher, chosen the theorists with whom I want to be in conversation, related to the participants, generated my interview data, selected, represented and analysed that data, oriented my discussion, and presented my conclusions. While endeavouring to write reflexively throughout this project, I address two of these aspects specifically here: my positioning in the project, and my positioning in relation to the participants.

My positioning in the project

In Chapter 1, and throughout this chapter, I have written about personal experiences, values and concerns which shape my subjectivity as a researcher. In outlining my approach to discursive narrative analysis I have been explicit about my intention to shine a light on the ways in which powerful ideas about religious authority circulate and position people within some Christian communities, in the hope of opening space for people in those communities to reconsider and, should they choose to, resist those ideas. While standing by this intention, I am mindful of Ellsworth's (1989) warning that any claim to be the bearer of "emancipatory authority" is far from unproblematic. Her comments relate to teaching and critical pedagogy, but can equally well be applied to critical research methodologies. For example, a claim that my work somehow constitutes "emancipatory research" might imply that I position myself as knowing what is best for others, that is, that they need emancipating from particular regimes of religious authority. Rather, as noted above, my intention is to contribute to people's awareness of the ideas about religious authority which may be at work in their communities, on behalf of agentic choices between a plurality of possible subject positions. This, for me, is consonant with the ethical stance I developed in the last chapter (section 3.4), where I noted Foucault's (1988) declared aim of helping people to see "that they are much freer than they feel, that people accept as truth, as evidence, some themes which have been built up at a certain moment during history" (p. 10).

Ellsworth's discussion also challenges me to consider whether I implicitly position myself an emancipated researcher. If my work is on behalf of freedom for others, do I assume that I am somehow outside of the systems that support oppressive forms of religious authority? Certainly there is an allure in viewing

myself as striving virtuously on behalf of those who produce their lives within the strictures of religious authority, skillfully deconstructing dominant discourses, and helping to bring subjugated stories and knowledges to light. But I am aware, albeit imperfectly, of many ways in which my life and career have been, and remain, inextricably bound up with discourses and interests that support the oppression of others. For example, over thirty years ago I enjoyed a privileged position in a church where women were barred from certain forms of participation. I did not agree with this restriction, and worked with others to see it changed, but meanwhile I availed myself of opportunities that were not available to half the congregation, and enjoyed recognition as an up-and-coming leader. Throughout the period of my research, I have occupied a relatively privileged position as a white, middle-aged, middle-class, educated, heterosexual male, with a senior position in an established religious academy.

The relevance of these acknowledgments to my research is to invite reflection on whether my positioning made it difficult for me to hear some aspects of my participants' experience, or for a participant to disclose something to me as an established insider. By virtue of this positioning, it is very difficult to know whether this has happened or not. In hindsight, it would have been helpful to build in an extra interview with the participants, as an opportunity to ask participants about their experience of the research, and of me as the interviewer. The only point during the main interviews where this issue became explicit was in relation to a participant's recollections of how she was regarded and treated as a woman in her community. When I asked her to say more about this, she did, but not before describing to me, a male interviewer, the difficulty for her of doing so.

I mean it's very hard as a—yeah, talking as a female about gender issues is really hard. It's really hard because it's very easy for it to come across like you're whining or whining or, you know, whatever.

As I have engaged in the analysis and writing of this thesis, I have acknowledged the points at which I have become aware of significance of my own positioning in relation to a participant. Positively, the feedback given by one female participant after reading a draft version of my re-presentation of her story affirmed my capacity to recognize and respects some gendered aspects of her experience:

Thank you for “truly hearing.” I have been pondering lately how few men have listened to this story and truly heard, felt, understood, and seen what it has been like, might still be like, for women.

As I have noted already, the insider position, despite its risks, has been helpful to me as the researcher. As Davies and Davies (2007) observe:

The very capacity we have to recognize others and recognize ourselves in relation to those others means that we have something psychically in common—a commonness that comes from being part of common landscapes, of being positioned within common discourses. (p. 1143)

The benefit, for me, extends beyond this mutual recognition to having helpful starting points for the challenge of discursive narrative analysis. Areas of commonality have suggested clues as to where to start in the search for the discourses, both within the interview situation and in the subsequent analysis. On the other hand, the churches described in most of the participants’ stories are very different to any church that I spend time in. So in this respect, together with my gender, academic position, and initiating role in this research, there are ways in which I am positioned as an outsider in relation to the participants. This awareness of difference has been helpful in producing a sense of intrigue or ethical concern which again takes me to the analysis of discourse. In both of these ways, my own positioning has contributed positively to the task of finding ways

to treat talk and other textual productions as archives, the study of which enables us to see how the very categories inside of which we and our research subjects accomplish ourselves as natural, normal human beings (if indeed we do) are constituted and lived and made real, and with what effects. (Davies et al., 2007, p. 1144).

My positioning in relation to the participants

In considering the range of possible relationships between researchers and participants, Denzin and Lincoln (2005) offer a typology of three voices or narrative strategies: authoritative voice, supportive voice, and interactive voice. In the second category (supportive), researchers give prominence to participants’ voices, and keep their own in the background. In the third strategy (interactive) researchers submit their own voice to that of the participants. While I have endeavoured in my analysis to privilege the voice of the participants, and while I

have given the participants opportunity to comment on draft versions of my analysis, it is the first category of “authoritative voice” which most accurately names my positioning in this project. This narrative strategy both connects and separates the researcher’s and narrator’s voices, with the separation arising through the interpretative elements of my analysis and discussion.

For example, during an interview, both narrator and listener are interested in developing the fullness and particularity of the narrator’s story, but when it comes to interpreting, the researcher turns to *how* and *what* questions that open up particular ways of understanding what the narrator is communicating through his or her story. (Denzin et al., 2005, p. 664)

While I make frequent use of the words of the participants, my analysis of the interview narratives is presented in language that may not be familiar (or even comprehensible) to the participants. In adopting a methodology of discursive narrative analysis I am therefore aware that I am pursuing my own particular interests and exercising my own author-ity in producing the research story. Similarly, my interviews were not undertaken with an explicit intention that they would in some way be as beneficial for the participants as they would for me in furthering my project.

Having acknowledged these aspects of my positioning in the research, I want to affirm again my commitment to the intention which Denzin and Lincoln (2005) ascribe to the use of the authoritative voice, namely

making visible and audible taken-for-granted practices, processes, and structural and cultural features of our everyday social worlds. . . . By taking up an authoritative sociological or psychological voice, the researcher speaks differently from, but not disrespectfully of, the narrator’s voice. (p. 664)

Using the term “authoritative,” especially in a study concerned with the uses and misuses of religious authority, raises an important ethical question. How do I ensure that the notion of authoritative voice does not become an excuse to use the interview material in ways that override the participants’ intentions and hopes in privileging me with their stories? On this question, Denzin and Lincoln (2005) join with Czarniawska (2002), who advocates a position of “narrative responsibility and respect” (p. 742). To this end, they recommend that “researchers attend to diversity in the stories that various narrators tell, to

dominant and marginal readings of narrators' stories, and to narrators' responses (including opposition) to the researchers' interpretations" (p. 664). I have pursued this strategy in my analysis and discussion, and, as stated above, have given participants the opportunity to provide feedback on draft versions of my analysis. Some have offered corrections on matters of factual detail. Some have asked for a greater level of care to protect their privacy. Some have offered comments for me to consider regarding my representation or interpretation of their story.

These efforts to hear and trustworthily re-present the words of the participants, and to invite their responses to my words, enact the dialogic ethical stance developed in the previous chapter (section 3.4). In the terms of Drewery's (2005) notion of agency, I have tried—within the limits of a research thesis—to offer some space for each person I interviewed to participate in conversations that concern the production of their lives. But a PhD thesis is not a collaboration between authors with equal contributing rights. As the researcher and the final author of this study, I acknowledge that mine remains the authoritative voice.

A note on excluded voices

Before leaving the issues of my relationship to the participants and my representation of their voices, I want to acknowledge others whose voices are heard only as performed by the participants. These are the individual or collective bearers of religious authority who feature in the participants' accounts, often as those responsible for acts of power and positioning which affected the latter adversely. As explained in Chapter 2, my decision to use a research strategy informed by poststructuralist ideas was in part an attempt to avoid the pathologising tendency of some other approaches to the issue of religious authority. Yet in listening to, and planning how to re-present, the participants' accounts, I found myself at times rehearsing versions of their stories within which the religious authority figures appeared as "the enemy." This taken-for-granted way of allocating subject positions is often associated with the heroic tale genre referred to earlier. Noticing the gravitational pull of these familiar tropes has reinforced for me the importance of utilising poststructuralist forms of analysis, not simply in relation to the interview data, but also to the ways in which I position myself in relation to the data. Pfohl (2007) describes well why such reflexivity is crucial.

Under the spell of dominant (or hegemonic) social constructions, artificial things become “second nature” to those they most captivate, *blessing a particular order of things while cursing others*. . . . The ritual historical positioning of humans in relation to cultural objects and stories that we both make and are made over by—this, perhaps, is the elementary form of an effective social construction. (pp. 645-646; emphasis mine)

Again I emphasise that it is not my intention to vilify leaders such as those described in my participants’ accounts. I acknowledge that narrative accounts, including narrators’ representations of others and of dialogue, are social constructions, not verbatim reports. There is discomfort for me in the following challenge to narrative researchers from Atkinson and Delamont (2006):

While the ‘voices’ of otherwise muted groups may be charged with political significance, we cannot proceed as if they were guaranteed authenticity simply by virtue of narrators’ social positions. The testimony of the powerless and the testimony of the powerful equally deserve close analytic attention. Moral commitment is not a substitute for social-scientific analysis. (p. 170)

From the beginning, the limited scope of this study meant that I did not plan to interview both leaders and led. As it happened, three of the ten participants were in positions of authority at the time of their experiences, although their stories were focused on experiences of authority used by others against them. In my work as a supervisor to Christian pastors, I have heard many stories from the leadership side of the authority divide, and it may be that in post-doctoral research I will have opportunity to engage analytically with the “testimony of the powerful.” In the meantime, one of my hopes for the present project is that it will provide a set of perspectives and questions that will challenge both leaders and their communities to reflect on the effects of the ideas and practices of authority which they have together been taking for granted.

For all these reasons, it is not my intention to construe those who take up the demanding and often thankless task of pastoral leadership as being in themselves “the problem,” even though they sometimes engage in problematic behaviours. In the spirit of narrative therapy, “the problem is the problem,” and is to be located in the realm of discourse (White et al., 1990). As Foucault has so effectively shown, the subjectivities of all the members of a social system are constructed within its dominant discourses, and all participate in the maintenance of its power-

knowledge regimes. This is not to deny moral responsibility on the part of the leaders for how they exercise the authority with they are positioned, but to suggest the possibility that in some cases even their own ethical hopes and intentions may be subverted by these regimes.

4.3 Research design

Having outlined key conceptual aspects of my research methodology I now describe the methods by which these were applied.

Ethical considerations

During the first year of my engagement with this project, I worked with my supervisors to formulate a draft research plan and submitted an ethics application to the School of Education Ethics Committee of the University of Waikato. The main ethical concerns addressed in this application were as follows.

i Contacting potential participants

I developed an information sheet (see Appendix 1) which indicated the focus of my research and invited potential participants to contact me for further information and explanation. I gave this information sheet to several counsellors and spiritual directors, with an invitation to pass it on to people whom they considered to be suitable potential participants. My intention was that anyone who chose to contact me did so at their own initiative, rather than at my direct request. As it turned out, four people to whom I had given the information sheet volunteered themselves as participants. One person offered herself as a potential participant on hearing me talk about the project.

ii Selection of participants

When my initial contact with a person indicated that they might be a suitable and willing participant, I provided them with a follow-up questionnaire (Appendix 2), which also invited them to ask me any questions concerning the project. On the basis of the responses I received I then made a list of ten people to approach again in order to invite their participation. The criteria I used for this selection process are outlined in Appendix 3. The intention of these criteria was to ensure that the participants (a) had experiences of the kind that I was researching, (b) were at

least 12 months on from these experiences, to lessen the risk of the interviews causing emotional distress, and (c) represented a spread of age, gender and church affiliation.

Of the eleven people who contacted me, indicating their openness to participate in my research, only 1 did not meet the criteria. I accepted the ten remaining people as my participants on obtaining their informed consent. These were made up of six women and four men, with ages ranging from late thirties to early sixties. The church affiliations which these people were recalling in telling their stories included established traditional Christian denominations (i.e. those which have been in existence for at least 400 years), independent Christian communities of more recent origin, and two movements which many Christians would consider to be on the fringe of orthodox Christianity.

In terms of the ethnicities of the participants, one included Māori ancestors in her whakapapa, while the other nine were of European descent, with one born outside of New Zealand. All belonged to churches with a predominance of Pākēha members and leaders. I have mixed feelings about this relatively narrow range of cultural diversity within the data. On the one hand, it would have been interesting to discover what discourses might have been dominant in communities with a prevalence of non-European members, and to hear how people experienced and resisted the practices of religious authority in these contexts.

I have some ideas about what this might have been like, having listened over the years to students from a range of other cultures talking about their church experiences. I speculate that cultural ideas about authority and respect would have played a significant part in the stories told about Māori, Pacifica or Korean churches, for example. On the other hand, as the researcher, I am a New Zealand born Pākēha male. The range of participants has presented the challenge of working with difference in the areas of gender, age and church affiliation. While working with people of other ethnicities and cultures would have enriched and extended my learning in this project, it would also have meant grappling with additional layers of complexity in relation to the values and knowledges of the communities concerned (Davies, Larson, Contro, Reyes-Hailey, Ablin et al., 2009; Liamputtong, 2008, 2010).

iii *Obtaining consent*

Having selected ten participants I sent a formal letter of invitation to each person, along with a consent form (see Appendix 4). This letter indicated the nature of the questions which I would be asking in the interviews, the process that I planned to use to analyse the interview material, and policies relating to confidentiality and recording/data storage policies.

iv *Confidentiality*

In order to maintain anonymity and confidentiality, participants' (and any other parties' or communities') actual names and other identifying information have not been included in the thesis. Pseudonyms have been used in the transcripts, reports to supervisors and seminar presentations, as they will be in any subsequent published documents. In checking the transcripts of their interviews, two participants asked that pseudonyms I had chosen be changed, and I have made those changes.

In the case of two of the church movements in which participants had been involved, it was evident that the features of those movements were such that they would be difficult to disguise in presenting the stories. In these cases I have named the wider church movement, but omitted any details that would identify the location and name of the particular individual churches. The two participants concerned have approved the material included in the chapters that concern their stories.

v *Minimising potential harm to participants*

Two areas of risk were addressed in my ethics application. The main risk was that despite a minimum distance in time of twelve months from the events, a participant might reconnect with painful memories in relating their earlier experience of religious authority. I provided for this by asking participants to indicate on the consent form (Appendix 4) a professional person to whom they could go for counselling and/or spiritual direction should the need arise. This form indicated that I was willing to assist them in finding a suitable person if necessary, and that the cost of one session would be covered. None of the participants took up this provision.

The second area of risk was that a person or group might perceive that a situation described in the dissertation pertained to them, and make a complaint or a direct approach to the person whom they assumed to be the participant who had given the account. As indicated above, I have endeavoured to minimise this risk by striving to protect the anonymity of the participants and their contexts, and by offering the participants the opportunity to negotiate changes to details included in the dissertation. Only one participant requested such changes, and after two iterations of suggested changes we were able to agree on a revised version of the material.

vi *Conflicts of interest*

My ethics application noted two areas of personal involvement which could be seen as representing a conflict of interest. At the time of submitting the application, and at the time of conducting the interviews, I held a leadership role in a Presbyterian church. This meant that I was one of a group of around eight people who were collectively responsible for the general direction of the church and the pastoral care of its members. I acknowledged that holding this position might construct a bias in my research in defence of those who hold religious authority, and that this may affect my approach to and analysis of interview narratives that are critical of religious authority. However, as I have made clear at several points in this thesis, this research has in part been motivated by a serious personal concern with regard to the way in which religious authority is exercised in some Christian religious communities. Rather than feeling an obligation to defend those in positions of religious authority, I feel an obligation to explore what constructs practices authority that have negative effects in some people's lives. The opportunity given to participants to comment on a draft version of my analysis provided a further check on any defensiveness that may have been apparent.

While my training and experience as a counsellor and spiritual director inform my interest in and approach to this project, the information provided to participants (Appendix 4) made it clear that I would not be conducting the interviews with the intention of doing either counselling or spiritual direction. I indicated that if the need for either became apparent, then I would refer the

participant to the person they had designated on the consent form and be willing to pay for the first session.

Introducing the participants

Here I briefly introduce the participants, with more detail to follow in the chapters where their stories are represented. All names used in these chapters are pseudonyms. As noted already, one had Māori ancestry and the others were of European descent. I interviewed seven women and three men. Sadly, one of the participants passed away before the completion of this project, and before her consent to the inclusion of her material could be obtained. It was a privilege to hear and to reflect on this person's story, and I regret that I have not been able to honour the generosity with which she shared it by including it here. Some of what I learned from listening to her story remains present in my writing, albeit "between the lines."

The results of my analysis of the remaining nine stories are distributed over three chapters, according to the discourses of religious authority which were dominant and the nature of their communities and/or their roles in their communities. I am mindful that any kind of grouping entails a risk that the naming of common elements will override the individual character of each interview narrative. As much as possible I have heeded Denzin and Lincoln's (2005) call, noted earlier, to "attend to diversity in the stories that various narrators tell" (p. 664), as an important aspect of exercising narrative responsibility and respect in the research process. I have not, therefore, attempted to press the results of working with grouped stories into any kind of schema, other than identifying the discourses or contextual features which were the basis of the initial grouping. I undertook my analysis of each interview transcript before deciding how the chapters would be arranged, thereby lessening the likelihood of looking for traces of particular discourses while overlooking others.

Chapter 5: Cathy, Bill, Jenny, and Selina. In this chapter I represent the stories of four people who told of their experiences in churches which might broadly be described as independent of, and more recently formed than, the Christian denominations which have been in existence for at least the last four centuries. As will be evident from their stories, these churches have often been characterised by

hierarchical (and patriarchal) views of religious authority, with the local senior pastor being positioned at the top of the hierarchy. Cathy and Bill are married to each other, providing an interesting opportunity to hear experiences they had in common being described from both female and male perspectives.

Chapter 6: John and Lynne. The stories of John and Lynne concern two very different religious communities. Despite that difference, their stories are informed by common discourses of separation from the “outside world” and unquestioning obedience to divinely appointed leaders.

Chapter 7: Andy, Sarah, and Martin. What links the accounts given by Andy, Sarah, and Martin is not the nature of their communities, but the fact that each held a recognised position of leadership in their church as a pastor or priest. Their stories focused on the way various forms of religious authority affected their lives and their efforts to fulfil the pastoral role each felt called to exercise.

Generating the data

Interviews

I conducted one main interview with each participant, lasting from 75 minutes to nearly three hours. Most interviews took place in the participants’ own homes, when they and I were comfortable with that arrangement. Two interviews took place at the participant’s workplace, and one at my workplace. I recorded these interviews using a digital recorder.

While I had a range of possible questions to use in the interviews, as indicated in Appendix 5, my primary intention in each interview was to engage in a conversation which would result in the co-production of a narrative, rather than a list of answers to set questions. In this I was guided by Chase (2003) who recommends (a) beginning with a broad question that invites the telling of a story; (b) following up with questions which emerge from close listening to the story, rather than sticking rigidly to prepared questions (many of which will end up being answered anyway); and (c) asking questions which invite rich descriptions of lived experience, rather than opinions, generalisations or hypothetical answers. These aspects of my approach are consistent with an unstructured interview model, in that I had to “develop, adapt and generate follow-up questions reflecting

the central purpose of the research” (Qu & Dumay, 2011, p. 245). On the other hand, the fact that my project revolves around two key research areas meant that I sometimes redirected the focus of the conversation to issues which reflected these questions, rather than simply allowing the narrative to unfold in a completely unstructured way. My interview method is therefore better described as “semi-structured,” but with a high degree of flexibility as to how and when my key questions were pursued.

The semi-structured interview involves prepared questioning guided by identified themes . . . the focus is on the interview guide incorporating a series of broad themes to be covered during the interview to help guide the conversation toward the topics and issues about which the interviewers want to learn. Generally interview guides vary from highly scripted to relatively loose. (Qu et al., 2011, p. 246)

I began each interview by briefly reiterating the focus of my research, before asking the person to tell me something of how they came to be a part of the Christian community in which their experiences of religious authority took place. In most cases the participants moved early in their account to descriptions of how religious authority was practiced, the ideas that supported these practices, the effects of these practices on people, and their eventual acts of resistance to this authority. Where necessary I would ask further questions about these issues, inviting the participant to expand on the brief description of their resistance which they had supplied as part of their written response to my invitation to take part in my research (Appendix 2).

Without using terms such as “positioning” or “discourse,” I was particularly interested in asking questions which offered me an opportunity to hear how participants recalled being positioned within the dominant discourses of religious authority in their communities. So in addition to “what happened then?” type questions, I asked how other people had made sense of the events at the time, how they, the participants, made sense of them then and now, what values they were standing for in their resistance, and so on. While there was no therapeutic or transformative intent in my conversations with participants, the pattern of my questions was similar to a narrative therapist’s movement back and forth between accounts of what happened and the ways in which participants made sense of these events (White, 1995, 2007). My use of meaning-focused questions

represents a significant aspect of my contribution to the co-production of the interview narratives, and to the second layer of intertextuality (telling and retelling) referred to earlier. My regular return to such questions reflects the concern I held as a researcher, in relation to having sufficient material with which to engage in discourse analysis.

Transcription

The recorded interviews were transcribed by a professional transcriber who had signed a confidentiality agreement. McLellan, MacQueen and Neidig (2003) suggest that “text selected for transcription should take into account the analytical contribution it will provide to the overall study” (p. 67). However, in order not to prejudge what data would be most relevant to the analysis, I decided to have each interview transcribed in full. I checked these transcriptions for accuracy against the original recordings. I then arranged each transcript into a numbered sequence of conversational turns, for ease of reference in my analysis. Because my methodology did not entail technical, sociolinguistic forms of discourse analysis, I represented each conversational turn simply as continuous text, without special notation or structural arrangement.

In terms of data generation, I left the text of each transcript largely unedited, apart from removing the occasional “um” or stumble over words. Grammatical errors, use of slang, and incomplete sentences were not corrected. Where a laugh or sigh was audible in the recording, this was noted in brackets in the transcription. When presenting material from the transcripts in this thesis, a pause is indicated by three periods without spacing (...), as distinct from spaced ellipsis points (. . .) which are used to indicate omitted material.

These measures were important in producing transcripts which were trustworthy representations of the interview conversations. I acknowledge that a sequence of typed, numbered paragraphs exists at a significant remove from in-the-moment conversation between embodied persons. As Poland (1995) observes, “the very notion of accuracy of transcription is problematic given the intersubjective nature of human communication, and transcription as an interpretive activity” (p. 292). That said, I regard trustworthiness as an essential goal. I view it not only as “an aspect of rigor in qualitative research” (Poland,

1995, p. 295), but also as an important expression of the dialogic ethic which informs my work, as outlined in the previous chapter.

Methods of analysis

From the beginning of this project, and throughout this chapter, I have been clear that I wanted to bring narrative and discourse analysis together. What wasn't clear until I actually engaged in the task of analysis was what that would mean in practice. Using the transcript of the first interview I had completed, which was with Cathy, I worked through several iterations of analytical approach.

My first approach was to read and re-read the transcript looking for, and coding, narrative themes and discursive aspects relevant to my research questions (page 3). I developed a grid in which I summarised patterns I was finding in the transcript, with the intention that this might become a template for analysis of the other transcripts. This grid, together with selected examples from Cathy's interview, is shown in Table 2. Note that the examples shown within the same column represent a variety of themes, rather than one consistent thread.

Table 2: Analysis iteration 1

| Elements of analysis | Example 1 | Example 2 |
|-------------------------------------|---|--|
| <i>Storylines in narration</i> | A = This church is different | B = I was treated differently as a woman, wife, mother |
| <i>Dominant discourses</i> | Patriarchal: women should let men take the lead | "Anointed" leaders have divinely revealed insight |
| <i>Sites of discursive struggle</i> | Freedom to make informed decisions about own future | Women positioned as not credible—their experience discounted |
| <i>Position calls</i> | Trust that "we [the leaders] know better" | Assume the role of silent, supportive spouse |
| <i>Experience of positioning</i> | "Feels" difference, contradiction, shock | "Just about went crazy" |
| <i>Resistance/agentive action</i> | Requests voice in the discussion of their future | Challenged husband's apparent collusion with her exclusion from discussion |
| <i>Creative identity work</i> | Efforts to produce life & work in dialogic relationship with others | Recalls & rehearses evidences of her own competence/achievements |

This initial approach was helpful in requiring me to become closely acquainted with the detail of Cathy's story, to appreciate the shape of her narrative, and to begin to think about it discursively. On the other hand, it presented me with a

multitude of items that felt fragmented. In the category represented by the last row, for example, I listed 38 examples of creative identity work.

My second approach was to undertake what I called a “synthetic analysis,” collating the data which I had generated using the first approach under the headings shown below. My intention was to preserve something of the narrative coherence of each participant’s story, while paying particular attention to their “account of producing his/her own life/identity, the resulting experiences of discursive struggle / positioning, and his/her negotiation of these” (the wording I used in my notes at the time). I arranged this second iteration of analysis under the following headings, hoping that they would be transferable to other interviews, and listed key examples from the data under each one:

Life prior to membership of the main community which features in this story

The way he/she hoped to relate to this community, its people and leaders

While in the community—plans, actions, positioning and resistance

His/her post-community life/self-descriptions/reflection

Account of how he/she experienced discursive struggle and positioning

Working through these two iterations of analysis brought about a significant shift in the way I had been thinking about the participants’ experiences and accounts. I write about this shift in some detail in my discussion chapter (section 8.1), under the heading, “A reflexive pause: regarding ethical intentions and hopes.” Briefly, the data itself invited this shift, as I came to terms with the importance for my participants of the issues represented in the first two headings. Because of the way I had framed my research questions—with an emphasis first on regimes of power and knowledge, and second on resistance—I had constructed for myself an expectation that the participants’ narratives would follow a pattern in which they would begin by describing the discourses and practices of religious authority in their communities, including their own compliance with these discourses, and then give an account of how it was they began to think differently and eventually engage in acts resistance.

This pattern wasn’t entirely absent from the participants’ narratives, but a different pattern emerged, as reflected in the difference between the headings in the first and second iterations of my analysis. In the first iteration, the final

heading was *Creative identity work*. This was added in recognition of the way that many participants talked about the hopes and values which were important to them in the production of their own lives, including their participation in Christian community. Significantly this theme shifted from being the last item (a kind of afterthought) in my initial grid (Table 2) to being represented in the first two headings in the second iteration of analysis:

Life prior to membership of the main community which features in this story, and
The way he/she hoped to relate to this community, its people and leaders.

At the time, I wrote the following in my notes for discussion with my supervisors:

In this “second take” I am attempting to see this as not so much the story of Cathy’s attempts to resist and deal with discourses and practices of religious authority, as her account of the production of her life and the way she deals with the “resistance” of those dominant discourses and practices! . . . It could be thought of as at least two stories in collision—one a discursive/social (hi)story of religious discourses and power-knowledge, the other the story of a life . . . told from the point of view of individual subjectivity. . . . I was constructing a narrative structure which gave the initiating, active role to the “religious authority” my participants found themselves resisting—*as though there was no prior story* in which they were already actively seeking to construct a life with their own guiding convictions.

It will be evident from these considerations why, earlier in this chapter, I have argued at some length for consideration of individual subjectivities within my formulation of discursive narrative analysis.

My third and final template for analysis (Table 3, next page) became the one I eventually used with all of the transcripts. This framework preserved a degree of narrative order as I worked with each person’s story, although in practice most people moved back and forth through the elements listed in the first column as they related their experiences. There is a danger, as I acknowledged earlier, that a grid such as this may be superimposed on a set of quite varied narratives, resulting in a misleading impression of order or commonality. I have tried to be sensitive to that danger in re-representing the participants’ stories in the chapters which follow, noting Riessman’s (1993) challenge to researchers engaged in narrative analysis:

Precisely because they are essential meaning-making structures, narratives must be preserved, not fractured, by investigators, who must respect respondents' ways of constructing a meaning and analyze how it is accomplished. (p. 4)

Table 3: Analysis iteration 3

| Elements of analysis | Areas for discursive narrative analysis |
|---|---|
| <i>Participant's accounts of their initial positioning, in terms of their expectations and hopes for the way relationships would be conducted within their communities.</i> | <p>What expectations/hopes did they hold in relation to conversations/decisions that would affect the conditions of their lives, and the lives of people to whom they were connected in significant ways?</p> <p>What/who positioned them in these expectations/hopes?</p> <p>What discourses are reflected in the participant's accounts of their initial positioning?</p> |
| <i>Participant's accounts of being positioned by those with authority in their community.</i> | <p>Their accounts of their experiences of positioning—descriptions of particular memories, bodily/affective experiences, cognitive/psychological, etc).</p> <p>The ways they made/make meaning of these experiences (including their accounts of any rationales invoked in the acts of positioning).</p> <p>Discourses reflected in the participant's accounts of the ways in which they found themselves being positioned within the community (again including their accounts of any rationales invoked in the acts of positioning).</p> <p>Indications in the participant's accounts of particular sites of discursive struggle, and of what was at stake.</p> |
| <i>Participant's accounts of their response/resistance to this positioning.</i> | <p>Their accounts of the ways in which they responded to these experiences, and the ways in which they made meaning of their own responses.</p> <p>Their descriptions of their own sense of agency & acts of resistance.</p> <p>The presence and role of contradictory discourses in the participant's accounts of their response to experiences of positioning.</p> <p>Evidence of discursive shifts in the participant's accounts of their response/resistance.</p> <p>Their accounts of what supported their response/resistance.</p> |
| <i>Participant's accounts of the eventual outcomes of these experiences.</i> | <p>Their accounts of what happened subsequent to the main experiences of struggle.</p> <p>The ways in which they now make meaning of what happened.</p> <p>Participant's descriptions of their present positioning in relation to Christian communities and to power relations within Christian communities.</p> <p>Evidence of further discursive shifts in the participant's present accounts of their experiences and of their present positioning.</p> |

As I worked with the material that was highlighted by the application of this process, the main challenge was to maintain both this sense of narrative integrity and the intention to offer a discourse-analytical response to my research questions. An awareness of dealing with stories in collision, as alluded to in the supervision notes cited above, was never entirely absent throughout the project. The positive contribution of this tension has been to keep me mindful of both priorities.

4.4 The question of validity

Within research which utilises a poststructuralist, or even a critical realist, epistemology, there is no access to “a ‘God’s eye view’ that is independent of any particular perspective or stance” (Maxwell, 2009, p. 111). Lather (1993) suggests that, in the absence of epistemological guarantees, validity is “not a matter of looking harder or more closely, but of seeing what frames our seeing. . . . Such post-epistemic concerns reframe validity as multiple, partial, endlessly deferred” (p. 675). Validity in this perspective is therefore not about historical veracity, verifiability, repeatability, or generalisability. It is, above all, about reflexivity. Seeing, and making visible, the seeing which is presented in the research as data, analysis, results, interpretation and discussion.

Brinberg and McGrath (1985; cited in Maxwell, 2009), assert that, “Validity is not a commodity that can be purchased with techniques. . . . Rather, validity is like integrity, character, and quality, to be assessed relative to purposes and circumstances” (pp. 112-113). I suggest that validity in qualitative research might therefore be thought of in terms of the quality of its relational connections, rather than in terms of maintaining an objective distance. Such connections include my relationship to my own work as a researcher (reflexivity); the relationship between the participants’ accounts and the re-presentations, analyses, interpretations and theoretical links which I construct; and the relationship of my analyses and conclusions to the contexts which gave rise to the research and its stated objectives.

Denzin (2009) contends that qualitative research is more about understanding than prediction, and seems to align himself with what he describes as a nonfoundationalist approach to evaluation. Nonfoundationalists, he suggests, “conceptualize inquiry within a moral frame, implementing an ethic rooted in the concepts of care, love, and kindness” (p. 61). While appreciating the relational

emphasis in Denzin's description, I identify also with what he calls a "quasifoundationalist" approach, in which there are criteria for evaluation which are unique to qualitative research (p. 61). These include demonstrating rigour in the areas of relational connection named above. I see this as one way of giving specific shape to my intention to proceed with "care, love, and kindness" toward my participants and the stories they have generously offered to this project.

In addition to reflexive strategies already outlined in this chapter, I have attended to these concerns in a number of ways. I provided an opportunity for each participant to read and comment on the transcript of their interview, and, as noted above, a draft version of my re-presentation of their story (see Appendix 6). This was not so much about verifying "truth," as checking the trustworthiness of my account in the eyes of the participants. Riessman (1993) notes the delicate balance between checking correspondence—checking that the researcher's reconstructions of participants' narratives "are recognizable as adequate representations"—and acknowledging that over time, "meanings of experiences shift as consciousness changes" (p. 66). I value the responses offered by the participants to the draft versions of what I have written about their stories, and they are incorporated in the final form of my writing. However, I cannot claim that what I have written speaks for views which participants have held, may now hold, or will hold in the future. To cite Riessman (1993) again, "Narratives are interpretive and, in turn, require interpretation. . . . Our analytic interpretations are partial, alternative truths that aim for 'believability, not certitude, for enlargement of understanding rather than control' (Stivers, 1993, p.242)" (p. 22).

While affirming the value of researchers checking with participants regarding re-representations of their individual accounts, Riessman (1993) argues that it is questionable whether the validity of "our theorizing across a number of narratives" can be affirmed in the same way (p. 66). During the writing process, therefore, I have not asked the participants to comment on my discussion chapter (Chapter 8), in which I draw together the results of my analyses of individual transcripts and theorise my responses to my two research questions. I have offered them the opportunity to read this chapter when the project has reached its final form, and a few participants have expressed interest in doing so. To address the relationship between participants' accounts and theoretical analysis and conclusions, Riessman (1993) draws on the notions of persuasiveness and

plausibility, suggesting that persuasiveness “is greatest when theoretical claims are supported with evidence from informants’ accounts and when alternative interpretations of the data are considered” (p. 65). That offers a good description of how I have approached the writing of my discussion of the findings of this project.

Riessman acknowledges the subjectivity implied in this view of persuasiveness, which depends partly on rhetorical skills of the researcher, including selective use of the data, and on reader response. This highlights the importance of the previously discussed issues of correspondence and recognisability. If participants recognise the correspondence between their original accounts, including their discursive contexts, and the ways I have re-presented their stories, then the onus is on me to provide a theoretical discussion which visibly coheres with those re-presentations, rather than drawing on them selectively or without regard for context. To further strengthen the plausibility of my theoretical discussion, I have as much as possible tried to articulate my reasons for theorising aspects of participants’ stories in a particular way. Where the connection may seem tenuous, I acknowledge the speculative nature of my comments.

The final area of relational connection named above is that between my analyses and conclusions and the contexts which gave rise to the research and its stated objectives. Riessman’s (1993) suggests that the pragmatic usefulness of research, that is, “the extent to which a particular study becomes the basis for others’ work” (p. 68), is another criterion for validity. In the final chapter of this thesis (sections 9.2 and 9.3), I reflect briefly on what this study might contribute to Christian communities committed to practicing religious authority in ways which support freedom and justice.

4.5 Concluding comments

In this chapter I have offered a careful explanation of, and case for, the bringing together of narrative analysis and discourse analysis in my discursive narrative analysis methodology. I have named a number of analytical strategies through which this approach to my data and research questions has been pursued, and I have acknowledged associated challenges which have required vigilant attention to maintaining reflexivity at every step. In outlining my research design, I have

described the actual steps taken in practice to generate the data, maintain ethical processes, undertake analysis and produce trustworthy results. These results are presented in the next three chapters.

Chapter 5:

Discourses of “covering” and “submission”

You could never actually have a conversation because your point of view wasn't actually valid. All that they were interested in as leaders was, were you submitting?
(Jenny's story)

Introduction to results chapters

Having developed a methodology of discursive narrative analysis in the previous chapter, I present in Chapters 5, 6, and 7 the results of my analysis of the participants' accounts of their encounters with, and resistance to, the practices of religious authority in their communities. At the end of each of these three chapters I sketch a brief outline of discussion points which have emerged from the analysis. In Chapter 8, I draw these points and the theory of Chapter 3 together in a discussion which sets out what this project has shown in relation to the two research questions at the heart of this project:

- i Within Christian communities, how is it that some regimes of power and knowledge can subvert the call to freedom and justice that is pervasive in longstanding streams of Christian tradition?
- ii What has enabled some people to resist the practices of religious authority constructed by such regimes?

The analysis which produced the results presented here and in the next two chapters employed the strategies summarised in Table 1 (Strategies for analysis and reflexive considerations, page 82) and focused on the areas listed in Table 3 (Analysis iteration 3, page 101).

This chapter presents the results of my analysis of the stories of four people: Cathy, Bill (Cathy's partner), Jenny, and Selina. As outlined in the previous chapter, I have grouped these participants on the basis of a common cluster of discourses which informed the practices of authority in their communities. In the process of finding participants for this project, people with stories of resistance to practices of religious authority within Christian communities, I did not target any particular Christian denominations or groupings. Nor did I use denominational allegiance as a criterion for accepting or rejecting participants who identified themselves as belonging, or having belonged, to a Christian community. As it

transpired, my analysis of the four stories presented in this chapter revealed a cluster of similar discourses and practices of authority. In relation to the first research question, I summarise these discourses using the terms often applied to them by the participants, namely “covering” and “submission.” Each of the four participants came to a place of resisting calls into subject positions of submission, and each took agentic steps out from under the covering of their leaders’ authority. With my second research question in mind, the questions which I brought to this aspect of their narratives were: Why did they resist? What supported them in this resistance? How did they reposition themselves in relation to subjugating practices of authority? In what ways did they re-author the stories of their positions within their communities?

In this chapter, I consider each person’s account in three parts: (i) *beginnings*: the hopes, values and experiences which they recall taking up in relation to their involvement in the church community which forms the context of their story; (ii) *discursive positioning and its effects*: the ways in which their narratives reflect experiences of being positioned by the dominant discursive practices of authority within the community, together with the effects of this positioning; (iii) *agency and resistance*: their accounts of their efforts to negotiate a more agentic position in relation to, and to resist, subjugating practices of religious authority within the community. This threefold structure embodies a sense of narrative development (beginning, middle and end), although in practice most of the stories unfolded in a cyclical telling process, rather than in a linear chronological sequence. The second and third stages of this structure parallel the first and second research question respectively. The first, beginnings, emerged from the initial rounds of my analysis. In ways I had not anticipated, the participants’ consistent references to the ethical hopes and desires which they held in relation to their participation in their communities proved to be a significant factor in relation to both questions.

5.1 Cathy’s story

Beginnings

Cathy joined the church which is the focus of her story as a result of her marriage to Bill (also a participant in this project). It had been his church for some years previously. Together they spent a further eight years in this community, until their

decision to leave it in the mid-1990s. Prior to this, Cathy had been involved in two other churches. These earlier involvements were a mixed experience for her. In the first church she had her first taste of monologic practices of authority when she discovered that an application for acceptance into a particular programme, which she had entrusted to the pastor, had never been passed on by him.

He didn't want me to go. He didn't think it was right. So he never sent the forms in that would confirm that I was a possible person to be, to be going. And he didn't tell me he hadn't sent them.

In contrast, in Cathy's second church, she found that people had "an incredible ability to accept you." Cathy's recalled experience of the leaders in that church was that it operated in a more dialogic manner: "they put it back on you . . . they discerned with you." In telling her story, Cathy later referred back to her experience of this second community as a benchmark for how she thought churches ought to operate when it came to acceptance of difference and collaborative approaches to decision making.

Immediately prior to joining the church where her main story was set, Cathy went overseas to work with a Christian organisation that was seeking to assist a very poor urban community. This too was a mixed time in terms of her experience of religious authority. On the one hand, what Cathy was able to achieve in that context positioned her with a sense of her own competence. She worked there for a year before being joined by Bill, and in that time had developed a good grasp of the local language and started up new programmes.

I guess my experiences [there] showed me that I could do things. I could, you know, start up a Bible College, and I ran a little school and did some amazing things. Out of sheer, I don't know, hard work, and that sort of gut, nervous, wow, I can't do this but I'm going to!

On the other hand, after her marriage, Cathy found herself being called into a position of inferiority in relation to Bill. She was told, not by Bill, but by one of the leaders, "not to be the best at language" in comparison to Bill (which she naturally was, having been there a year before him). This was Cathy's first acquaintance with a gendered religious storyline which, later in the interview, she entitled "being second best." She recalled that for some time she "took that on,

hook line and sinker.” Cathy described the effects on her of trying to live out this storyline:

I think I nearly had a nervous breakdown. Yeah, I remember just crying in the little slum house one day, thinking I've got to be allowed to be who I am.

Cathy's stated need to be allowed to have existence and identity in her own right, and the embodied effects of her positioning, are themes which reappeared later in her account. The same themes also feature in other participant's accounts. The need to “be who I am” could be framed in essentialist terms, as a construction of humanist discourses of “authenticity” and the “true self.” Yet those discourses also carry notions of autonomy and independence which were not represented in Cathy's narrative.

As Cathy moved on to tell the story of her subsequent involvement in Bill's church, she continued to include threads from past experiences, suggesting that they were important in the way she was making meaning of her own story of resistance. These hopes, values, and memories were with her as she actively tried to find a speaking position in the community and resist the ways in which she and others were being positioned by religious authority. Specifically, she carried hopes of finding a community in which people, with all their differences, were accepted and supported as agentic participants in the production of their own lives. Her experience overseas had provided her with a repertoire of stories of her own competence, but also with the memories of the effects of gendered positioning that constrained the possibilities of what she was capable of achieving.

Discursive positioning and its effects

Early in the interview, Cathy recalled a set of events which occurred when she and her partner Bill wanted to consult with their church leaders concerning their future plans. Already Cathy had realised that the church to which she and Bill had returned after their time overseas was very “different” to the earlier church in which she had experienced acceptance and collaborative decision making. Looking back, she accounted for this difference in terms of the identities that were constructed for her within the gendered discourses dominant in the church:

So coming up back to here, and starting to think, starting to feel . . . that there was something different. Very quickly. What it was, was, that I was a woman and a

wife, and I hadn't been treated like that before. Well, I hadn't been a wife before, in Christian circles, and I had a child.

Cathy further illustrated the religious and gendered aspects of the positioning which she experienced by describing a meeting she and Bill had with the church leaders to discuss their plans. Those plans included some time studying at a certain theological college where Bill had spent some time before their marriage.

So there was one significant episode at a meeting at our house, a prayer meeting, and a discussion about our future because we wanted to come to [the theological college]. And the words were that the Holy Spirit wasn't there.

Cathy's description of this meeting as "a prayer meeting" suggests an openness on her and Bill's part to the possibility of receiving divine guidance and wisdom as part of the decision making process. How was such wisdom to be known? The phrase "the words were that the Holy Spirit wasn't there" is significant in this regard. In several of the interviews discussed in this chapter, the mention of 'word' or 'words' refers to divinely given insight or knowledge. So when Cathy refers to leaders receiving or giving words, the epistemology which undergirds this terminology imputes a divine source and authority for what is spoken (Fraser, 2003). The words which Cathy recalls being offered by the church leaders constituted a forceful call into a subject position in which Cathy's and Bill's own ideas regarding this theological college should be set aside. To do other than accept this call would be to reject what God was saying, or to call the leaders' God-given authority into question.

Cathy went on to describe the strongly gendered nature of the positioning she experienced at that same meeting.

And then at that meeting they spoke to Bill, totally Bill, "What are you doing for your future? What are you?" And I sat there for an hour and a half, I remember, and I said, "Could I say something about my future?" . . . And they looked around and they listened, and then they just looked back and started talking to Bill again. And I sat there thinking, did it happen or didn't it? I couldn't grasp it. I couldn't really see. And then the wife of one of the pastors came over and whispered in my ear, "Don't you think it's time to put the pizzas on now?" And then I thought, Aah! And got up and did it—which I still look back and it really annoys me! I should have said, "Do it yourself!"

The difficulty which Cathy recalled experiencing in grasping or seeing what had just happened can be understood in terms of the discursive conflict between her treatment by the leaders and the value she placed on collaborative decision making. This confusion seemed to shift when the pastor's wife prompted her to take up a different mode of participation, namely, fulfilling her domestic duty as the woman of the house by putting the pizzas in the oven. These position calls, to be silent when the men are speaking of important things, and then to serve them, sparked recognition in Cathy: "Aah!" Here was a subject position which felt familiar—a deeply inscribed way of performing identity as a woman.

Looking back on this incident, Cathy remembered challenging Bill, after the meeting, about the fact that he had not supported her inclusion in the conversation. This was out of character for him, as "overseas he'd been an out of the box sort of person." In telling the story, Cathy took herself to task also, for having accepted the call into the position of domestic helper. She rehearsed the subject position of resistance she would have preferred herself to have taken: "Do it yourself!" When I asked Cathy how she made meaning now of what had happened, and of her response, she connected it with the gendered positioning she had experienced overseas, with its "second place" storyline, and also with memories of her parents' "traditional marriage."

Being slotted into second place, I call it. But what it kicked into was my own traditional childhood. My parents were not Christians. My father especially. But they had a very traditional marriage. And so I remember thinking, "Oh, I've just got to try and be the perfect wife, the perfect mother," but very confused, very confused.

A little later in the interview, Cathy spoke again of her efforts in this period to produce her life and identity according to this "traditional marriage" discourse: "I slipped into trying to be the perfect little wife, and the perfect little stay at home mother, and just about went crazy." At this point, the "gut" kind of knowing, of which Cathy had spoken in relation to her experience overseas—the embodied experience of discursive conflict—became an important theme in the story that she was telling.

I think that having come from [that earlier church], and being [overseas], and then coming back here, it was like my gut, my whole body, is telling me there's something wrong. However, there is a whole traditional group within Christianity,

that tell you, no, the husband is the leader. And I didn't know a lot about [the Bible]. . . . So there was within myself that whole confusing journey of what my body and my gut is telling me. How can that be right? You know, I've got to pull myself in and, and be this sort of person. . . . I worked really hard at being the perfect wife. Just trying to repress my thoughts and feelings.

How were the discourses which constructed the voice of the “traditional group” able to exert such a powerful influence on Cathy’s attempts to produce her life and formulate her identity, given the strong reaction of her “body and gut”? Cathy’s own account of those discourses, and of the values which were then informing her own thinking about decision making, shows how she made sense of the embodied confusion she experienced:

The beliefs were that they heard from God for you. Underlying, underneath to me, as I began to look and watch, people were not allowed to make a decision even for their own lives almost, without having it go through leadership. And that to me was ironic, it was like aren't we all responsible for our own lives? Yes, we could submit it to you, but not be told whether it's right or wrong. . . . Like, like having been told that about [the theological college]. That was for me fairly powerful. To have someone like that actually say that about a Christian community for a starter. So people looked on them as the all-knowing I suppose, yeah, yeah, they did.

It seems to me that traces of the conflicted discursive space in which Cathy was trying to produce her life in this period linger in this account. Certainly, “we could submit it to you” marks a significant shift from “submit to you,” yet the language of submission still sits uncomfortably alongside the expectation of deciding for oneself “whether it’s right or wrong.”

A second main narrative thread emerged in Cathy’s story as she described the impact she felt as she witnessed the way other people in the church, especially women, were treated by their religious leaders. After several years of involvement in the church, Cathy and Bill found themselves engaging fully in the life of the community and offering pastoral care to other members of the church. This included listening to the stories of people who were struggling with the way authority was being practiced in the community. Some of these people were themselves in positions of responsibility in the church. Cathy recalled a pattern in these stories:

The more they grew in confidence, the more they wanted to try doing things their way, and maybe doing something a little bit different. Or their personalities were such that they needed to do things different. But they could only go so far, and that's what people were saying, that were coming to us. "You can only get so far and if you don't toe the line you have to leave."

It is not surprising that notions of having a divinely mandated authority should position leaders with a sense of duty to ensure that those they lead do "toe the line." To believe that one has received divine guidance as to the direction of the church leaves little room for others to do things "their way" or to try "something a little bit different." So Cathy spoke of emerging leaders in the church being "dealt to" and leaving the church "bruised and battered" from their encounters with the senior leaders.

While those who were "dealt to" included both women and men, Cathy recalled how she saw the same "second place" gendered discourse which she had encountered calling other women in the church into subjugated subject positions. She described the impact on one woman in particular:

A Māori lady. Beautiful woman. Incredible woman. And that's what she said, I'm a shadow of my former self. And that, interesting thing with the women, with that, if the women were stronger than the man, or more creative, or more up front—they were knocked back. You were not allowed to be—the man was definitely supposed to be the leader and the up-front person. And then—particularly that woman, but significantly other women, had been elders—had been told to allow their husbands to be up front in leadership, in the right place in their marriages. They needed to submit, and if they didn't, they were rebellious, and, and, what do you call it, [under] deception.

Cathy's account makes explicit the way in which a woman's refusal to accept the position of submission in relation to her husband would be regarded as evidence that she was "rebellious" and under "deception." These are serious accusations, which, I infer from my own acquaintance with such contexts, imply that some kind of evil force is at work when a person refuses to assume "the right place" in relation to God-given authority. To refuse to submit to God's appointed order of authority is to put oneself in opposition to God—a fearful prospect for those who believe, as they have been taught, that theirs is a God of wrath and punishment. It

is precisely at this point that the coercive power of this nexus of discourses concerning divinely given authority and knowledge is most evident.

As indicated in the introduction to these stories, submission, in the terms of these discourses, is sometimes referred to as being under the “covering” of the authority which God has ordained. So, for example, a wife should be under the covering of her husband’s authority, and all in the church should submit to the covering of the authority held by the pastor and other senior leaders. To be under this covering is to be in the place of God’s protection and blessing. To step outside of the appropriate covering is to place oneself in spiritual and physical danger. The extent to which this covering discourse inscribes the subjectivity of those who spend time in such communities, and persists even after they have left, is evident from Cathy’s response to my question as to the source of the ideas:

Oh, from the church. Absolutely. “We’re your covering.” Yes, yes. You need it. You can’t be outside of the church, you can’t be outside of the covering. If you are, you know—and one other woman who left a wee while later came to me with that, and her son was incredibly ill, and she was really tussling with, was it because they had done what they had done? You know? Had God moved away, or—?

Looked at from the point of view of religious leaders, the covering discourse also offered ways to discipline—in the name of pastoral care—those who refused to submit to their leadership. The strongest of these disciplinary measures was for the leaders to withdraw from relationship with the rebellious person(s). Cathy described this treatment as a source of great pain and confusion for some of those who came to them feeling bruised and confused, speaking of “the powerfulness of the relationship withdrawal from those people.” In withdrawing relational connection the leaders were implicitly withdrawing their covering also. The strength of Cathy’s language in describing the effects of the loss of covering, whether by having it withdrawn or by rejecting it, is striking. It suggests to me that the covering discourse not only constituted a sense of safety for those who “toed the line,” but affirmed and legitimised them as spiritual subjects, that is, as subjects who could have confidence that their lives were under God’s approval. The woman who had left the church, and now had a very ill son, was left in uncertainty, according to Cathy: “Had God moved away, or—?”

A second disciplinary practice supported by the covering discourse was to forbid people from having significant influence in the church. Bill, Cathy recalled,

was told not “to pray and touch anybody or do any sort of ministry stuff.” She suggested that this was because “we had begun asking questions.” Later Cathy was visited by the pastor’s wife who told her to get her “hands off the women of the church.” These “hands off” demands were not merely metaphorical. Because Bill and Cathy were perceived to be out of step with the leaders, the dominant discourses of religious authority constructed them as being not merely in danger, but as spiritually dangerous to others. In a reversal of the notion of conferring spiritual benefit through the religious practice of laying hands on someone when praying for them, there is an implication here of passing on a kind of spiritual contamination if they were to do this while not under proper covering.

Cathy’s reference to receiving the “hands off the women” message from the pastor’s wife related to a sequence of events which, for her, marked a significant milestone in her journey toward resistance. I turn now to that aspect of her account.

Agency and resistance

Cathy traced her questioning of the leaders’ authority back to the meeting described earlier, in which she and Bill had wanted to discuss their future plans with the leaders. She recalled that after being given “words” at that meeting, which implied they should drop their idea of going to the theological college they had in mind, she and Bill had spoken to the leader of their church denomination’s own training college and explained what they hoped to study. His response had been to say that their own college couldn’t offer what they wanted, and that they should go to the college they first had in view. Cathy linked this contradiction between the respective leaders’ views with a subsequent agentic move on her part. She described her questioning of the original words, and her attempt to negotiate a more dialogic process of conversation with the pastor:

And it was like, well! So I actually asked the pastor, “How long is it since you have been to [that theological college]?” And he said, “About fifteen years.” And I said, “Well, isn’t that going on hearsay, that you think the Holy Spirit’s not there?” Which really shocked us. Yeah.

The ripple effects of the contradiction, and the shock which Cathy reports, went beyond this specific challenge to an increasingly questioning stance on Cathy’s part. “That was the first, one of the first, first questioning things,” she recalled.

The deconstructive import of this “first questioning” should not be overlooked. The thought that what was offered as divinely given insight might actually have just been hearsay “shocked” the discursive framework in which Cathy had been positioned. At the same time, to have *had* that thought, let alone to have put it to the pastor in the form of a question, suggests that the discourses which supported notions of divinely granted authority and knowledge were from the beginning only partially successful in recruiting her allegiance. Her description of her earlier mixed experiences of religious authority, including a positive experience of collaborative decision making, may help to account for this.

More serious question-asking was to come, and Cathy traced this to the impact on her of hearing about, and seeing, the way others in the church community were “dealt to” by their leaders. There is a violent thread in the metaphors which Cathy used in describing the effects of this treatment on people, men and women, including phrases such as “knocked back,” “bruised and battered,” and “bruised and confused.” Most impacting for Cathy was the series of events, alluded to above, which led to the “hands off the women” warning from the pastor’s wife. At the time of these events Cathy had undertaken some training in counselling and was assisting in a local women’s centre course.

I was working with a bunch of women at the women's centre doing a course called "Living with and without violence." Now, I walked into the room on the first day and I actually had to walk out again. Eight out of the eleven women were from the church, and I—it was just overwhelming.

With her counselling training, Cathy was aware of the violence which women sometimes experience in domestic situations, and of strategies for helping women toward agentic responses to this violence. But the “overwhelming” impact of finding that the majority of the women present in the room were from the church suggests that she was also positioned with an expectation that such violence did not, or should not, trouble Christian families. Cathy’s surprise indicates not only this personal discursive confusion, but, I speculate, a silence within her church in relation to the problem of domestic violence within church families. She was, by this time, helping with pastoral care in the church, but it seems that nothing had prepared her for this dis-covering of the extent to which violent male practices of power were being reproduced in the families of these women from the church.

Cathy connected her recollection of this experience with an account of seeing these same women at church, lining up to be prayed for by the leaders.

And each Sunday they would go forward for prayer, and a significant—three of them would end up rolling and yelling and just writhing, you know making all the demonic—what’s described as demonic—but their kids were left sitting in the congregation. So I looked—I remember looking over and thinking, “Shit! What are those kids seeing?” Yeah, and so I would move over to them and ask them, “What do you think mummy’s doing?” And they were petrified. Absolutely petrified.

In churches such as Cathy’s, the implication of “going forward for prayer” is that the person has a problem which requires spiritual help. The bodily responses, “rolling and yelling and just writhing,” would, as Cathy noted, be interpreted by many in that context as evidence of “demonic” influence. The immediate concern she described feeling for the children—“Shit! What are those kids seeing?”—evokes scenarios in which some of these children had been equally “petrified” as they watched what was happening to their mothers at home.

This twofold witnessing on Cathy’s part—seeing women taking steps on their own behalf to live without violence, and then watching them subject themselves to discursive practices which constructed the problem as spiritual and located within them, and which recruited them into stylised and violent bodily responses—raised major questions for Cathy. Her descriptions of her subsequent actions tell an increasingly agentic story of resistance to the discourses which had positioned the women with responsibility, in the form of internalised spiritual evil, for their own troubles. She pursued theological conversations about this issue with people outside of her church. This research supported her in rejecting the idea that the women’s difficulties were due to spiritual causes within them. She also began asking the women what was being achieved through the spiritual practices to which they were subjecting themselves at church. Cathy reported that “going forward for prayer” was not bringing any lasting change into their lives: “they said, ‘Look, three days later we’re back to normal.’”

In terms of the witness positions outlined by Weingarten (2010), the actions which Cathy reported taking in response to what she had observed show her assuming an “aware and empowered position.” Weingarten suggests that, “Taking action, and clarity about what actions to take, goes along with the experience of this witness position” (p. 11). This is even more clearly evident in Cathy’s

account of what took place after she witnessed the way one woman in particular, a woman who had experienced ongoing domestic abuse, was treated by the pastor. Cathy's own account tells the story best.

And there was a significant happening in the church where she told the pastor up front—she was asking for prayer—that her partner, that they were battling around, battling over, had done something the night before. And [the pastor] literally just went like this [lifting hand gesture] over her, and she actually had to move. And he yelled, and said, “He's become a Christian, he wouldn't do that!”

Now, she came out to me just absolutely shocked, and I was wild! I was, I hadn't really experienced that sense of wildness, and I said to her in front of everybody, “I will deal with this, this is totally wrong.” And I was really shocked at myself. And I went home and got on the piano and I played. I remember playing the piano, grrrrr! and banging away. But came to a point where I thought, “I've got to see him, I've got to confront him. He's just re-abused her. He's totally re-abused her.”

So I did. I rang up and made an appointment for Monday night. Now between that Sunday night and Monday night the police had been involved, and the guy had confessed. So when the pastor came to see me, he was in a different mood. But I tried to explain why I felt he'd re-abused her. But I don't think there was a lot of understanding. And then the pastor's wife came and saw me, and told me to get my hands off the women of the church. And I said, “But every woman that is in that group has come up those stairs. They didn't even know that I was taking it.”

But that really messed me around actually. I got really sick, I got really, really sick, and had to—I remember praying and lying on my bed thinking, “God, what is this, and what do you want?” And I had to make a choice, to carry on and grow in it, I suppose. It was a significant sickness. I knew I was sick because of that meeting with her. . . . At the end of the meeting, I said to her, “You don't even know me. Why all this mistrust?” And she couldn't give me an answer. I mean, looking back now, I should never have let her sit down. But, you do these things.

The same feeling of shock which overwhelmed Cathy in the women's community centre, as she came to terms with the fact that eight women from the church were seeking help to live without violence from their partners, seems here to have recruited the pastor into a position of anger, disbelief and complicity with domestic violence: “He's become a Christian, he wouldn't do that!” These words also embody the idea which called women in the church to “go forward for prayer,” namely, that problems which are deeply embedded in dominant social discourses of masculinity can be solved by spiritual means.

The effects of these events on Cathy have strongly embodied aspects, which she describes in terms of “wildness,” “banging away” on the piano, and, after the visit by the pastor’s wife, “sickness.” It seems to have been especially through her body that she knew that what had she had just witnessed was “totally wrong” and amounted to the women being “re-abused.” That Cathy viewed her sickness as “significant,” that is, as having sign value, is evident in her sick-bed prayer: “God, what is this, and what do you want?”

Both forms of bodily experience, the wildness and the sickness, were productive of agentic action on behalf of Cathy’s deep concern for the welfare of others in the community. Her frequent use of the first person and active verbs underline the agentic character of her response to the pastor’s action: *I said . . . I will deal with this . . . I did . . . I rang up and made an appointment . . . I tried to explain . . . I said . . . I had to make a choice, to carry on and grow in it . . . I knew . . . I said . . .* Beyond the polite action of making an appointment, there is no remnant here of buying into the covering discourse. In an echo of her earlier annoyance at herself for accepting the position of pizza attendant, Cathy chided herself for even allowing the pastor’s wife to sit down.

Interestingly, unlike the woman who came to her wondering if her son’s illness was due to stepping away from the covering of the church, and perhaps therefore from God’s protection, Cathy’s sickness led her toward God and an agentic choice: “I had to make a choice, to carry on and grow in it.” What this meant in practice was further acts of resistance. Ignoring the “hands off” demand, Cathy continued to co-facilitate the group at the women’s centre, and invited the women from the church to reflect on what was happening in that context. “What is happening for you there on Sundays, when you are enticed, encouraged, invited up the front, and you end up doing what you do?” When the women’s centre course was finished, these women continued to meet with Cathy who led a course for them, exploring other approaches to spiritual life.

Cathy spoke of other acts of resistance which preceded her departure from the church. She arranged a farewell celebration for a key couple in the church that had been “dealt to.” In the end, the leaders took it over, and Cathy recalled, “I partly let them and partly I just carried on myself with one other woman.” She and Bill also asked for a meeting with the church elders to discuss their concerns about what was happening in the church. “And we’d already decided if it went a

certain way we'd just resign and come away." When they did eventually resign they asked for a chance to say goodbye to the community.

So for me that was like a bit of a red rag to a bull. It was like, right! I'm going to write to everybody. We wanted to say why we were leaving, not, not in specifics, and not in any detrimental way. But they had supported us for years overseas. It was like, Bill's been here for fifteen odd years, we can't just walk out. People are going to ask. And I don't know what happened, but in the end, on Sunday morning, he rang up and said, you can as long as, you know, you toe the line.

Even their leaving, in Cathy's recollection, had to be performed in submission to authority, expressed once again in terms of the need to "toe the line." She described their feelings as they left the church for the final time:

We both got in the car and drove far enough away from the church, and just went, "Yes!" You know? We both came away just, just very, very happy with the decision we made. It was an incredible sense of release.

After leaving, Cathy continued to question and reflect on the discourses which had supported the practices of religious authority in their church community. A significant moment, and movement, occurred in her relationship to the covering discourse, when she realised that she and Bill were no longer under the authority of the church leaders. This registered with Cathy as she was hanging out the washing.

And just the metaphor of being covered by the, by the line, I thought, "Oh, we haven't got a covering!" You know? . . . It was amazing! It was beautiful! It was like, "Wow!"

The embodied effects of the covering discourse on Cathy, described earlier, are matched by the joy that accompanied her agentic movements (driving away, stepping out from under the covering): "Yes!", "an incredible sense of release," "amazing!", "beautiful", "Wow!" When I asked Cathy how she accounted for these agentic responses and her acts of resistance, she spoke of training (as a counsellor), education, and meeting people with alternative viewpoints and experiences (in the theological college she and Bill did eventually attend) as having opened up alternative viewpoints. This variety of discursive contexts created a space in which Cathy could experience herself as sifting beliefs, making choices and challenging the supposedly divinely given wisdom of her leaders,

especially as it was enacted in their treatment of people. Her counselling training had taken her back to her childhood, with its “traditional” aspects, and this, Cathy recalled, had increased her awareness of the gendered nature of the religious discourse operating within the community.

Cathy also recognised that the gendered aspects of the practices of authority which she had encountered, such as the “second place” storyline, were part of wider social discourses concerning gendered roles for men and women. She acknowledged that this was something that she and Bill continued to wrestle with in their efforts to “run life” collaboratively. Cathy expressed an awareness of gendered positioning when it came to the possibility of having the right to make choices in life: “for me, the whole thing about choice has been a long journey . . . being woman for a starter.” She also connected this with her sense that as a woman it was not easy to go against, or question, authority.

I also asked Cathy what supported her in the continuing “long journey” toward taking up her own agency. She had two responses to this question. The first involved inviting other people to speak into her life; that is, to affirm and to challenge, but not tell her what to do. Secondly, Cathy reported that she was learning to trust her own experience more, and her capacity to search out the understanding she needed to make meaning of her experience. She acknowledged that the experience most likely to cause her to “stand up and speak” was witnessing injustice to others. Then “wildness” would support the action she felt she needed to take. Cathy traced the development of this sense of justice back to her knowledge of her father and his practical compassion. Looking further back, research into her whakapapa⁴ and connection with her hapū⁵ was connecting Cathy to cultural knowledges which were enlarging her perspectives on life, relationships, spirituality, and justice.

Cathy’s concluding comments in the interview reflected her openness to one day engaging in restorative conversation with the leaders of the church, without surrendering her own agentic position.

There is still part of me that wants one day to be able to speak to those people in a way that— Well, that’s a hope, it’s a dream, whether it will ever happen—to be able to sit and kōrero, to talk, without the same atmosphere, judgment. Whether

⁴ Māori word for genealogy.

⁵ Māori word referring to subtribe or clan.

that will ever happen, or whether it's just a healing hope of mine ... Because whenever I see them, there is a significant—I choose not to go any further than, “Hi, how are you?”

5.2 Bill's story

Beginnings

Bill has been mentioned in introducing Cathy's story. Whereas the church they attended after their marriage was new to Cathy, Bill had been involved in it since his late teenage years. Originally brought up in a more traditional style of church, Bill was drawn to this community as a teenager, partly because he experienced the pastor as a “fatherly kind of character.”

I lived with them for three months or so and became sort of part of their extended family, and was often invited to family things. And I felt very comfortable in that environment.

In his mid-20s, Bill decided that he was going to work overseas with a mission organisation (the one where Cathy also worked). The pastor told him that he was “both really pleased that I was going, but also sad because he had hoped that I might take over—pastor the church when he came to retire.”

With this advantageous positioning as an honorary family member and possible future leader of the church, Bill left the community for some eight years to work overseas and then study at a theological college. On his return to the church he found that the community had changed little, whereas he had changed. “I'd changed from experience overseas, learning a new language, doing a degree.” Bill now saw his mentor's leadership through different eyes and with a new awareness of power relations.

Discursive positioning and its effects

Bill described his position in the church in the period following his return as one of being “recognised and supported and honoured and appreciated.” He used similar words in relation to how both he and Cathy were regarded by people in the church. “We were well liked and respected and appreciated within the congregation.” This language resonated with Bill's description of his position in his earlier church, where again he had been “appreciated and acknowledged.” He

connected this sense of positive regard with a “need to be needed and need to be wanted,” which, he observed, resulted in overdoing his involvement in youth work in the church to the point that he “burnt out.” Alongside his own account of this process in terms of personal deficits, I want to highlight this theme of appreciation within Bill’s story as a significant aspect of his subjectification within the leadership culture of both churches. In his own words: “I was so richly rewarded for the work that I put in.” This is not to suggest that people in either church cynically manipulated Bill’s desire for recognition, but that they and Bill were reproducing discourses of sacrificial service which are present in New Zealand society, and which have particular potency in a faith tradition which emphasises the sacrifice of its founder. Within this discursive framework, taking up the subject position of sacrificial service offered Bill a way of being “being recognised as *someone*, and in particular someone of value” (Davies et al., 2002, p. 302; italics in the original).

While Bill and Cathy were both appreciated by the people in the church, especially those to whom they offered pastoral care, Bill recalled his awareness of difference in the way they were treated by the church leaders. He accounted for this in terms of his longer involvement, but also, echoing Cathy’s own account, as an expression of the gendered positioning of women in the church.

Women in that context don’t, or can’t, hold as much authority as men. . . . I think her ideas, opinions and so on were not as held in such weight ... not listened to as much. Whereas, I think I was—as I say, towards the end I think I was listened to—not appreciated, but was listened to.

Bill also spoke of seeing women being prayed for “in quite a violent way” at the front of the church. He recalled that this way of praying involved “hands on heads, sort of pushing.” Like Cathy, he was struck by parallels with what was happening to the women at home, where “they were pushed by men, they were yelled at,” and with the impact on their children who saw “their mothers being hit and hurting” at home.

Agency and resistance

Despite the relatively agentic subject position which Bill was able to maintain in the church, the process of changing his relationship with the senior pastor of the church was challenging for Bill. Again drawing on psychological discourse he

described their early relationship as a “parent-child thing that I’d felt for so long, and hadn’t, couldn’t, really break through.” He also reflected on the extent to which his ideas and decisions had been shaped by this first phase of his involvement with the pastor, the pastor’s family and the church community.

I grew up in that, but I did decide to go to [a theological college] which wasn’t his first choice. He thought I should have gone to the denominational college. So I did have—I did maintain some level of independent thinking and ability to sort of . . . to make my own decisions and opinion. But on the other hand, I was quite absorbed into that community’s belief system, I suppose, at a young age.

In the years he spent away from the church, and from the influence of the pastor, Bill described himself as having “grown up” and “changed hugely.” He had lived and worked in a difficult foreign setting, he had married Cathy and he had engaged in theological study. One significant way in which Bill had changed is reflected in his account of what struck him on his return: “things that I would have called misuse of power, or abuse issues in the church. . . . There was quite a lot of power-over stuff happening.”

How did Bill respond to what he saw? In his narration of events, Bill moved immediately from these comments about misuse of power to very agentic language: “And so I just started raising those questions and just asking him or asking other leaders . . . just asking those questions.” Whereas Cathy’s account conveys a difficult journey toward a more agentic position and eventual resistance, Bill seemed to locate that shift as having taken place in his “growing up” time away from the church. Moreover, the factors he named in relation to the way he was heard more readily than Cathy—the length of his connection with the community and gendered discursive practices—seem to have positioned Bill with an agentic speaking position from the beginning.

The difference in their positioning was evident in Bill’s description of his response to the witnessing the way women were being prayed for in the church. In listening to Cathy, it seemed to me that she spoke of the strength of her embodied response, her “wildness,” as having provided the ground for her confrontation of the pastor over the treatment of these women. As a woman in the church, she made no assumption of automatic entitlement to speak. In contrast, Bill said little about how these events impacted on him physically or emotionally, but rather

spoke of pastoral concern and his intention to use his speaking position to “talk it out” with the pastor collaboratively (noting his use of “we”):

I just wanted to talk it out and say, “Look, is this—do you realise what’s happening? Can you make the connections? Is there anything here that we can change about the way we pray and work?”

However, Bill’s account of what ensued after his initial questioning gives a picture of a painful struggle as he and the pastor both tried to come to terms with the ways his perspective had changed.

And he—he didn’t quite know how to cope with it, because he hadn’t been asked, or hadn’t been challenged, in that way before, by someone who is reasonably theologically articulate and could—and had some experience. And he took it as a personal affront, really, and became quite defensive, and so sort of wanted to shut me down and stop me asking questions. So, um—basically I felt there was no context to ask questions anymore. So it came to a bit of a head at one of the AGMs, which of course is a public forum. And I asked him fairly pointed questions at an AGM. Because that was the only—he’d shut down all the other contexts that I could try and raise some issues that I was concerned about. And um—and that became really difficult for him and difficult for me.

The language here conveys a shift in Bill’s attitude to the man who was formerly for him a “fatherly figure.” Themes of appreciation and collaboration give way to challenge and “pointed questions.” No space for questioning remained where Bill could ask questions and stay under the covering of the pastor’s authority and blessing. Supported by his awareness of alternative theological discourses, in which the practices of authority within the church could be named as a “misuse” or “abuse” of power, Bill found a speaking position within the constitutional process of the church AGM.

From this point, having stepped outside of the covering, Bill’s recalled experience began to sound more like Cathy’s. Now he was positioned as out of line, “rebellious” and “unable to accept authority.” A number of meetings with the leaders followed, and Bill began to feel “increasingly unsafe in those kind of contexts.” In one of these meetings, which Bill had requested permission to record, a metaphorical narrative emerged through which the leaders and Bill were able to agree that they were sailing on the same harbour, but were now in different

ships heading in different directions. This helped Bill to name his preferred version of the narrative, albeit with some sadness.

I agreed with this, the—that metaphor of being on different ships and deciding, well, I don't know what ship we want to be on, but I think I don't want to be on this one anymore. Which after sixteen years of being in the same community and having been recognised and supported and honoured and appreciated within that community for so long, it was really hard for me.

When the tape recorder was turned off, Bill became aware that the tone of the discussion changed. If Bill felt sadness, the pastor's response appeared to him to be one of anger.

I was very conscious that he was angry, and I sort of stayed away from him physically. And he came over towards me and he was shaking. He was literally shaking and holding himself back from hitting me—that's how I—he was shaking and I interpreted that as him holding back from wanting to hit me.

Whether the physical anger he perceived in his pastor on this occasion was produced by a sense of entitlement to be obeyed, or by a sense of disappointment that Bill would not be his successor, Bill did not speculate. Looking back on the dynamics of power at work in the church community, however, he concluded that people who were part of the “hierarchical system” of religious authority were unable to cope with challenges to the system. The religious discourse of authority in which they were positioned constructed a view of leadership as “something to do with God's authority on earth, and so challenging his authority on earth is like challenging God.” There was also, Bill recognised, “a lot of vested interest in maintaining the system. . . . Maintaining power, and the perception of control.” In Foucauldian (1980) terms, the discourses and relations of power are inseparable and mutually productive. A discourse within which a leader is “God's authority on earth” is productive of power relations of unquestioned authority and trusting submission. These power relations in turn re-produce the discourse.

In summing up what supported his acts of resistance to this discursive system, Bill highlighted two things: justice and sadness. Like Cathy, his overseas experience and theological training had positioned him with strong values of social justice and community involvement. His sense of justice is evident in his willingness to challenge “power-over” practices of authority in the church,

especially those reflected in the way women were being treated. His sadness was in response to the realisation that the church could not grasp the possibility of serving the local community, and “couldn’t accept that we wanted to work with non-church people and not have our primary focus as converting them.”

Cathy was already involved with the local women’s centre, and, after leaving the church, Bill and a group of others formed a trust with a view to working with men and boys in the local area. This group, Bill reflected, was now fulfilling the hopes that he had for the church. In a sense, it was his church.

We never prayed; we never sang worship songs. We sang other kinds of songs and we listened to music and read poetry and did all sorts of stuff. Um, but it didn’t specifically have a God-focus. But for me, there was a sense of connectedness that was very godly, you know. . . . And it’s about the spirit for me. It’s about the spirit moving, um, very naturally and organically. There’s nothing that me or anyone else has to say or . . . except create a fertile ground of trust and honour, and respect and listening—and spirituality grows.

5.3 Jenny’s story

Beginnings

Jenny and her family immigrated to New Zealand not long before her involvement with a church in their new town began. She was keen to embrace relational opportunities and to fit in with the local setting. She saw a sign in a church window advertising a “ladies’ group” and decided to attend.

It was friendly and it was very pleasant and they just talked differently. They had a whole language and a whole way of being that was totally different to me. Even that word “ladies” is really significant, if you know what I mean? . . . It implied so much about what it was to be female, to be a woman. You know, you had to be a lady. . . . And dreadful things were said that I would have got quite angry about, but I sort of took it on as part of being a Christian, you know, like, you know, obeying your husband, and even if he said outrageous things or did ridiculous things, he was still head of the house and—I struggled with it. But I was a stranger in a foreign land.

Jenny’s description of this meeting foreshadowed several key aspects of the story that she went on to tell about her years of involvement in this church. She had

previously trained as a social worker, and her comments on the term “ladies” indicate her awareness of patriarchal language and practices. On the other hand, being in, and working at maintaining, quality relationships featured prominently in Jenny’s account of her hopes for life in community. Later in the interview, she spoke of having taken up an idea which supported these hopes, namely that quality communication within relationships “is like the heart of the gospel, it’s the heart of God ... to actually be relating to one another.” Her initial experience of this church as “incredibly friendly” and caring therefore made it an inviting context to join.

The priority of maintaining relationship, the disarming friendliness of the people and the sense of being “a stranger in a foreign land” all positioned Jenny with a preparedness to tolerate patriarchal language and practices with which she admittedly “struggled.” There were also powerful discursive factors within the church context that made it difficult to resist these ideas and practices, and Jenny names one of them here. She quickly discovered that “being a Christian” implied a position call to take on “dreadful things” that were said about women “obeying” their husbands as “head of the house,” regardless of what they said or did.

Discursive positioning and its effects

Jenny began her story with an acknowledgement that her journey toward eventually saying “no” to “something that was evidently very unhealthy” had been a “huge process.” Her own reflection on why it had taken so long to negotiate that process centred on the ideas which constructed and bounded her thinking:

And I think there would have been people around me that would have said—a bit like, a bit like the thoughts one might have around, perhaps, women that are in an abusive marriage, or whatever—“For goodness sake, why don’t you just say no? Why don’t you just—?” And the same applies, really, that because of my thinking, I didn’t just say “no” to something that was evidently very unhealthy. But, because of the mindsets and all that being linked to God, it’s very hard to think that you can say “no,” or it’s right even to think “no.”

What were the “mindsets,” the discursive practices, which proscribed the possibility of even thinking “no”? The discourses of covering and submission, encountered already in Cathy’s story, also featured prominently in Jenny’s

narrative. A particular incident epitomised, for her, the impact of these ideas on her family. Having bought a new home, Jenny explained, she and her husband wanted the church leaders to come and pray with them in the house. They were aware that some tragic things had happened there in the past.

And by then we'd become aware, and had thought that it was the correct teaching, to—you sort of submitted yourself to the elders. And there were things like—things said that sort of groomed you, if you like. Like, “Oh now,” it would be said in church, “Oh now, this couple are thinking of moving. Now isn't that great? They're asking us to pray for them before they make any decisions. I love it when people do this. They come to us first. They submit themselves to us. And it's just great. This is the sort of stuff we want to see.” And that was put to you, that this was the way to go, you know. Anyway, so we sort of thought that was the right thing.

But Jenny and her husband had already made the decision to move, without consulting the elders. So, Jenny recalled, the pastor came to them with several elders on the day of the move and informed them that they would not be praying with them, because, he said, they “weren't under his covering.” Moreover, they were told that if anyone from the church prayed with them, they would be opening themselves to evil influences, because they would be stepping out from under his covering. Such was “the strength of the few,” Jenny observed, that no one came to pray. The language used by Jenny in describing her own response strikingly demonstrates the power of the covering discourse to position people with fears of dire consequences—life and death consequences—should they refuse the call to a submissive position.

So it was very distressing, because in my mindset at the time it was really—although I felt God was in it, and we were doing this because it was God-inspired—parts of me felt, because of the training I'd had over six years I guess, that I was actually upsetting God. And we did move, but I just thought, “God might actually kill me.” I know it sounds ridiculous, you know, but I actually felt God might actually kill us. That it was a distinct possibility.

The move went ahead. No one came to pray, but many people from the church community came to offer practical assistance with packing and cleaning. Jenny remembered being overwhelmed by these people's genuine kindness, but still conflicted, “very distressed” and “shamed.” On the one hand, she recalled, “I just

felt people were being kind to us, even though we'd done wrong." On the other hand, "there was still a spark in me that knew we hadn't." Jenny's reference to her "spark" of knowing, and her feeling at the time that their move had been "God-inspired," reflect a theme that pervaded her narrative. She spoke of having "always had an awareness of God" and from childhood had "enjoyed" her relationship with God. Whatever account might be given of this alternative knowledge, Jenny saw it as something that supported a thread of self-belief through the years when the dominant discourses of religious authority recruited other "parts" of her subjectivity into fear and shame.

Alongside the covering and submission discourses, which so effectively supported the authority of the leaders, Jenny, like Cathy, also encountered authoritative practices which reflected a belief in leaders' privileged, divinely imparted knowledge. Jenny was one of a group of women who felt that they also had some wisdom from God which was relevant to the direction the church was taking. When they asked if they could talk to the church leaders about this, with a view to conversation, rather than as a claim to superior insight, they were refused.

Anyway, so we kept trying and the more we kept trying the worse it got. And in the end we were told "You will not talk about this." You know? "You will not—you will just shut up now." Woops, woops, woops. And he got really nasty. It was horrible. It was so harsh ... The leadership had a view that they were sort of infallible—a bit like the Pope really.

The sense of entitlement to exert authority in a unilateral fashion, constructed by the discourses of divinely sanctioned authority and knowledge, was reflected in other practices described by Jenny. There were unwritten rules: "silly rules that they have in those sort of churches, about your parenting, or the way you—you know—the clothes you wear." Jenny described what happened when she expressed a personal opinion to the pastor concerning the head of their church denomination:

He insisted that I meet him and I had to face him. And I said, "I don't want to. I've got nothing against the man." And he brought him to our house. And I had to meet with him. And I didn't want to. It was awful.

In Jenny's view, it was impossible to have dialogic relationship with the leaders of the church because of the silencing effects of the discursive practices of authority.

You could never actually have a conversation because your point of view wasn't actually valid. All that they were interested in as leaders was, were you submitting?

Again echoing Cathy's experience, gendered practices of authority placed further limits on Jenny's capacity to make agentic choices in the production of her own life. She recalled expressing a desire to attend a conference and being told by the pastor, "you should stay home and look after your family." Often the high priority she placed on honest communication in relationships positioned Jenny with a desire to talk to the pastor about things that concerned her. Eventually she realised that the more she did that, the more she would be positioned as spiritually rebellious and out of line:

And curiously part of the strength of that church was on relationship. I wanted to say to [the pastor], "Look, I don't understand that," or, "that really hurt." But that was all a waste of time. And I just realized that it was just—it was just throwing me more and more in the role of—well, "Jezebel" was bandied around a lot—"a Jezebel spirit."⁶

As she told her story, Jenny described further effects which the practices of religious authority in this community produced in her and others:

It could have just—it could have robbed me completely of my faith. And it did a lot of damage, I believe, to myself and my family. It took us a long time to get over it.

Throughout the interview, Jenny named these damaging effects with a striking array of terms: shame, being crippled, being lessened, confusion, flatness, anger, agony and feeling devastated, undone, wild inside, and horrible.

I can't, I wouldn't be able to, get the words to say how huge it was—there aren't words big enough—or how painful it was. It was extraordinarily painful.

Again the embodied nature of the effects of religious authoritarianism is striking. The pain has significance for Jenny which no words can adequately capture. I asked her what she now understood to be the source of this pain. She explained that it was not so much the petty rules and attitudes she encountered, but the way she found her personhood, including her spirituality, being put in question.

⁶ As noted in Chapter 4, Jezebel is portrayed in the Hebrew Scriptures as a queen who rebelled against God and persecuted God's chosen prophet.

Well, I think it was a denial. I suppose one of the most important things—I mean it was a denial of my sense of self. Who I was wasn't acceptable. That was—and my personhood, if you like, wasn't acceptable. Who I was before God wasn't acceptable. And even it put into question my relationship with God, and that's probably the most painful.

Jenny's narrative again suggests that, for her, personhood and spirituality were inherently relational notions. Her accounts of her efforts to value even difficult relationships, to engage in dialogic conversation, and to pursue restorative possibilities in the face of conflict, indicate the perseverance with which she rehearsed these values. Jenny described the constant thwarting of her relational efforts as crippling: "there's something that actually cripples me in a way, or lessens me, when I'm stuck in that mode." At the same time, Jenny acknowledged that it was partly the strength of the values she placed on relationship which held her in that "stuck" place. The covering discourse constructed a separation between those under and those outside of the covering of church allegiance. So to move away from the pain of relationship refusals would be to lose access to other valued relationships. So Jenny was held in this stuck position by

a sense of being connected to these people. Like if you leave, you can't really have, you're not allowed to really have, a relationship with them anymore. There was a sense of that as well.

Jenny offered two further perspectives on why she stayed so long. Through the lens of her counselling profession, she saw her earlier family experiences as producing within her a vulnerability to "disastrous marriages." She also felt that these difficult relationships had given her "training" in her "reality being denied." So, it seemed to her, "there was sense with me that people could do what they liked and I had to just get over it." But Jenny could also see that the fact that she remained in the community for years, despite the pain, was about more than internal psychological dynamics. There were religious discourses, "teaching," within the church context that positioned her with an obligation to stay, just as "being a Christian" had earlier recruited her to discourses which demanded unquestioning submission to her husband, no matter how much he denied her account of "reality."

And that teaching feeds that, you see, of course. You just have to get over it, get on with it, and it's a godly thing to do.

Jenny identified another form of the covering discourse, again familiar from Cathy's story, which produced fear at the prospect of choosing to leave the church.

I thought at that time that—oh, there's a real—there's quite a strong teaching about not leaving church, you know. . . . And there was a sense of, "You've really done the wrong thing." If you leave, you've walked away from God, if you've left church. And again, that ties into that whole idea of church being God, really. And I suppose I bought into that for a long time. I couldn't see that there was actually a difference.

To leave the church is to walk away from God. This disturbing discourse on its own offers a compelling answer to the question of why so many people like Jenny stay in church contexts that diminish their lives, and find it hard to say, or even think, "no." So how did she account for the cracks that developed in her own subjection to "the system," opening space for agentic action, resistance and her eventual repudiation of the covering discourse?

Agency and resistance

Two main strands emerged in Jenny's story of resistance. One concerned questions that began to arise in her thinking about the ideas and systems of authority in the church. The other related to the embodied effects of witnessing the impact of those systems on the lives of others.

Jenny identified her contradictory subjective experience on the day of the house move as having opened a space in which the practices of religious authority within the church could be questioned. On the one hand the covering discourse, enacted in the pastor's refusal to allow people to pray with Jenny and her family in their new house, produced disturbing thoughts and fears: "God might actually kill me." The thought of going to church the next day left her feeling "totally shamed." On the other hand, she still felt that the move was "God-inspired," and experienced care and support from the community in the form of practical help. Jenny's account of people's support suggests that they too were being positioned in contradictory ways, by the covering discourse on the one hand, and by the ideal of being a caring community (which strongly informed the church's teaching) on

the other. It suggests that they managed to negotiate a space for themselves in which they could enact discourses of practical care without refusing the position call to remain under the covering of religious authority. Looking back, Jenny recalled: “that was the turning point for me; that started to make me question, and I began to notice things.”

In discursive terms, what Jenny “began to notice” was a system of ideas, flagged by certain recurring “keywords” which she heard not only in her own church, but in the teaching of other churches also: “covering, excellence, leadership, submission, authority.”

Every meeting, you’d hear all these men who are going to make fine leaders one day. “These children are going to be our leaders. We want to draw them into excellence.” So those to me began to be keywords that I always felt suspicious, you know, when I heard them.

Eventually Jenny’s curiosity about these ideas and practices led her to do some research into their origins. In particular, she “started doing some reading around the Shepherding Movement.”⁷ This research opened further space for Jenny to question (and so deconstruct) a system of ideas which had formerly seemed God-given. This system of ideas now became an “it,” a “mindset” to be understood within a “framework”:

But there was actually some stuff that was useful to me, because it gave me a framework. You know. And I just thought, “Oh this is it. This is what this is.” . . . It was the thinking, yeah. It was the thinking. It was a whole mindset, a whole way of—a whole doctrine I suppose. And I thought, “This is it. This is what’s got into the church.”

Jenny described the discovery of this framework as “liberating,” and she began talking to others about it, “trying to prove that this was a real thing, and it really was there, and it really wasn’t healthy, and it really had slipped into the church.” In this she was motivated by feelings of grief at the way this system of ideas about authority was diminishing the spiritual possibilities of people’s lives.

⁷ This is a reference to a school of thought, influential in some British and North American churches in the 1970s and 1980s, which strongly emphasised that every Christian should be under a mature leader (“shepherd”) to whom they would be accountable for their conduct of the Christian life (Moore, 2003). While this movement was largely discredited by the end of the 1980s, the ideas appear to have been transmitted beyond their original contexts, circulating and reproducing through discursive practices such as covering and submission.

Because I'm so—Ah, it just—it really—it robs people. And I think that really grieves me, because I think it must grieve God. It just robs people of—really of their relationship with God.

Jenny had experienced a long period of paralysing conflict between the discourse which condemned people who were not submissive and the discourse in which relationship was “the heart of God.” Now that the former discourse could be viewed, through her research, as a framework of thinking which was capable of critical evaluation, the priority of relationship could assert itself in her responses to what was happening. At the same time, Jenny acknowledged that it was in part her own agentic efforts to practice her relational values in responding to the leaders that had delayed a more challenging stance.

I was determined to be generous. I was determined to try and come from a place that I believe God would want me to come from. But I hadn't quite yet grasped the fact that he might actually want me to get a grip on—you know, on speaking out for what was right.

Even at the time of our interview, Jenny acknowledged that the value she placed on certain ways of being in relationship, together with what she described as her “nature and training,” still sometimes invited her into a subject position of acquiescence.

I think I am still probably—although I have grown a lot, and I've changed a lot—I would still be a little too ready, probably, to acquiesce to another, or to succumb to another's power or influence. Although that's changed—I mean, will continue to change. That's a tension as well, I find, when I'm trying to walk a path that keeps some grasp on the concepts of humility and kindness and generosity and preferring the other, when you've got my nature and training. You know? So I'm trying to move away from that.

Jenny recalled that it was the effect of seeing other people being treated unjustly by the pastor, rather than her own treatment, which was “pivotal” in supporting her eventually to think and say “no.”

When he was so unpleasant, and so unkind to other people, and ridiculous really in some of his stuff, that caused something in me to rise up. Because it was wrong and unkind and unjust, and that made me say, “No,” you know? That made me say, “This is not OK.”

Jenny described the impact of witnessing a particular incident, which involved the pastor's treatment of a woman in the church, and the way her own sense of anger "really helped" her to move from her stuck position, to finally say the "No" which previously could not even be thought. The following week some comments were made in the church service which Jenny regarded as very dishonouring to people, like this woman, who didn't fit the espoused profile of "solid Christians that make good parents and that are just wonderful members of the church."

I thought, "How dare you!" I couldn't believe my ears. . . . "I can't—I'm not going to be in this environment!" So it was more offence that impacts other people, probably, or stuff that he was saying about God, rather more than what he did to me. . . . It was only when I saw his treatment of people—that tipped it for me. . . . I suppose that was hard evidence in front of my eyes.

Jenny's anger at what she was seeing and hearing can be understood as an embodiment of the discursive conflict between the leader's claim to represent God and her understanding of the priority which Jesus placed on relationships of "humility, of serving, of gentleness and kindness and all that stuff." At the time of the interview, she was continuing to align herself with the Christian faith, but expressed real doubts as to whether any church community could actually resolve this conflict. As to the possibility of having close involvement with a church in the future, Jenny's prediction was: "I'll never go to church again."

Having offered this pessimistic view of the church, Jenny went on to describe an alternative picture of how it might be—a picture that she felt was God-given. In this picture, the church, with its structures of authority, no longer stood between God and people. Rather, the church was a circle of people, all of whom had the capacity to listen to God and to share their ideas of what God might be saying with each other. The church, then, becomes "the person sitting next to me, it's the person sitting next to that, it's the person sitting next to that." In Jenny's picture, no one person, including her, had the right to unilaterally tell others what God thinks or wants. Rather, "if the person happens to say, 'What about—?' I could say, 'Well, I think—'"

As our two hour conversation drew to a close, Jenny summed up what was important for her in this way:

I mean if the power of God is life, you know? And joy. And love. And all that stuff. . . . Well then, it isn't evident in that system of thinking. . . . Like the other

day . . . I was walking—I go walking in the morning—and there was a solid concrete or tarmac pavement, and there was a crack. And this plant was growing up? That's it, isn't it? Life will overcome.

These words aptly captured Jenny's years of struggle to negotiate a hospitable space—described by her in terms of mutual love, openness, humility, kindness and joy—in which life, her life and others' lives, could flourish. The solid concrete was the system of thinking that made it very hard to say, or even think, no, to practices that diminished life. Jenny remained pessimistic about the system, but could testify to the possibility of finding cracks in the system in which life would make its way nonetheless.

5.4 Selina's story

Beginnings

Selina had connections with the church at the centre of her narrative for more than twenty years. In describing the first main phase of her involvement, she named values which continued to shape her narrative throughout our conversation. She spoke warmly of the diverse and inclusive character of the community: “it was gentle, it was respectful and it was embracing . . . it was good.” She had encountered these values earlier, during her university years. There she encountered a diverse group of people who related to one another with mutual respect and care. Selina also relished her memory of university as a place where she learned “that thinking is good and that development is really important and that change is good.” All of this was in marked contrast to the way Selina recalled being positioned in her family of origin, where loyalty meant conformity to the family's way of doing things.

So in my family culture, there is a very powerful push that I should—rather than be who I am—that I should be who they want me to be, and do things the way they want. And, you know, there's just absolutely no space or room for, “Who are you?” All it is, is “You are not who we want you to be.”

Another positive experience in the first phase of Selina's involvement in the church at the centre of her narrative was a shared form of leadership. There was

one main leader, but leadership was understood to be the collaborative responsibility of a team of equals.

In naming the relational values which she had taken up as a result of these earlier experiences, Selina was making meaning of the difficulties and disappointments she experienced when leadership practices in the church began to enact discourses which were at odds with collaborative notions of leadership. While the language of covering did not feature explicitly in Selina's narrative, parallel notions of divinely sanctioned authority and submission were evident. She subsequently realised that these discourses were characteristic of the wider network of churches to which her church belonged, but they had not been aggressively rehearsed in the collaborative leadership style of the earlier pastor. When that situation changed, her resistance, her efforts to actively hold on to the values of inclusivity, freedom and respect, began.

To frame Selina's resistance simply in terms of holding on to these values does not do justice to another important strand within her narrative. In an echo of Jenny's "life will overcome" metaphor, Selina also told her story of resistance as a struggle for survival, which began with the effects of her positioning within the discursive practices of conformity within the family, and continued in her experiences within the church.

From their point of view, it's definitely my fault that the family doesn't work. And I'm selfish and off doing my own thing, and, yeah. And so, because of all of that, I am like really, really—I get very nervous if I feel that anybody's telling me what to do. I mean, I have an irrational, you know, response to that—reaction to that. . . . For me it's just sheer survival. It is just trying to be able to—I've been haunted for decades by this enormous sense of annihilation, you know, that I will actually cease to exist, which was very frightening and very powerful.

I return to this striking language of fear and survival in considering the themes of agency and resistance in Selina's story.

Discursive positioning and its effects

As mentioned already, Selina did not use the term "covering" in describing the discursive practices which became problematic for her (and others) in the second phase of her involvement in the church. Her recollection of the language of leadership included phrases like "God's man" and "God's appointed leader."

When the new pastor was called to lead the church, the leaders were convinced that he was “God’s man.”

This was God’s man! And it was that language that was used—absolutely. This was God’s man. It was said over and over again. I remember.

Both words in that phrase were significant: leadership was *God*-appointed and *male*. In theory, Selina recalled, the new pastor was appointed as “one amongst equals,” in line with the previous practice of shared leadership. But as time went on it became clear that his language and practice of leadership was constructed by quite different discourses. In her view, the new pastor believed that he was specially chosen by God to be *the* leader, and that God would speak to the church through *him*:

The kind of spirituality that [he] brought into the church was—and there would have been some of it already, but there were kind of counterweights, if you like, to it. . . . He used to call himself, “God’s man.” . . . Yeah. “I’m God’s man for here. God speaks to me before he speaks to anybody else. I know what’s necessary for this church and you guys don’t.”

From the beginning, Selina did not accept these ideas, nor the authority with which they positioned the pastor. She quickly identified three ways in which the changes were at odds with the values which had informed the community up to that point: it was a shift from shared leadership toward hierarchy; a shift from an embrace of diversity toward conformity; and a shift from collaborative participation in decision making to control from the top.

Initially, Selina was reluctant to raise her concerns, but, in line with the third of her concerns, she felt a responsibility to do so. As she attempted respectfully to put her concerns before the pastor and other leaders of the church, she discovered how difficult it was going to be to resist the prevailing discursive tide, especially as a woman. She put her concerns in a letter and arranged to meet with the leaders (all men) to discuss them. Before the meeting, one of the leaders rang to tell her to bring her husband with her: “You’ll find it more comfortable if you do.” Selina rejected this advice, preferring to speak as a person in her own right. As people gathered for this meeting, she recalled, there was an awkward silence in the room, broken when the pastor finally asked her what she wanted to say.

I was quite surprised, because I thought, well, it was all in the letter, and so I expected that [the pastor] would say, “Now Selina, in this letter you said this, and can we—do you have anything else to say?” Or, “We’ve talked about it, and we think this,” or whatever. But [he] just—he just said, “What do you want to say?” And I said, “Well, it was all in the letter.” And so [he] looked at everybody, and this look came across his face. And he just looked at the others. He said, “Got your letters boys?” And I hate that voice. I hate it. Anyway ... I had my copy of the letter, so I sort of started, and I launched through the points. And it was just—I just delivered it to this very cold silence basically.

Afterwards, Selina “drove home in a daze,” overwhelmingly aware of how different this experience had been to any previous meetings with the church leaders. The other leaders had clearly known the pastor’s view, and were unwilling to step out of line to offer her any support or response. She “never heard another word” about her letter.

Selina related another encounter with the pastor, which occurred a few months after this meeting. She sometimes helped with leading worship in the church, and the pastor told her that she was doing too much speaking while in the up-front role. “Just do the music,” she was told. “If you want to speak, I will put you on the preaching roster.” Selina was surprised at this offer, but responded that, yes, she *would* like to be on the preaching roster. But over six months had passed, and her name never appeared on the roster. During a subsequent visit from the pastor to her home, Selina asked him about the fact that no invitation to preach had yet come. Her memory of his response was still vivid at the time of our interview. Her question was met with a defensive and very angry tirade that left her feeling “totally traumatised.” “I really, really thought he was going to actually punch me!” Selina recalled. She resolved after this to “lie very, very, very low” and not to do or say anything “to even be a blip on [his] radar.”

When I asked Selina why she made this resolution, she spoke of having had “the strong sense that something very terrible, that shouldn’t have happened, had happened.” There was an understandable element of wanting to protect herself against further angry responses: “I felt probably as if I actually had been hit.” But the “something very terrible, that shouldn’t have happened” was not simply this man’s inappropriate display of anger. Selina was speaking of her sense at that time that there was something that *she* had done, as a woman confronting a man, which was wrong. Looking back on this, she offered an articulate account of her

experience as a woman in the church context, bridging from these historical incidents to the general situation for women in the church:

[I thought], clearly the culture is now completely different, and so I will do my best to lie down and float with the current because that apparently is what's expected. So, clearly I've been a naughty girl. . . . I think in church—well, I mean this is ten years ago, so maybe things are different—but if you're a female, and you stand up with an opinion, or try and be a person, you very easily can be labelled somebody who's trying to control things, or somebody who's being inappropriate somehow. It's like the culture says that it's inappropriate for women to hear from God, or act like a normal person.

With some hesitation—she was speaking to a male interviewer—Selina continued her reflection on gendered practices within the church, before and during the new pastor's time.

Talking as a female about gender issues is really hard. It's really hard, because it's very easy for it to come across like you're whinging or whining or, you know, whatever.

As she continued, I was privileged to hear Selina give further personal examples of gendered positioning and male-centred language within church practices. She was aware that the pastor had probably found her independent stand as a woman threatening in some way, and offered a compelling account of how deeply “awful” it felt for her to violate the “given order” by making a man feel threatened.

And I—and it's a horrible thing—it's like an awful thing, to feel that you make anybody feel threatened. But I think as a woman, you're very aware that basically men hold the power in society. So when you become aware that you're making a man feel threatened, that is awful. Because you feel like—you feel that you are actually somehow going against the whole kind of given order of—you know, like I've—somehow I've done something wrong here. Somehow I've stepped out of the place that I'm supposed to be in, and I am behaving in a way that must be inappropriate. Because here's this person feeling like somehow I have removed some power from them, when that never was my intention. So what am I doing wrong?

In raising her questions, respectfully, Selina had done what she felt to be right. More than right, she had done what she felt to be required of her by God. Yet the

forcefulness of the response, the response of male power under threat, invited her into a conflicted subject position of having done something wrong, and of lying “very, very, very low.” Having tried to challenge the new culture of authority, she vowed, “I just was not going to do that anymore, ever.” The imagery of lying “very, very, very low”—in an attempt to preserve life and avoid violating deeply inscribed cultural structures of male authority—had a telling connection with a metaphor Selina used later in describing to a friend the consequences for her of assuming this submissive subject position:

I said to her, “I feel like I’ve been presented with this very, very, very shallow coffin that I’m being asked to lie down in. And I don’t think I can fit my body in there.”

This striking word picture anticipated Selina’s account of her movement toward a decision to leave the church.

Agency and resistance

A sense of agency was evident throughout Selina’s narrative. She presented herself as having been clear as to the values and hopes she had taken up for life in community and the practices of leadership. These values, along with her previous experiences of community, enabled her to recognise and critique the discourses of religious authority which were reproduced through the new leaders’ words and actions. Rather than finding space for agency in the experience of contradictory positioning, as Cathy and Jenny did, Selina seems to have assumed the position of respectful critic from the beginning. In fact, Selina explained, this position was not so much a matter of freedom as it was “a sense of responsibility.” She saw herself as someone gifted with an ability to “see” things that sometimes she would rather not see. But having seen something, she needed to act:

And so yes, I guess a sense of responsibility. And a sense of, I’m not going to just be pushed around by this guy who thinks that he can just march in here and change everything when people are—a lot of people were leaving the church without saying anything. They were just not coming back. So it was like a sense of the church haemorrhaging, and it was well, we can’t just let this happen!

Did the point at which Selina decided to “lie down and float with the current” represent a surrender of this sense of responsibility and agency? Temporarily,

perhaps. But there is no indication that she simply gave up and allowed herself to be re-inscribed by the same discourses of divinely bestowed authority and knowledge which she was consciously resisting. In one sense, her temporary step back was an agentic move, intended to protect her from a repetition of her traumatising experience of the pastor's anger. On the other hand, as Selina herself reflected, there was in her withdrawal a sense of having been disciplined according to longstanding and deeply inscribed forms of subjecthood (the "given order") which forbid women to threaten male potency.

Selina's vow not to challenge authority again was in fact short lived. The new leadership team formed by the pastor continued to act in ways that confirmed her three concerns. By this time others in the church were also waking up to the significance of the changes that were occurring. No matter how respectfully she or others tried to raise concerns, the leaders were inclined to see such challenges as "rebellion." Selina recalled how one of the leaders portrayed the situation during a meeting to discuss some of the issues:

"We've got you guys and we've got us, and really we don't have a lot in common. And we have to ask ourselves, can this continue to work?" And everybody just sat there, you know. And I looked at everybody, and I thought, "They can't hear what he's saying" I said, "N.," I said, "are you saying N. that it would be better if we actually went away and did our thing somewhere else and were no longer part of [this church]?" And everybody went, "Oh!", like this. And he just looked straight at me, and he said, "That is what I am saying." And the other leaders were like, quite shocked! But I was thrilled, because I thought, "Great! Finally what they actually think is out in the open for all to see." I was really pleased. And sad. But pleased to say, "Well look, this is where we've got to now."

Some weeks later the leaders issued what Selina regarded as very restrictive conditions on which people could continue to exercise any roles within the church. This was the point at which she and her partner decided to leave the church. In part, they hoped their decision would shake others into realising what was happening. People were shocked and upset, Selina recalled, but, as in Cathy's and Bill's leaving, "the church people were told after we'd gone that they weren't to have anything to do with us." Again it is evident how the discourses of the 'covering' variety construct those who do not submit to authority as being spiritually dangerous.

Learning of these restrictions was also the occasion for Selina's use of the coffin metaphor, mentioned earlier. In that light, the act of leaving the church was not simply a measured next step for Selina, it was an act of survival. On the day of their leaving, her body, within which the annihilating effects of repressive religious authority had been felt so strongly, resonated even more powerfully with a joyful sense of freedom:

I remember really clearly walking down the central aisle of the church, and as I stepped outside, it was like this explosion in my head. I physically felt the freedom of it. It was like I went—whoah! It was physical. It was—it shocked me. I physically felt this great weight, this huge weight, lift right off my head, and it was just like a total like clear sky straight up to God. And all this garbage just gone. It was amazing!

5.5 Discussion points

I conclude this chapter by briefly noting points for further theoretical reflection in relation to my two research questions. These, together with discussion points from the next two chapters, are taken up in my final discussion (Chapter 8).

First research question

Within Christian communities, how is it that some regimes of power and knowledge can subvert the call to freedom and justice which is pervasive in longstanding streams of Christian tradition?

Traces of several interrelated discourses recur in my analysis of these four stories. There is a notion that leaders are not simply elected by their communities, but are divinely appointed. This is implicit in all of the accounts, but explicit in Selina's reference to her leader's self-designation as "God's man." Bill suggests that people were called into a subject position in which to challenge the pastor's authority was like challenging God. According to this cluster of ideas, then, leaders have special authority and knowledge, given by God. These ideas support the promotion within these communities of the notion that spiritual wellbeing consists of being submissive to the authority and wisdom of one's leaders, an idea that in two of the churches referred to here is captured in the metaphor of covering. All four participants featured in this chapter highlight a strongly gendered aspect in this call to assume a submissive subject position. The three

women relate their experience of “second-place” positioning within the church to their life-long acquaintance with gendered forms of positioning and subjectification.

In Chapter 8, I explore the ways in which such regimes of power and knowledge subvert the possibility of dialogic power relations—which, I have argued in Chapter 3, is the necessary condition of freedom and justice—within Christian communities. I also consider what may be learned from the results presented in this chapter concerning the technologies of subjugation and hegemony which are supported by such discourses.

Second research question

What has enabled some people to resist the practices of religious authority constructed by such regimes?

Resistance takes a number of forms here, but is most commonly recalled by the participants in terms of respectful attempts to question or challenge particular practices of authority, followed by their eventual decisions to leave their communities. Often this is connected with witnessing the effects of these practices on others in the community. Three of the narrators tell of their actions in ways that suggest that they were on behalf of the ethical commitments to justice, collaboration and inclusion which they brought to their life in community. Other issues which I take up and theorise in Chapter 8 include the importance of the embodied effects of subjugating practices, and of access to alternative knowledges, in the participants’ accounts of their move to a more agentic position in relation to religious authority. Finally, I note the recurrence of strikingly joyful metaphors and descriptions of freedom as the narrators told their stories of departure from the contexts which had constrained their lives for so long. In my discussion I reflect on the adequacy of purely discursive accounts of such joy.

Chapter 6:

Discourses of separation, knowledge and authority

But what they're actually doing is they're taking you away from your support networks, from all your friends, from all your families—totally isolating you, totally making you, well, do the programme, and obey the programme, even though it's completely and utterly mad! (Lynne's story)

This chapter presents the results of applying discursive narrative analysis to the transcripts of my interviews with John and Lynne. Their narratives describe experiences in two very different religious communities, yet both are strongly informed by discourses of separation from what insiders of their communities referred to as “the world.” Themes of divinely privileged knowledge and authority are also present in both accounts, as they were in the last chapter. By comparison with the stories related in the previous chapter, however, the technologies of subjection within these communities tended toward domination and demanded compliance in almost every area of their members' lives.

6.1 John's story

Only two religious communities are named explicitly in this thesis, one being that which features in John's story: the Exclusive Brethren. The historical features of the movement which are described here are a matter of public record, and are sufficiently distinctive to enable easy identification.

Beginnings: born into belonging

John's story began with his birth into this religious community.

Pretty well all the Exclusive Brethren are born into the Exclusive Brethren community. So you're brought up in a family environment that embraces this particular point of view.

In speaking about his experiences of religious authority in this context, his resistance, and his eventual departure from the Exclusive Brethren (hereafter EB), John was telling the story of more than half his life. Within that period, according to John's account, the discourses and practices of religious authority within the EB movement underwent several changes. It is important to acknowledge that there have almost certainly been further changes in the years since John's

involvement. What is described in this chapter cannot be assumed to accurately describe the EB movement in its contemporary form.

Before describing what happened to him in the years of his involvement in the EB, John noted an irony in relation to the beginnings of the movement. It arose in the early decades of the nineteenth century in Britain and was, John suggested, “a protest against the formality and authoritarian approach of the establishment.” Within a short time, however, this relatively spontaneous development, centred on a network of house meetings, solidified into “a monolithic sort of structure where it became inevitable that leadership would be, and world leadership would become, very important.” This tension between an original ideal of collective, egalitarian approaches to leadership, and the authoritarian dominance of a series of “world leaders,” caught John’s attention at an early stage. John’s awareness of this dissonance became an important factor in his eventual disillusionment with the movement.

The discursive shaping of identity: chosen and separate

According to John’s account, the founders of the EB movement believed that through them, God was restoring important truths of the Christian faith, and that they were “the chosen remnant of the last days.” In other words, within the foundations of this community was an idea that it was in some way specially chosen by God, and that it was holding onto truth that had been lost or corrupted by the established church. This sense of special “chosenness” developed into a call to maintain separation from the world, and from churches who did not share EB beliefs. In explaining this, John referred to words from the New Testament which had provided a key metaphor within EB discourse.

The main scripture, of course, was in 2 Timothy 2: “In the great house there are vessels to honour and vessels to dishonour and if anybody separate himself from these, the vessels to dishonour, he shall become a vessel to honour—fit for the Lord and fit for every good work.” And so, you know, we were encouraged to fulfil that.

He also pointed back to the beginnings of the movement, and to the language of one of the founders, J. N. Darby.

One of . . . Darby’s mantras was, God’s principle of unity is separation from evil. Separation from evil is your point of gathering almost. This is what makes you a

group. And that mantra had been very central to the whole Exclusive Brethren teaching.

John acknowledged that there were balancing points of view in Darby's teaching, but "separation from evil is the one that really captured the imagination and became central." The discourse of separation made a deep impression on John and his siblings as younger children. They were intrigued by an aunt and uncle who were not part of the EB movement and whom they seldom saw. "But we could tell that our parents were very cautious that we shouldn't be too much influenced by them." Looking back, John could see a conflict for his parents between this stance of fear and exclusion and their positioning within other Christian discourses which called them to a more outward looking stance.

I think our parents had a big problem, particularly my mother, between their own concepts of the outgoingness of Christianity and the growing trend for it to become more enclosed and cut off from the rest of the world. And my mother, I know, suffered a tremendous amount in regard to that in her spirit.

Originally intended as a "principle of unity" for the movement, the discourse of separation from evil seems to have become a fertile breeding ground for fear, suspicion, and control within its constituent elements, down to the level of the family. John further explained that this discourse became even more dominant, and began to take on extreme forms, under a particular worldwide leader of the movement, James Taylor Jr. In the early decades of the movement, successive leaders had exerted considerable influence, yet there had been room for dialogue and discussion at the level of local communities.

So, my earlier experiences of our meetings . . . as a child was—our important meetings were our "dialogue meetings", "reading" meetings rather than preachings, and these were—I thought they were very interesting. We'd go through a passage of the Bible and somebody would stand up and read the chapter for the night and somebody would make some opening remarks and we'd go from there.

John related less positive memories of what happened when James Taylor Jr became the leader (by now known as "the Man of God") in 1953, when John was in his late teenage years. The principle of separation began to be extended to more and more areas of everyday life (down to shared walls and sewer pipes), and again this had a direct impact on John's family. James Taylor Jr decreed that EB

members could not belong to what he called “associations of men.” This included workers’ unions and professional associations. As a result John’s father led a delegation to Parliament to request exemption from union membership for the Exclusive Brethren. His mother, he recalled, had a deep love of nature, and had been a devoted member of the New Zealand Forest and Bird Society.

And then this question came up about belonging to the associations. And I was in our lounge when they started talking about this, and she had to arrive at it that she must write a letter and resign. And I could see the pain on her face, but she dare not go against the authority of her husband. My father, and the Exclusive Brethren generally, were very male dominated, and the hierarchy of Christ–man–woman–child was very, very strong.

As John put it, his mother “had to arrive at it” to resign. Two discourses—separation from the world and submission to male authority—positioned her with a choice that was effectively no choice: between loyalty to her husband and continuing her membership of this “association of men.” In fact, the choice was even starker than that, since to reject her husband’s wish would have been to reject Christ. The divinely ordained hierarchy of authority for the EB was now, in effect, Christ–Man of God–man–woman–child.

Conflicted positioning: life in two discursive worlds

How did the discourse of separation, mediated via this hierarchy of authority, position John the child? He remembered making an effort at school to conceal the fact that he belonged to the EB. The policy of EB children “standing out from school assembly” had not yet started, and he found ways to blend in with other children. Within EB communities the discourse of separation produced a fear of influence from the evil outside world, and so EB families were not permitted to have radios (nor televisions later). John recalled pretending to the other boys that he had heard the radio shows they were talking about, and laughing along with them. At the same time, he began to have “terrible anxiety” about whether he really did belong to those who were “truly saved.” In line with the movement’s self-understanding as a small remnant of true believers, separated from the many that have it wrong, the question of eternal safety hinged on believing and doing the right things. For John at this time “it was all about ... the anxieties of eternal

safety.” He hoped that he had done all that was needed to be “absolutely safe,” but fears “still hung around.”

Using his own version of the practice of separation, John managed to keep his school friendships and his life in the EB in discrete compartments. This enabled him to maintain an uneasy hold on two important kinds of belonging, albeit (the adult John suggested) with “an element of hypocrisy.” This “two worlds” strategy—and with it, a bifurcated process of subjectification—continued well beyond his school years. As noted already, the discourse of separation produced within EB communities both a sense of spiritual specialness and a fear of the contaminating influence of the outside world. John’s capacity to move between the worlds inside and outside of the EB exposed him to just such an influence, in the form of alternative ideas and “being able to think a bit wider.” This widening of his thinking began in high school and eventually gave rise to some significant doubts.

Firstly, you know, the possibility of evolution being true, the scale of the universe and the insignificance of man in the whole scheme of things. And I also began to think about the other nations. If I’d been brought up in India or something like that, I would have been right out of all this sort of thing. It just didn’t seem fair that circumstances should weigh so heavily in regard to your eternal consequences. And the Brethren always had arguments about this—well, their day will come and they’ll be given another opportunity—and things like this. Sort of palliative stuff, which didn’t quite settle me too well.

Immediately following high school, while he was still just sixteen, John left home to study at university. To his knowledge, he was the last member of the EB in New Zealand to have been allowed to complete a university degree. It was a risky move on his leaders’ part, destined to trouble further the dominance of EB discourses in John’s life.

It had already been suggested that this wasn’t a good place for believers; it wasn’t a safe place. Um, and you know, my uncle and aunt who had been at university and didn’t come into fellowship through—the influences of the world got them in the end and I’d always thought they’d succumbed to temptation, rather than thought through it. Yes, so I felt I was quite strong . . . and my parents were concerned, but they knew I was a very committed young brother, so they thought I would handle it alright. And I was there on trust in that respect.

John continued to pursue his ‘two worlds’ strategy while at university, and, as a result, the unsettling influence of wider thinking continued to grow. A fellow student who took an interest in him turned out to be an atheist, “but in his lifestyle and his attitude he just seemed more like what I imagined Jesus would have been like than anybody else around.” After failing to convert this friend John took up his challenge to read Tolstoy, Freud and Jung. “I was as scared as anything about reading, particularly the psychologists.” But in Jung’s approach to spirituality he found “amazing stuff” that shed new light on his reading of the Bible. He boarded with an EB family for a year, where a family member who had already “come under influence” gave him James Joyce’s *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* to read.

That was quite an experience reading that. Yes, that caused me a lot of anxiety. But he just uncovered, talked about all the struggles I was going through in that book. . . . And then I came to a point where I felt, “Look, I’m just—I don’t know what I believe and why.”

It seemed that the world of alternative ideas was in danger of overwhelming the tightly knit discourses of his faith, yet John couldn’t bear the thought of what his family and friends would think if he left the EB movement. He took his doubts and concerns to the EB leaders for whom he had a high regard, and they challenged him to sort out where he stood.

I went away, and on the one hand I was thinking, “Well, you know there is something in the Bible that I feel happy with, but I can’t take it in the same way they do.” When I met them a fortnight later they asked me how I’d got on, and my response was, “I accept God’s authorship in creation,” which allowed me a fair bit of freedom as to what that meant. And they just gasped, “Oh, we’re so thankful John.” I think they were pretty relieved too, and accepted me on those terms.

Rather than close down the possibilities of the life he found in the EB, or of the pursuit of truth, John had once again agentically negotiated a discursive space where he could hold on to preferred aspects of both. This meant reframing the separation discourse, just as he had reframed a fundamentalist belief in divine creation using the idea of “authorship.” He now saw the principle of separation from the world not in absolute terms, but “but in the sense of the world being a pretty grotty place and far as integrity and that sort of thing goes.” So he

continued to have contact with his university friends, but declined their invitations to go to certain movies. While other EB members were, he felt, “merely conforming,” John took up his own “agenda,” which was to make decisions “on a moral basis,” informed by his own understanding of Christian values. It became a matter of abiding by his “convictions.”

I was curious to know what held open this discursive space in which John felt the freedom to pursue a moral agenda which was not simply dictated by the edicts handed down by the Man of God. John identified three factors which supported him in this. The first related to the ongoing tension within the EB movement between those who held to the original ideals of freedom from authoritarianism, preferring collective decision making within local contexts, and those who saw the authority of the Man of God as binding. As noted already, John had been attuned to this discursive complexity from his earliest experiences in the meetings, and “it was very evident even as a child that there were groups; there were factions.” The same tension was there in his teenage years.

There was always two factions wherever you were, two points of view, and Auckland had their big conflict where they had a division. And it was pretty much about the same thing really, about the authority of the Man of God versus people that were more liberal and flexible in their approach to conduct. And the arbitrary ones always win ... The ones that make rules.

Throughout our interview, John consistently expressed his preference for the collective, flexible approach. So, as a young adult, he took up the position that the process of sorting out his own moral convictions—while noting the views of the Man of God—was parallel to what was happening corporately in the movement. It was, he said, “a whole agenda in my own mind which was running parallel to what was happening in the meetings.”

A second factor which supported John in his agentic efforts to pursue life in the EB context on his own terms can again be traced to the original intentions of the movement. From the beginning there had been a belief that this “remnant” community was recovering Christian truths that had been lost or corrupted by the institutional church. The espoused guide to all truth was held to be the Bible, as interpreted within the community. John was still firmly positioned within this discourse, even if he now sometimes read the Bible differently to the EB leaders.

I was still the person that felt as though the Bible was, you know, God's manual for life; shall we put it that way? And that the whole idea of the Brethren—it wasn't so much the authority of the leader, in theory, as the fact that everything was actually decided, not in somebody's lounge, but in the collective position where everything was open to challenge, right? . . . And, so there was a wonderful—earlier on—there was a wonderful feeling of consensus about it all, and if anybody challenged it or anything, it was always listened to.

As John looked at the way the discourses and practices of separation were developing under the new Man of God, James Taylor Jr, he felt that they were departing from his (John's) understanding of Christianity and his understanding of the Bible. "I thought, you know, this is getting right away from what Christianity is all about. . . . The restrictions of separation actually made you unavailable for anything useful." There are traces here of John's memory of his parents' belief in the "outgoingness of Christianity." He also perceived a lack of integrity in the way people obeyed the literal words of the Man of God, while in practice "it was more a matter of what you could get away with." This did not sit well with John's awareness of certain sayings of Jesus which called for congruence between conviction and action—a principle clearly reflected in his own moral agenda.

Significant although these two areas of discursive tension were, they were destined to be overtaken by John's increasing concern at the reported behaviour of James Taylor Jr. "I think one of the things that worried me more than anything was the conduct of the leader himself, as he became more under the influence of his alcohol. And we were never allowed to suggest that he had an alcohol problem." This led to some bizarre pronouncements from Taylor, including a declaration that alcohol was created by God and therefore people *should* be drinking it.

Overnight, the Brethren became changed from being predominantly tee-total to being, um, whiskey drinkers. And it was absolutely ludicrous, the things that were done. People would have alcohol at their breakfast table and think that this was the way to live—the Lord's indicated this. Bizarre, absolutely bizarre, the whole history of things.

John conceded that initially it hadn't seemed so bizarre. "When somebody steps out and [is] so radical like this—obviously it's either of the devil or it's of God. Well, it couldn't be of the devil, so it was of God." But soon he began to realise

that Taylor was very unwell. The latter began to make sexual references in his public meetings “and sort of became obsessive in regard to woman’s bodies, and spiritualizing it all of course.” The end result of this deterioration came during a series of meetings in Aberdeen, when Taylor was discovered in bed with somebody else’s wife:

There's a huge story around the whole thing, but all you really need to know is that here was a man who was in a leadership, power position. He'd become paranoid; he'd gone down the slippery slope of an alcoholic who does not admit that he's an alcoholic, and he actually died, I think, of alcoholic poisoning a few months after those meetings.

John recalled that many people in the northern hemisphere left the EB after this incident, whereas those in Australia and New Zealand heard only a “sanitized version” and very few left the movement. John indicated that he would have left, but by this time he was married and had a young family. Moreover, for reasons explained in the next section, to openly voice doubts and questions, even to a family member, was by now too dangerous.

I think if I had've been on my own, I would have walked out at that stage. Like happens with most, um—you're sort of trapped into a situation. And I remained trapped. . . . They make sure that you are so involved with the whole system that it is very difficult for you to escape. I carried my concerns, and I couldn't speak to my wife about them. I tried once or twice, but I knew that if I was too vocal, she would dob me in.

The space between two discursive worlds, where John had for a number of years felt that he could stand and pursue his moral agenda, was rapidly shrinking as the practices of authority within the EB movement departed further and further from anything he could recognise as having integrity. Ironically, it would be the ramifications of a new push by EB leaders for moral purity which would finally tip the balance for John.

Resistance and rejection: life beyond the EB

Prior to John’s marriage he had spent time working overseas. While he was there, James Taylor Jr had begun teaching that “there’s only one basis for leaving home and that’s to marry.” At that stage, John recalled, he was still “very compliant.” So he resigned his job and returned home to New Zealand. At about the same

time, Taylor also began insisting that if EB members “had any moral misconduct” in their lives, then “this should be cleared up, which meant confessing to people that were supposed to be pure.” Members could not be trusted to have their own judgment on whether something in their past was already laid to rest. “You must lay your case out before somebody else for their judgment. So, all over the world people were coming out with their histories.” For John, coming back to New Zealand

was no sort of glorious return. It was rather ignominious, and I made no hesitation or delay in telling them what I had been involved in, in my earlier years. They decided that it could be covered privately—that had it been anything worse, then it would have to be brought to the assembly and confessed amongst all the brethren. And there was sort of lines drawn as to what degree of uncleanness or impurity that you were involved in as to whether you had to come before all the brethren.

Looking back, John felt there “was no understanding of healing” in this drive for purity. Rather, he suggested, there was “a fair bit of voyeurism” and “a big opportunity to get power over people because they’d been sinners.” If serious misdemeanours came to light, then people could be “put out of fellowship” for as long as the elders deemed necessary. This discipline could take more than one form, as John was later to experience, and could split families apart. So, as noted above, when John began to have very serious doubts about the integrity of the Man of God and the direction of the EB movement he was too afraid to voice them fully to his wife lest she inform on him.

Eventually, however, John was “put on the mat” over a different issue. By then a new leader had succeeded Taylor as the Man of God. In John’s view, the new man was “a textbook case of a dictatorial leader.” All important decisions had to be referred to him for judgment, continuing the pattern of authoritarianism which had concerned John for many years now. John’s handling of a family trust came under scrutiny, despite the fact that it had earlier been approved.

And I said, “Well, you know we were told that it was okay.” And then I got in trouble for putting what he’d said back then in over against what he's saying now. Yeah, it was totally unjust. And so I was shut up for questioning.

I asked John about the significance of being “shut up.” He explained that it was a term drawn from the law of the Hebrew Bible. If a house was suspected of being

infected by disease, then it was shut up and observed until considered clean again. So this form of discipline was an expression of the fear-based separation discourse, now applied *within* the EB movement.

So this term “shut up” came in, and you’re under observation—you don’t go to any meetings, you don’t have contact with anybody else; because you’re potentially leprous and a contagious person.

Consequently, John and his wife were socially isolated and their children were sent away to stay with another family, while they were tested for any further moral impurity. So the leaders started asking John if he had “any other doubts or things.” He took the opportunity to voice his doubts and questions about “this whole Aberdeen thing and the whole principle of leadership.” As a result, his discipline moved to another level and he was “withdrawn from,” meaning that the whole community was instructed to maintain separation from him. This was, John explained, the ultimate form of discipline. It placed people in a position in which there was no hope “unless God in his mercy granted repentance.” While John at times entertained the possibility that he was the one in the wrong, he chose to stand by his commitment to act on the basis of conviction, rather than conformity.

I . . . was not about to just take the easy way out, and say the right things, in view of getting back in fellowship and getting my household together. I just couldn’t face the dishonesty of doing that.

It was a costly position for him to maintain. His wife, seeing no hope of John changing his mind, asked for a legal separation from him. This was, John observed, “the expected thing,” and he agreed to the separation, knowing that it meant losing his children as well. He made over the house to his wife and moved into the office where he worked.

Promoted as a basis of unity, the discourse of separation had, in John’s experience, propagated suspicion and division within the EB community, down to the level of individual families and now his own marriage. Rather than ensuring that its members remained “fit for every good work,” they were, John remarked, trapped, controlled, and isolated from the outside world, and therefore “unavailable for anything useful.” This was the final turning point for him.

So, it was about that time that I sort of made a pact with God. “God is light and in him there is no darkness at all. I will not hold back; I will come out in the open

with everything, and leave the consequences with God.” And from that moment on—look, they were not honest about—they just didn’t have an honest answer for anything that I raised. And I sort of felt more and more comfortable.

The theme of ambivalence and anxiety which had persistently threaded itself through John’s story—“Is it me that’s wrong or is it them?”—seems to resolve itself in these statements. A sense of agency had been evident throughout his narrative, as in his taking up of the moral agenda which supported him against the absolute demands of the separation principle. But here his language takes a boldly agentic turn: “I . . . made a pact with God . . . I will not hold back; I will come out in the open . . . I raised . . .” Rather than continue to inhabit the ever diminishing space between two discursive worlds, John had stepped into “the open”—into the “light” which he understood to be the nature of God.

Years of inscription and living with the internalised gaze of EB discourses meant that a sense of pressure to say “the right things,” in order to be accepted back, was ongoing. But John resisted this call, and never returned to the EB. “It took me three years before I was really comfortable about walking down the street and feeling okay about myself. . . . I’d use back streets and feel as though I was being looked at, or brethren might see me and so on.” For several years he continued to be involved with various Christian communities of a more open kind. In the end, he found even these “a bit circumspect in some of their attitudes,” whereas his own moral sense was now attuned to “global issues, care of the earth, and that sort of thing.” After a period of having no involvement with any Christian community, John found his way to a Quaker group, where he still felt at home at the time of our interview. His concluding comments reflect the huge distance he had travelled from the exclusivity, conformity and fear-based separatism of the community into which he was born.

I am very happy meeting with people that don't think the same ways I do, and I tend to read books that challenge me rather than reinforce. . . . I've not been afraid anymore of reading things that challenge, that are a challenge. . . . I don't have to agree or buy into any of these points of view, but I do enjoy the challenge and I think that the whole thing is a lot more fluid. And I'm very much in favour of the fact that God is not something that can be defined.

6.2 Lynne's story

The religious community which dominated Lynn's life for ten years was very different to the Exclusive Brethren. It was, in her terms, an international "cult." Lynne was recruited into it when she was twenty five, rather than being born into it as John was into the EB. Nonetheless, as will become evident, her account of the discursive practices which held her in subjection in this movement contains a number of thematic parallels with John's narrative. For reasons of confidentiality, I refer to this movement as "The Fellowship," rather than by its real name.

Beginnings: the promise of power and knowledge

Lynne described herself as "a missionary's child," and was brought up in the Christian faith. As a teenager she left that part of her life behind for a time, thinking "it was all a bunch of rubbish." She had a successful job, bought a house, and lived with her partner. In her early twenties she started going to church again and "had some amazing spiritual experiences to do with spiritual healing." The impact of these experiences, which had brought some significant healing to Lynne's immediate family, evoked in her a desire to help others.

So there was a decision in my life, back when I was twenty one, that "I want to help people; I want to learn to heal people," you know. . . . I'd gone, sort of, a complete 180 turnaround to "Oh my God, there's power here." So—and I'd spend, sort of, the next few years reading the Bible trying to learn, trying to learn.

Lynne identified this quest for learning as a key factor in her initial attraction to The Fellowship. She was drawn in by a perception that within this community there was power, healing and miracles. Above all, there was the promise of learning.

The power and the promises . . . they ran a class . . . And the class in itself is actually almost a form of brainwashing because it's very intensive—I think forty hours of intensive scripture just crammed into three weeks. So it's sort of—it's a real "Whoah!" . . . And so you come out of this three-week intensive course, sort of feeling like you can conquer the world.

Lynn also accounted for her attraction to this community in terms of the emotional vulnerability she experienced when her relationship with her partner ended painfully: "my whole world came crashing down, and the rug had been

pulled out from under me and I was extremely vulnerable.” She was looking for love and support.

So that’s a sort of a common pattern that I was seeing, when people get invited to . . . these organisations. You’re at a very low point. You’re searching. You’re vulnerable. And so I think, yes, my partner had left on the Thursday and on the Monday I’d been invited to a Fellowship [meeting]. It was like . . . a supernatural intervention.

Lynn was also spiritually vulnerable. By her own account, she had been successful in life to this point, but in the wake of her relationship breakup she was troubled by the idea that she had failed God by doing things in her own way. Despite her awareness of her own competence, therefore, she surrendered her moral and spiritual agency to those who claimed to know and represent God’s way.

I hadn’t been—you know, I wasn’t married. I’d gone and done my own thing. I’d rejected God, so therefore I thought, “Well, I’ve made such a hell of a mess of my life doing it my way that I might as well try God’s way.” So, in actually making that decision to give my power over to God because I felt I’d failed—The fact that I’d bought a house at the age of twenty, and I’d, you know, had a successful job and was, you know, was actually quite successful, didn’t seem to matter. In my own mind, I’d failed. I’d failed. And that was—it wasn’t real, but I felt that I had failed in my life. So, to give my power over to them, and say, “Well, I’ll just do it God’s way. And I’ll just do everything God wants me to do, and I’ll be fine.”

In these ways, Lynne described her initial acquaintance with The Fellowship as having been full of promise. It offered training that would fulfil her desire to help and heal others. With seemingly supernatural timing, it represented support at a time of pain and loss. Within this community she could return to the way of obedience to God, with all the hope implied in that surrender: “You can make it better. . . . You can do it right. . . . God will bless you.”

“Like the spirit of a python”: the processes of discursive subjection

The hopes which Lynne brought to her involvement with The Fellowship were not realised. Instead, she said, she “lost everything.”

So they were offering you all this power. And by the time I [had] got and done all the courses which, you know, take a long time and cost a lot of money, they didn’t.

But by the time you'd actually done it, you were trapped. You were brainwashed. . . . It was empty promises.

Early in the interview, Lynne offered a powerful metaphor for this process of becoming “trapped” within the movement. It was, she said, “like the spirit of a python” which slowly and gently wraps its coils around its prey, and then steadily begins to tighten its grip. “Every minute of my day I had to account for what I did, when I did it, you know, who I talked to . . . everything was just being controlled and controlled.” As the interview continued, a number of these coils became evident in the form of discursive practices which held her ever more tightly in a position of subjection to the leaders and doctrine of the movement.

Lynne indicates, in the excerpt just cited, that the courses offered by The Fellowship were an effective means of attracting and binding people to the movement. There was a series of such courses, based on the teaching of the movement's founding president, beginning with the three-week intensive described above.

And then they do another course, so there's a foundation or course, and then there's an intermediate course, and then there's an advanced course . . . And in each course there's the carrot that you're going to learn more, and you're going to learn more, and then you become a better person.

For Lynne, the “carrot” was the promise of learning and spiritual empowerment that would enable her to help others. She described the ways in which the leaders would play on people's desire to please their God. “If you love God, you'll do this.” “You're going to do it right . . . God's going to bless you.” Each course promised access to a higher level of knowledge in the next. Lynne recalled that these higher levels of privileged knowledge were spoken of in terms such as “the locked box,” and “a very private secret.” Implicit in all of this was the message that the leaders of the movement knew what doing it “right” under the gaze of God meant, while Lynne's own knowledge was discounted.

As Lynne progressed through the courses she began to ask questions. Because she knew the Bible well, she sometimes challenged the content of the lessons. At such times, the strategy of playing on her hopes gave way to playing on her fears. The discourses of privileged knowledge extended now not only to

God's right future path for Lynne, but also to interpreting the life she had lived to that point.

The fear of, you don't want to return to the life you led before. And I sort of thought well, you know, apart from the fact that, you know, they'd got me in a vulnerable time, my life wasn't actually that bad. But they start to make you think that your life was, you know, terrible. And because I was hurting so much, and I felt, you know, they—it made it very easy for them to say, “Well you don't have to experience that pain ever again because,” you know, “that pain's because you weren't on God's path and the reason you fell flat on your face, and the reason the rug was pulled out from under you, was that you were not being obedient to God.”

A second strategy of subjection targeted Lynne's social networks in ways that have parallels with the discourses of separation and exclusion described in John's story. Lynne indicated that she was drawn in by the promise of support at a difficult time, but that she soon felt that the movement was demanding more and more of her time. “So eventually, you know, you've maybe got one night a week left to yourself.” After the initial courses the next step was to go on a year-long programme to establish the ministry in another city.

But what they're actually doing is they're taking you away from your support networks, from all your friends, from all your families—totally isolating you, totally making you, well, do the programme, and obey the programme, even though it's completely and utterly mad!

Lynne's account suggested that the isolating effect of this programme was increased by a pattern of late nights and early mornings, to the point of sleep-deprivation. “So they just completely take you away from the world.” Lynne did two years of this intensive programme, during which time, she recalled, some people became disillusioned with The Fellowship and left. Such people, she recalled, were written off by the leaders as being influenced by evil spirits, or as “losers” whom God would not bless. Again the strategy of fear was invoked, as warnings were given that the children of such people “would become homosexuals and want sex-change operations.” These messages share some ideas with the ‘covering’ discourse discussed in the previous chapter. Only within the safety of The Fellowship could God's protection be assured. The outside world was considered evil, and, followers were told, “Any outside criticism towards the group was actually just from the devil.”

After her first year of involvement in The Fellowship, Lynne noticed a shift in attitude toward people outside the movement. Initially there seemed to be a genuine desire to help people, but steadily the attitude toward outsiders became more and more negative. The first target was people who were gay or lesbian. Then it was, “we can’t be bothered with losers anymore.” People were to be related to only as targets for recruitment. If they did not respond to one or two invitations to come to a class, they could not continue to be a friend. No “worldly friendships” were permitted. “It just became more and more arrogant in that we are better than everybody else.” Followers of the movement were even taught that they had no moral obligations toward “unbelievers.” In effect, the movement was becoming a self-contained world in its own right, with its own doctrines, values and ethics.

The fact that the leaders’ pronouncements on these issues carried such weight reflects a third discursive coil of control. Authority was not only divinely sanctioned, it was hierarchical, heterosexual, and male. In further parallels with John’s account, the international president decided on the doctrine for the whole movement, while the leader of the local community was spoken of as “the Man of God.” With regard to the latter, it was instilled in Lynne that “he is the Man of God ... he is all knowing ... he must be obeyed and he is to be trusted.” Texts from the Bible were used to buttress these discourses and to name expressions of difference as evil.

They’d take on a chapter and verse, chapter and verse, in of course obeying leadership, you know. You have to obey the leadership. You have to obey the leadership. You have to obey the leadership. . . . And of course if you couldn’t obey, then *you* had the problem. You know, if you couldn’t obey, you were devil possessed. If you couldn’t obey, you were a witch. You know. You were rebellious.

These extreme expressions of authority, and the notions of entitlement that accompanied them, took a sexually abusive turn when the New Zealand leader requested that Lynne come and stay at his house.

And, of course, you know, you have to sleep in *my* bed, you know. And even though, you know, “Thou shalt not commit adultery”—and it’s like, you know, sort of this Clinton style affair of, you know, you *have to* pleasure me, I am the leader, you have to obey.

The abuse continued over several months. Lynne reflected on the fact that prior to involvement with The Fellowship she had learned how to protect herself from unwanted relationships. Yet such was the grip of the dominant discourses around leadership and authority that she felt “terrified” and “powerless” in this situation.

I was absolutely, “How could this happen?” You know? And it was the manipulation, you know, looking back to think, you know, I didn’t have to stay with him. You know. But he said, “You have to stay with me.” And to think, “Oh, I have to obey the Man of God.”

Lynne later discovered, through her research on the movement, that other leaders had engaged in similar forms sexual exploitation. This was rationalised on the basis that they were “the men of God,” and in the Hebrew Bible leaders often had several wives. “So they had it all sewed up, you know, that they could use women for, you know, to meet their needs, you know.” The word “needs” in this sense speaks of a more pervasive discourse of male sexuality which has here found a particular religious expression.

This experience, Lynne reflected, had initiated her into one of the secrets entrusted to those at the higher levels of the hierarchy. “It’s the locked box. You know, this is a very private secret, you know, that you’ve been entrusted with.” If the world outside the movement was regarded as a domain where generally accepted ethical obligations do not apply, so, in a different sense, was the secret world of privileged authority, knowledge, rights and duties at its centre. Lynne was aware that having this information made her a “dangerous person.” She also knew that if she betrayed the secret, people would be told that she was mad and not to be trusted in anything she said. Like the right to commit adultery, the right to lie was apparently justifiable for the inner circle. Sexual exploitation therefore became an effective means of controlling and silencing women.

Discourses of male authority and entitlement found further expression when Lynne married a man she had met in the movement.

A married woman would—you know, you had to obey your husband. You had to obey your husband. It didn’t matter if he was right, wrong—you know, you had to obey, you had to submit, you had to obey.

Lynne indicated that she found the marriage difficult from the beginning, but was unable to disagree with, or question, her husband. Moreover, the discourses of

separation from the evil outside world were invoked to isolate her from her family. If she did not stop seeing her mother and wider family, she was warned, the child she was expecting would be born with deformities. When Lynne looked to another family within the movement for help in dealing with the marriage difficulties, including her husband's anger, the onus was put back on her to make it better.

Don't make your husband angry. . . . And that I wasn't being obedient enough. And I wasn't doing this, and I wasn't doing that. . . . I turned myself inside out and upside down and back to front, to be perfect—to be the perfect wife. I baked beautiful biscuits. I cooked cordon bleu dinners. I had the house immaculate. You know. My child was perfect, obedient, and respectful. Everything was perfect. And I'd—I couldn't have—I wasn't allowed permission to leave the house, and I had to have a plan of where I was going, and what time I was going to leave, and what time I would come home, and who I was going to go with.

This analysis of Lynne's narrative has highlighted a number of the discourses and practices which seduced and held her for ten years in the python-like grip of The Fellowship:

- The leaders' claim to divinely granted knowledge that promised to unlock the secrets of a life of power and blessing and usefulness.
- Acceptance of a subject position of unquestioning obedience and trust as the means of gaining access to this supposed knowledge and its fruits.
- The leaders' assumed authority to interpret the meaning of Lynne's story and to prescribe the paths she must follow in order to be right with God.
- The language which constructed the world and people outside the movement as evil, dangerous and unworthy of respect.
- The call to separate herself from the infectious influences of the world, and to invest unreserved loyalty, time and money in the movement.
- Assumptions of male authority and entitlement, religiously described, which supported leaders' sexual exploitation and domination of women.
- Notions of marriage which positioned Lynne with minimal freedom to produce her own life, while holding her responsible for her husband's anger.

The long path out: questions, refusals and realisations

How did Lynne account for her eventual decision to break free from the grip of these discourses and practices of religious authority? While it took her ten years to come to it, her account represents her decision to leave as the culmination of her ongoing efforts to challenge and resist her positioning within the movement. Her resistance shows itself in three main aspects of her account.

The first and most pervasive expression of resistance evident in Lynne's narrative is her *questioning* of the leaders and their teaching. Looking back, she viewed herself as never having "swallowed the entirety of the doctrine hook, line and sinker." As John did in relation to Exclusive Brethren teaching, Lynne privately sifted some of the ideas and maintained her own position on some issues. "I'd go along with it as far as go through the motions, but it never sat as all-encompassing truth." She accounted for this ability to maintain her own thinking in this way in terms of her intelligence and her prior knowledge of the Bible and traditional Christian beliefs.

I had come from sort of a very intelligent stock. . . . And so I knew I came from—even though I hadn't particularly chosen an academic field, I had achieved success in my own path. So I had memory retention, so I knew. And I had all this scriptural knowledge to go on. So, when I [would] . . . throw little scriptures into the conversations, and sort of say, "Well what about this? What about this? What about this?" You know, I sort of became the enemy, sort of thing—just in a subtle way.

In challenging some of the leaders' teaching, and their attitudes toward the world outside the movement, Lynne's intention was not to be "the enemy." Rather, she was taking up a belief that her original hopes in joining the movement, allied to her own values of Christian healing and compassion, could still be realised.

So, and I was trying to sort of, I guess, change the system from within. I was trying—I was hoping desperately that they'd come around, and they'd actually see that, you know, we *are* to look after the weak people, and we *are* to help the sick people, and we *are* to be, you know—we can talk to people more than twice, you know? And so I was desperately trying and trying and trying and trying and trying to get them to actually behave according to the standard of the compassion of Jesus.

Only after several years did Lynne finally accept that the "carrot" which had enticed her to join The Fellowship, and to remain in it, was in fact "a plastic

carrot. . . . It just left a bad taste in my mouth and didn't satisfy me." Having initially accepted the leaders' claims to special knowledge, which required her to restory aspects of her own life and achievements, this realisation enabled Lynne to reclaim the value of her own knowledge and experience. "And it's like realising, well, I've actually had more practical experience than they have!"

A second thread of resistance was reflected in Lynne's account of a key moment of courage and agency on her part. It occurred after three years in the movement and several months of being subjected to demands by the Man of God that she should meet his "sexual needs." Throughout this time she had experienced significant discursive conflict between the ways in which she wanted to produce her life and the movement's teaching that positioned her in subjection to this man's authority: "I have to obey the Man of God." Lynne spoke of this experience in ways that suggested that the imposition of religious authority undermined her agency to the point of feeling the terror and powerlessness of a sexually abused child:

Well, you know, when you end up in bed with a married man, it's like totally against your will, you know, totally against. Like, "This is wrong. This is wrong." I was, you know, just absolutely terrified. As an adult—I was an adult. I was a grown woman. I wasn't a child. When children are, you know, preyed upon, I mean it's, you know, they've got that—they're having the same terror of, "This is wrong. What the hell is happening? How can this happen?"

The sense of wrongness was located for Lynne both in the violation of her will and in her Christian values around marriage and sexual relationships. It left her with a lingering sense of shame, confusion, and disbelief as to how she had ended up in this situation despite her clear preferences and values. "I was just so absolutely frozen in fear and shock and horror that I could not for several months, as I said, comprehend."

Finally, Lynne recalled, she recovered sufficient "power" to tell the leader, "this is wrong, this cannot continue ... no, I can't do this anymore." I asked what had enabled her to do that. Her answer reflected a pattern which became evident in the stories of the three women discussed in the previous chapter. Each of them suggested that it was witnessing the effects of oppressive forms of religious authority on others, particularly on women, that played a significant role in mobilising their agency and resistance. For Lynne also, the power of "no" was

activated not merely out of concern for herself, but “more out of respect and love for his wife, because I was, you know, she was my friend.” The memory of her own experience of betrayal by a friend, as well as her identification with the interests of “womankind,” supported this sense of care for the leader’s spouse and outweighed the call to subject herself to this man, even if he was the Man of God.

The love for his wife was stronger than—the love for womankind I suppose—you know, the sense of sisterhood is like ... You just don’t do that to another woman. You don’t—it’s just not right. It’s just not right, you know.

This was a significant moment of resistance for Lynne, yet the grip of the python was such that she remained in The Fellowship for a further seven years. How did she account for the fact that she stayed for so long, despite the questions she held about some of the teaching of the leaders and this experience of sexual exploitation? She acknowledged that even after her first year in the movement there were times when her “whole body just wanted to run away.” In part what held her there was her hope that she could “change the system from within,” as noted above. Two further reasons emerged during the interview.

The first concerned her positioning in relation to the leader. The second was her marriage to another member of The Fellowship. Alongside her sense of moral wrongness and her love and respect for the leader’s wife, Lynne pointed to a further factor in her refusal to continue to meet the leader’s sexual demands. It was one which held a certain sad irony for her. Despite his exploitative behaviour, she had feelings of love, respect and loyalty toward him, supported by the Man of God discourse, and the bond that had developed through their physical connection. Because of her Christian values, Lynne believed that his actions were placing him in spiritual danger. So she felt a desire “to protect him.”

The reverence and trust was just so—you know, I would have rather died than had any harm come to him. Such had been the conditioning. And also the intimacy which had developed was, you know—basically, I held his life in my hands. I had the power to destroy his marriage. I had the power to destroy his ministry.

The irony in these words was evident to Lynne as she looked back. “I had the power to destroy him . . . he eventually destroyed me.” But her earlier statement, “I would rather have died,” bears striking testimony to the extent to which the

dominant discourses of the movement had positioned her in a place of loyalty, despite all that had happened.

Lynne's marriage was the second factor she identified in accounting for the time it took her to finally leave the movement. "I think had I maybe not met my husband, I might have left a bit sooner." As observed earlier, the patriarchal discourses of marriage promoted within the community positioned her with few rights and a heavy responsibility for her husband's moods. In spite of these difficulties, Lynne did not want to leave him. "I adored him. I loved him. I thought I couldn't cope." Yet in order to see her family outside the movement, she had to go behind her husband's back. "I was becoming dishonest, and I didn't—that wasn't the model Christian woman I wanted to be—that I had to lie to my husband, or omit the truth, to actually say where I've been, to visit my family."

So once again Lynne found herself in a conflicted position constructed by the discourses of separation and submission on one hand and particular Christian and family values she held on the other. Still Lynne hoped that she might somehow be an instrument of change, and that one day this tension would be resolved. Her mother, whom she visited on these covert excursions, was less optimistic. She didn't criticise the movement or tell her daughter to leave, but asked a question which eventually helped Lynne to see things as they were: "Is it going to get any better?"

I did absolutely everything perfect, and I still made him angry. And I realized, "I can't win." And that was the turning point. I—even though I am being the perfect model housewife—I can't win. Because he's still angry at me. And then my mother said, which I—"Is it going to get any better?"

It was not getting better. In fact, Lynne recalled, it was getting "harder and harder and harder to keep up the façade that everything was wonderful." She found herself becoming withdrawn, depressed and even suicidal. She obtained permission to get some medication to help her cope with it all. Rather than helping her to accept things, however, the medication—along with her mother's question—helped her see things in a new way, and finally to act on what was she was seeing, on her own behalf.

The medication actually made *me* volatile, and gave me the anger. Because I'd just completely introverted. I'd completely just—yeah, sort of shut down. And then it actually gave me that kind of backbone, instead of sort of, well—I realised that I

didn't want to live any longer. And I didn't—of course, I couldn't die, because that goes against my beliefs, but I didn't want to keep living. And I'm like—and I couldn't keep living with the situation being just so bizarre. So I managed to get permission to get the medication and of course the medication gave me the aggression to actually just pick up my son and walk out the door and leave. And then I rang my husband and said, "Look, I just need some time to calm down. I just need some time to calm down." He said, well, "Come back now. You have to come back right now." And I said, "I just need some time." "Nope. It's over then." You know? So they didn't want me back—which is quite wonderful really!

That last statement represented Lynne's viewpoint at the time of our interview. But at the time of her leaving, she had not wanted to make a complete break with The Fellowship. "I didn't want to leave, because I'd been so brainwashed into thinking that the world was evil." She had not wanted to leave her husband permanently either, but his response was uncompromising. At the time of the interview they were divorced and he was still in the movement. Lynne had a sense that people in the movement were pleased to be rid of her. She was dangerous because she thought differently and asked questions.

So then they dumped all my stuff on my mother's doorstep. And my mother was just horrified, you know. I think a week later, you know, within a week, they'd just put all my possessions and just completely cleaned, cleaned, you know, just cleansed the house of me. You know, it's like ... which is very nice of them! My mother was absolutely horrified, you know, because she'd known how much I'd given and given and given and given.

I asked Lynne if she had any doubts now about leaving the movement. Her answer was an unequivocal no. But she did speak of legacies of her past involvement.

I mean, the first three months, I was just so afraid to leave the house. I was absolutely. . . . I'm not under my husband's protection. And I can't. I'm just so afraid that God's not going to protect me. You know, there's so much fear like when you come out. Because I didn't want to leave. I just couldn't cope.

There are strong echoes of the covering discourse here, discussed in the previous chapter. There are also reminders of John's post-EB experience. Lynne reflected that "it took four years to really start to feel like a normal human being again."

Lynne added that, five years after leaving, she continued to have nightmares that she was still in the movement, “trapped under their control.”

Lynne told me that she had recently taken the step of being baptised, an action which had powerful symbolism for her. She explained that for her it was a way of repudiating the teaching of the founder of The Fellowship, who had declared that baptism was unnecessary. “And actually it healed me of all that twistedness and to actually see his doctrine for the arrogant, twisted load of crap that it was!” One ongoing challenge for her was the fact that her ex-husband was still taking their children to meetings of The Fellowship.

My son came home just a few weeks ago saying, you know, “Everybody else’s gods are wrong and not right, and we’ve got the true God.” And I’m like, “Mummy and daddy think differently darling, and it’s okay to think differently.”

Knowing that Lynne was attending a church in her area, I asked her how she now thought about religious authority. Would she submit her life again to someone else’s leadership? “On no terms.” She now believed that God spoke to her personally, and also through others, in contradiction to the discourses of privileged knowledge and exclusivity she encountered in The Fellowship. On the morning of our interview, Lynne remarked, the owner of her local dairy, a Hindu man, had spoken to her in a way that encouraged her. The discourses of The Fellowship would have regarded him as subject to the evil of the world, but Lynne felt that God had spoken to her through him. She respected and supported the woman who led the church she was now attending, but “that’s as far as it goes.”

To . . . submit blindly without questioning is—I would like to think I would never be so stupid to . . . go against my, my, my inner gut, and go against my, my intuition, or my heart and my soul.

6.3 Discussion points

First research question

Within Christian communities, how is it that some regimes of power and knowledge can subvert the call to freedom and justice which is pervasive in longstanding streams of Christian tradition?

The discourses of religious authority traced in my analysis of John's and Lynne's narratives support hierarchies of control which are more blatantly espoused than those of the previous chapter. Whether on a local basis, as in Lynne's community, or an international basis, as in John's community, the Man of God is discursively positioned with authority which adherents must obey if they are not to risk exclusion from the community and isolation from friends and family. In these communities discourses of separation from an outside world of corruption and evil influence construct a deep fear of the spiritual consequences of exclusion. There is again a gendered aspect to the hierarchical levels of authority in these communities, and an explicit chain of command: God–Man of God–man–woman. The stories of both participants include accounts of the Man of God exploiting this hierarchy for his own sexual gratification. The extreme nature of such practices verges on domination, recalling Foucault's account of sovereign power, as distinct from modern technologies of power.

In the discussion in Chapter 8, I draw heavily on the results of this chapter in theorising the processes of subjugation which are performed in some religious communities through discursive practices of monologic power relations, surveillance, confession, discipline, and separation.

Second research question

What has enabled some people to resist the practices of religious authority constructed by such regimes?

Despite the coercive regimes of power and knowledge which dominated their communities, both John and Lynne testified to strategies by which they were able to maintain spaces of reserved judgment as to the trustworthiness of all they were taught. They were supported in this by their access to alternative knowledges and contact with people outside their communities. One of the intriguing questions connected with my second research question is how and when people reach a "tipping point," which marks a shift in their relationship to religious authority from ambivalence to resistance. I offer theoretical reflections on this notion of a tipping point in Chapter 8 (section 8.3). Lynne's narrative relates this shift to the cumulative embodied effects of her subjugation. For John, the loss of his marriage and children, due to the disciplinary practices of his community, marked the point at which he decided to step into "the light." Both speak of

continuing to experience the lingering effects of life in their communities for several years after making a final break from their communities, suggesting how deeply they had been inscribed by the dominant discourses of those communities.

Chapter 7:

The discursive construction of call and conflict

There was an issue there that I really had to resolve. And the tension was between feeling the call to love, and knowing that that was part of what the Christian life was really all about, and . . . the commitment to obey the order—the demand for order within the Church. (Martin's story)

This final set of results emerged from the discursive narrative analysis of the transcripts of my interviews with Andy, Sarah and Martin. At the time of these interviews, each of them was, or had been, an ordained Christian minister. That is, they had been theologically trained and formally inducted into their ministry roles by the three different church denominations to which they had belonged. A unique feature of these stories, then, is that the narrators' experiences of religious authority occurred while they themselves were holding such authority.

7.1 Andy's story

Andy was an experienced Christian minister who had led other churches before moving to the particular community which was the main focus of his story. In this large church, which comprised several distinct congregations, he was taken on by the senior minister to look after one of the congregations. His relationship with the senior minister soon became difficult, and he began to feel that the latter's authority was being exercised in abusive ways. What follows explores Andy's account of the values which informed his approach to ministry, the discursive construction of controlling practices which called him and others into a subjugated position, and his efforts to resist these practices by holding on to his own values.

Beginnings: the value of persons

Andy was clear as to his ethical stance in relation to Christian ministry and relationships. This stance was grounded in his understanding of God and of human beings. In this regard, two key ideas were prominent throughout the interview.

First, he valued persons above any other “things,” including ministry goals. The basis of this stance for him was his belief that “to be a human being is to be loved and held precious to God.” Andy saw this valuing of persons as an ethical position to which all Christians were called, and regarded it as subversive of value systems in which people were treated as objects or as means to an end.

The second important idea which informed Andy’s approach to ministry was that it was not about him formulating a plan and forcing it on others. Rather, he saw himself as “the fortunate and surprised recipient of an invitation from God to participate in what [God is] already doing.” His intention in church ministry was therefore not to impose his own agenda on people, but to cooperate with them, and with God, as together they became aware of a sense of direction.

I don't need people to agree with me, and it doesn't matter that they don't. And they don't have to do things my way. You know, there is no sense of that. There's more a kind of sense of attentiveness to the larger influence, if you like, or the larger presence of God, shaping and moulding us together and journeying with us, you know? I don't have—you don't have to have things your way. And it's more important to value people than get your own way.

When these values are upheld, Andy suggested, it “enlarges life.” When they are not, it “diminishes life, squeezes life away.” This translated, for him, into exercising leadership with the intention of being “facilitative and relational.”

A corollary of these values was that Andy approached relationships with the hope that he too would be respected as a person, rather than being used as a thing. That hope was not fulfilled under the leadership of the senior minister, and Andy identified this as the primary factor in the deep pain he experienced in that relationship.

The discursive construction of success and entitlement

The congregation for which Andy was given responsibility was composed primarily of older people, and was not growing. He felt that the brief given to him by the senior minister was, in effect, to “kind of let it collapse and go away.” Far from dying, however, this congregation trebled in size during the first two years of his involvement. At that point, it seemed to Andy, the senior minister began to reassert his authority over this congregation and to “sideline” him. On several occasions he was reminded by this man that “he was my boss.” In his facilitative

style, Andy had developed a leadership team from within this congregation. But now the senior pastor began to take over the roles of preaching or leading worship at some of the services, sometimes without prior warning.

I asked Andy how he had made meaning of the senior minister's efforts to take over control. His answer highlighted two areas of discourse which he believed were operative in this man's actions. The first concerned ideas about leadership, while the second was anchored in the way their national denomination equated success with achieving numerical growth in its constituent churches. Andy remarked that their denomination was at that time "very busy extolling the virtues of church leaders who were producing growth." A successful church was a growing church, and a successful leader was one who could achieve such growth. In his view, these notions of success strongly informed the senior minister's approach to leadership. They displaced other concerns, such as respect for others as persons, and created a pressure, not just to be successful, but also to be seen to be successful. Andy later discovered that when his own congregation began to grow, the senior minister had gone "off to conferences and everything, telling everybody what a great job *he* was doing. So he was taking the credit for this and using it to add to his lustre."

The extent to which the senior minister had been recruited by these discourses of church growth and successful leadership became evident to Andy in other ways also. When growth did not happen in the way he hoped, for example, he had a tendency to see it as the fault of the people, because they were failing to follow his vision.

The fact is, the congregation never grew under him. In fact it declined steadily right throughout his ministry. And he had two ways of dealing with that. One was that when it was obvious that that was happening, it was happening because the rest of us weren't cooperating with his plans. Right? Because if only we'd seen it his way, and only we'd done exactly what he wanted, then the results would have been assured.

In Andy's view, the pressure to be seen to be growing, numerically, was also reflected in his leader's handling of attendance figures.

But the other thing was, he tended to deceive himself too. So when he did things like, you know, counting how many people were at church, he would often count people twice . . . and he would include, say, kids who were just at Sunday school in

the counts. . . . So there was an element of deception there, which I don't think was done for anybody but himself.

Andy further speculated that the senior minister's approach to leadership was influenced by "American high profile Pentecostal type leaders," who exercised "supreme authority" over their communities. This was not, Andy suspected, because he agreed with their theology, but because it appeared to get the results that mattered in the current denominational climate. These high powered leaders were renowned for growing large, "successful" churches. This way of thinking seemed to bring forward a bullying style of leadership in the senior minister.

So he used to, when he would come and take over the services, he would stand in front of the church there, and he would harangue the people—abuse them for not all sitting down the front, abuse them for not giving enough to the church, abuse them for not attending if they knew he was preaching.

Andy generously acknowledged that in all of this, this man probably "genuinely believed he was doing this for God, and he was doing the best thing." It was as though he saw himself as God's "local CEO." This notion of divinely delegated authority also supported a sense of entitlement on the senior minister's part—an idea that has appeared in most of the interviews considered so far.

I'm sure he felt that somehow or other, that there—along with the job—there was an entitlement to treat people the way he did, you know? A God-given entitlement to treat people that way. Almost a failure to respect him was a failure to respect God.

This cluster of ideas about leadership also supported a utilitarian view of people. This was evident in the senior minister's leadership practices, according to which people were "a thing to be used and cast off." Utilitarian practices stood in marked contrast to the values which supported Andy's own view of persons as "loved" and "precious," and to his "facilitative and relational" approach to ministry.

Because he was the leader, and because he had a job to do, he was entitled to do it his way. And I'm sure he saw us all as fundamentally extensions of himself. You know. We were just basically resources, and it was basically all about him.

The discourses of leadership within which the senior minister operated seemed to produce a sense of entitlement to unquestioning submission from his church members, his human “resources.” Anything that stood in way of this position of unquestioned authority was “dealt to.” Andy discovered that “shortly after he arrived at the church he had the constitution suspended, so he disenfranchised the whole congregation.” The expectation of submission in turn supported a domineering leadership style which Andy and others experienced as very intimidating.

He used to have regular staff meetings with me, and I—as he did with all the staff—and the meetings were set up to intimidate. What he would do—he had a low couch in his office—he would bring you in and sit you on the low couch. Then he would sit in a higher chair, in his big executive chair, high back on wheels and he would wheel that across so it blocked the door. Right? And he would sit with his back to the door, up against the door, so you couldn't get out, and then he would apply the full force of a very, very strong personality to you. Intimidating, you know? You felt like you were being interrogated by the Gestapo really. And either you caved in and just became a—I don't know what you would become really—but it was very threatening. And even I, I mean, I sat there and I found it frightening. Almost—you almost felt you were right on the edge of physical violence.

Andy related what happened when the senior minister was challenged over something by a staff member. The senior minister threatened to fire the person from his job in the church, but on this occasion the leadership team stood up to him, and the staff member was able to keep his job. Afterwards the senior minister said to Andy and the others involved, “No pastor should ever have to put up with what you people have done to me.” A discourse of religious leadership which connects the pastoral role with entitlement to power and submission speaks through these words of frustration.

In contrast, the discourses of leadership and relationship which informed Andy's approach to ministry invited a sense of utter disbelief that a pastor could exercise their role in such a domineering and intimidating fashion. His narrative was punctuated with phrases such as “Can you believe this?” and “Hard to believe!” He described his attempt to express some of his concerns about the senior minister to people in the wider denomination, and being met by disbelief

and suspicion that he was “overstating and exaggerating” the case. “Because, after all, no pastor would ever behave like this.”

The senior minister, Andy recalled, took steps to ensure that the more “over the top” aspects of his behaviour were not visible, except to those who were directly involved. This suggests that he also may have been influenced by the idea that “no pastor would ever behave like this.” But this knowledge was apparently trumped by the discourses of “supreme authority” and success as church growth, which were dominant in his approach to leadership. The tension between these conflicting approaches to pastoral leadership was evident in the senior minister’s demands that the content of certain meetings be kept confidential. This silence enabled him act on his own sense of entitlement to exercise supreme authority, without raising concerns among the wider church population. For Andy, this was a pattern which had unfortunate parallels with the secrecy that often surrounds situations of “abuse.”

[He] used to regularly demand silence from the people that he was in charge of. You know, “This will just be between you and I.” . . . Secrecy—it’s a characteristic of abuse. And again, always suppressing the truth, and usually with threats. Anyway, I just took no notice of that. So I quite openly talked to the rest of my team about what was going on. Well afterwards, honestly, I’m sure if [he] could have used physical violence on me, he would’ve. He took me aside and I got a tirade of abuse from him, because I’d broken his demand for silence.

Damage and rage, resistance and resignation

For over two years Andy persevered in this difficult working relationship. Frequently during the interview he spoke of the effects of this period on him, and on others, in terms of “damage.” He felt a deep pastoral concern regarding the impact of the senior minister’s utilitarian approach to people, as these excerpts show:

And if you don't go along with that or support him, and he can't move you around just like pieces on a chessboard, then you're obstructive and useless and you just get dealt with in whatever way. . . . So some people got seriously damaged by it.

He has no compunction about doing damage to other people. You know. Whatever it takes to protect himself, to shore up his position, he will do it. And he feels

perfectly justified, because, after all, it's his rightful station in life. Almost a mandate from God I think.

Somehow or other, there was just all these damaged people who were just kind of huddling together for protection really.

As Andy spoke, it was clear that he counted himself among those who had suffered this “damage.” For him, the effects of being intimidated and coerced were felt most acutely in connection with his own values.

And I think some of the—some of the kind of damage must have been related to the fact that I like good relationships with people. And so, I think it worked—it worked on my weakness. So there was this—always this kind of feeling, “If I give in to him, maybe he will be nice to me.”

As noted already, Andy held a strong ethical position regarding the value of persons, as people loved by God, and the hope of mutual respect informed his approach to relationships. Here he speaks of this as a “weakness” when it came to his relationship with the senior minister. He knew that his desire to improve relationship was calling him into a subordinate position in order to accommodate the other's desire for dominance. Yet alongside the value he placed on “good relationships,” Andy also valued honesty and integrity. So if he was unfairly criticised by the senior minister, he faced a choice between accepting blame in order to avoid conflict, or holding his ground and facing further threats and intimidation.

Looking back on it, I felt blamed not for only whatever it was he had felt I'd done, but also condemned for my unwillingness to face the truth about my behaviour. Right? So always he's in a good position, always you're diminished.

Andy contrasted this situation with his experience in another church, where the congregation had decided they didn't like his approach to pastoral ministry and pressured him to move on. In that case, he recalled, he “didn't feel damaged by what happened there,” painful though it had been. What was different? In that situation, Andy reflected, “I was a person. . . . And so I didn't feel kind of ... just a thing to be used and cast off.” So “damage” for him was to be treated as less than a person, which struck at the heart of his view of what it meant to be human.

Andy reflected on this kind of damage again later in the interview, connecting it this time with feelings of having been “abused.”

I felt damaged, and I can remember often thinking, “This is doing me far more damage than anything that ever happened at [the earlier church]”. You know? The interior damage. The sense of being diminished and devalued as a human being. . . . That’s what makes me feel abused. So over and over again, messages kept coming to me, you know: “You’re of no worth, you’re of no account. Your only—your only value is in how your life serves my purposes.”

One way in which Andy tried to make meaning of what was happening—and so to mitigate the damage—was through psychological discourses of insecurity, self-image, self-protection and personality type.

I think a lot of this is shoring up this false self-image that he has, and protecting it. And I think that’s why some of the really aggressive stuff occurs, because he needs to protect himself. And instead of protecting himself from people, he’s really protecting himself from the truth. . . . So initially we tried to deal with that, and the way we did it was, I tried to help them understand what kind of person we were dealing with. . . . So with them all understanding that, I thought it might help us to know how he’s functioning, why he is dealing with us the way he is, and maybe that would create an environment where we can forgive him that.

That “did work for a while,” Andy recalled, but his own and others’ ongoing experiences of being positioned by the senior minister as “serviceable others” (Sampson, 1993), within his project of achieving success, produced in him “a mounting anger” and “a growing sense of outrage.”

Really angry about how he was treating other people. So, you know, there was the sense of personal outrage that was growing for me. So after two years of working for him I was really feeling that quite strongly, as were the rest of the team.

I have mentioned already that Andy’s leadership team stood up to the senior minister over his intention to dismiss a staff member. There was also a growing sense of dissatisfaction among church members with his authoritarian style of leadership, and a desire to “hold him to account.” One person wanted to take the senior minister to court, but Andy refused to be called into a form of resistance which he considered contrary to his values.

I just wouldn't go along with that. I just said, "Look, no matter what he's doing, there is—there is no excuse for us behaving the same way as him." You know? "Yes, maybe he can do damage to us, but for us to retaliate in kind is to be part of the same system that we are deploring in him. We're not going to do it."

While he refused retaliatory action, Andy was prepared to support another staff member who claimed that he been made redundant by the senior minister in circumstances which amounted to constructive dismissal. The case was strong, and the latter agreed to a generous redundancy package. But to guard his own reputation as a leader, the senior minister demanded that a secrecy clause be signed. Andy opposed this, and it was agreed that the redundancy would be paid with no secrecy clause.

I think I was just wanting to say, "Look, I'm sick and tired of this. Right? And I'm not playing these abusive games anymore. You're gonna have to face up to what you do. Right? Right. And other people are going to see it. You are going to have to have some eyes looking at you." . . . I was so sick of it. I was so sick of the way he was treating people. You know, and I mean, it takes a lot to get me going, but I think I just got angry, and said, "Right, this is it. This guy is not going any further." And then after that, I resigned my position too. I said, "I'm not staying doing this. You know. I'm sick of playing this game, why do I need all this stress?"

Andy's account of his resistance shows the values he held, of respect and care for people, finally overriding other concerns as his anger "got [him] going." He could no longer tolerate what he saw as "abusive games," including the senior minister's secrecy and "the way he was treating people." The language is agentic (repeated first person pronoun), and suggests a turning of the tables, in which the senior minister would now be on the receiving end of Andy's decisions: "I'm not playing . . . You're gonna have to . . . You are going to have . . . This guy is not going any further . . . I'm not staying . . ."

At the same time, Andy's language acknowledges the toll that all of this had taken on him, as in his references to being "sick" or "sick and tired" of it all, and to "all this stress." After resigning his position, he and his wife felt unable to leave the church. This too was a reflection of his care for people: "I could not desert those people." But looking back he also saw something "scary" about their inability to leave, and connected their paralysis with the legacy of "damage."

We had this pool of abused people and we're all in this together. It's kind of—nobody flees from the prison camp, because we can't live with ourselves for deserting our comrades. You know? And so he's got us wound in the web. And I think the serious damage to me was really starting at that point, by then, because I'd lost the ability to resist. Somehow or other, there was just all these damaged people, who were just kind of huddling together for protection really.

After recalling this difficult time, Andy's tone brightened as he described how this rather grim "prison camp" narrative was interrupted unexpectedly by a story of hope. There was joy in his telling of this story, as the conversation shifted from the oppressive effects of the discourses of success to a story of liberation which was anchored in the biblical tradition of freedom and justice. Andy explained that due to daylight saving he had mistakenly arrived at church an hour early, so he took the time to pray in the empty building in silence. As he did so, he recalled the biblical story of the exodus, when Moses led the people of Israel out of their slavery in Egypt. In echoes of that narrative, Andy had a sense that God had "heard the pain of the people" and that "there was an exodus coming." The effect of this experience was to reassure him that they were "not abandoned" and to release him from the pressure of trying to "do something" to fix the situation.

The promised "exodus" came just as unexpectedly. It was Easter, and Andy felt that his own church was not celebrating this important festival in a way that was meaningful for him. He and his wife therefore attended an Easter service at another church, of another Christian denomination. The experience of difference was so positive that they "just stayed."

We never went back. We never went back. It was just such a relief to be somewhere where they hadn't lost the plot!

Andy reflected that "just that little break said to us, it was neither helping nor hindering the people by us staying. To stay wouldn't—it didn't actually matter as much as we'd believed it did." Looking back, he found himself surprised by the extent to which he had allowed himself to be subjugated by the practices of authority represented by the senior minister, despite knowing at the time that they were unacceptable. He speculated that if he found himself in such a situation again, he would respond differently.

I would probably stick it out for a while to see if it was really happening, but I think I would just say, “There is absolutely no point in fighting this, because to fight it makes it stronger.” . . . I think would just distance myself, and just say, “No, we’re not going here again. We’re moving.”

By the time of our interview, Andy had been recognised as a minister in his new denomination and was enjoying the opportunity to fulfil that role in ways that enacted his values. He spoke positively of the checks and balances that operated in this church system with respect to ministerial authority.

So everybody has a point where they have to front up with their ministry for scrutiny by somebody else. And I think that is, to me, that’s fairly helpful. You don’t get, you don’t get that kind of free from accountability autonomy that you— certainly we saw with [the senior minister].

Summary

Andy gave an account of being positioned by two very different discourses of religious leadership. On the one hand, the ethical values which he had taken up prior to these experiences positioned him with a view of each human being, including himself, as loved by God and worthy of respect. On other hand, dominant discourses of growth and success within his church denomination acted on him through his senior minister, demanding submission to the latter’s authoritarian leadership style, and suggesting to him a diminished, utilitarian view of his identity and worth. Andy’s own values, together with certain psychological understandings of his leader’s behaviour, supported him in resisting these damaging practices of authority on behalf of himself and others. They also invited a non-retaliatory approach to this resistance, which for a time left him uncertain as to how to effect any lasting change in the situation. Andy’s encounter with a story of God’s care and liberating intervention offered him the opportunity to rehearse an alternative, hopeful narrative, and prepared the way for his eventual “exodus.”

7.2 Sarah’s story

In all of the stories considered so far, the focus has been on forms of religious authority exercised by appointed church leaders. Sarah’s account is different, in that it tells the story of a person who ostensibly held the highest position of authority within her religious community being called into a position of

conformity by influential lay members of that community. (Lay members are those who have not been ordained into official ministry roles within the church.) The force of this position call was such that Sarah felt unable to fulfil her ministry in this church and eventually resigned her position.

While this aspect of Sarah's story is distinctive within the scope of this study, it is far from exceptional in the context of power relations within Christian churches. In Andy's account, for example, mention was made of an earlier experience of having effectively been fired by a former congregation. Figures for the New Zealand scene are not available, but research in the United States suggests that in that context as many as "one-fourth of all pastors have been forced out of at least one parish" (Lebacqz et al., 2000, p. 148). It is fitting, therefore, to have at least one account of such an experience in this study.

It would be an oversimplification to suggest that Sarah had no influence or agency in her situation. She was the minister, and it was in part the exercise of her authority as the leader of the church which drew opposition from a sector of the congregation. As each of the stories in this chapter demonstrates in different ways, a leadership position can become a site of discursive conflict. Such conflict is produced when leaders and those they relate to are positioned within different discourses and hold different values. Each of the participants in this chapter also recalled being positioned in conflicting ways by the discourses which he or she had taken up as a leader. In Sarah's case, the value she placed on collaboration and consultation vied with her commitment to making ethical decisions for the good of the community as a whole. The latter commitment produced a decision which had adverse effects for one member of the community.

In Chapter 4, I reflected on the way in which narratives may be performed differently by the same narrator over time, and that very different accounts of the same events might be given by those involved. I noted the dangers for myself as a researcher of presenting the results of my analysis in ways that implied judgment or cast people in the roles of heroes or villains. Sarah's story particularly highlights the importance of maintaining that position. It is conceivable that had I interviewed the person affected by her decision, I might have heard an account of how they were called into a subjected position by Sarah's practice of religious authority. The analysis which follows seeks to recognise these complexities, while

paying particular attention to Sarah's account of the ways in which discourses of conservatism ultimately asserted their dominance at her expense.

Hopeful beginnings: "our priority is for people"

Sarah was appointed as the new minister to a church in which she felt hopeful of exercising her ministry gifts in a way that would benefit the church and its engagement with the surrounding community. The interview process had gone well and initially she sensed "a lot of enthusiasm" for her arrival. At that interview she had explained the value she placed on exercising leadership collaboratively, rather than hierarchically. This view of authority was located in her understanding of the Christian gospel.

Right from my interview I presented myself as somebody who wanted to be in a more flat style of leadership, so that the authority that I had would be demonstrated by gathering a team of people around me. And that, you know, that was the way I felt that, you know, gospel ministry was meant to happen.

Sarah held that the church's "priority is for people, and not on buildings." She also hoped to use her gifts to offer services that were "relevant and attractive" to people in the wider community. She felt that these values had been affirmed during her interview, and that she had been given "a clear mandate . . . that this church had a strong recognition of ministry into the community and wanted to grow in various areas."

The disciplinary power of the status quo and its effects

As Sarah recalled this hopeful beginning, she named an aspect of the situation which, on reflection, she "didn't think about . . . enough" at the time. The previous minister had been in the church for quite a few years, and had left only a few weeks before she began her role. With hindsight, Sarah speculated that a number of people felt a sense of allegiance to the previous minister. She remembered receiving an impression that people regarded her as being "so different" from her predecessor. His approach to ministry, she acknowledged, had probably been "quite different" to hers. With this backward look, Sarah realised that some church members may have been "grieving in their own different ways."

The significance of these reflections for Sarah was connected with the strength of some people's response to what she regarded as "small amounts of change."

The other thing that I wasn't really surprised about, because it exists in many, many churches—that people don't like change. But it was strong, very strong in this church, so that even very small amounts of change—I mean, it's impossible not to change, because you never know exactly how a previous person has operated and you can't be that person. . . . But there was strong reactions to small amounts of change, and so this was another kind of power that I didn't realise was so strong until later on.

At her first meeting with the church council (consisting of elected representatives of the congregation) Sarah encountered early indications of this other "kind of power." One member of the council, a man who held an important position in the church, greeted her with the words, "Oh, it's a woman!" While Sarah did not regard this as an insult at the time, she viewed it afterward as "very rude," and a "smart Alec thing to do" in front of the other church council members. She also speculated, at the time of our interview, that through his apparent jokiness this man was making a statement regarding a significant change to the status quo, in that a woman was now leading the church.

Sarah's reading of this encounter fits with what followed. At the same meeting, some of the council members explained to her that there were "issues" in the church which had preceded her arrival. These had not been mentioned during the appointment process. The issues centred on a group of people who, Sarah soon came to realise, exerted considerable influence in the church.

There was an element of power which was present in the church, which was making itself known from an early stage, so that I would—I recognised it as a warning to me that, you know, I might think I am the [minister], but ultimately you are almost a figurehead.

Beyond being a woman in leadership, Sarah pinpointed her emphasis on helping the church "grow in various areas," including its "ministry into the community," as a departure from past patterns of church life. Many people embraced these changes, she recalled, and "very freely accepted me as being different." But through the actions of one man in particular, and others whom he had "gathered

around him,” she experienced a disciplinary power (my words) that seemed intent on undermining her authority and protecting interests vested in the status quo.

This power element was seeking to tell me that that wasn’t the ministry of this church. That the role of the church is to maintain, well, not only buildings, but maintain a certain status quo. But status quo so that the agenda of these particular people would be adhered to.

It was generally through church council members that Sarah became aware of “concerns” that people were feeling, although it was never clear how widespread such concerns were. “Often it was hard to determine whether it was their personal concerns or their representative concerns.” As we talked about the sorts of issues that people would raise—such as changes to the form of the service—Sarah came to the conclusion that in themselves they were “irrelevant.” She felt no strong emotion in telling me about them, she said. But there was emotion in her voice as she explained that what had affected her so significantly was something “present and looming just below the surface. . . . Secretive, aggressive, and critical in a very nasty way.”

Sarah recalled being in other churches where making changes had been difficult, but in those situations it had been possible to “talk about them fairly and recognise maybe that, you know, you need to compromise, or you come to some level ground.” This “level ground” approach accorded with her preference for a “flat style of leadership.” But in her new context there were forces at work which made no room for compromise.

In the way that this power operated there was no discussion, and where I and others would be assertive it would be shot down and criticised.

With the help of an external supervisor, Sarah tried to sift what was affecting her “personally” from what was affecting her “professionally.” The personal effects were evident in her account of one church council meeting and its aftermath. She recalled that this meeting had been “quite antagonistic and undermining.” To help her unwind afterward she decided to watch a DVD and chose *Gandhi*. As she watched the movie, Sarah found herself identifying with Ghandi’s experience, including his “persecutions.”

Yeah—it was a very empowering experience, because I guess it helped me to recognise and value my ministry and my calling and that the things I felt strongly

about. Things which I felt were—I believe *are*—fundamental and basic to the ministry of the church. But I was having to fight for these things.

Even more importantly, the resonance she experienced with this narrative helped her to see how the opposition she was experiencing was affecting her sense of personhood and her own goodness.

I can remember saying to myself out loud—what was it—something like, “These things happened to Gandhi and he was a good person.” I realised—well no, I realise now—that what was happening to me was present strongly, much more strongly than I realised.

This emerging awareness prompted Sarah to make a greater effort to recognise and protect herself from the kind of criticism which had the potential to sabotage her sense of personhood, as opposed to criticism which related to specific aspects of her professional role. She acknowledged that this was hard to do in practice, partly because of religious discourses which collapse the distinction between private and vocational aspects of identity, and which regard sacrifice as inherent to the ministry vocation.

I think particularly with this work that we do, which involves a calling of who we are integrally. . . . Because in my ministry training formation there was always an awareness that not this is not a job . . . that we are trained to be ourselves in ministries, sacrificial ministry.

The struggle for authority and its discursive construction

I asked Sarah what ideas seemed to be at work on behalf of the status quo “power element.” She named “tradition,” elaborating this as, “This is the only way. This is what church is about.” The status quo group claimed to speak on behalf of “older members” and what was “best for them.” But Sarah’s sense was that those who made these claims primarily represented “a pervading demonstration of authority.” So once again, the issue was power, and the right to exercise authority in the church, rather than any specific action on Sarah’s part. Looking back, she concluded that while there were people on the church council that supported her, they too “had been having to deal with this stuff for such a long time that they were tired.” While they and she “authority on paper in reality there was no authority because it wasn’t allowed.”

Sarah named a further dynamic which seemed to be at work in this struggle for authority—one which played a significant role in events which resulted in her resignation. She discovered that the man who had greeted her with “Oh, it’s a woman!” was a member of an organisation which engaged in spiritual practices about which she felt some concern. Given this man’s important role in the church, Sarah felt a double concern—for his spiritual welfare, and for that of the church. Subsequently she became aware of other members of the church who also belonged to this organisation, including a key person in the status quo group. It seemed to her that the “demonstration of authority” with which she was contending was somehow supported by this common involvement outside of the church.

It was at this point that the discursive conflict between the value she placed on exercising a “flat style of leadership” on the one hand, and her sense of ethical responsibility to act decisively for the good of the community on the other hand, became acute for Sarah. She asked the man if he felt that his allegiance to this organisation in any way “compromised his Christian faith.” At this point, she recalled, he “became extremely defensive.” Sarah then told him that she “had a problem” with him continuing to hold an important role in the church if he was to continue with the other organisation. With hindsight, she reflected, she would have approached this conversation differently, but at the time of our interview she remained convinced that the man did need to choose between allegiances. Supporting this conviction was a view of ministry which produced a sense of accountability to something beyond herself: “I was acting out the sense that this was the right thing to do and that I had more than me behind me.”

I realise now that I should have had somebody with me, and that I should have given him notice or warning that I was going to say something like that to him. But it was one of those things that happened. I don’t regret it and I was sure enough of my grounds. Okay, so he left the church. He went home and wrote a letter saying that he was resigning from the church, leaving the church, and something like, “I can’t be in a church where this woman is the [minister],” or something like that.

As a consequence, Sarah was asked by the church council to explain her actions. Her perspective was, “I felt I was drawing on my calling, my responsibility and leadership, and that I had acted out of that.” Only a minority of church council members supported her action, and the “primary support went to this power

element.” Not long after this, she was visited by a delegation of four church members who were not on the church council.

I was told that I was going to be—he was going to read out a list of—two lists—one of how things were before I came, and the other list was how things are now ... I was given a seven page document of their criticisms of me. . . . And at the end it said I was being given, I don’t know, to a particular time to respond to this matter. So anyway they went and I can remember I had this—a very overwhelming sense that something enormous had happened.

Sarah felt that while very few of the criticisms were justified, the authority of her role had been weakened by this document. She felt personally attacked. “Everything about me and my calling has been criticised on paper.” She did not doubt her ministry calling, or regret her actions, she recalled, but her sense of identity and her ability to live out her calling had been undermined.

Over ensuing weeks she spoke with the person in the wider church structure to whom she was ultimately accountable, and he expressed his support for her. Nonetheless, she wrestled with the question of whether she could continue to function as the minister in the church in light of what had happened. She did not want to leave “in weakness,” and wrestled with a way to make a decision that she could be at peace with.

Eventually what I settled on was that there were power issues that had been evident in the church for a long time, and that I believed these issues needed to be sorted to—for a person in a [minister’s] role to be able to function. And so I made a statement to that effect which I read at the AGM. . . . So when I read that letter of resignation out to the AGM, I did this supported by this resolve.

At this same AGM a new church council was voted in, and “a lot of nominations came in from this power sector,” all of whom were elected. The interests bound up in maintaining the status quo seemed set to prevail.

I asked Sarah what she saw as the source of the “resolve” that had supported her through all of these difficulties. She spoke of certain key texts from the Bible which informed her approach to ministry, and at the root of these identified an “awareness of justice.”

And I think it is quite interesting now to look at that in the light of everything we have talked about. Because my desire was to see justice done in other people’s

lives, but what I was struggling with was injustices being done to me. And I was never completely broken through all of this. I was deeply wounded, but I wasn't broken the way I have seen other people.

At the time of our interview Sarah had not taken up another position as a minister. Understandably, she felt "cautious about getting involved in church leadership." In the meantime, she was developing her capacity to offer professional support to others in ministry, drawing on her heightened awareness of injustices and abuses of power which occur in church contexts.

7.3 Martin's story

The final account to be considered in this chapter belongs to Martin, whose life was defined for more than thirty years by his vocation as a Roman Catholic priest. That vocation was challenged when he found himself having to choose between the call he had felt to priesthood and what he described as "the call to love." As a priest, Martin had held a privileged position of authority within the church communities he served, but this in itself was not the primary focus of our interview. His account of resistance rather concerned the discourses and practices of authority of the Roman Catholic Church, from which his authority as a priest had derived. This centuries-old, powerful, worldwide religious system had ordained him into the priestly vocation, rigidly prescribed the boundaries of his life as a priest, and finally defined his identity as a person whose ministry was no longer valid.

That's really, I suppose, the heart of my story and the position that brought me into conflict with the Church that had formed so much part of my life, and with which I'd never had such a crisis before.

The discursive construction of priesthood: "another Christ"

Martin grew up in a Roman Catholic family within which the discourses supporting the sacred power and position of priesthood had produced a huge sense of esteem for this as a possible vocation: "it was a very easy context for me in which to feel that this was a useful thing to do with my life." Immediately on leaving school, at sixteen, Martin entered the seminary and began studying, "with a great sense of feeling that I was in the right place." Within his Roman Catholic

context, the discourses which supported the notion of priesthood constructed it as more than simply one vocation among others. To be ordained as a priest implied the creation of a new kind of relationship between himself and Christ, and accordingly a new identity which was inscribed in his very being.

Priesthood was presented to me as a sacrament that involved an ontological change. We talked about the priest being “another Christ”—an *alter Christus*. And the call to priesthood was seen as perhaps the closest way that a Catholic male could follow the Christian vocation.

Martin recalled many rewarding aspects of the thirty years of priestly ministry which had followed his ordination. He had enjoyed the company of other priests and his relationships with the communities of people he served. Being a priest had entailed a commitment to celibacy, but, at that time, he hadn't seen this “as being in any way difficult.” While not having had a family of his own, he had enjoyed many opportunities in his pastoral role to share in a very close way with families the ups and downs of their everyday lives. For much of this time, Martin reflected, he had been content: “I suppose I never imagined being anywhere else.”

The discourses of celibacy revisited

A number of factors conspired in Martin's experience to trouble his acceptance of the dominant discourses of celibacy within the Church. One influence in the early years of his priesthood was the new thinking that emerged from the Second Vatican Council, which began in the early 1960s.

There was a great sense of feeling that something new was emerging from that meeting of bishops that took place over six years in Rome, and the theological experts, the *periti*, that were with them. . . . There were all sorts of new insights filtering through.

One of these new insights concerned marriage. Prior to this major ecclesiastical rethink, the vocation of marriage had been regarded, Martin suggested, as “a kind of poor third” after priesthood and monastic life. Following the Second Vatican Council, the Church accepted that marriage too was “a way of people growing in grace,” and “an opportunity for people to discover God in the centre of their lives and their loving.” This recognition lessened the gulf between married life and the

privileged spiritual status of celibate callings which had characterised the earlier teaching of the Church.

For Martin, this discursive shift in the church's view of marriage was accompanied by the experience of watching couples "growing in their own love for each other" and for their children. He observed what he had considered to be some of the privileged functions of priesthood being exercised in the context of love relationships—in "the opportunities they had for experiencing things like forgiveness and reconciliation in a real life way." At the same time, as he reached his fifties, he saw first-hand "how isolated and lonely and irascible" some of the older priests were becoming.

I could see there was a distinction between priests who lived within the supportive environment of a religious community—vowed as they were to celibacy, to chastity, obedience and poverty, finding great satisfaction from being part of that community—there was a difference between that and the increasing—what I saw to be—the increasing isolation of diocesan priests. . . . So, I suppose, for all sorts of reasons, at all sorts of levels, I became less convinced that priesthood and celibacy had to go together.

These perceptions and questions coincided, Martin recalled, with the "experience of drawing close to the woman who's now my wife, and developing a love myself which responded to hers for me." (I will refer to this person as Anna). Now, alongside his call to priesthood, he felt a new "call to love," and this became for him part of a call to embrace a wider experience of what it meant to be human: "to grow as a whole person." Despite its more positive view of marriage, however, the Church's theology of priesthood allowed no possibility of these calls being worked out at the same time. Martin was therefore faced with the "huge dilemma" of having to choose between them.

The discursive construction of Martin's dilemma and its effects

For Martin, this forced choice between priesthood and a desire to give and receive sexual love was a crisis of identity which called into question the whole purpose and vision of his life. His Church referred to the process of being released from the priesthood and from commitment to celibacy as "laicisation." The theology which understood priestly ordination as inscribing a permanent ontological

change constructed a situation in which release from this calling depended on identifying a flaw in the original path to ordination.

The process of laicisation itself is a demeaning one. It meant, in effect, that I had to really agree to say that I should never have been ordained; that there was something deficient either about my calling, or my discernment, or my maturity or my spiritual life—all of those things.

The necessity of following this “demeaning” procedure, should he decide to choose love over priesthood, forced Martin to re-evaluate the earlier experiences which had led him into the priesthood. He reflected on the fact that his whole education had taken place in single-sex schools, where the teachers were celibate Marist brothers. He had entered the seminary at sixteen years of age and was trained by celibate priests.

I mean, in terms of personal growth and psychosexual maturity, I probably was very green. And there were issues that I had to agree to which probably were in some ways inadequate. But then, I’d say probably some of the seminary staff who asked me the questions at the time were in some ways incomplete as people too.

Nothing had been modelled to help or prepare him to embrace human sexuality as an integral aspect of relational personhood. Moreover, he had been granted special permission (from Rome) to be ordained at twenty two years of age. This was well below the usual minimum age and, from Martin’s point of view, pre-empted an informed decision between celibacy and sexual relationship. If there were deficiencies, he concluded, they had been as much in the structures and systems of the Church as in his own sense of call.

The theology of priesthood meant that there was far more at stake for Martin than re-evaluating his call, as people in other vocations might consider a career change. If, according to the dominant discourse of the Church, ordination was supposed to have inscribed him permanently with a new identity as “another Christ,” what did it mean for this status to be revoked? The laicisation pathway offered him no positive way to think about this question.

For someone who felt, who thought, that his faith was secure and that his spirituality was well developed, to suddenly find that I was being faced with having to step back from that close identification with the Christ of the Church—to say that this ontological relationship that had been established through ordination was

going to—I was going to have to surrender that—left me in something of a spiritual wilderness, really.

It took Martin more than a year to come his decision to seek laicisation. The process of wrestling with that decision, given its consequences, led him into a “black hole of depression” where not only his ministry but his faith, his spiritual identity and his sense of belonging were in doubt.

I went into a kind of a spiritual black hole, of not knowing quite where I belonged. After years of thinking I was on close terms with God, I suddenly thought—you know, people used to ask me to bless them, to pray for them—that maybe I’ve lost contact with the God that I thought I was on such good terms with.

He was conscious, too, of making choices which seemed to dishonour the values of his family and the trust placed in him by the communities which he had served.

Am I turning my back on not just my own calling but on the community that I’ve been called—that I felt called to serve? How will the people that I’ve ministered to feel? What about the people whose marriages I’ve helped to celebrate, will they feel that the ground has been knocked from under their own lives and commitment? Anticipating the reaction of family was a big question. . . . My own family, my siblings—my sister and my two brothers—but especially my mother, who is still alive and who was, for better or worse, very heartened and affirmed by the fact that she had a son who was a priest.

For the first time in his life, and because of a desire to love and be loved, Martin recalled, he found himself at odds with the Church which he also loved and served. The discourses of priesthood and celibacy left him no other place to stand. In fact, the discourses and practices which had been central to the construction of his identity for more than thirty years now positioned him with a sense that to embrace an experience of love, which included the expression of his sexuality, was somehow wrong.

One of the terrible things about the bind I found myself in was feeling called to love in this new way and feeling that, as a priest, this was wrong or I shouldn’t be doing this.

On the other side of his dilemma, Martin was anxious not to abuse the love being shown to him by Anna by entering into relationship while still being unable to contemplate the surrender of his priesthood. “One of the fears that I had was that I

was in danger of abusing Anna's love for me in drawing close to her, but saying, you know, we can't go anywhere with this."

The effect of this discursive vice-grip on Martin was "a kind of paralysis." He found a temporary solution by negotiating permission from his bishop to relinquish his parish in a way that would give him space and time to think through his decision.

I remember saying I'd reached a point where I could say that no priest can proclaim the Gospel with a divided heart. There was an issue there that I really had to resolve. And the tension was between feeling the call to love, and knowing that that was part of what the Christian life was really all about, and the commitment to obey the order—the demand for order within the Church.

While acknowledging the importance for the Church of having "order," Martin looked back in our interview on this painful period of paralysis with disappointment that the Church's discourses of priesthood and sexuality had not allowed, and still did not allow, space for the coexistence of the two goods between which he was forced to choose.

And when I think about it, I suppose I have to say that I'm resentful there, for being put in that position of having to deny and surrender so much of what was good in order to make another choice which was also good.

Deconstructing the binary and reimagining vocation

Unsurprisingly, the process of negotiating a pathway out of the "bind," which Martin and Anna called "the dark hole," was neither simple nor quick. As it turned out, the first step was in itself a choice directed toward love. Anna, who was "at her wits' end," asked him if he would consider seeing a counsellor. Martin initially regarded this option as a "waste of time and money," but went for Anna's sake. The counselling sessions offered an opportunity to review what was important to him, and after several visits he began to see a way ahead.

The dark hole had some light at the end of the tunnel. And I thought I could see that there was a way forward—that my whole life would not collapse. And that the things that were becoming so important to me, I could hold onto, and the things which I had thought were so important, I could perhaps imagine living without.

In time Martin therefore felt able to make a final decision to seek laicisation. He identified several key factors which were operative for him—both before and after making the decision—in rethinking and reimagining life beyond priesthood. At the risk of oversimplifying a long and complex process, I summarise these factors here in terms of deconstruction, reimagining, and resistance.

Deconstruction. I have already noted the way in which the dominant religious discourses which tied priesthood to celibacy began to be subverted for Martin by a twofold observation: people in marriages and families engaging in the priestly roles of forgiveness and reconciliation, and his fellow priests becoming isolated and irritable as they grew older. The effects of being forced into “the dark hole” of an either-or choice by these discourses, and of the “demeaning” process of laicisation, raised further questions. Martin explained that laicisation left him with fewer opportunities for participation in church life than a lay person who had never been ordained. Experiencing the disciplinary effects of this process invited a revised perspective on the structure and purpose of ordination itself, including a recognition of its vested interests in “power and control.”

The laicization document excludes me from having any kind of office. . . . So I can't teach. I can't preach. I can't distribute communion. I can't read the Scriptures, as other lay people can. . . . It's punitive, really. I mean, I also think that a good deal of the superstructure which the ordained—which the system of ordination, the Episcopacy and the Presbyterate put in place—it's really about control and the exercise of power, rather than the advancement of holiness, which is really what the Church ought to be about.

Reading and writing are significant aspects of Martin's life, and some of his reading also contributed to the process of deconstruction he was experiencing. He read an article by a Jewish rabbi who had also left his ministry and had resonated with his description of “freefall in a world that had no titles, no religious garb, no forms of ritual or liturgy.” For this man it had been the beginning of a new kind of faith, without “props.”

I think something of that happened for me as well. I began to doubt some of my own Church's claims and official lines on some things. I began to see that perhaps the absolute claims of the Church of Rome were far more time-conditioned and culturally shaped than I'd imagined, and that the Roman take on quite a few issues was only one of many.

As Derrida (1997) emphasises, deconstruction is not simply about doubting old truths or dismantling binaries. Positively it can create space for the emergence of new and hitherto suppressed meanings. The painful dismantling of the “props” which had supported, but also circumscribed, Martin’s identity and vocation for thirty years, cleared the way for fresh perspectives on his faith and his vocation.

Reimagining. The process of laicisation ended Martin’s access to formally recognised ministry and opened the way to marriage. But over time, he began to see ways in which the divide between these two callings was not absolute. In significant measure these insights came through relational connections. Through Anna, in particular, he experienced the call to love in a new way, and discovered the power of human relationship to mediate sacred experience.

I can’t avoid mention of how the experience of loving and being loved has alerted me to new way of detecting God’s presence in my life. And things like, yes the experience of forgiveness and reconciliation, and the selflessness of love, are lessons that I’ve learnt more from being husband and spouse than I ever learnt as a priest.

These discoveries were reinforced in the period of transition out of the priesthood, when Martin spent time in a church community outside of the Roman Catholic context.

And the experience of being within [this] community, meeting married priests, both men and women; being a friend of a gay priest who’s also in a loving relationship—those things have broadened my horizon.

The genealogy of the Church’s insistence on celibacy for its priests has included not just a suspicion of sexuality in general, but an historical view of the female sex as spiritually dangerous. In contradiction to this heritage, Martin’s post-laicisation spiritual imagination was fired and expanded by a growing acquaintance with a community of Catholic sisters. He observed that they “had developed for themselves a spirituality, and a religious tradition, that was to some extent independent of and separate from the patriarchal church.” This was a spirituality which highlighted for him

a different set of values from the ones that I had focused on as a priest and as a proclaimer of the Word. I discovered, for instance, that they have a very well-grounded care for the environment, and a spirituality that reflects that commitment.

In time his own theology shifted toward this “earth-centred spirituality” and, as a consequence, he gave more importance to “living life well.” This in turn helped to address his earlier anxiety and uncertainty about surrendering his priestly identity as “another Christ.” In the process, he began to discover “another Christ,” in a different sense, with whom he could identify in a new way. This Christ did not demand denial of the body, sex, or everyday life in order to achieve a sacred plane of existence.

It’s helped me, too, to realise that even the classic Christological definitions of the early church were themselves time-conditioned. . . . I’m more interested in what the message of Jesus can do to help me to understand my own humanity. And that’s probably more important to me now than wanting to be an *alter Christus* in a disembodied, sexless, cultic sense, which perhaps was what it was.

The spirituality and practices of this community of women also demonstrated a political awareness, including a commitment to the Treaty of Waitangi, which seeded another important element in Martin’s reimagining of faith and work.

As a priest, to my shame, I have to say I never—apart from saying *kia ora*⁸—that was about the limit of my Māori. Now when I go on formal occasions to engage with groups, I’m sometimes called on to provide the *mihi*,⁹ and with help from one of my colleagues I’ve developed a—I can’t say I speak Māori—but a fluency that enables me to do that.

A third strand of the Catholic sisters’ way of life which affected Martin spoke to the Church’s patriarchal discourses and practices of power, which had become problematic and oppressive in his own experience. Within their community he observed a non-hierarchical, participatory approach to leadership.

They have a system of shared leadership. It’s a community of equals. Yes, obedience is still there, but it’s obedience to God’s Word that comes through prayerful discernment. It’s not a case of Reverend Mother Superior saying, “Sister you do this.” And if it works for women, it should work equally well for men.

In time, Martin’s view of God and faith broadened considerably from the prescriptive orthodoxy of his training. In keeping with his increasingly earth-centred spirituality, he came to see the divine as “being within the heart of

⁸ Informal Māori greeting.

⁹ Māori word for the speaking structure in a formal welcome.

creation,” rather than conceiving of a God who exists in a different, celestial world. Accordingly, he reimagined the Christian life as a call to “the letting be of being,” and saw many of the Church’s moral laws as a denial of this.

I think I’ve come to see that Christian life is more than anything about the letting be of being. And the circumscriptions which the Roman Church puts in place around the lives of lots of people, but especially around the lives of its own priests, is not about the letting be of being. It’s about keeping people where they need to be kept.

So Martin looked back on the choice he was forced to make as more than a false choice between two loves and callings, it was “a denial of being—it’s a refusal . . . in the letting be of being.” With some sadness, he recalled how, in the early years of his ministry, he and other young priests used to receive letters from the New Zealand poet James K. Baxter.

I remember in one of those, he talked about the Roman Church having, as it were, the crown jewels but not knowing the preciousness of what they held. The sacraments are powerful sources of grace; of God’s presence coming into people’s lives, setting them free, and helping them to grow.

All the potential was there for the Church to assist people in the setting free and letting be of being. Yet, Martin reflected, the effects of the way the Church handled the jewels with which it had been entrusted were too often constricting and inhibiting of growth.

Resistance. When the official document arrived, dispensing Martin from his vow to celibacy, on condition of withdrawing from the priesthood, it contained a recommendation that he move away from places where he was known. “I mean, the institution would like me to have just vanished, and to resurface somewhere where I wasn’t known and said nothing about it.” He refused to do that, for several reasons. Not least of these was his resistance to any notion that what he had done was shameful.

I haven’t abused kids. I’ve—simply put, I found myself in a situation where because of the rules of my Church, which I think are stupid, I’ve had to surrender what was actually a very fruitful ministry, for myself and for the people whose lives I served. So I’m staying put!

Implied in Martin's "staying put" was a desire to remain not just in his location, but within the Catholic Church. Some of his colleagues who had also withdrawn from priesthood in the Catholic Church had found ordained positions in churches where celibacy was not an issue. He refused that option, and saw his refusal as a protest which testified to a situation which was fundamentally wrong. Several times in our conversation, Martin referred to a statement that he had heard attributed to Heidegger, "Hell is to live between the ages." It was important for him to remain in the hellish place in which his Church had placed him, and others like him, as it struggled to let go of an old age and accept new ways of being. It was also important for him to bear witness to this plight from within his Church, rather than as an outsider. For example, he explained, he had written about his situation for Catholic publications, and his story had featured in a national newspaper.

I think the only way we're going to have change is for people like me to continue to talk about how things are. One of the results about—the final results of the [newspaper] article was that people got in touch with me to say that they had never realized that the rules of our own Church was so severe and so, yes, so punitive. . . . The Church has, I suppose, a right and a duty to provide for good order. But the point at which it becomes destructive of people and destructive of love, is the point at which we need—everyone needs—to sit up and say, "What's happening here?"

Beyond the desire to provoke this important question, Martin has never regarded his priestly call as being no longer valid.

I feel that I'm—there's part of me that's—there's a priesthood that can't be undone. It's there. It's part of my life, but I'm not able to use it. I think it's stupid. It's a waste. . . . There's a priestly ministry there that's gone into cold storage. It's not used.

In support of that part of his calling which cannot be undone, Martin has found new ways to reimagine his priestly vocation. In his regular opportunities to write for Catholic contexts, Martin finds an echo of the priestly role of preaching, which for him had been about "helping Christians through God's Word to make sense of life." Another way of reimagining his calling occurred to him during the first Easter to follow his withdrawal from the priesthood. The Holy Thursday of Easter was a difficult day for him, as it is traditionally the day when priests renew their commitment to celibacy. The sermon that day focused on the connection

between Jesus' humble act of washing his disciples' feet and his celebration of the Last Supper with them. The focus on humility and kindness, as opposed to priestly authority and privilege, spoke to a thread of ministerial identity which he could continue to embrace.

It helped me to see that while I perhaps would never be able to celebrate Eucharist again as a priest, I would always be able to find ways of washing feet. So that call to discipleship was not lost. And if in my own mind I was able to somehow link that to the Eucharist that I was part of, something would continue.

Martin described a further strategy he had developed for maintaining connection with the Eucharist which had been so central to his identity as a priest. It offered him a way to continue quietly resisting the false choice into which he had been forced, and to bring the sacraments of Eucharist and mutual human love into connection.

At mass now each Sunday, as I say silently to myself the words of institution, because I'm not able to pronounce them—"This is my body, given up for you"—I instinctively reach for my wedding ring. And it's as though in that sacred moment of doing what Jesus told us to do, I'm able to acknowledge both those sacraments. Both the power of the Eucharist to bring into this community the Lord's giving of himself through his own death and rising again, but also the life-giving experience of my love for Anna and hers for me. And somehow those two things sit together quite well.

This allusion to death and resurrection resonates with the shape of the personal journey I was privileged to hear Martin unfold in our interview. Having been drawn into a dark hole of despair by the discourses of his tradition, which constructed priesthood and sexual love as mutually exclusive, he was finding new and creative ways to transform this zone of exclusion into a place of possibility and hope. The place between the ages was still painful and wrong, but he was making it a place where, as much as possible, being could be let be, either-or could become both-and, and his two loves could "sit together quite well."

7.4 Discussion points

First research question

Within Christian communities, how is it that some regimes of power and knowledge can subvert the call to freedom and justice which is pervasive in longstanding streams of Christian tradition?

The stories of Andy, Sarah and Martin yield traces of a range of discursive regimes. The common discursive thread in their narratives is a sense of call to exercise pastoral ministry on behalf of others. In each case, the narrator tells of being positioned in a dilemma by discourses of leadership which conflicted with their sense of call, and describes the disruptive effects of this discursive conflict on their life and ministry. A point of interest in relation to my first research question is that in each narrative the regime of power and knowledge which conflicts with the narrator's preferred approach to leadership originates in a discursive context which extends beyond the community in which they lead. Practices of entitlement feature strongly in the accounts given by Andy and Sarah, while Martin was affected deeply by discursive practices which diminished his entitlement to exercise priestly service.

Second research question

What has enabled some people to resist the practices of religious authority constructed by such regimes?

Andy and Sarah have stories of resistance to the actions of particular people whose understanding of pastoral ministry was shaped by these wider discourses of leadership. This helps to support Rose's (1996) contention that resistance, understood as "opposition to a particular regime for the conduct of one's conduct" (p. 35), is a matter of perspective. Both sides of a conflict may claim higher moral ground for their position and name it resistance. I choose to call Andy's and Sarah's actions resistance because the ethical stance reflected in their accounts of their ministries resonates with the understanding of freedom and justice embedded in my first research question, and in their own ethical hopes and intentions. Their stories are less about discursive change (on their part) than a discursive struggle to maintain a viable space within which this ethical stance could be practiced.

Martin's narrative is not one of dealing with particular individuals but with the longstanding discursive position of the worldwide Roman Catholic Church on priesthood and celibacy. Despite the monolithic nature of the Roman Catholic Church, Martin found ways to resist the pressure to quietly disappear from the city where he was a priest, and to reimagine his vocation as a priest. The process he endured produced some deeply challenging discursive shifts in his faith.

In the discussion provided in Chapter 8, I draw on these stories as important examples of how resistance is supported by tenaciously held ethical intentions, especially those which are reinforced through regular liturgical practices such as Bible reading, prayer and corporate worship.

Chapter 8: Shining a discursive light on subjugating practices of authority and resistance in Christian communities

The previous three chapters have presented the results of my discursive narrative analysis of transcribed interviews with the participants in this study. The purpose of this chapter is to bring the theoretical ideas developed in Chapter 3 to bear on the main findings of those chapters, and to focus this discussion on what has been learned in relation to my research questions:

- i Within Christian communities, how is it that some regimes of power and knowledge can subvert the call to freedom and justice which is pervasive in longstanding streams of Christian tradition?
- ii What has enabled some people to resist the practices of religious authority constructed by such regimes?

I begin with a review of certain assumptions which I brought to this project, concerning the discursive worlds of the participants, and how these assumptions were challenged as I began to analyse the data. I then turn to the first research question and name several discursive technologies of subjugation and hegemony which characterised the regimes of power and knowledge in the participants' communities. In the third main section of this chapter, I focus on the second research question and insights which emerge from my analysis of the participants' accounts of their resistance. I offer theoretical reflection on the prominence in their accounts of talk about the embodied effects of subjugation, the contribution of alternative knowledges, and the tenacity of their ethical hopes and intentions.

8.1 A reflexive pause: regarding ethical intentions and hopes

As I look back on my initial thinking about this project, I realise that I began with a rather schematic understanding of Foucault's analysis of the relationships between dominant discourses, positioning, and subjectivity within social systems. The basic social constructionist notion that "people can only think with the ideas that are available to them" had provoked me to wonder how divergent thinking and resistance can occur. Initially my question was something like this: "If the subjectivity of a person in a religious community is constructed by the dominant discourses of that community, how is it possible that they come to think differently, let alone engage in acts of resistance?"

I was aware of the view that a subject's positioning within multiple, contradictory discourses may open a space in which a form of agentic choice is possible (Davies et al., 1990). Yet somehow this awareness did not alter my formulation of a paradigm in which the participants were like blank slates, inscribed by the discourses—whether unified or contradictory—of their contexts. I was overlooking the complexity of their discursive positioning prior to, and concurrent with, the influence of their religious communities. As I note in Chapter 4, this oversight influenced the first iteration of my analysis of the interviews. I looked first for dominant discourses which were supporting the practices of religious authority they experienced, and secondly for the sources of their resistance, including any encounters with contradictory discourses (see Table 2, page 98). I therefore inadvertently privileged the dominant discourses of the religious communities, casting them as the primary actors in the stories of resistance I was hoping to present. Consequently, and ironically, I found myself in danger of passing over the ethical intentions and hopes which the participants held for their lives, because of my own initial discursive positioning as a researcher.

As I embarked on the first iteration of analysis of the interviews, I became aware that the ways in which the participants had ordered their narratives suggested that they made meaning of their struggles and acts of resistance with reference to their ethical intentions and hopes. In most cases, they had not entered their various religious communities as *tabulae rasae* awaiting inscription by dominant discourses. In analysing Cathy's story, for example, I was struck by the way she had started the interview by telling me of a "significant episode," in which her hopes of collaborative discussion and decision making had been sabotaged by a very gendered process which placed little value on her participation. As I continued the analysis, a similar pattern became evident in many of the stories. Early on in telling their stories, the participants had given examples of their own ethical intentions and hopes being subjugated by the discourses and practices of religious authority in their communities. The representation of their stories in the preceding three chapters shows that these intentions and hopes most commonly centred on the conduct of relationships within their communities (e.g. valuing of persons, acceptance of difference, respect, inclusivity, compassion, honesty) and strategies for increasing the wellbeing of the communities and their members (e.g. collaboration, open

communication, reconciliation, advocacy, the pursuit of justice). Moreover, despite their subjugation, it was precisely these intentions and hopes which supported the participants in their eventual acts of resistance to religious authority.

As appropriate to my avowed methodology of reflexivity and “narrative responsibility and respect” (Czarniawska, 2002; Denzin et al., 2005), the data itself was exerting an influence on the development of my research story, and I consequently adjusted the focus of my research interests to incorporate the presence of the participants’ ethical hopes and concerns more explicitly. My question shifted from, “If the subjectivity of a person within a religious community is constructed by the dominant discourses of that community, how is it possible that they come to think differently, let alone engage in acts of resistance?” to something more like the two research questions outlined above, in which my own ethical concern as a researcher is named (in the first question), and a *tabula rasa* view of the participants’ discursive history, including their ethical intentions, is avoided.

As I pursued my analytical work with the participants’ stories, I became even more aware of the importance of paying close attention to their accounts of the ethical intentions and hopes which informed their involvement in their religious communities. In anticipation of the discussion to follow (sections 8.2, 8.3), I want to highlight three aspects of this importance.

Reflexivity. My initial thin regard for the ethical intentions of the participants was ironic for two reasons. First, as outlined in earlier chapters, my own commitment to supporting justice and freedom in religious contexts was and is a primary motivation for engaging in this research. In hindsight, my regard for my own ethical intentions initially obscured those of the people I interviewed. The second and more significant irony in my initially inadequate regard for the participants’ ethical intentions lay in its parallels with the experiences which they described as being at the heart of their subjugation by, and eventual resistance to, the practices of religious authority in their communities. I argue below that the people who performed these practices of governmentality were recruited to a lack of regard for participants’ ethical hopes and intentions by taken-for-granted ideas about authority in their communities. In my case, it was my initially simplistic version of Foucault’s power/knowledge paradigm which produced ways of thinking about my topic which privileged dominant discourses and minimised the

possibility of the participants entering, rather than simply emerging from, their communities with agentically held ethical intentions for the production of their lives.

This was not only a salutary experience for me as a researcher, it also invited a more nuanced attitude on my part toward the people whose actions were described by the participants as having oppressive and diminishing effects. In some cases, those I interviewed acknowledged that the practices which had these effects were probably born of their leaders' own ethical intentions. Andy, for example, spoke frequently of the "damage" he experienced in his relationship with his senior minister, yet speculated that the latter probably "genuinely believed he was doing this for God, and he was doing the best thing."

Subjectification. This point and the next constitute a paradox. My analysis of the interview narratives suggests that the ethical positioning of the participants supported both their subjectification by, and their eventual resistance to, the hegemonic discourses and practices of religious authority within their communities. This paradox is explored more fully in later sections of this chapter. Here I simply recall Weedon's statement that subjectification works "most efficiently" for the established hierarchy of power relations when the subject position offered to a person is "fully identified by the individual with her interests" (1997, p. 109). Setting aside the word "fully" in that statement, it can be seen in the narratives which I have re-presented in the previous three chapters that aspects of some of the participants' ethical intentions—acceptance of difference, respect, compassion and reconciliation, for example—contributed to their initially compliant acceptance of the subject positions offered to them within the dominant discourses of religious authority.

Resistance. On the other side of this paradox, I argue in the third main section of this chapter (8.3) that the persistence of those same ethical intentions and hopes, which were at odds with their repeated experiences of subjugation, helped to produce and support their resistance.

8.2 Discursive technologies of subjugation and hegemony

In this section, I identify nine aspects of the analyses of the previous three chapters which help to address the first research question. Drawing on these threads from my analysis, and selected examples from the participants' narratives,

I offer theoretical reflections on the discursive technologies by which the subversion of freedom and justice has been achieved. I distinguish between technologies which produce subjugated subjects and those which maintain the hegemony of dominant discourses (while acknowledging that these are closely related aspects of Foucault's power/knowledge theorisation). In referring to technologies of subjugation, I have in mind discursive practices which hold people in non-agentic subject positions (i–iv below). Such practices are held in place by the hegemony of certain discourses. My analysis of the participants' narratives has also brought to light a number of ways in which this hegemony itself is maintained in Christian communities, and these I refer to as technologies of hegemony (v–ix). In offering examples of the nine technologies from those narratives there is, unavoidably, some repetition of material from Chapters 5, 6, and 7.

i *The construction of monologic subject positions*

As outlined in Chapter 3 (section 3.4), I use the term “monologic” in Sampson's (1993) sense of power relations in which one person or group constructs the other in ways that serve the interests of the dominant party. Social interaction is not dialogic (and therefore not *just*) if the other “must speak in a register that is alien to its own specificity, and in so doing lose its desires and interests” (Sampson, 1993, p. 11). Genuinely dialogic forms of participation recognise that the ethical production of one's life is a relational achievement, and require “that there be two separable presences, each coming from its own standpoint, expressing and enacting its own particular specificity” (p. 15).

In describing the effects on them of subjugating practices of governmentality in their communities, the participants' concerns very often centred on the ways they were called into monologic forms of participation in their communities. The monologic subject positions constructed by the dominant discourses of their communities can be summarised using four questions which recurred in various forms throughout the participants' accounts. The discursive construction of these subject positions is addressed here, while their effects and the participants' resistance to them are considered in section 8.3 of this chapter.

Who may belong to this community? Perhaps the most fundamental form of participation in community is a sense of acceptance and belonging. Some participants recalled being warmly welcomed and cared for by their communities, only to discover later that this belonging came with conditions attached. These conditions were summed up by Cathy and Jenny as “toeing the line,” that is, conforming to the leaders’ teaching and directions. When people tried “doing things their way,” or “doing something a little bit different,” Cathy recalled, they soon discovered that “if you don’t toe the line, you have to leave.” This contrasted with Cathy’s earlier experience of a church where all kinds of people were accepted, just as they were. In both of their stories, this expectation was supported by discourses of “covering” and leaders’ divinely sanctioned authority. In addition to the discursive practices which made conformity the condition of belonging for those within their communities, several participants spoke of practices of exclusion directed at those who were “other.” The theologies of separation and exclusion prominent in John’s and Lynne’s stories provided stark examples of these.

Whose knowledges are valued and incorporated in this community? All of the stories re-presented in Chapters 5 and 6 featured discourses in which leaders possessed not only God-given authority, but also divinely revealed wisdom and knowledge. This notion is epitomised by the Man of God discourse, described in John’s and Lynne’s accounts. Other knowledge and experience was, by default, inferior to this supposedly God-given knowledge. In these discursive environments the knowledges and competencies of other members of the community were not valued. In the case of Andy, Sarah, and Martin (Chapter 7), rather different discourses were at work (discourses of successful leadership, the status quo, and church tradition), but each of them also described the marginalisation of their own knowledges and their view of ministry in particular.

The women I interviewed described an additional layer of monologic positioning and subjugation of their knowledges due to gendered discourses which were pervasive in their communities. Both women and men related experiences of being “quarantined” within their communities—that is, being forbidden to use their knowledge and experience to help others—as a form of discipline and to protect others from being spiritually “contaminated” by their disobedience.

Exclusion and silencing related to sexual orientation do not feature prominently in the stories re-presented in this thesis. This theme is touched on by Lynne and Martin, and has certainly been present in stories I have heard in the course of my work, including the stories of heterosexual people who have been marginalised for accepting gay or lesbian others without judgment.

Who may participate in the conversations and decisions of this community? Closely related to the kind of positioning which marginalises the potential contribution of a person's knowledge and experience to their community is the question of who may participate in the conversations of the community, and on what terms. This is at the heart of Sampson's contrast between monologic and dialogic power relations. It is also a key issue in Drewery's (2005, p. 315) account of agency—"persons who are participants in the conversations that produce the meanings of their lives are in an agentive position"—and in Davies' (1991) understanding of the discursive constitution of "presence" as access to a subject position in which a person has the right to speak and be heard.

The participants recalled many instances of being thwarted in their attempts to enter into conversation with authority figures in their communities. For example, Jenny's attempts to engage her pastor in dialogue were variously met with refusals, monologues and accusations of rebellion: "You could never actually have a conversation, because your point of view wasn't actually valid. All that they were interested in as leaders was, were you submitting?" Although Sarah and Martin were in leadership roles which carried speaking rights, their voices too were muted by the interests of the dominant forces in their communities. As Sarah put it, "In the way that this power operated there was no discussion, and where I and others would be assertive, it would be shot down and criticised."

Other examples highlight the monologic character of decision making practices within the participants' communities. Selina grieved the loss of the collaborative decision making processes of her community when a new leader came, claiming to be God's man through whom God would give wisdom to the church.

How is wellbeing conceptualised and performed within this community? Thinking again of Drewery's notion of agentive positions as those in which people are able

to engage in “the conversations that produce the meanings of their lives,” it seems to me that one significant aspect of such conversations centres on wellbeing. To have one’s own wellbeing defined, and its conditions prescribed, without dialogue, is to experience a monologic form of positioning.

A number of participants described gendered forms of such positioning. Lynne turned herself “inside out and upside down and back to front” in trying to be “the perfect wife,” having been told that the welfare of her marriage and the solution to her husband’s anger depended on it. This and similar examples illustrate a gendered version of the wider discourse of covering, which called people into positions of trusting submission to their leaders on the premise that this alone was where spiritual and physical wellbeing could be assured. An extreme expression of this positioning is evident in Jenny’s memory of fearing that, because she had strayed beyond the covering of her leaders, “God might actually kill me.”

Having worked closely with the stories of the participants in this research, my clear sense is that the issue of monologic positioning is not merely one of a number of concerns. The experience of exclusion from participation in processes that affect the production of one’s own life is a recurring theme throughout all of the interview narratives. I regard this as a significant finding, because the issue of monologic versus dialogic positioning was not something that I focused on explicitly in my opening questions in the interviews. My questions were framed more broadly around the issue of resistance to religious authority, but the participants’ accounts of what it was that provoked them to resistance quickly and consistently turned to the issue of monologic positioning.

ii *The discursive construction of “serviceable others”*

As explained in Chapter 3 (section 3.4), Sampson (1993) introduces the notion of the serviceable other in relation to monologic forms of interaction: “Although you and I may converse together, in most respects the you with whom I am interacting has been constructed with me in mind” (p. 4). As Andy put it, his senior minister’s view of him and others seemed to be that they were “extensions of himself” and “just basically resources.”

Two aspects of the discourses traced in the interview narratives in relation to religious authority combine to give particular force to this serviceable other strategy of subjugation. First, as noted often in presenting my analyses of the participants' narratives, to make an all-powerful God the ultimate point of reference in a hierarchy of authority ensures that the call to service will be very difficult to resist for a person who believes in such a God. This discursive strategy was well summarised by Bill when he observed that, for people in his church, leadership was perceived as "something to do with God's authority on earth, and so challenging his authority on earth is like challenging God."

In a discussion with Foucault (1980, pp. 159–160), Perrot ponders the question of who occupies the central tower in Bentham's proposed Panopticon: "Is it the eye of God?" Foucault argues that Bentham could not entrust the "eye of power" to any one person, since part of the intention was that "no one can or may occupy the role that the King had in the old system." Within hierarchical discourses of religious authority, however, according to which a leader embodies God's authority, Bentham's purpose is both served and subverted. On the one hand, the all-seeing divine eye constitutes the ultimate motivation for constant self-surveillance. On the other hand, something like the divine right of the king is restored in the person of the Man of God. The subjugating force of this discursive technology is graphically illustrated in Lynne's story. Despite holding particular ethical values around fidelity in marriage, she was too terrified to refuse her married leader's demand that she be his sexual serviceable other, because, she told herself, "I have to obey the Man of God."

Second, and in tandem with notions of an all-seeing, all-powerful God, many expressions of the Christian tradition emphasise the importance of self-sacrifice and serving others. This is strongly reinforced, as I observed in representing Bill's story, by recourse to the example of Christ's own self-sacrificial death. For women in some churches, there are additional gendered layers of social and religious discourse which construct their identities and relationships on the basis of submission and service. Despite her exposure to feminist discourse in earlier training, Jenny discovered in her new church that "being a Christian" implied taking on "dreadful things" that were taught about women "obeying" their husbands as "head of the house," regardless of how they were treated by these men.

Referring to the paradigmatic examples of woman as other, and African-American as other, Sampson (1993) argues that:

The other is a figure constructed to be serviceable to the historically dominant white male group. In order to provide this service, the other cannot be permitted to have a voice, a position, a being of its own, but must remain mute or speak only in the ways permitted by the dominant discourse. . . . No real dialogue can be permitted to intervene, lest in permitting others to actually speak in their own terms, expressing their own point of view, the entire scheme of Western civilization would collapse. (p. 13)

The participants in this project have all come from churches where “the historically dominant white male group” still holds the power. The dominance of this group is secured in the name of upholding a supposedly divinely ordained order of authority and submission, which is in turn necessary for spiritual and physical wellbeing. When people resist their positioning as serviceable others and try, however respectfully, to “speak on their own terms,” this order is threatened and often they are silenced (see below on disciplinary practices). In terms of the ethical stance I have outlined for this project, this construction and continued subjugation of serviceable others amounts to a refusal to admit the particular otherness of the other, and perpetuates “I-It” rather than “I-Thou” encounter (Buber et al., 1970). In Levinas’ (1999, p. 176) terms, this discursive strategy defaces the other, that is, prevents “the face of the other . . . from being recognised,” by assigning an “anonymous individuality,” which for Levinas is a precondition for totalitarianism. I am not suggesting that all (or even most) of the religious leaders featured in participants’ stories adopted this strategy with a conscious intention of gaining total control. Yet, whatever they believed their intentions to be, it can be seen how the twin aspects of dominant religious discourse outlined above—leaders’ divinely sanctioned authority and the call to self-sacrifice—construct authority structures in which a form of control with totalising tendencies is exercised. The next two technologies of subjugation show leadership moving in the direction of domination, through practices of entitlement and disciplinary power.

iii *Discursive practices of entitlement*

Harré and van Lagenhove (1999) speak of positioning in terms of “ever-shifting patterns of mutual and contestable rights and obligations of speaking and acting” (p. 1). Some discourses strongly support the rights of dominant parties, while offering little contestability when it comes to the obligations placed on their serviceable others. Jenkins (2009), writing about male violence and abuse, suggests that discourses of competence, adequacy, and success in dominant masculine culture

reflect values that promote conquest, acquisition, competition, ownership and entitlement to power and resources, without a requirement of responsibility for one’s actions and their consequences upon the welfare of others. Similarly, hegemonic ideas about male sexuality prescribe sexual entitlement and conquest without responsibility for the well-being of others. (p. 6)

I include this description not simply to illustrate a general point about the discursive construction of entitlement (see also Nylund & Nylund, 2003; Winslade & Monk, 2008), but because it resonates with aspects of many of the participants’ stories. As noted in Chapter 2, the issue of sexual abuse by Christian leaders is widely reported, and dominates the literature on abuses of religious authority, but it is my contention that this is merely the codified and visible end of a spectrum of entitlement practices within religious contexts. I recall the following examples from the participants’ narratives in support of this claim.

In her cross-cultural work, Cathy confronted a call to allow her husband to be “the best at language.” She recalled that, in the church, “if the women were stronger than the man, or more creative, or more up front—they were knocked back.” Cathy was not implying physical violence, but, as I noted in re-presenting her narrative, the metaphors she employed in describing the treatment of those who did not “toe the line” of submission were often violent in nature: “dealt to,” “bruised and battered,” and “bruised and confused.” Within the church, Cathy observed women who lived with violence in their homes being treated in ways that avoided the issue of their partners’ violence and located the problem within them (spiritually and emotionally). Selina had memories of feeling “awful” at having violated the “given order” of men’s entitlement to “hold the power” after bearing the brunt of her leader’s anger at her questions.

The rationalities which support a sense of entitlement in men, and in male leaders in particular, may produce violent attitudes toward other men, as well as toward women. Andy heard the language of entitlement in his senior minister's words, and was aware of the potent mix of management discourse and theological ideas which supported it: "I'm sure he felt that somehow or other, that there—along with the job—there was an entitlement to treat people the way he did . . . A God-given entitlement to treat people that way . . . A failure to respect him was a failure to respect God." At times, Andy reflected, his meetings with this man were frightening: "You almost felt you were right on the edge of physical violence."

Having highlighted patterns of entitlement at the less publicly visible end of the spectrum of violent practices of power within Christian communities, it remains to note again the more blatant theme of sexual entitlement which was evident in John's and Lynne's stories. I suggest that it is not coincidental that both of the leaders concerned were referred to as "the Man of God" within their communities, a title which embodies discourses of masculine and divinely sanctioned leadership. John recalled that when the international leader of the Exclusive Brethren was discovered in bed with the wife of a fellow leader, he "insisted that this was all above board, and that he had needs, and she would wash his feet, and things like that." As I observed in re-presenting Lynne's narrative, the highest levels of the hierarchy in The Fellowship operated according to a secret ethical code which apparently justified sexual exploitation and deception. There seems to be an echo of this in the Exclusive Brethren example also. The Man of God's reference to the washing of his feet is an allusion to a biblical story about a woman washing Jesus' feet, implying that his entitlement was supported by his elevated position in the Christ–Man of God–man–woman–child hierarchy.

There is mention in both John's and Lynne's stories of the meeting of men's "needs," suggesting the presence of what Hollway (1989), in her study of gender and subjectivity, calls "the discourse of male sexual drive" (p. 54). The central proposition of this discourse is "that men are driven by the biological necessity to seek out (heterosexual) sex." Hollway points out the wide range of effects which this discourse has "through the interpretation it puts on men's conduct," including the provision of a defence for exploitative sexual behaviour, as in the examples presented here. In Chapter 2, I noted Deans' (2001) suggestion that in religious contexts women are often held responsible for men's desires, while "men's so-

called ‘red-bloodedness’ is given cultural and religious acceptance” (p. 167). Morss (1996) and Burman (2008) critique the role of dominant psychological discourses of development in perpetuating such taken for granted ideas about male sexuality.

In the words of Jenkins (2009), cited earlier, practices of entitlement are performed “without a requirement of responsibility for one’s actions and their consequences upon the welfare of others.” Practices of entitlement disregard the particularity of otherness, and perpetuate “I–it” encounter, thereby subverting freedom and justice as understood in the ethical discussion of Chapter 3.

iv *Disciplinary practices of power*

Several of the participants described disciplinary practices which met their efforts to resist being subjected to religious authority. In referring to discipline here, I have in mind both punitive practices, which tend toward domination, and the more subtle forms of subjectification and correction so thoroughly explored by Foucault (1973, 1977a, 1978). These two forms of disciplinary power correspond to the “old system” of centralised, monarchical power, and decentralised forms of “correct training,” which Foucault (1977a) characterises as a “modest, suspicious power” (p. 170). In his discussion with Perrot, referred to above, Foucault (1980) contrasts Bentham’s decentralised, panoptical approach to disciplinary power with the role of the king.

It was implicit in the theory of monarchy that trust in the King was a necessity. His very existence, founded in God’s will, he was the source of justice, law and power. Power, in his person, could only be good; a bad King was either an accident of history or a punishment by God, the absolutely good sovereign. (p. 158)

This is not simply a fine point of theory. My analysis of the participants’ accounts indicates that churches in which religious authority was buttressed with language such as “the Lord’s anointed” were drawing on texts from the Hebrew Scriptures concerning kingship. Similar ideas lie behind titles such as the Man of God and God’s man. As some of the interview narratives show, what Foucault says of kingship can be seen in operation in such discursive contexts, where power is vested in a pastor who leads by the will of God and is to be trusted and obeyed. This connects directly with the preceding discussion of practices of entitlement. It also offers an alternative to purely psychological accounts of the angry,

threatening responses some of the participants encountered when they questioned or challenged their leaders.

At the same time, aspects of Foucault's descriptions of decentralised techniques of disciplinary power remain applicable to some of the participants' stories. As noted above with regard to the panoptical principle—the hegemonic gaze—it is not difficult to see how belief in an all-seeing God constructs a sense of living within a “permanent and continuous field” of surveillance (Foucault, 1977a, p. 177). The effectiveness of this strategy is reflected in the internalised forms of self-surveillance reported by some participants, such as not permitting oneself even to think “no” (Jenny).

As noted in Chapter 3, Foucault's (1977a) discussion of technologies of the soul, including pastoral care and the confessional, is also particularly relevant to this project. Hook (2003) explains that disciplinary power for Foucault both *objectifies* individuals, by making them the objects of categorial knowledge, and *subjectifies* them in the sense of producing subjectivity according to such knowledge.

It is in this sense that one can understand Foucault's (1982) deliberate ambiguity in speaking of how disciplinary power produces ‘subjects’: subjects, that is, both in the sense of being subject to control, and in being tied to their own identity through self-knowledge or conscience. . . . To exist in this way, between the objectifying norms of disciplinary knowledge, and the subjectified production of self-knowledge, is to exist in relationship of continual self-problematization, or disciplinary normalization. (p. 611)

Objectifying practices are evident in the participants' accounts of being named (categorised) by their leaders when they were perceived to have stepped “out of line” with terms such as “rebellious,” “under deception,” or “Jezebel.” For Martin, the process of laicisation was a powerful act of re-categorisation performed on him by the structures of his Church. Although such practices were clearly unwelcome and at times painful for the participants, it seems to have been the subjectifying processes of disciplinary power which were most effective in binding them to their communities (despite the tensions that often existed between these processes and the ways in which the participants hoped to produce their lives as ethical subjects). I am thinking here of the ongoing processes of self-knowledge and self-problematization, connected with self-surveillance under the

eye of God, to which Hook refers. These are evident in the participants' stories in a variety of forms: a sense of guilt at having critical thoughts, feelings of fear in stepping out from the covering of submission to leaders, a sense of loyalty and duty toward a "fatherly figure," fear of "upsetting God," anxiety concerning eternal salvation, the need to confess "impurity," a desire to please and be useful to God, internalised responsibility for the wellbeing and behaviour of others (husbands in particular), a belief that if leaders (or husbands) acted badly what mattered was a godly response (forgiveness and unquestioning submission), feeling wrong for having upset a male leader, a desire to be gracious/conciliatory rather than challenging when questioning leaders, and a sense of being called to serve God in Christian ministry.

It could be argued that the most significant aspects of the processes of subjectification are those which produce a person's sense of being, not merely as an individual, but as a social being who has a place of belonging. Earlier in this chapter, I suggested that the question of "who may belong" is fundamental to genuinely dialogic participation in community, and that this question was of vital ethical concern to several of the participants. Davies et al (2006) highlight the vulnerability which this aspect of subjectification produces for the human subject:

I see the way in which this kind of subjecthood is granted, and I therefore also see how, on other occasions, it might not be granted—to me, to anyone. I see my attachment to it, I see my dependence on it and thus my vulnerability to it. . . . The subject is always vulnerable to the possibility that the terms of its conferred existence might be disrupted by the withholding of recognition, or some kind of sudden break in the certainty of belonging (p. 96).

This underscores the particular force of the final form of disciplinary power I want to note, most often experienced as exclusion or being "withdrawn from." These experiences, or the threat of them, feature in a number of participants' stories, but John's account of life in the Exclusive Brethren described a highly developed disciplinary strategy of separation and exclusion. As explained in representing John's narrative, members were generally born into the movement, and so identity was defined by belonging. The founding premise of the movement (reflected in the term "Exclusive") was separation from evil, and to be outside of the community was to be in doubt of salvation. To be excluded, or even withdrawn from, was therefore a fearful prospect. In order to minimise the risk of

this happening, members were required to confess all possible misconduct to their leaders, who would decide what degree of public confession and temporary separation might be warranted. As noted in re-presenting John's story, he looked back on this primarily as "a big opportunity [for leaders] to get power over people." It was an effective technique. Rather than risk exclusion from the movement as a result of being contaminated by his "sin," John's wife preemptively separated from him, taking their children with her.

I turn now to technologies of hegemony. How is the persistent hegemony of the discourses which produce subjugated subjects in Christian communities to be accounted for? This question reflects my longstanding perplexity at the way biblical calls to freedom and justice are persistently subverted in many Christian communities.

v *Mutually-reinforcing discourses of authority and submission*

According to Foucault, power is maintained and transmitted by all who participate in social organisations, according to their common discursive positioning, whether or not they occupy recognised positions of authority. The discourses of covering and submission, which I have traced in various forms in several of the participants' stories, provide a striking example of how this works. According to these discourses, spiritual wellbeing is contingent on remaining in submission to leaders' God-given authority. This doctrine is preached by those who hold such authority, and remaining under their covering includes an acceptance that what they teach is God-inspired. This constitutes a self-reinforcing discursive loop which holds people in subject positions of credulity and compliance, thus entrenching the continued authority of their leaders, and the espoused theology of covering, within the community.

As most of the participants' narratives demonstrate, people can function as vehicles of hegemonic discourse in this way, and at the same time be positioned with values which are in tension with that discourse. Yet despite this discursive tension, repeated inscription by the dominant discourses of the community calls them back into subject positions of compliance, which in turn makes them available for further inscription as subjects. Bill's account, cited in Chapter 5,

illustrated the persistent influence on him of the dominant discourses of his community, even after time away for theological education:

I did maintain some level of independent thinking and ability to sort of . . . to make my own decisions and opinion. But on the other hand, I was quite absorbed into that community's belief system, I suppose, at a young age.

Lynne spoke of her indoctrination into The Fellowship as “a form of brainwashing.” Despite economic and vocational successes in her earlier life, the discourses which supported belief in her leaders' divinely given insights constructed a different narrative which marginalised knowledge of her own competence: “they start to make you think that your life was, you know, terrible.” She described her own sense of powerlessness and moral conflict as she performed the dominant discourse of authority within the community, which required her submission to the Man of God.

Within Foucault's power/knowledge paradigm, the members of the relational networks within a social organisation, as well as those in authority, help to police one another when it comes to maintaining the truth regimes of the community. This was strongly evident in the stories of John and Lynne. Both of them gave accounts of being scrutinised and admonished by fellow members of their communities. Both experienced the loss of their marriage relationships as the cost of their resistance to religious authority. Other participants spoke of the prospect of losing of relationships, or abandoning vulnerable others, as a significant factor in their reluctance to leave their communities. As Andy put it, “nobody flees from the prison camp, because we can't live with ourselves for deserting our comrades.”

vi *Personal identities are subsumed under community narratives*

Poststructuralist accounts of subjectification, the processes by which the dominant discourses of a community inscribe particular ways of being on subjects, help to shed further light on the hegemony of certain discourses of religious authority. In noting earlier the disciplinary power of separation and exclusion, I highlighted the vulnerability of subjects whose personhood and belonging are conferred and recognised within the terms of the dominant discourses of their communities. According to Butler's (1997) discursive account of subjectification in terms of mastery and submission, outlined in Chapter 3 (section 3.2), subjects are

vulnerable to subjugation because they are bound to seek recognition of their existence outside of themselves, in the “categories, terms, and names” of the dominant discourses of their contexts (p. 20). The dominant discourses of a community therefore become embedded in the fabric of communal relationships and narratives, and individual identities are in turn bound up with these. The vulnerability which this produces for subjects is captured by Butler in this concise statement, cited already in Chapter 3:

If the terms by which “existence” is formulated, sustained, and withdrawn are the active and productive vocabulary of power, then to persist in one’s own being means to be given over from the start to social terms that are never fully one’s own (p. 28).

In any social context, for an individual to think of challenging the dominant discourses of the community, or of leaving the community, exposes this vulnerability. In some religious contexts this vulnerability is intensified. Where the ultimate Other who confers existence is considered to be God, and where this divine recognition is mediated by those who represent God, then to step away from the community and its leaders may be a frightening prospect. This fear may be magnified further when discourses of separatism construct the world beyond the community as a place of danger and deception.

As an immigrant to New Zealand, Jenny stumbled on a community of people who “had a whole language and a whole way of being that was totally different.” These differences included “dreadful” patriarchal language and practices. “I struggled with it, Jenny recalled, “but I was a stranger in a foreign land. . . . So I sort of immersed myself.” Later, she found that the practices of religious authority in this church were calling aspects of her personhood into question: “Who I was before God wasn’t acceptable.” Yet, when Jenny contemplated leaving the church, she feared that to do so would mean walking away from the God on whom her life and identity depended. As she put it, “I couldn’t see that there was actually a difference.” For Martin, the theology of the Roman Catholic Church had constructed an identity for him, as an ordained priest, in terms of ontological identification with Christ. Unsurprisingly, Martin’s lifelong inscription by this theology meant that the prospect of leaving the priesthood dramatically affected his sense of spiritual and vocational identity, sending him for a time “into a kind of spiritual black hole.”

vii *The positioning of leaders to view difference as trouble*

It is ironic that while the dominant discourses of religious authority in many of the participants' communities called them into positions of loyalty and respect, the same discourses positioned those in authority to hear people's questions, discomforts and alternative viewpoints as challenge, criticism or rebellion. This invited monologic and sometimes disciplinary responses on their part, rather than enquiry and dialogue, which in turn assisted the subjugation of alternative knowledges. In part, this pattern connects with notions of entitlement, and divine right, as outlined above. Discourses of religious authority, such as those that predicate spiritual wellbeing on submission, may also construct a sense of pastoral vigilance on leaders' part, which again may produce disciplinary responses. Hook's (2003) summary of Foucault's idea of pastoral power (see Chapter 3, section 3.2) is strikingly pertinent to this point:

The notion of the pastor, the leader as a shepherd in charge of a flock, has several basic constituents. Firstly, the shepherd's role is to watch over his/her flock with scrupulous attention such that he/she will ensure their salvation through 'constant, individualized . . . kindness' (Foucault, 1988a, p. 69). Pastorship is a salvation-based form of power predicated on the provision of love. Secondly, given that the shepherd is an intermediary of a greater religious structure, unquestionable authority comes to characterize his/her leadership, just as total obedience and absolute dependence characterizes the flock's relationship to him/her. Thirdly, the pastor bears the responsibility for the destiny of the flock, and is bound by a particularly complex moral tie to each member. (p. 617)

A particularly patriarchal expression of this "scrupulous attention" is seen in the way several female participants spoke of having been warned that their efforts to ask questions or challenge authority showed that they were under the influence of spiritual evil. No doubt the discursive construction of such warnings was complex. Those who gave them may have been positioned by discourses of pastoral responsibility, as described by Hook. But historical and religious discourses concerning women's vulnerability to deception, and the proper place of women in relation to male leadership, can also be traced in the participants' accounts of these experiences. Young-Eisendrath and Wehr (1989) write of the

marginalisation of women's experience and ways of knowing in worldviews which are dominated by male approaches to knowledge:

Female experiences and realities have been objectified by male observers, cast into an "otherness" that is alien, exotic, remote, subversive, submissive, or silent. Their validity cannot inherently make sense because the independent male thinker reveals the female person as unknown. (p. 120)

For many of the participants, it was more than ironic that they should be treated as troublemakers when they were trying to raise issues in a respectful way. It was sad and hurtful. It was also a lost opportunity. In *all* cases, their accounts describe concerns and initiatives that were produced by a sense of care for others, including their leaders, and by the ethical hopes and intentions they carried for their lives and their communities. The dominant discourses of authority often positioned those leaders not only to see the participants' efforts as trouble, but also to disregard the ethical hopes and intentions to which they bore witness. As a result, the hegemony of these discourses remained intact.

Another expression of pastoral vigilance—equally effective in protecting hegemonic regimes—is seen in the quarantining practices described by some of the participants. In the separatist church movements described by John and Lynne, for example, salvation was assured only within the discursive and social boundaries of their communities. Any questioning of these boundaries inevitably therefore met a strong negative response, designed to protect community members from contaminating influences. The Exclusive Brethren practice of miscreants and their families being "shut up" was, to recall John's explanation (Chapter 6), in fact based on a law in the Hebrew Scriptures concerning infectious diseases within a household. Whatever pastoral motivation there may have been behind such quarantining practices, they were effective in producing a fear of being viewed as a nonconformist. John was afraid to name his concerns, even to his wife: "I tried once or twice, but I knew that if I was too vocal, she would dob me in."

In other communities too, participants who failed to "toe the line" recalled that other community members and friends were advised by their leaders not to have contact with them, as if their alternative ideas might be contagious. Cathy was warned to take her "hands off the women of the church." Her partner Bill,

too, Cathy noted, was told not “to pray and touch anybody or do any sort of ministry stuff.” Why? Because they had “begun asking questions.”

viii *Taken-for-granted ways of knowing*

In many religious contexts, including those of the participants in this study, knowing and believing “the truth” are matters of central concern. This is especially so when it comes to religious adherents knowing the truth about God, and knowing the will of God. In many cases, the foundation of their religious beliefs and moral norms is assumed to be what their God has revealed (e.g. through the Bible, nature, church councils, divinely inspired insights, visions, or ecstatic utterances). Within this general picture, a variety of ways of knowing are operative. In some communities (such as those led by a Man of God), it is believed that God imparts knowledge through the leader(s) at the top of the hierarchy. In other cases, there may be a more collaborative model of knowing, according to which knowledge is confirmed as divine truth through consensus.

As I have observed throughout this discussion, the claim to have access to divinely given truth skews the balance of power hugely in favour of the claimant(s). Attempts to make meaning of the hegemony of certain discourses and practices within Christian communities therefore need to pay close attention to taken-for-granted ideas about who has access to divine truth and how that access is maintained. In keeping with the monologic positioning described in many of the participants’ accounts (see i above), many of the ways of knowing described in those accounts were hierarchical and non-participatory in character. Most members of their communities, therefore, were not participants in the processes of knowing which produced the normative theological and ethical shaping of their lives.

In Chapter 5, for example, I re-presented Cathy’s description of a “discussion”—concerning the plans she and Bill had to go to a certain theological college—which was foreclosed by the pastor’s definitive “words . . . that the Holy Spirit wasn’t there.” She observed that in their community, “The beliefs were that they heard from God for you.” Selina recalled that her new pastor spoke and acted in ways that suggested, “I’m God’s man for here. God speaks to me before he speaks to anybody else. I know what’s necessary for this church and you guys don’t.”

While Andy and Sarah were not confronted by the same kind of “direct line to God” epistemology in their church communities, they too were called into positions of subjection within power relations which discounted their capacities to know what was best for their communities. Both spoke of how alien this was to their own preferred collaborative approaches to discerning direction with their communities. In Martin’s case it was Roman Catholic tradition and the higher echelons of its leadership which had decided the (non-)future of his calling as a priest. There was a stark contrast between this and the non-hierarchical, participatory approach to decision making which he subsequently observed in a community of Catholic sisters. That group was, Martin reflected, a “community of equals” with a “system of shared leadership.”

Over time, then, the performance of religious authority in such contexts—whether through leaders’ claims to divine revelations, the giving and hearing of sermons, the pronouncing and receiving of truth claims and moral directives, or guidance given in the name of God—both draws its power from, and through iteration (Derrida, 1988) establishes, taken-for-granted ideas about how truth is known, and by whom.

ix *Discursive support from the wider social context*

With reference to Foucault, Hook (2001) speaks of the “highly specific and idiosyncratic matrix of historical and socio-political circumstances, which give rise to, and are part of, the order of discourse” (p. 525). On this basis, Hook critiques approaches to discourse analysis which focus primarily on texts and language, and pay insufficient attention to their socio-historical milieu, including “the multiple institutional supports and various social structures and practices underlying the production of truth” (p. 526). Foucault (1980) himself argued for

analyses in terms of the genealogy of relations of force, strategic developments and tactics. . . . The history which bears and determines us has the form of a war rather than that of a language: relations of power, not relations of meaning (p. 114).

By applying discursive narrative analysis to the participants’ accounts, I have sought to bring such “relations of power” to light, as well as the technologies which have enabled dominant discourses to maintain their hegemony under the appearance of “givenness” or “rightness.” I have also noted traces of dominant

discourses from participants' wider social contexts which have aided the subversion of freedom and justice in their communities.

In relation to gendered forms of positioning, for example, earlier training in counselling and social work had made Cathy and Jenny aware of the history of patriarchy in Western society, and both recognised this in their experiences of religiously framed calls to submission in their marriages. I noted earlier in this chapter discourses of male sexual needs and entitlement which were reflected in Lynne's account of sexual abuse by the Man of God. Cathy acknowledged that lifelong exposure to discourses of male leadership within her family and society created difficulties for her as a woman when it came to questioning authority. As noted earlier, Selina readily connected her experience of male power in the church with her inscription by wider social discourse: "as a woman, you're very aware that basically men hold the power in society." To make a man feel threatened "is awful. . . . Because you feel that you are actually somehow going against the whole kind of given order."

In The Fellowship, Lynne encountered a form of exclusivism directed at gay and lesbian people. Again this was couched in religious terms, but provided a vehicle for homophobic practices of exclusion. In the authoritative practices which Andy experienced in relation to his senior minister he recognised the presence of discourses of management and success familiar from the rhetoric of his denomination, as well as business models, management theory and "high profile Pentecostal" styles of leadership. The discourses which decided Martin's future were ultimately anchored in the historical traditions of the Roman Catholic Church, which in turn had their roots in ancient Greek philosophy, the Holy Roman Empire, and centuries of monastic life.

Concluding comments

Within Christian communities, how is it that some regimes of power and knowledge can subvert the call to freedom and justice which is pervasive in longstanding streams of Christian tradition?

The discussion in this section has offered a range of insights which address this first research question. I have highlighted the construction of monologic subject positions and serviceable others, practices of entitlement, and disciplinary practices, as powerful discursive technologies of subjugation in the participants'

communities. I have shown how such technologies gain considerable leverage not only from dominant social discourses of masculinity and leadership, but also from the religious language, metaphors, and notions of God (as all-seeing, all-knowing, exacting, and punitive) which are embedded in the dominant discourses of those communities. Finally, I have delineated five technologies which help to ensure that these discourses maintain their hegemony within Christian communities. Taken together, these nine technologies constitute an organic system of control which efficiently replicates its own discursive DNA, and inhibits resistance, deviance, and change. This helps to explain how readily the ethical imperatives of freedom and justice can be subverted in Christian contexts.

8.3 Accounting for resistance

The preceding discussion of discursive technologies of subjugation and hegemony gives further impetus to my second research question: “What has enabled some people to resist the practices of religious authority constructed by such regimes?” I address this question by identifying four relevant threads within my analysis of the participants’ accounts, and connecting these with the theoretical discussions of agency and resistance reviewed in Chapter 3. Again I draw on selected examples from the participants’ narratives.

i *The felt effects of subjugation and discursive contradiction*

Participants’ narratives of resistance invariably included striking descriptions of the effects on them of the ways in which they were being positioned by others, or of seeing others positioned in similar ways. Descriptions of these effects included the following (interrelated) aspects:

Cognitive responses: confusion, disbelief, doubt, suicidal thoughts.

Affective responses: shock, anger, sadness, powerlessness, fear, anxiety, intimidation, shame, withdrawal, flatness, depression, despair.

Embodied responses: tears, sickness, pain, tiredness, outrage, desire to escape.

Recourse to vivid images and metaphors: being asked to lie down in a shallow coffin, being crippled, being squeezed by a python, being damaged, being plunged into a black hole.

The points in the interview narratives where these descriptions were included often seemed to mark important stages in the participants' storying of their movement toward resistance. So, part of the meaning which the narrators made of their resistance was that experiencing (and witnessing) the subjugating effects of the discourses and practices of religious authority in their communities had amplified a sense that something was wrong and needed to change. Cathy's account of her embodied response to the way a woman in her church was treated by the pastor provides a clear example of this, with its references to being "shocked" and "wild" and "banging away" on the piano, leading then to, "I came to a point where I thought, 'I've got to see him, I've got to confront him.'" After difficult conversations with her leaders, Cathy recalled, she became unwell. Again she regarded her bodily experience as "significant," that is, as *signifying* things to her that required her to make a choice: "I had to make a choice, to carry on and grow in it, I suppose. It was a significant sickness."

In recalling a time when very restrictive conditions were imposed on people's contribution to the life of her church, including her own involvement, Selina's metaphorical description of the effects involved her body—it was like being asked to lie down in a shallow coffin—and included a strong sense that she would have to leave the church: "I don't think I can fit my body in there."

After just one year in The Fellowship, Lynne recalled, there were times when her "whole body just wanted to run away." The emotional effects produced by her leaders' sexual demands were very powerful, and accompanied by a strong sense of wrongness, but fear and confusion left her paralysed and unable to resist: "I was just so absolutely frozen in fear and shock and horror that I could not for several months, as I said, comprehend." Lynne noted that her eventual exit from the movement was sparked by what she observed in terms of the effects on her mind and body—she was becoming increasingly withdrawn, depressed, and suicidal.

While this emphasis on embodied effects and knowledge was especially prominent in the female participants' accounts, it was not absent from those of the male participants. Andy, for example, spoke of the effects of being under authoritarian leadership using the language of anger, outrage, being sick, tired, stressed, damaged, and abused. There was a period when these effects left him

feeling unable to resist, but eventually, he recalled, his mounting anger “got [him] going.”

Without seeking to abstract a general theory from these recalled experiences, I suggest that they share some significant features which help to flesh out the theoretical reflections on agency and resistance offered in Chapter 3. First, it seems to me that the participants’ frequent mention of embodied effects (including strong affective responses) as an impetus to their resistance can be connected with an aspect of subjective experience which Weedon (1997) refers to as “distance.” Subjectification works “most efficiently,” Weedon argues, when the subject position offered is “fully identified by the individual with her interests” (p. 109). Correspondingly, resistance is produced when there is *distance* between the position offered and the interests of the subject. These interests are discursively constituted, but because the subject has a memory, and an already discursively constructed sense of identity, she may “resist particular interpellations or produce new versions of meaning from the conflicts and contradictions between existing discourses” (p. 102). My analysis shows that when participants were called by others into subject positions which distanced them from important ethical intentions they held in producing their lives (interests), this distancing was often experienced in the body. According to Davies (2006), the constitutive effect of discourse resides “not just in language but in the affect of the material body” (p. 90). This is consistent with the notion of embodied discursive inscription described in Chapter 3 (section 3.3). When people are called into subject positions within multiple and contradictory discourses, these contradictions—experiences of distance in Weedon’s terms—are registered in the body.

Lynne was attracted to, and for several years subjugated by, The Fellowship because its rhetoric resonated with her interest in gaining knowledge that she could use to help others. She soon became aware of “distance” between other spiritual concerns she held (such as respect for difference) and some of the practices of authority within the movement, and this awareness was felt in her “whole body.” As that sense of distance increased she engaged in small acts of resistance, until a tipping point was reached that resulted in more significant resistance, culminating in her withdrawal from the movement.

Davies (1991) suggests that people may struggle to change their positioning because of “the inscription in one’s body of the ways of being that are appropriate

to the subject positions usually taken up” (pp. 49-50). She offers a personal example of listening to a seminar on women’s exclusion from ordained ministry, and momentarily experiencing in her own body a re-inscription by an old patriarchal discourse: “It was . . . an extraordinary feeling to be reinscribed, even momentarily, as wrong, deformed, and as in error in seeking to position myself as a legitimate member of the public world” (p. 50). Positively, my analysis of the participants’ accounts shows that such experiences may also have effects on behalf of resistance. Deeply inscribed ways of being that reflect long held ethical interests, for example, may assert themselves in embodied experiences of distance (or discursive contradiction) which energise people for resistance and change. This was certainly evident in the way participants described their responses to prolonged experiences of monologic practices of religious authority. There may also be a resonance here with White’s (2007) therapeutic use of “distancing tasks,” which are intended to help clients achieve space from the immediacy of oppressive experiences. Questions which produce a sense of distance in this way can create space for clients to “play a more significant part in influencing the course of their own development and, in so doing, to more fully inhabit their own lives” (p. 275).

A second aspect of the felt effects described by the participants which invites theoretical reflection concerns the moments at which their resistance became more overt or definitive. A number of the narratives showed that the felt effects of subjugation were present for some time before decisive acts of resistance occurred. My earlier discussion of technologies of subjugation and hegemony help to explain why such overt expressions of resistance may have been delayed. What was it that contributed to their emergence, *despite* such technologies? In some cases, as noted already, it was witnessing the way other people were being treated that participants pointed to as providing the final impetus for change. In Jenny’s account of what “tipped it” for her, an other-centred sense of outrage at what was being done to “other people,” along with traces of a gendered discourse of self-denial which may previously have been holding her back, is evident:

So it was more offence that impacts other people, probably, or stuff that he was saying about God, rather more than what he did to me. . . . It was only when I saw

his treatment of people—that tipped it for me. . . . I suppose that was hard evidence in front of my eyes.

This pattern of a protracted period of subjugation eventually reaching a turning point is evident in several of the interview narratives. I suggest that Butler's (1997) emphasis on the role of *reiteration* in producing both subjectification and a sense of agency is relevant here.

If conditions of power are to persist, they must be reiterated; the subject is precisely the site of such reiteration, a repetition that is never merely mechanical. . . . The reiteration of power not only temporalizes the conditions of subordination but shows these conditions to be, not static structures, but temporalized—active and productive. . . . The perspective of power alters from what is always working on us from the outside and from the outset to what constitutes the sense of agency at work in our present acts and the future expanse of their effects (p. 16).

Earlier in this chapter, in discussing technologies of hegemony, I drew on Butler's (1997) argument that subjection exploits a longing for social existence, "where existence is always conferred from elsewhere" (p. 21). Butler suggests that this desire for existence leads people to embrace noxious and even injurious discursive positions: "I am led to embrace the terms that injure me because they constitute me socially" (p. 104). However, Butler argues, the process of subjection is never fixed: "a subject only remains a subject through a reiteration . . . and this dependency of the subject on repetition for coherence may constitute that subject's incoherence, its incomplete character" (p. 99). This accumulated fraying of coherence through reiteration, Butler suggests, contributes to the possibility of agency and resistance, and eventually the subversion of the subjectifying power.

In Lynne's case, the more she subjected herself to repeated workshops and teaching sessions within The Fellowship, having been drawn into them by the "carrot" of promised benefits, the more she became aware that these amounted to only "a plastic carrot ... it just left a bad taste in my mouth and didn't satisfy me." The further she was taken into the inner sanctum of the hierarchy of leadership, the more troubled she felt by what she saw and experienced (including the period of sexual abuse she endured). Through reiteration, then, the experience of "distance" was magnified for Lynne, and the hegemony of The Fellowship's ideas and practices of authority was undermined.

Jenny recalled that one of the effects of her repeated exposure to the teaching within her church was that certain key phrases began to stand out. “So those to me began to be keywords that I always felt suspicious, you know, when I heard them.” This growing awareness in turn produced questions as to the origins of these ideas, and these led to research which was ultimately “liberating.”

The contribution of felt effects to the participants’ resistance is a thread which emerged strongly, and rather unexpectedly, in my analysis of their narratives. In the light of the theoretical reflections I have offered here, I suggest that this finding is significant, both in relation to my research question, and in highlighting such effects as observable indicators of distance between the actual practices of a community and the ethical hopes and intentions of its constituents.

ii *The resources found in alternative knowledges*

Many of the participants spoke of having recourse to alternative knowledges in resisting the subject positions offered to them. By alternative knowledges I mean knowledges which are not produced by, or at least do not serve the interests of, the dominant discourses which support authoritative practices within the participants’ communities. Foucault (1980) writes of an “*insurrection of subjugated knowledges*,” referring to historical knowledge which has been obscured, and also to “naive knowledges . . . local popular knowledges” (pp. 81-82; emphasis in the original). His interest is in the role of subjugated knowledges in sabotaging the hegemony of “global, *totalitarian* theories” (p. 80; emphasis in the original). My interest is in the way participants’ alternative knowledges helped to produce and support their resistance to hegemonic discourses and monologic or dominating practices of religious authority.

As noted earlier in this chapter, the question of whose knowledges were recognised and incorporated within their communities was an aspect of the monologic positioning which formed a common and significant thread in participants’ narratives. If the felt effects of this positioning signalled to the participants that *something* was wrong (the experience of distance), and also energised their resistance, it was the “insurrection” of various forms of alternative knowledge which several spoke of as giving *meaning* to what was happening and what needed to happen. In practice, this was not described as an ordered or unified sequence of experiences. Often participants recalled times when they were confused and pulled in contradictory directions by competing position calls. But,

as shown in my re-presentations of their narratives, this fracturing of subjectivity itself helped to prepare the ground for resistance.

Knowledges which functioned in this way for the participants included exposure to alternative discourses gained through personal research, study or training; narrative resources from other times and places in their lives; questions and perspectives which emerged through interaction with others; and embodied knowledge (connected with the embodied effects referred to above), together with intuitive or spiritual awareness.

Knowledge gained through personal research, study or training. The theological training which Bill had undertaken before returning to the church community of his youth helped to make him aware of abusive “power-over stuff” that he had previously taken for granted as normal. This supported him in raising questions with the leaders about the way power was being used. John’s exposure to a wider discursive world through his studies at school and university raised many questions about the Exclusive Brethren’s claim that they held the truth while other churches and “the world” were wrong. Lynne’s persistent questioning of some aspects of the teaching of The Fellowship was a product of her upbringing in Christian contexts where the Bible was studied. Cathy and Jenny had training in counselling during the period of their involvements in their church communities. This again prompted questions as to the way religious authority was being used, especially in relation to vulnerable people in their communities. Cathy, Jenny and John spoke of doing their own research, to pursue their questions further, and to help shed light on ideas and practices that were troubling them.

With the exception of Bill, who had spent eight years away from his church, it is interesting to note that in most of these participants’ accounts the alternative knowledges which they were gaining through study and research travelled alongside their formation as subjects within the dominant discourses of their contexts. These knowledges produced questions and troubled the hegemony of the dominant discourses, but this did not amount to outright insurrection. As I have argued, it was usually their experience of the felt effects of their own and others’ subjugation, along with the process of reiteration, which triggered participants’ decisive acts of resistance. Alternative knowledges helped to prepare the way by

magnifying the experience of distance, and provided a valuable resource when the time came to take a stand against the subjugating practices of authority.

Narrative resources from other times and places in their lives. Here I have in mind the memories and stories which participants held in relation to their experiences beyond the church contexts where resistance occurred. When Cathy was called into the submissive position of “second place” as a woman, for example, she was able to draw on counter-stories of her own competence as a single woman working in a challenging context overseas: “I guess my experiences [there] showed me that I could do things.” The call to submission also brought forward memories of the felt effects of similar position calls in that earlier context—“I think I nearly had a nervous breakdown”—intensifying the influence of the effects she experienced in the church. The presence of these stories, and others, produced an eventually subversive multiplicity in Cathy’s subjectivity, in which she experienced a position call “to try and be the perfect wife, the perfect mother,” and at the same time a feeling of confusion as how this fitted with the memories of her life overseas. When a new leader introduced monologic practices of authority to Selina’s church, and claimed a divine mandate for doing so, Selina recalled her earlier experiences of inclusive, dialogic styles of leadership. She remembered these experiences as having been life-giving, in contrast to the effects she was experiencing under the new regime.

Questions and perspectives which emerged through encounter with other subjectivities. Drawing on what Wittgenstein has to say about “participative thinking,” Shotter (2001) argues that any account of social change must include the importance of our “immediate, spontaneous, living responses to the others and otherness in our surrounding circumstances” (p. 343). This is a helpful reminder that, given the discursive production of subjectivity, it is important to notice not just the discourses in which a person may be positioned, but the webs of relationships and social transactions within which meanings emerge. This connects with my account of intertextuality and subjectification (Chapter 3, section 3.2). One person’s re-authoring of their identity or life narrative may disturb the ways in which others are positioned in their own discursive contexts.

In giving an account of their resistance, several participants recalled significant encounters and conversations with others. Sometimes these others were outside of the participant’s religious community, and their encounters with

otherness invited the participants to see things from a different discursive perspective. John's time at university not only exposed him to alternative academic ideas, but also to encounters with people who breathed otherness. He met an atheist who "seemed more like what I imagined Jesus would have been like than anybody else around," and suggested authors whose ideas helped John see the Bible in a new light. Against the wishes of her leaders, Lynne visited her mother regularly. Without telling her what to do, her mother kept raising a question which eventually contributed to her decision to leave The Fellowship: "Is it going to get any better?" Martin's relationship with Anna led to an enormous discursive upheaval in his life and vocation. His interactions with writers, priests from other denominations and a community of Catholic sisters all contributed to the emergence of new perspectives on the Church, his calling and his God.

For other participants, it was conversations with others within their communities—people who shared their experiences of subjection—which helped to support their concerns and acts of resistance. I think here of the people who came to talk to Cathy and Bill about being "dealt to," and of Andy's leadership team who supported him, not to mention his talk of being "comrades" together in the "prison camp." Andy's use of these terms hints at a grim humour, shared under adverse circumstances. This touches on an aspect of corporate resistance which is described by Scott (1990) as the "hidden transcript" of resistance: "Every subordinate group creates, out of its ordeal, a 'hidden transcript' that represents a critique of power spoken behind the back of the dominant" (p. xii). Such resistance is expressed in forms such as gossip, jokes, storytelling or excessive politeness, by which people help one another to see the cracks and contradictions in the supposedly unified, unassailable regimes of authority in their contexts. As Manki (2003) notes, acts of resistance can "take place on the very terrain of power/knowledge, they do not, as many critics have suggested, have to exist outside the regime of power" (p. 59).

Embodied and intuitive/spiritual awareness. I have already drawn attention to the important place given to the embodied effects of subjugation in relation to the participants' experiences of distance and associated turning points in their narratives of resistance. I highlighted the *sign*-ificance of these effects for several of the participants, who concluded that what they were experiencing in their bodies was a form of knowledge which deserved to be heeded and acted on. So,

for example, Cathy on several occasions used phrases such as “my gut, my whole body, is telling me there’s something wrong.” Lock and Strong (2010) note Merleau-Ponty’s view “that we *are* our bodies, and that our lived experience in this body denies a fundamental duality between subject and object, mind and body, etc” (p. 49). The world and consciousness “meet in our bodies,” so that the body seems to have an intelligence which is not directly available to consciousness or rational thought (p. 50).

In a related way—or perhaps it is the same way expressed in different language—several participants emphasised the contribution to their eventual resistance of ways of knowing which might be described as intuitive or spiritual. After her house moving experience, for example, Jenny recalled thinking that “people were being kind to us, even though we’d done wrong.” At the same time, she was aware that “there was still a spark in me that knew we hadn’t.” On the one hand, the dominant discourse of covering produced knowledge of deviance and possible punishment by God. On the other hand, another kind of knowledge, attributed by Jenny to a God-given spark of awareness, contradicted the guilt and fear. There were times when she wanted to share such God-given insights with her leaders, when these were relevant to the life of the church, but usually they were not welcome. I concluded my presentation of Lynne’s story with her strong statement of intent to honour these forms of knowing in any future experience of authority:

To . . . submit blindly without questioning is—I would like to think I would never be so stupid to . . . go against my, my, my inner gut, and go against my, my intuition, or my heart and my soul.

The significant contribution of embodied and intuitive/spiritual forms of knowledge to participants’ acts of resistance is consonant with Davies’ (1991) emphasis on the value of non-unified, non-rational and unconscious ways of knowing. She argues that assertions of the rational over the irrational, and the conscious over the unconscious, are expressions of humanist and masculinist discourse. It was certainly the experience of several of the women I interviewed that their ways of knowing were at best discounted, and at worst labelled as dangerous. Their accounts confirm Davies’ suggestion that a different form of agency is found

by allowing oneself to be aware of the contradictions, the discursive constitution of the self as contradictory (by claiming rather than disowning the unconscious and the irrational elements of subjectivity), one may have access to powerful ways of being that are not the result of normative judgement from within the dominant discourses made by those positioned powerfully within them. (p. 45)

It was not only the content of participants' alternative knowledges which had the capacity to disrupt the hegemony of dominant discourses, but also the ways in which their knowing bypassed the hierarchical channel of knowledge held in place by the dominant discourses of authority. In presenting Jenny's story, I referred to one of the insights she felt God had given her—a picture of how power and knowledge might function dialogically in the church. In this picture, no one person had the right unilaterally to tell others what God thinks or wants. Rather, knowledge was distributed within the community, and “if the person happens to say, ‘What about—?’ I could say, ‘Well, I think—’.”

This discussion reinforces the reflexive insight with which I began this chapter: that people do not come to their involvements with their communities as blank slates, but with discursive histories which include experiences, knowledges and ethical intentions. The tenacity of the latter, despite prolonged experiences of subjugation, is the focus of the next point.

iii *The tenacity of ethical hopes and intentions*

In the previous section, I outlined four aspects of monologic positioning which were consistently at the heart of participants' accounts of their struggles with the practices of religious authority in their communities. I showed how these contrasted with the ethical hopes and intentions which they held for their lives and their communities. I have already suggested that repeatedly experiencing the felt effects of their own positioning, and of witnessing the effects of the subjugation of others, not only amplified participants' general awareness *that* something was “wrong,” but invited them to reflect consciously on *what* it was that was wrong. These repeated experiences therefore became opportunities for the participants not only to notice and reflect on the distance between their hopes and intentions and the ways in which they were being positioned, but also to renew their commitment to those hopes and intentions. In this light, resistance is more than just opposition, or a reaction, to something; it is, explicitly or implicitly, an affirmation of something else. This can be observed in several of the examples I referred to in

the earlier discussion of felt effects, including Cathy's visceral response to witnessing violent forms of so-called ministry to women in the church. She recalled being shocked by the strength of that response. As she expressed the energy produced in her body, a clarity of cognitive awareness came to her as to what was wrong, ethically. This awareness was framed within the discourse of abuse, which was familiar to her from her work in the women's centre. She also became aware of the action she needed to take on behalf of the women concerned, and on behalf of justice.

A second way I account for the tenacity of the participants' ethical intentions and hopes concerns their relationship to the texts, theologies, and spiritual practices in which they located the sources of these convictions. This again entailed a process of reiteration, not now through recurring acts of subjugation, which reiterated the dominant discourses of religious authority, but through repeated acts of hearing, reading, reciting, singing, ritualising, and praying texts in which themes of justice and freedom were embedded. There is no suggestion here of stepping outside of discourse, but of being produced within competing discourses, each of which contributes to the production of subjects through processes of "sedimented iterability" (Butler, 1995, p. 134). Added to this, I recall White's (1990) notion of the indeterminacy which is at work in the reading of every text, especially in the presence of metaphor.

The process of subjectification within a given network of power/knowledge is, Butler argues,

open to resignification, redeployment, subversive citation from within, and interruption and inadvertent convergences with other such networks. "Agency" is to be found precisely at such junctures where discourse is renewed (p. 135).

Both "subversive citation from within" and "interruption" were evident in the participants' stories. An aspect of the dominant discourses in most religious contexts is the expectation that members of the community will engage in practices such as those I have named above. In Christian contexts this is often referred to as "liturgy." In some churches, liturgy is formalised in prayer books and rituals, while in other churches practices vary from one occasion to another. In most of the churches to which the participants belonged, it is likely that people were also encouraged to engage in private spiritual practices, such as reading the Bible and praying, as well as joining in corporate practices in church services. The

intention of regular immersion in liturgical practices is undoubtedly to do with the formation, that is, the subjectification, of worshippers within the particular dominant religious discourses of the community. But the effects can be *subversive* of this subjectification when the texts involved embody not only discourses which inscribe submissive ways of being, but also material which resonates with the ethical intentions they have for their lives. This shows again how the possibilities of producing one's life with agency, that is, *authority*, are magnified through encounter with discursive complexity. This subversive potential of liturgical texts evokes Derrida's (1997) idea of deconstruction as the creation of space for the emergence of new or suppressed meanings which are to be found in the midst of a powerful dominant discourse.

I speculate that this liturgical process of reiteration was a factor in all of the participants' resistance, whether or not it was associated with technologies of subjugation. This is evident in several of their narratives. John looked back with fondness to his early memories of Exclusive Brethren meetings where the Bible would be read and interpreted by the community, rather than by one person as happened later. Under the latter regime, he continued to read and reflect on the Bible for himself, with the result that he saw the increasing separatism in the movement as "getting right away from what Christianity is all about." Similarly, Lynne's knowledge and reading of the Bible led her to ask questions about the teaching and practices of The Fellowship, on behalf of her own values of healing and compassion,

hoping desperately that they'd come around, and they'd actually see that, you know, we *are* to look after the weak people, and we *are* to help the sick people. . . . And so I was desperately trying and trying and trying and trying and trying to get them to actually behave according to the standard of the compassion of Jesus.

Sarah spoke of being supported through her difficulties with the "power sector" in her church texts from the Bible and in particular an "awareness of justice." As Andy engaged in silent prayer in an empty church, he called to mind the biblical story of the exodus, a narrative of liberation. This supported his hope that his and others' experiences of injustice and domination by his senior minister would one day come to an end. Participation in an Easter service, with its themes of death and resurrection, marked the day of decision to leave his church and not return. As noted at the end of Chapter 7, the experience of an Easter service was significant

for Martin also, in enabling him to reimagine his vocation as a priest, rather than allowing the dominant discourses of his tradition to invalidate that vocation altogether. His own words, framed in the language of his tradition, offer a theological restatement of the point I have been making in relation to the potential for liturgical practices to support resistance:

The sacraments are powerful sources of grace; of God's presence coming into people's lives, setting them free, and helping them to grow.

iv *“Lines of flight” toward life*

The final perspective I offer in accounting for the participants' resistance is more speculative in nature than those considered so far. It concerns the language of life and death which featured in some of the participants' stories and is noted in my discussion of the felt effects of subjugation. *Death* was named, in almost premonitory terms, as a feared spiritual or metaphorical consequence of accepting complete subjugation. In contrast, *life* was named by several participants as being God's purpose for human beings, and located in freedom from subjugation. In that light, acts of resistance to subjugation are an implicit affirmation and expression of a desire for life. In re-presenting Jenny's story in Chapter 5—Jenny who feared that God might kill her for her rebelliousness—I cited her concluding reflection on what she considered to be of greatest importance. It bears repeating here:

I mean if the power of God is life, you know? And joy. And love. And all that stuff. . . . Well then, it isn't evident in that system of thinking. . . . Like the other day . . . I was walking—I go walking in the morning—and there was a solid concrete or tarmac pavement, and there was a crack. And this plant was growing up? That's it, isn't it? Life will overcome.

Weedon's idea of distance, experienced in the body, and Butler's and Davies' emphasis on subjects' vulnerability to the withholding of recognition of their existence, help to make meaning of the negative effects of subjugation and the fear of a kind of death. However, I wonder if they offer an adequate account of the visceral terror reflected, for example, in these words of Selina's, again cited in Chapter 5:

I get very nervous if I feel that anybody's telling me what to do. I mean, I have an irrational, you know, response to that—reaction to that. . . . For me it's just sheer

survival. It is just trying to be able to—I've been haunted for decades by this enormous sense of annihilation, you know, that I will actually cease to exist, which was very frightening and very powerful.

Equally, I wonder if purely discursive accounts of subjectivity and subjectification satisfactorily explain the euphoric sense of freedom and *joy* which characterised some participants' accounts of leaving the contexts which they had found to be so oppressive. For example:

We both got in the car and drove far enough away from the church, and just went, "Yes!" You know? We both came away just, just very, very happy with the decision we made. It was an incredible sense of release (Cathy).

I thought, "Oh, we haven't got a covering!" You know? . . . It was amazing! It was beautiful! It was like, "Wow!" (Cathy)

I remember really clearly walking down the central aisle of the church, and as I stepped outside, it was like this explosion in my head. I physically felt the freedom of it. It was like I went—whoah! It was physical. It was—it shocked me. I physically felt this great weight, this huge weight, lift right off my head, and it was just like a total like clear sky straight up to God. And all this garbage just gone. It was amazing! (Selina).

We never went back. We never went back. It was just such a relief to be somewhere where they hadn't lost the plot! (Andy)

In raising questions about the adequacy of purely discursive accounts for these recalled experiences, I am not at all arguing for a return to humanistic notions of an essential "true self" which must find autonomy for full self-actualisation. Sampson (1993) and others have shown that such autonomy is illusory and often predicated on injustice. Nor am I suggesting that the *meanings* attributed to these experiences, or the words used to describe them, are anything but discursively constructed. Harré and Gillett (1994) acknowledge the importance of felt physiological states in relation to emotion, but note that these are "diffuse and indeterminate" (p. 150). Meaning is attributed to such states, and communicated to others, through socially produced displays, vocabulary, and social actions. Without wanting to make universal or essentialist claims about human nature, I want to observe the strong connection in several of the participants' accounts

between the physical character of their reported experiences and what was experienced as a deeply felt need to retain the capability of acting and making decisions for the production of one's own life.

Intent on avoiding any notion of interiority, Foucault's subject, according to Bell (2006), is "co-extensive with his or her outside" (p. 214). In other words, "what is readable on the body is only ever the embodiment, momentary if seamlessly reiterated, of forces that emanate from without" (p. 215). Butler (1997), however, notes an ambiguity in what Foucault says about the body.

Although Foucault wants on occasion to refute the possibility of a body which is not produced through power relations, sometimes his explanations require a body to maintain a materiality ontologically distinct from the power relations that take it as a site of investment. Indeed, the term "site" seemingly appears in this phrase without warrant, for what is the relation between the body as *site* and the investments which that site is said to receive or bear? (pp. 89-90; emphasis in the original)

Butler develops these observations by theorising the psychic life of persons, but I want simply to stay with the notion of a materiality which is "ontologically distinct" from the embodiment of power relations. Nothing can be said about this materiality, and no meaning can be attributed to it, which is not discursively constructed. Nor can it be known in any direct sense, unmediated by discourse. Yet it seems to me that the discursive idea which people call "life," and which they attribute to various forms of materiality, human and otherwise, names an autopoietic entity which tenaciously resists extinction, reproduces itself, and seeks out the conditions of its own flourishing wherever possible. If these strategies exert themselves through human bodies which are also, in Foucault's terms, "sites" of discursive production, then an aspect of resistance is introduced which is a response at a physiological level to a perceived threat to one's existence as a living, choosing subject. The perception and the naming of such a threat is discursively produced and communicated (as in Selina's "shallow coffin" or "enormous sense of annihilation"), but I suggest that the response of the body to such threats, or to the cessation of danger, might usefully be considered within this larger "life" perspective, in connection with an analytics of discourse, power and subjectivity.

At this point, the work of Deleuze helpfully complements that of Foucault. While there are many points of agreement between Deleuze and Foucault, there are also differences which bear on this study of power and resistance. Whereas Foucault offers an analysis of the way in which power and discourse operate at the micro-level of subjects, Deleuze's (1988) interest is in the operations of desire, and of "Life," on a macro-scale (p. 100). According to Colebrook (2006), "This radical sense of life—the life that is not that of the bounded organism with its own life—is what Deleuze and Guattari refer to as the 'body without organs'" (p. 2). The impetus for life and becoming does not originate with individual beings, but rather acts *through* things, including persons. Deleuze and Guattari (1987) speak metaphorically of the "rhizomatic" movement of becoming: open, productive, bifurcating, non-directed, networked processes. These processes are sometimes blocked or territorialized, and this is where power becomes visible as stratification and sedimentation (Seigworth, 2005, p. 187). On the other hand, Deleuze, with Parnet (1987), writes of "lines of flight" which disrupt this stratification, allowing for new possibilities and rhizomatic connections (p. 125). Bell (2006) construes such lines of flight as "a movement of creativity" toward life, and sees this as a balance to a purely co-extensive view of the subject:

What has been, if not denied, then bracketed, namely the creativity of things, their self-activity, indeed the very insistence of *life*, is put back into the frame. (p. 217)

In developing an ethic of freedom and justice in Chapter 3, I cited Winslade's (2009) reflections on the insistence of life, and even the presence of joy, in Deleuze's reading of Foucault. For Deleuze, Foucault writes with "the joy of wanting to destroy whatever mutilates life" (p. 337). Returning to the focus of this project, and my ethical intentions in pursuing it, there are rhizomatic connections here with my own desire to contribute to the subversion of "whatever mutilates life" within Christian communities. There is a connection also with the final story presented in Chapter 7, and Martin's reflection on what it was that he resisted in the circumscriptions of his Church: "I think I've come to see that Christian life is more than anything about the letting be of being."

Winslade (2009) also draws parallels between Foucault's focus in his later work and that of Michael White in his narrative practice. Transposed from the therapeutic realm to the religious contexts in which I work, his words speak eloquently for my own ethical intentions and hopes in this work:

Like Foucault himself, [White] travels through the impasse where power produces a sense of dark outrage at the presence of injustice to an experience of the effect of power producing a consciousness of the spiritual struggle for freedom from its influence, a struggle that might be pursued along a line of flight to some new territory of living and of therapeutic practice. (p. 338)

Concluding comments

My second research question was: *What has enabled some people to resist the practices of religious authority constructed by such regimes?*

The speculative perspective outlined in the immediately preceding discussion suggests that resistance may be viewed not simply as a subject's mechanical response to the action of power, but as an outcome of "the insistence of life," in Deleuzian terms. From that perspective, acts of resistance which occur at junctures where processes of becoming have been blocked and territorialised are "lines of flight" toward life. For me, this adds richness to the Foucauldian account of resistance, and offers a way to describe the visceral experiences of relief and joy which may occur when impasses to life are broken through.

To move from Deleuze's "body without organs" to particular embodied acts of resistance by the participants in this study has, however, required a more nuanced account than this macroscopic picture provides. My discussion in this section has highlighted the important role played by the felt effects of subjugation in stories of resistance. Participants identified their awareness of these effects—in themselves and in others—as a significant catalyst in their movement toward resistance. I have suggested that these effects may be viewed as embodied indicators of the distance between subjects' ethical interests and the ways in which they were being positioned within the dominant discourses of their context. The reiteration of subjugating position calls has the potential to amplify awareness of this distance, and to bring it to conscious cognitive realisation. This realisation, together with the energising quality of some embodied effects, seemed to lead to a turning point, where a person's ethical interests became more significant in the production of their subjectivity than the interests exploited by the strategies of subjugation.

In line with Foucauldian theory, the insurrection of alternative knowledges has also been shown to contribute significantly to participants' resistance to

subjugating practices of authority in their communities. Knowledges gained through training, research, experiences in other times and places, participatory meaning making, embodied awareness, and intuitive/spiritual insights have the potential to shed new light on what is happening, disrupt unified subjectivities through contradiction, and subvert hegemonic truth claims.

Finally, participants' courageous acts of resistance bear testimony to the tenacity of the ethical interests and hopes which they held for the production of their lives individually and in community. I have argued that this tenacity was supported by a twofold process of reiteration: repeated experiences of monologic positioning provoked a renewed awareness of the ethical hopes which they initially held, while liturgical practices with cognitive, affective, and physical aspects entailed recurring exposure to themes of freedom and justice.

Chapter 9: Concluding reflections

Disturbed by people's stories about their experiences of religious authority in Christian communities, I embarked on this study in the hope of shedding light on two questions:

- i Within Christian communities, how is it that some regimes of power and knowledge can subvert the call to freedom and justice which is pervasive in longstanding streams of Christian tradition?
- ii What has enabled some people to resist the practices of religious authority constructed by such regimes?

Pre-modern approaches to problematic practices of religious authority viewed them as lapses of moral and spiritual character, best dealt with behind the closed doors of the church. Modern analyses considered the issues in terms of deficiencies and/or pathologies, which were evaluated according to professional, psychological and theological paradigms. Both pre-modern and modern approaches showed little regard for the role of taken-for-granted ideas and vested interests in the wider church and social culture in constructing the problem. Feminist analyses of the historical, cultural, and theological roots of the oppression of women in Christian communities have spoken into that gap.

My intention in undertaking this study was to complement the work done by feminist critics by considering oppressive practices of religious authority that affected men as well as women, and to account for stories of resistance to such practices—an issue which has received less attention in feminist discussions of religious contexts. I argued that a poststructuralist conceptual framework was well suited to the task of analysing the complex relationships between ideas, language, interests, power relations, and individual subjectivities. By developing a research methodology based on this framework, and applying it to local stories of resistance to religious authority, I hoped to show how problematic practices of authority were socially constructed, and to shed light on how resistance to these practices was produced. A further intention in addressing both research questions was to contribute to efforts to develop Christian communities in ways that support, rather than subvert, freedom and justice. To that end, I decided to include the re-presentation of key aspects of the participants' narratives as a central feature of my methodology. In addition to making available the results of my

analysis, my hope was that foregrounding the participants' own accounts of what had happened in their communities might itself be a contribution to change.

In light of these hopes and intentions, I now briefly assess the strengths and limitations of my research design and name the significant contributions of this study.

9.1 Reflections on the research design

The decision to approach this study by means of interviews, rather than a purely literature-based thesis, produced the outcomes for which I had hoped. The range of participants which emerged from the selection process resulted in a rich diversity of stories to analyse. In developing my methodology, I reflected on the argument that a focus on personal narratives and subjectivities would distract attention from the historical and cultural production of power relations—repeating the weakness of the modern approaches I had critiqued in Chapter 2. In the early stages of my analysis, I did find myself being captivated by the stories. But as I persisted with further iterations of analysis, the discursive aspects became clearer and more incisive. The ongoing challenge was to maintain a focus on the discourses which had produced the narratives, and the events recalled in the narratives, as the subjects of my analysis, rather than the narrators and their affecting stories.

One limitation of the methodology that I designed for this project was acknowledged and discussed in Chapter 4 (section 4.2), under the heading, “A note on excluded voices.” The decision not to include interviews with church leaders about their experiences of exercising authority, or of having people resist their authority, was intentional. I outlined the practical reasons for this in the earlier discussion. To conduct such a study in the future would bring fresh insights in relation to my research questions, and would helpfully complement the present study. However, I do not consider that this limitation undermines the validity of the findings of this thesis, nor does it detract from their significance.

In hindsight, it would have been valuable to include a brief follow up interview with each participant, in relation to gender. Without the opportunity for this kind of meta-reflection, I have found it difficult to assess what effects gender may have had in the co-production of the interview narratives. The fact that I didn't see this as important at the time invites me to reflect on how I was

positioned to regard a research interview as an ungendered process. It was, I suspect, an instance of the disembodied form of knowing sometimes referred to as “the universalizing male gaze” (Sampson, 1993, p. 8). Sampson contrasts this with Code’s (1991) call to see knowledge as “both embodied—recognizing, therefore, that a person’s sex is important—and built upon an interpersonal rather than an isolated and abstract point of view” (p. 9). I was certainly aware of the importance of gendered discourses and positioning insofar as they formed part of the participants’ stories, but ironically put this to the back of my mind in relation to what was happening in the interview conversations.

9.2 The contribution of this thesis

The re-presentation of nine local stories of resistance to religious authority is itself a significant contribution of this thesis. Visible acts of resistance draw attention to otherwise hidden or taken-for-granted strategies of power, and testify to hopes for alternative ways of being in community. Each person’s story recalls and enacts agentic re-authoring processes, further subverting the hegemony of the discursive regime which formerly constrained the production of his or her life. These subversive effects may be replicated when others experience a resonance between such a narrative and their own stories. Such effects are an aspect of what I hoped for in re-presenting the participants’ stories.

In response to the first research question, this study makes an important contribution to an understanding of the subversion of freedom and justice in Christian communities. There are three conclusions which I regard as having particular significance. These conclusions draw on my earlier discussion of technologies of subjugation and hegemony.

Monologic positioning is a primary indicator of problematic discourses and practices of religious authority. While the nature of this research does not offer a basis for drawing conclusions about all Christian communities, the striking presence of this issue in all of the participants’ narratives suggests that monologic power relations are at the heart of the discomfort experienced by many people in authoritative religious contexts. If freedom and justice are thought of in dialogic terms, as I argued they could be in Chapter 3 (section 3.4), then in one sense this finding is simply a logical statement about the nature of injustice. It makes a contribution, however, by offering a way for people to make meaning of the

discomfort they experience without resorting to ideas which pathologise either their leaders or themselves. For those people, and for those who are committed to developing genuinely inclusive and dialogic forms of community, questions like those outlined in my earlier discussion may be a useful starting point in evaluating the ideas and practices of authority in their context: Who may belong to this community? Whose knowledges, and what ways of knowing, are valued and incorporated in this community? Who may participate in the conversations and decisions of this community? How is wellbeing conceptualised and performed within this community? Further to these questions, the following may offer a useful subsequent line of deconstructive enquiry: What ideas in our context are determining the answers to these questions, and what is holding those ideas in place?

The Man of God discourse inevitably subverts freedom and dialogical forms of justice. Several of the discursive technologies identified earlier, such as the construction of serviceable others, practices of entitlement, and disciplinary practices, are found in many forms of social organisation. What I have shown and theorised in this study is the considerable force they acquire when buttressed by notions of an all-powerful, all-seeing God, who is represented by a Man of God. While only three participants spoke explicitly of the Man of God, or God's man, as the leader of their community, less overt expressions of the same idea of representational authority were present in several other interview narratives. Positioning a leader in this way was invariably accompanied by expectations on the members of the community to submit to God's representative, a position call reinforced by implicit or explicit warnings of the consequences of failing to submit.

The negative effects of such a discourse are evident in my analyses of the participants' stories. Patriarchal discourses of entitlement, alloyed with the Man of God notion, construct power relations with potentially abusive effects for women (and some men). The vulnerability implied in the relational construction of identity is hugely increased when *one* other speaks for the ultimate Other, God, and for the community. When the community has a leader who alone speaks with God's authority, then monologic power relations are inevitable. That leader is positioned to regard the questions and concerns of others as trouble, and alternative knowledges and ways of knowing are marginalised. My analysis has

shown the lengths to which people have had to go in order to untangle themselves from such regimes.

An alternative discourse, more supportive of freedom and justice, and espoused by several of the participants, construes the presence of God as something which is distributed among the members of the community. Rather than setting up monologic lines of force, this distributive picture invites dialogic modes of relationship, and collaborative practices of knowing and making decisions. It is also supportive of agency, understood as having the opportunity to participate in the conversations that produce the meanings of one's life.

Sexual abuse by religious leaders belongs to a spectrum of discursively produced entitlement practices. As suggested above, the Man of God discourse, together with a discourse of submission and patriarchal discourses of entitlement and male sexual drive, constructs power relations which readily become exploitative and damaging. While the law and professional codes of ethics establish important behavioural boundaries, and although the psychological assessment and treatment of offenders may at times be appropriate, neither of these approaches addresses the powerful discursive forces which construct and maintain the problem. Unless such wider contextual, discursive issues are addressed, their damaging effects will continue. This complements the feminist analyses of ministerial and sexual power referred to in Chapter 2 (section 2.3), and locates that issue in the context of a wider spectrum of harmful entitlement practices.

Finally, this study has also shed light on the second research question, concerning the production of resistance to subjugating practices of religious authority. The findings of my analyses of participants' accounts were largely consistent with poststructuralist theorisations of agency which are not dependent on humanist notions of an autonomous self, including those which view agency as an outcome of discursive complexity and contradiction (Davies), the socially constructed nature of language (Drewery), indeterminacy in the way meaning and identity is storied (White), and reiteration (Butler). My analyses also suggested that something more than these theorisations may be needed to satisfactorily account for the intensity of the language of life, death, and joy which was present in several of the narratives. I offered Deleuze's notions of the "body without organs"

and “lines of flight” as one way in which Foucauldian approaches to resistance might be supplemented.

The following two conclusions I believe add fresh perspectives on the production of resistance in religious contexts. They are of theoretical interest, and also provide useful points for reflection and discussion for communities committed to practices of freedom and justice.

The embodied effects of subjugation bear witness to subjects’ hopes and intentions and can be instrumental in producing resistance. In my reading of poststructuralist accounts of agency and resistance, the issue of embodied inscription was mentioned, but not prominent. Nor did the cerebral ways of knowing in which I have been schooled lead me to expect that embodied knowledge would feature significantly in my interviews with participants. The fact that it did therefore suggests that this is a point worth underlining. The embodied effects of being called into monologic power relations and subjugated subject positions testified to fact that those practices were distancing the participants from something which they held as important, but which they had perhaps not fully articulated, even to themselves: their own ethical hopes and intentions. Embodied experience therefore speaks not only of inscription by dominant discourses, but of the tenacity of ethical hopes and intentions. It has the potential to produce critical awareness of having been distanced from one’s preferred life narrative, and contributes energy for resistance.

Reiteration therefore produces two kinds of effects. First, reiteration may amplify awareness of distance, increasing the likelihood of resistance. Second, the more often people experience subjugating practices, the more the storying of their lives will be characterised by indeterminacy within determinacy (recalling Geertz’s point that it is the copying that originates, section 3.3). This opens up new possibilities for agentic *authority*. This account of resistance sheds significant light on my research question, and invites individuals and communities to value embodied experience as an important indicator of distance (or proximity) between the actual practices of a community and the espoused ethical hopes and intentions of its constituents.

Repeated exposure to a range of religious texts and rituals both supports and subverts subjectification within the dominant discourses of a community. As indicated in Chapter 2 (section 2.3), feminist analyses of church practices have

critiqued readings of biblical texts which support gendered forms of inequality and oppression. Repeated exposure to such texts supports the hegemony of patriarchal discourse and constructs subjugated subject positions for women. On the other hand, the complex collage of texts which make up the Bible, along with Christian prayers, songs, and other texts, are characterised by discursive complexity. My analysis of the participants' accounts of their resistance confirms that regular spiritual practices may both serve a subjectifying purpose, on behalf of the dominant discourses of their communities, and produce a deconstructive effect, in Derrida's sense of creating space for the emergence of new or suppressed meanings.

In light of this finding, a community committed to freedom and dialogic expressions of justice might consider two invitations in relation to its liturgical practices. The first is to develop a critical awareness among its members with regard to the social and historical construction of the texts they encounter. In terms of supporting the agency of its constituents, I consider that such a strategy is preferable to determining which texts will be available to the community and which will not. The second invitation, which follows from this last observation, is for the community to embrace a diversity of liturgical texts and practices, creating space for each adherent to assemble their own bricolage of meanings.

These five responses to my research questions show how poststructuralist approaches can offer fresh understandings of, and responses to, the longstanding problem of oppressive practices of religious authority.

9.3 Final word

The intention of Foucault's work was not to denounce power, but to unmask its operations. Even on that point, he was realistic, rather than utopian.

Relations of power are not something bad in themselves, from which one must free one's self. I don't believe there can be a society without relations of power. . . . The problem is not of trying to dissolve them in the utopia of a perfectly transparent communication, but to give one's self the rules of law, the techniques of management, and also the ethics, the *ethos*, the practice of self, which would allow these games of power to be played with a minimum of domination. (Foucault, Fernet-Betancourt, Becker, & Gomez-Müller, 1988, p. 18)

Similarly, my purpose in this project has not been to suggest that religious authority is, in itself, antithetical to freedom and justice, but to bring to light its operations and effects through a discursive analysis of local stories of resistance. There are situations, whether in a church or a state, in which authority must be exercised to protect freedom and prevent injustice. This study suggests several ways in which Christian communities might conduct themselves “with a minimum of domination,” and, to return to the beginning, calls on those communities to revisit beliefs and practices which fail to “foster life or advocate for justice” (Brock et al., 2001, p. 9).

How might a community take up this challenge to review critically its own taken-for-granted beliefs and practices and their effects? This study demonstrates how a process of deconstructive enquiry can bring such beliefs and practices to light. Few Christian communities will have sufficient acquaintance with poststructuralist ideas to engage in discourse analysis, but this study’s findings and discussion provide a basis for developing a reflexive review process for use by communities. By this I do not mean a diagnostic checklist, based on some paradigmatic ideal, but a process which invites people to story the effects on them of community practices, enquires into how such effects have been produced, enquires into the hopes people hold for their life in community, and explores what supports and/or subverts their efforts to practice those hopes. A community willing to engage in such a process will create hospitable spaces for unheard voices and disregarded knowledges when it makes it possible, and safe, to notice discomfort and engage with it; it will not be afraid to invite participation in conversations about ways of being together that foster freedom, justice, and life.

References

- à Kempis, T. (1957). *The imitation of Christ: A new translation* (G. F. Maine, Trans.). London, UK: Collins.
- Ailsop, J. (2006). Regaining trust in medicine. *Current Sociology*, 54(4), 621-636. 10.1177/0011392106065093
- Allen, T. (1996). Civil liability for sexual exploitation in professional relationships. *The Modern Law Review*, 59(1), 56-77.
- Atkinson, P., & Delamont, S. (2006). Rescuing narrative from qualitative research. *Narrative Inquiry*, 16(1), 164-172.
- Atkinson, P., & Delamont, S. (2007). Rescuing narrative from qualitative research. In M. G. W. Bamberg (Ed.), *Narrative: State of the art* (pp. 195-204). Amsterdam, The Netherlands: J. Benjamins
- Bakhtin, M. M., & Holquist, M. (1981). *The dialogic imagination: Four essays*. Austin, TX: University of Texas Press.
- Bamberg, M. (1997). Positioning between structure and performance. *Journal of Narrative and Life History*, 7(1-4), 335-342.
- Bamberg, M. (2004). Form and functions of 'slut bashing' in male identity constructions in 15-year-olds. *Human Development*, 47(6), 331-353.
- Bammert, G. M. (2010). Narrating the church. *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion*, 26(2), 153-174.
- Banister, P., Burman, E., Parker, I., Taylor, M., & Tindall, C. (1994). *Qualitative methods in psychology: A research guide*. Buckingham, UK: Open University Press.
- Beals, C. (2007). *Levinas and the wisdom of love: The question of invisibility*. Waco, TX: Baylor University Press.
- Bell, V. (2006). Performative knowledge. *Theory, Culture & Society*, 23(2/3), 214-217.
- Bent-Goodley, T. B., & Fowler, D. N. (2006). Spiritual and religious abuse: Expanding what is known about domestic violence. *Affilia*, 21(3), 282-295. 10.1177/0886109906288901
- Benyei, C. R. (1998). *Understanding clergy misconduct in religious systems: Scapegoating, family Secrets, and the abuse of power*. New York, NY: Haworth Pastoral Press.
- Birchard, T. (2000). Clergy sexual misconduct: Frequency and causation. *Sexual & Relationship Therapy*, 15(2), 127-139. 10.1080/14681990050010727
- Birchard, T. (2004). 'The snake and the seraph'—sexual addiction and religious behaviour. *Counselling Psychology Quarterly*, 17(1), 81-88.
- Blanchette, M. C., & Coleman, G. D. (2002). Priest pedophiles: Pedophiles and ephebophiles have no capacity for authentic sexual relationships. *America*, 186(13), 18-21. Retrieved from <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=hlh&AN=6546592&site=ehost-live>
- Bleiker, R. (2003). Discourse and human agency. *Contemporary Political Theory*, 2(1), 25-47.
- Blue, K. (1993). *Healing spiritual abuse: How to break free from bad church experiences*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.
- Bowen, M. (1978). *Family therapy in clinical practice*. New York, NY: J. Aronson.
- Brock, R. N., & Parker, R. A. (2001). *Proverbs of ashes: Violence, redemptive suffering, and the search for what saves us*. Boston, MA: Beacon Press.

- Brown, J. C., & Bohn, C. R. (Eds.). (1989). *Christianity, patriarchy, and abuse: A feminist critique*. New York, NY: Pilgrim Press
- Bruner, J. (1986). *Actual minds, possible worlds*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Buber, M., & Kaufmann, W. (1970). *I and thou* (3rd ed.). Edinburgh, UK: T.&T. Clark.
- Burman, E. (1996). *Psychology discourse practice: From regulation to resistance*. London, UK: Taylor & Francis.
- Burman, E. (2008). *Developments: Child, image, nation*. Hove, UK: Routledge.
- Burr, V. (2003). *Social constructionism* (2nd ed.). London, UK: Routledge.
- Butler, J. (1992). Contingent foundations: Feminism and the question of "postmodernism". In J. Butler & J. W. Scott (Eds.), *Feminists theorize the political* (pp. 3-21). New York, NY: Routledge
- Butler, J. (1995). For a careful reading. In S. Benhabib, J. Butler, D. Cornell & N. Fraser (Eds.), *Feminist contentions: A philosophical exchange* (pp. 127-143). New York, NY: Routledge
- Butler, J. (1997). *The psychic life of power: Theories in subjection*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Butler, J. (2001). Giving an account of oneself. *Diacritics*, 31(4), 22-40.
- Butler, J. (2004). Bracha's Eurydice. *Theory Culture Society*, 21(1), 95-100. 10.1177/0263276404040481
- Butler, J., & Scott, J. W. (1992a). Introduction. In J. Butler & J. W. Scott (Eds.), *Feminists theorize the political* (pp. xiii-xvii). New York, NY: Routledge
- Butler, J., & Scott, J. W. (Eds.). (1992b). *Feminists theorize the political*. New York, NY: Routledge
- Capps, D. (1979). *Pastoral care: A thematic approach*. Philadelphia, PA: Westminster.
- Celenza, A. (2004). Sexual misconduct in the clergy: The search for the father. *Studies in Gender & Sexuality*, 5(2), 213-232.
- Chase, S. E. (2003). Learning to listen: Narrative principles in a qualitative research methods course. In R. Josselson, A. Lieblich & D. P. McAdams (Eds.), *Up close and personal: The teaching and learning of narrative research* (1st ed., pp. 79-99). Washington, WA: American Psychological Association
- Clark, D. C. (1993). Sexual abuse in the church: The law steps in. *The Christian Century*, 110(12), 396-398.
- Code, L. (1991). *What can she know? Feminist theory and the construction of knowledge*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- Coffey, A., & Atkinson, P. (1996). *Making sense of qualitative data: Complementary research strategies*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Colebrook, C. (2006). *Deleuze: A guide for the perplexed*. London, UK: Continuum.
- Collins, O., & Young, A. (1999). *Speeches that changed the world*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press.
- Cooper-White, P. (1991). Soul stealing: Power relations in pastoral sexual abuse. *The Christian Century*, 108(6), 196.
- Cooper-White, P. (2011). Intimate violence against women: Trajectories for pastoral care in a new millennium. *Pastoral Psychology*, 60(6), 809-855. 10.1007/s11089-011-0354-7

- Czarniawska, B. (2002). Narrative, interviews, and organizations. In J. F. Gubrium & J. A. Holstein (Eds.), *Handbook of interview research: Context & method* (pp. 733-749). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications
- Damiani, R. (2002). Spiritual abuse within the church: Its damage and recovery process. *Evangel, 20*(2), 42-48.
- Dasa, B. (1999). *Best intentions—Dynamics of spiritual abuse*. Retrieved from http://www.iskcon.com/icj/7_2/72bvd.html
- Davies, B. (1991). The concept of agency: A feminist post-structuralist analysis. *Postmodern Critical Theorising, 30*, 42-53.
- Davies, B. (1994). *Poststructuralist theory and classroom practice*. Geelong, Australia: Deakin University Press.
- Davies, B. (2000). *(In)scribing body/landscape relations*. Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press.
- Davies, B. (2004). Introduction: Poststructuralist lines of flight in Australia. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education, 17*(1), 1-9.
- Davies, B., Browne, J., Gannon, S., Honan, E., Laws, C., Mueller-Rockstroh, B., & Petersen, E. B. (2004). The ambivalent practices of reflexivity. *Qualitative Inquiry, 10*(3), 360-389. 10.1177/1077800403257638
- Davies, B., Browne, J., Gannon, S., Hopkins, L., McCann, H., & Wihlborg, M. (2006). Constituting the feminist subject in poststructuralist discourse. *Feminism & Psychology, 16*(1), 87-103.
- Davies, B., & Davies, C. (2007). Having, and being had by, "experience": Or, "experience" in the social sciences after the discursive/poststructuralist turn. *Qualitative Inquiry, 13*(8), 1139-1159. 10.1177/1077800407308228
- Davies, B., Dormer, S., Gannon, S., Laws, C., Rocco, S., Taguchi, H. L., & McCann, H. (2001). Becoming schoolgirls: The ambivalent project of subjectification. *Gender & Education, 13*(2), 167-182.
- Davies, B., Flemmen, A. B., Gannon, S., Laws, C., & Watson, B. (2002). Working on the ground. A collective biography of feminine subjectivities: Mapping the traces of power and knowledge. *Social Semiotics, 12*(3), 291-313.
- Davies, B., & Harré, R. (1990). Positioning: The discursive production of selves. *Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour, 20*(1), 43-63.
- Davies, B., & Harré, R. (1999). Positioning and personhood. In R. Harré & L. Van Lagenhove (Eds.), *Positioning theory: Moral contexts of intentional action* (pp. 32-52). Oxford, UK: Blackwell
- Davies, B., Larson, J., Contro, N., Reyes-Hailey, C., Ablin, A. R., Chesla, C. A., . . . Cohen, H. (2009). Conducting a qualitative culture study of pediatric palliative care. *Qualitative Health Research, 19*(1), 5-16. 10.1177/1049732308327346
- Davis, M. H. (2008). Structures of evil encountered in pastoral counseling. *Zygon: Journal of Religion & Science, 43*(3), 665-680. 10.1111/j.1467-9744.2008.00947.x
- Day, P. D. (2003). *Dictionary of Christian denominations*. New York, NY: Continuum.
- de Certeau, M., & Rendall, S. (1984). *The practice of everyday life* (S. Rendall, Trans.). Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- de Saussure, F., Bally, C., Sechehaye, A., & Reidlinger, A. (1966). *Course in general linguistics* (W. Baskin, Trans., 3 ed.). New York, NY: McGraw-Hill.

- Dean, M. (1999). *Governmentality: Power and rule in modern society*. London, UK: Sage Publications.
- Deans, L. M. (2001). *Whistleblower: Abuse of power in the church, a New Zealand story*. Auckland, NZ: Tandem Press.
- Deleuze, G. (1988). *Foucault* (S. Hand, Trans.). London, UK: Athlone.
- Deleuze, G. (1995). *Negotiations* (M. Joughin, Trans.). New York, NY: Columbia University Press.
- Deleuze, G., & Guattari, F. (1987). *Thousand plateaus: Capitalism and schizophrenia*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.
- Deleuze, G., & Parnet, C. (1987). *Dialogues* (H. Tomlinson & B. Habberjam, Trans.). New York, NY: Columbia University Press.
- Denzin, N. K. (2009). *Qualitative inquiry under fire: Toward a new paradigm dialogue*. Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press.
- Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (2005). *The SAGE handbook of qualitative research* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Derrida, J. (1988). *Limited Inc*. Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press.
- Derrida, J., & Caputo, J. D. (1997). *Deconstruction in a nutshell: A conversation with Jacques Derrida* (J. D. Caputo, Trans.). New York, NY: Fordham University Press.
- Drewery, W. (2005). Why we should watch what we say: Position calls, everyday speech and the production of relational subjectivity. *Theory & Psychology, 15*(3), 305-324.
- Drewery, W., & McKenzie, W. (1999). Therapy and faith. In I. Parker (Ed.), *Deconstructing psychotherapy* (pp. 132-149). London, UK: Sage
- Drewery, W., & Monk, G. (1994). Some reflections on the therapeutic power of poststructuralism. *International Journal for the Advancement of Counselling, 17*, 303-313.
- Drewery, W., & Winslade, J. (1997). The theoretical story of narrative therapy. In G. Monk, J. Winslade, K. Crockett & D. Epston (Eds.), *Narrative therapy in practice: The Archaeology of hope* (pp. 32-52). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass
- Dreyfus, H. L., & Rabinow, P. (1982). *Michel Foucault: Beyond structuralism and hermeneutics*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Dupont, M. (2004). *Toxic churches: Restoration from spiritual abuse*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Publishing Group.
- Ellsworth, E. (1989). Why doesn't this feel empowering? Working through the repressive myths of critical pedagogy. *Harvard Educational Review, 59*(3), 297-324.
- Enroth, R. M. (1992). *Churches that abuse*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.
- Epston, D., White, M., & Murray, K. (1992). A proposal for re-authoring therapy: Rose's revisioning of her life and a commentary. In S. McNamee & K. J. Gergen (Eds.), *Therapy as social construction* (pp. 96-115). London, UK: Sage Publications
- Fischer, W., & Goblirsch, M. (2007). Bibliographical structuring: Narrating and reconstructing the self in research and professional practice. In M. G. W. Bamberg (Ed.), *Narrative: State of the art* (pp. 37-46). Amsterdam, The Netherlands: J. Benjamins
- Fish, V. (1993). Poststructuralism in family therapy: Interrogating the narrative/conversational mode. *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy, 19*(3), 221-232.

- Fisher, D. (2012, 30 June). Anglican debate on gays risks splitting church. *The New Zealand Herald*. Retrieved from http://www.nzherald.co.nz/nz/news/article.cfm?c_id=1&objectid=10816490
- Fortune, M. M., & Poling, J. N. (1994). *Sexual abuse by clergy: A crisis for the church*. Decatur, GA: Journal of Pastoral Care Publications.
- Foucault, M. (1965). *Madness and civilization: A history of insanity in the age of reason*. New York, NY: Pantheon Books.
- Foucault, M. (1970). *The order of things: An archaeology of the human sciences*. London, UK: Tavistock Publications.
- Foucault, M. (1972). *The archaeology of knowledge* (A. M. Sheridan Smith, Trans.). New York, NY: Harper & Row.
- Foucault, M. (1973). *The birth of the clinic: An archaeology of medical perception*. London, UK: Tavistock Publications.
- Foucault, M. (1977a). *Discipline and punish: The birth of the prison* (A. Sheridan, Trans.). London, UK: Penguin.
- Foucault, M. (1977b). *Language, counter-memory, practice: Selected essays and interviews*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- Foucault, M. (1978). *The history of sexuality, volume one. An introduction* (1st American ed., Vol. 1). New York, NY: Pantheon Books.
- Foucault, M. (1982). The subject and power. In H. L. Dreyfus & P. Rabinow (Eds.), *Michel Foucault: Beyond structuralism and hermeneutics* (pp. 208-226). Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press
- Foucault, M. (2001). So is it important to think? In J. D. Faubion (Ed.), *Michel Foucault: Power* (pp. 454-458). London, UK: Allen Lane
- Foucault, M. (Ed.). (1975). *I, Pierre Rivière, having slaughtered my mother, my sister, and my brother ... a case of parricide in the 19th Century*. Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press
- Foucault, M. (Ed.). (1980). *Herculine Barbin: Being the recently discovered memoirs of a nineteenth-century French hermaphrodite*. New York, NY: Pantheon Books
- Foucault, M., Fornet-Betancourt, R., Becker, H., & Gomez-Müller, A. (1988). The ethic of care for the self as a practice of freedom: An interview conducted with Michel Foucault on January 20, 1984 (J. D. Gauthier, Trans.). In J. W. Bernauer & D. M. Rasmussen (Eds.), *The final Foucault* (pp. 1-20). Cambridge, MA: MIT Press
- Foucault, M., & Gordon, C. (1980). *Power/knowledge: Selected interviews and other writings, 1972-1977* (1st American ed.). New York, NY: Pantheon Books.
- Foucault, M., & Martin, R. (1988). Truth, power, self: An interview with Michel Foucault. In L. H. Martin, H. Gutman & P. H. Hutton (Eds.), *Technologies of the self : A seminar with Michel Foucault* (pp. 9-15). Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press
- Francis, P. C., & Baldo, T. D. (1998). Narcissistic measures of Lutheran clergy who self-reported committing sexual misconduct. *Pastoral Psychology*, 47(2), 81-96.
- Francis, P. C., & Turner, N. R. (1995). Sexual misconduct within the Christian church: Who are the perpetrators and those they victimize? *Counseling & Values*, 39(3), 218-227.

- Fraser, M. (2003). A feminist theoethical analysis of white Pentecostal Australian women and marital abuse. *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion*, 19(2), 145-167.
- Frawley-O'Dea, M. G. (2007). *Perversion of power: Sexual abuse in the Catholic Church*. Nashville, TN: Vanderbilt University Press.
- Freedman, J., & Combs, G. (1996). *Narrative therapy: The social construction of preferred realities* (G. Combs, Trans., 1st ed.). New York, NY: Norton.
- Friedman, E. H. (1985). *Generation to generation: Family process in church and synagogue*. New York, NY: Guilford Press.
- Friedman, E. H., Treadwell, M. M., & W., B. E. (2007). *A failure of nerve: Leadership in the age of the quick fix*. New York, NY: Seabury Books.
- Frohmann, B. (1994). Discourse analysis as a research method in library and information science. *Library & Information Science Research*, 16(2), 119-138. [http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/0740-8188\(94\)90004-3](http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/0740-8188(94)90004-3)
- Furlong, M. (1991). *A dangerous delight: Women and power in the church*. London, UK: SPCK.
- Georgakopoulou, A. (2007). *Small stories, interaction and identities*. Philadelphia, PA: John Benjamins.
- Gergen, M. M., & Gergen, K. J. (2006). Narratives in action. *Narrative Inquiry*, 16(1), 112-121.
- Giesbrecht, N., & Sevcik, I. (2000). The process of recovery and rebuilding among abused women in the conservative evangelical subculture. *Journal of Family Violence*, 15(3), 229-248.
- González, J. L. (2010). *The story of Christianity. Volume 2: The reformation to the present day* (2nd ed.). New York, NY: HarperCollins.
- Grace, S. (1996). *Garlands from ashes: Healing from clergy abuse*. Wanganui, NZ: Grace-Watson Press.
- Grenz, S. J., & Franke, J. R. (2001). *Beyond foundationalism: Shaping theology in a postmodern context*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press.
- Gross-Schaefer, A., Feldman, L., & Perkowitz, N. (2011). A time to learn: A comparison of policies dealing with clergy sexual misconduct. *Pastoral Psychology*, 60(2), 223-231. 10.1007/s11089-010-0310-y
- Gubrium, J. F., & Holstein, J. A. (2009). *Analyzing narrative reality*. London, UK: Sage Publications.
- Guilfoyle, M. (2002). Power, knowledge and resistance in therapy: Exploring links between discourse and materiality. *International Journal of Psychotherapy*, 7(1), 83-97. 10.1080/13569080220138471
- Guilfoyle, M. (2005). From therapeutic power to resistance? *Theory & Psychology*, 15(1), 101-124. 10.1177/0959354305049748
- Harré, R., & Gillett, G. (1994). *The discursive mind*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Harré, R., & Slocum, N. (2003). Disputes as complex social events. *Common Knowledge*, 9(1), 100-118.
- Harré, R., & Van Lagenhove, L. (Eds.). (1999). *Positioning theory: Moral contexts of intentional action*. Oxford, UK: Blackwell
- Henriques, J., Hollway, W., Urwin, C., Venn, C., & Walkerdine, V. (1984). *Changing the subject: Psychology, social regulation and subjectivity*. London, UK: Methuen & Co.
- Hodgson, N. (2009). Narrative and social justice from the perspective of governmentality. *Journal of Philosophy of Education*, 43(4), 559-572. 10.1111/j.1467-9752.2009.00722.x

- Hollway, W. (1989). *Subjectivity and method in psychology: Gender, meaning and science*. London, UK: Sage.
- Hollway, W. (2006). *The capacity to care: Gender and ethical subjectivity*. London, UK: Routledge.
- Hook, D. (2001). Discourse, knowledge, materiality, history: Foucault and discourse analysis. *Theory & Psychology, 11*(4), 521-547. 10.1177/0959354301114006
- Hook, D. (2003). Analogues of power: Reading psychotherapy through the sovereignty-discipline-government complex. *Theory & Psychology, 13*(5), 605-628.
- Hook, D. (2005). Genealogy, discourse, 'effective history': Foucault and the work of critique. *Qualitative Research in Psychology, 2*(1), 3-31.
- Howe, L. T. (1998). Self-differentiation in Christian perspective. *Pastoral Psychology, 46*, 347-362.
- Jenkins, A. (2009). *Becoming ethical: A parallel, political journey with men who have abused*. Dorset, UK: Russell House Publishing.
- Johnson, D., & VanVonderen, J. (1991). *The subtle power of spiritual abuse*. Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House Publishers.
- Jones, A. (1997). Teaching post-structuralist feminist theory in education: Student resistances. *Gender & Education, 9*(3), 261-269.
- Josselson, R. (2007). Narrative research and the challenge of accumulating knowledge. In M. G. W. Bamberg (Ed.), *Narrative: State of the art* (pp. 7-15). Amsterdam, The Netherlands: J. Benjamins
- Josselson, R., Lieblich, A., & McAdams, D. P. (Eds.). (2003). *Up close and personal: The teaching and learning of narrative research* (1st ed.). Washington, WA: American Psychological Association
- Judgment day for nine black sheep of the faith. (2002, June 22). *The New Zealand Herald*. Retrieved from http://www.nzherald.co.nz/nz/news/article.cfm?c_id=1&objectid=2048019
- Kennedy, M. (2003). Sexual abuse of women by priests and ministers to whom they go for pastoral care and support. *Feminist Theology, 11*(2), 226-235.
- Koro-Ljungberg, M. (2007). A social constructionist framing of the research interview. In J. A. Holstein & J. F. Gubrium (Eds.), *Handbook of constructionist research* (pp. 429-444). New York, NY: Guilford Press
- Kronman, A. T. (1983). *Max Weber*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Lather, P. (1993). Fertile obsession: Validity after poststructuralism. *The Sociological Quarterly, 34*(4), 673-693. 10.2307/4121374
- Lebacqz, K., & Driskill, J. D. (2000). *Ethics and spiritual care: A guide for pastors, chaplains, and spiritual directors* (J. D. Driskill, Trans.). Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press.
- Lee, S. J. C. (2002). In a secular spirit: Strategies of Clinical Pastoral Education. *Health Care Analysis, 10*(4), 339-356.
- Levinas, E. (1999). *Alterity and transcendence* (M. B. Smith, Trans.). New York, NY: Columbia University Press.
- Liamputtong, P. (2008). *Doing cross-cultural research: Ethical and methodological perspectives* (Vol. 34). Dordrecht, The Netherlands: Springer.
- Liamputtong, P. (2010). Cross-cultural research and qualitative inquiry. *Turkish Online Journal of Qualitative Inquiry, 1*(1), 16-29.
- Lincoln, Y. S. (2005). Revolutions in qualitative research: From just experience to experiencing justice. *Journal of Thought, 40*(4), 25-40.

- Lock, A., & Strong, T. (2010). *Social constructionism: Sources and stirrings in theory and practice*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Manki, M. A. (2003). Power, subjectivity and strategies of resistance: The case of the Acme School. *TAMARA: Journal of Critical Postmodern Organization Science*, 2(4), 52-75.
- Maxwell, J. A. (2009). Evidence: A critical realist perspective for qualitative research. In N. K. Denzin & M. D. Giardina (Eds.), *Qualitative inquiry and social justice: Toward a politics of hope* (pp. 108-122). Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press
- McLellan, E., MacQueen, K. M., & Neidig, J. L. (2003). Beyond the qualitative interview: Data preparation and transcription. *Field Methods*, 15(1), 63-84. 10.1177/1525822x02239573
- McMullen, C. (2003). One day I went to a theological consultation on domestic violence. *Feminist Theology: The Journal of the Britain & Ireland School of Feminist Theology*, 11(2), 197-202.
- McNay, L. (1991). The Foucauldian body and the exclusion of experience. *Hypatia* (Vol. 6, pp. 125): Indiana University Press.
- Minnich-Sadler, K. (2005). The language of family systems theory: Why it doesn't always work. *Clergy Journal*, 81(8), 6-9.
- Moissinac, L. (2007). "Mr. Lanoe hit on my mom": Reestablishment of believability in sequential 'small stories' by adolescent boys. In M. G. W. Bamberg, A. De Fina & D. Schiffrin (Eds.), *Selves and identities in narrative and discourse* (pp. 229-252). Philadelphia, PA: John Benjamins
- Monk, G., Winslade, J., Crocket, K., & Epston, D. (Eds.). (1997). *Narrative therapy in practice: The archaeology of hope*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass
- Monroe, I. (2009). Taking theology to the community. *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion*, 25(1), 184-190. 10.2979/fsr.2009.25.1.184
- Moore, S. D. (2003). *The shepherding movement: Controversy and charismatic ecclesiology*. New York, NY: T&T Clark International.
- Morss, J. R. (1996). *Growing critical: Alternatives to developmental psychology*. New York, NY: Taylor & Francis.
- Muse, J. S. (1992). Faith, hope and the 'urge to merge' in pastoral ministry: Some countertransference-related distortions of relationship between male pastors and their female parishioners. *Journal of Pastoral Care*, 46(3), 299-308.
- Nason-Clark, N. (2000). Making the sacred safe: Woman abuse and communities of faith. *Sociology of Religion*, 61(4), 349.
- Noll, D. E., & Harvey, L. (2008). Restorative mediation: The application of restorative justice practice and philosophy to clergy sexual abuse cases. *Journal of Child Sexual Abuse*, 17(3/4), 377-396.
- Nylund, D., & Nylund, D. A. (2003). Narrative therapy as a counter-hegemonic practice. *Men and Masculinities*, 5(4), 386-394. 10.1177/1097184x03251086
- NZACPE. (2013). *The New Zealand Association for Clinical Pastoral Education*. Retrieved from <http://www.cpe-nz.org.nz>
- Paré, D. (2012). *The practice of collaborative counseling and psychotherapy: Developing skills in culturally mindful helping*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Parker, I. (1992). *Discourse dynamics: Critical analysis for social and individual psychology*. London, UK: Routledge.

- Parker, I. (2005). *Qualitative psychology: Introducing radical research*. Maidenhead, UK: Open University Press.
- Parry, A., & Doan, R. E. (1994). *Story re-visions: Narrative therapy in the postmodern world*. New York, NY: The Guilford Press.
- Pauling, Y. (1999). *Churches responding with integrity to clergy sexual misconduct: A report to the Winston Churchill Memorial Trust*. Wellington, NZ: Winston Churchill Memorial Trust
- Peterson, E. E., & Langellier, K. M. (2006). The performance turn in narrative studies. *Narrative Inquiry*, 16(1), 173-180.
- Pfohl, S. (2007). The reality of social constructions. In J. A. Holstein & J. F. Gubrium (Eds.), *Handbook of constructionist research* (pp. 645-668). New York, NY: Guilford Press
- Pillow, W. (2003). Confession, catharsis, or cure? Rethinking the uses of reflexivity as methodological power in qualitative research. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 16(2), 175-196. 10.1080/0951839032000060635
- Plante, T. G. (2006). A psychological assessment of applicants for priesthood and religious life. *Human Development*, 27(4), 45-48.
- Plante, T. G., & Aldridge, A. (2005). Psychological patterns among Roman Catholic clergy accused of sexual misconduct. *Pastoral Psychology*, 54(1), 73-80. 10.1007/s11089-005-6184-8
- Poland, B. D. (1995). Transcription quality as an aspect of rigor in qualitative research. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 1(3), 290-310. 10.1177/107780049500100302
- Polanyi, L. (1985). Conversational storytelling. In T. A. van Dijk (Ed.), *Handbook of discourse analysis, Vol. 3: Discourse and dialogue* (pp. 183-201). London, UK: Academic Press
- Pooler, D. K. (2011). Pastors and congregations at risk: Insights from role identity theory. *Pastoral Psychology*, 60(5), 705-712. 10.1007/s11089-011-0356-5
- Pope, K. S. (2001). Sex between therapists and clients. Retrieved from <http://kspope.com/sexiss/sexencyc.php>
- Pope orders Vatican officials to tackle child sex abuse scandals. (2013, 14 August). *The Guardian*. Retrieved from <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/apr/05/pope-vatican-child-sex-abuse>
- Popke, E. J. (2003). Poststructuralist ethics: Subjectivity, responsibility and the space of community. *Progress in Human Geography*, 27(3), 298-316.
- Qu, S. Q., & Dumay, J. (2011). The qualitative research interview. *Qualitative Research in Accounting and Management*, 8(3), 238-264. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/11766091111162070>
- Redekop, F. (1995). The "problem" of Michael White and Michel Foucault. *Journal of Marital & Family Therapy*, 21(3), 309-318.
- Richardson, R. W. (1996). *Creating a healthier church: Family systems theory, leadership and congregational life*. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press.
- Richardson, R. W. (2004). *Becoming a healthier pastor: Family systems theory and the pastor's own family*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press.
- Riessman, C. K. (1993). *Narrative analysis*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications.
- Riessman, C. K. (2002). Analysis of personal narratives. In J. F. Gubrium & J. A. Holstein (Eds.), *Handbook of interview research: Context & method* (pp. 695-710). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications

- Riessman, C. K. (2003). Performing identities in illness narrative: Masculinity and multiple sclerosis. *Qualitative Research*, 3(1), 5-33. 10.1177/146879410300300101
- Rodgers, S. (1995). Health care providers and sexual assault: Feminist law reform? *Canadian Journal of Women & the Law*, 8(1), 159-189.
- Rose, N. S. (1996). *Inventing our selves: Psychology, power, and personhood*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Sampson, E. E. (1993). *Celebrating the other: A dialogic account of human nature*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.
- Sampson, E. E. (1998). Life as an embodied art: The second stage—beyond constructionism. In B. M. Bayer & J. Shotter (Eds.), *Reconstructing the psychological subject: Bodies, practices, and technologies* (pp. 21-32). London, UK: Sage Publications
- Sampson, E. E. (2003). Unconditional kindness to strangers: Human sociality and the foundation for an ethical psychology. *Theory & Psychology*, 13(2), 147-175. 10.1177/0959354303013002001
- Scanzoni, L., & Hardesty, N. (1974). *All we're meant to be: A biblical approach to women's liberation*. Waco, TX: Word Books.
- Schoener, G. R. (1995). Historical overview. In J. C. Gonsiorek (Ed.), *Breach of trust: Sexual exploitation by health care professionals and clergy* (pp. 3-17). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage
- Schüssler Fiorenza, E. (1983). *In memory of her: A feminist theological reconstruction of Christian origins*. New York, NY: Crossroad.
- Schüssler Fiorenza, E. (2001). *Wisdom ways: Introducing feminist biblical interpretation*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books.
- Schüssler Fiorenza, E. (2007). *The power of the word: Scripture and the rhetoric of empire*. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press.
- Schüssler Fiorenza, E., Collins, M., & Lefébure, M. (1985). *Women, invisible in theology and church*. Edinburgh, UK: T. & T. Clark.
- Scott, J. C. (1990). *Domination and the arts of resistance: Hidden transcripts*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Seigworth, G. J. (2005). From affection to soul. In C. J. Stivale (Ed.), *Gilles Deleuze: Key concepts* (pp. 159-169). Durham, UK: Acumen
- Shotter, J. (1990). *Knowing of the third kind: Selected writings on psychology, rhetoric, and the culture of everyday social life, Utrecht, 1987-1990*. Utrecht, The Netherlands: ISOR, University of Utrecht.
- Shotter, J. (2001). Participative thinking: "Seeing the face" and "hearing the voice" of social situations. *Career Development International*, 6(7), 343-347.
- Shotter, J. (2005). Acknowledging unique others: Ethics, "expressive realism," and social constructionism. *Journal of Constructivist Psychology*, 18(2), 103-130. 10.1080/10720530590914761
- Sipe, R. (2010). Secret sex in the celibate system. *National Catholic Reporter*, 46(14), 23. Retrieved from <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=rh&AN=50137177&site=ehost-live>
- Slocum-Bradley, N. R. (2010a). Identity construction in Europe: A discursive approach. *Identity*, 10(1), 50-68. 10.1080/15283481003676234
- Slocum-Bradley, N. R. (2010b). The positioning Ddiamond: A trans-disciplinary framework for discourse analysis. *Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour*, 40(1), 79-107.

- Smith, B., & Sparkes, A. C. (2008). Contrasting perspectives on narrating selves and identities: An invitation to dialogue. *Qualitative Research*, 8(1), 5-35. 10.1177/1468794107085221
- Smith, S. (1993). Who's talking/who's talking back? The subject of personal narrative. *Signs*, 18(2), 392-407. 10.2307/3174982
- Sparkes, A. C. (2005). Narrative analysis: Exploring the *whats* and *hows* of personal stories. In I. Holloway (Ed.), *Qualitative research in health care* (pp. 191-208). Maidenhead, UK: Open University Press
- Sparkes, A. C., & Smith, B. (2007). Narrative constructionist inquiry. In J. A. Holstein & J. F. Gubrium (Eds.), *Handbook of constructionist research* (pp. 295-314). New York, NY: Guilford Press
- St Pierre, E. A. (2000). Poststructural feminism in education: An overview. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education (QSE)*, 13(5), 477-515. 10.1080/09518390050156422
- Stockton, K. B. (1992). Bodies and God: Poststructuralist feminists return to the fold of spiritual materialism. *boundary 2*, 19(2), 113-149.
- Taylor, S. (2005). Identity trouble and opportunity in women's narratives of residence. *Auto/Biography*, 13(3), 249-266. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1191/0967550705ab029oa>
- Taylor, S. (2007). Narrative as construction and discursive resource. In M. G. W. Bamberg (Ed.), *Narrative: State of the art* (pp. 113-122). Amsterdam, The Netherlands: J. Benjamins
- Trible, P. (1984). *Texts of terror: Literary-feminist readings of biblical narratives*. Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press.
- van Lagenhove, L., & Harré, R. (1999). Introducing positioning theory. In R. Harré & L. van Lagenhove (Eds.), *Positioning Theory: Moral Contexts of Intentional Action* (pp. 14-31). Oxford: Blackwell
- Vanhoozer, K. J. (2003). *The Cambridge companion to postmodern theology*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Veyne, P., Porter, C., & Davidson, A. I. (1993). The final Foucault and his ethics. *Critical Inquiry*, 20(1), 1-9.
- Ward, G. (2001). *The Blackwell companion to postmodern theology*. Oxford, UK: Blackwell.
- Weedon, C. (1997). *Feminist practice and poststructuralist theory* (2nd ed.). Cambridge, MA: Blackwell.
- Weingarten, K. (2010). Reasonable hope: Construct, clinical applications, and supports. *Family Process*, 49(1), 5-25. 10.1111/j.1545-5300.2010.01305.x
- Wendt, S. (2008). Christianity and domestic violence: Feminist poststructuralist perspectives. *Affilia*, 23(2), 144-155. 10.1177/0886109908314326
- White, M. (1995). *Re-authoring lives: Interviews & essays*. Adelaide, Australia: Dulwich Centre Publications.
- White, M. (1997). *Narratives of therapists' lives*. Adelaide, Australia: Dulwich Centre Publications.
- White, M. (2002). Addressing personal failure. *International Journal of Narrative Therapy & Community Work*, 2002(3), 33-76.
- White, M. (2004). Folk psychology and narrative practices. In L. E. Angus & J. McLeod (Eds.), *The handbook of narrative and psychotherapy: Practice, theory, and research* (pp. 15-51). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications
- White, M. (2007). *Maps of narrative practice*. New York, NY: W.W. Norton & Co.

- White, M., & Epston, D. (1990). *Narrative means to therapeutic ends*. New York, NY: Norton.
- Willig, C. (2000). A discourse-dynamic approach to the study of subjectivity in health psychology. *Theory & Psychology, 10*(4), 547-570. 10.1177/0959354300104006
- Willig, C., Potter, J., Wickham, G., Kendall, G., & Hook, D. (2005). Commentaries on Hook, 'Genealogy, discourse, 'Effective History': Foucault and the work of critique'. *Qualitative Research in Psychology, 2*(1), 32-46.
- Winslade, J. (2005). Utilising discursive positioning in counselling. *British Journal of Guidance & Counselling, 33*(3), 351-364.
- Winslade, J. (2009). Tracing lines of flight: Implications of the work of Gilles Deleuze for narrative practice. *Family Process, 48*(3), 332-346.
- Winslade, J., & Monk, G. (2008). *Practicing narrative mediation: Loosening the grip of conflict*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Young-Eisendrath, P., & Wehr, D. (1989). The fallacy of individualism and reasonable violence against women (J. C. Brown & C. R. Bohn, Trans.). In J. C. Brown & C. R. Bohn (Eds.), *Christianity, patriarchy, and abuse: A feminist critique* (pp. 117-138). New York, NY: Pilgrim Press

Appendices

Appendix 1: Letter of information and invitation to join research

My name is David Crawley and I am embarking on a PhD research project on the use and abuse of authority within Christian faith communities (churches or other forms of community). In particular, I am deeply interested in the stories of people who have chosen to change their relationship to the people and/or structures of authority in such communities.

This project is being undertaken through the University of Waikato and has been approved by the School of Education Ethics Committee.

My chief supervisor is Dr Wendy Drewery, contactable at the University of Waikato on (07) 856 2889 or at educ1004@waikato.ac.nz.

I plan to interview a range of people who have at some point chosen to resist religious authority. My aim is to gain a better understanding of what precipitates such actions (sometimes at personal cost to themselves), what changes take place in their ideas and practices, and what the ongoing effects are in their lives. Part of my interest is also in seeing how well certain postmodern ideas about choice and change fit with the stories that come to light through this research. I am expecting that the interviews will take one to two hours, and there will be some follow up time involved as I want to give each participant the opportunity to read and offer comments on what I have written about the interview. The total involvement could therefore be about 5 or 6 hours.

Criteria for potential participants:

1. You were a participating member of a Christian faith community of some kind (church, house church, or other structured grouping) for a period of at least 12 months.
2. At some point you began to re-evaluate the ideas and practices of this faith community (or of certain individuals within it) with regard to religious authority.
3. You consequently took some action to change your relationship to these ideas and practices, whether that meant you challenged them, tried to change them or simply left the community.
4. At least 12 months have passed since you took that action.
5. You are at least 18 years of age.

If you fit these criteria and would be open to participating in this study, then I would be keen to hear from you to discuss that possibility further. Given that I can only interview a limited number of people, it may be that I will need to select some stories to include and not others. Please do not be offended if I find that I am unable to include your story.

You can contact me either by email: XXXXXX@XXXXXX
or by telephone (calls are free): 0800 XXX XXX

Please feel free to ask me any further questions about the research before indicating your willingness to consider the possibility of involvement. If you do

express an openness to involvement I will contact you with a few further clarifying questions. I will aim to do this within one week of first hearing from you.

The names of participants and other people and groups involved in their stories will remain strictly confidential to me and no identifying details will be included in the published research.

Thank you

David Crawley

Appendix 2: Questionnaire for potential participants

Dear

Thank you again for expressing your openness to involvement as a participant in my PhD research with the University of Waikato.

Before finalising the participants I would like to ask some preliminary questions. These need not be answered in great detail as the full interview will go over these areas again in more depth, but I do need some information to help me select a suitable range of participants. Please write something for each question, and then return the form to me in the enclosed stamped addressed envelope.

Please feel free to contact me with any further questions you have about the project (0800 XXX XXX or email XXXXX@XXXXX). Please read the enclosed Consent Form. You don't need to sign this now, but it explains in more detail the research process and the ways in which your identity and privacy will be safeguarded. It may be that revisiting your story will not be an easy experience, and please note provision is made for counselling and/or spiritual support should that become necessary.

If you have decided you would rather not participate in this study after all, simply indicate that on the form and return it to me in the enclosed stamped addressed envelope and I will destroy any information I have in relation to you.

I would appreciate receiving the form by _____ and hope respond to you by _____.

Thank you
David Crawley

Questions:

1. How long were you a member of the faith community concerned before you acted to change your relationship to religious authority?
2. What sort of faith community was it?
Church House-church Other: _____
Religious denomination? _____
3. How would you describe the way religious authority/leadership worked in this community, in terms of:
(a) the beliefs people held about religious authority/leadership?
(b) the ways in which authority/leadership worked in practice?
4. Briefly describe any particular event that was instrumental in changing your beliefs and/or attitudes to religious authority in your community.

5. Was there anything or anyone (no need to give names) that helped you decide what you needed to do in relation to religious authority/leadership in your community? If so, explain briefly.
6. Describe briefly what you actually did to enact the change you felt needed to happen in your relationship to religious authority/leadership.
7. How long ago did this happen?
8. What is your present relationship, if any, to a Christian faith community?
9. How have these experiences influenced your present beliefs and actions with regard to religious authority/leadership?
10. What is your present age range?
18–25 26–35 36–45 45–55 55–65 65–

Appendix 3: Criteria for selection of participants

In the light of the aims of this research, there were several factors which guided the selection of participants, and numbered criteria are listed in association with these. These criteria were not intended to pre-judge or pre-determine the shape of the participants' stories, but to ensure that their stories do have as a central concern the issues that I am wanted to research. (This sheet was not supplied to participants, in order not to influence their answers to the questions listed in Appendix 2.)

- Centrality of issues of religious authority to the experiences described:
 1. *Indication of centrality of issues of religious authority in answers to questions 3, 4, 6 and 9 in Appendix 2.*
- Evidence of significant change of position for participant (discursively and relationally):
 2. *Length of involvement in the faith community concerned before action taken.*
 3. *Indications of significant repositioning in answers to questions 3, 6, 8 and 9 (Appendix 2).*
- Evidence of having moved on from any traumatic effects of the experience:
 4. *At least 12 months have elapsed since actions taken.*
 5. *Indications of having worked through emotional and psychological effects of the experience in answers to questions 5–9.*
- Evidence of ability to think and discuss at discursive level:
 6. *Indications of ability to identify and articulate underlying ideas in answers to questions 3 and 9.*
- Demographic variation in the range of participants:
 7. *Where other criteria suggest equal suitability, to consider factors such as gender, age and type of religious community.*

Appendix 4: Consent form

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

1. I understand that I am being asked to participate in a PhD research study conducted by David Crawley under the auspices of the University of Waikato.
2. I understand that the purpose of this study is to increase understanding of the use and abuse of authority within Christian faith communities and the ways in which people act to change their relationship to the people and/or structures of authority in such communities.
3. I understand that my participation in this research is entirely voluntary and that no financial remuneration is involved. I understand that I am free to choose without explanation to discontinue my participation in this study until one week after the follow up interview (see 7 and 8 below).
4. I understand that the interviews will be recorded on audiotape, and will develop from some or all of the questions listed on the attached sheet.
5. I understand that excerpts from the transcripts of interviews that I have with the researcher will be analysed and may be quoted and referred to in the PhD dissertation, in future papers, journal articles and books that may be written, and in seminars that may be presented, by the researcher.
6. I am granting authorisation for the use of such information on the understanding that my anonymity and privacy will be preserved at all times. I understand that my real name or any other identifying information concerning my identity or that of the faith communities of which I have been a part will never be disclosed or included in any written or verbal context. I understand that for the duration of the research, audiotapes, computer disks, printed transcripts, written notes and any other material containing this information will be contained in a locked cabinet in the researcher's home, and that when the research has been completed the audiotapes will be erased, and the other material (including full transcripts) will continue to be held in locked storage.
7. I understand that prior to the follow up interview the researcher will present me with a transcript and a preliminary analysis of the first interview, that I will have an opportunity to request changes/additions/deletions to the transcript, that I will be invited to comment on the preliminary analysis, and that these comments may be incorporated in the published form of the research.
8. I understand that one week after the follow up interview marks the final point at which I may withdraw my involvement in this project.
9. I understand that the researcher will provide an opportunity for me to read draft sections of the dissertation that pertain to my story, and that there will again be an opportunity to make comment and/or request that certain details of my story not be published. In light of point 7, however, I understand that I may not at this stage request that my story not be used at all in this study.

10. I understand that the purpose of the interviews is to elicit and record the story of my experiences, not to engage in counselling, spiritual direction or any other therapeutic process. Should I find that the interview process causes distress or raises questions that I want to pursue, then I understand that it is my responsibility to take those issues to the appropriate qualified person(s), as named below.

(The researcher is available to recommend a suitable person if necessary. The first session will be paid for by the researcher if requested.)

Name(s) of suitable counsellor/spiritual director to whom you would be willing to take issues raised by the interviews should that need arise:

Professional association(s) of which this person is a member (e.g. NZAC, ACSD):

I have read this consent form and I understand what is being requested of me as a participant in this study. I freely consent to participate.

_____ (Full name of participant, printed)

_____ (Signature of participant)

_____ (Date)

_____ (Signature of researcher,
David Crawley)

_____ (Date)

Appendix 5: Sample interview questions

Prior to the interviews, participants were supplied with the following list of sample questions, with an explanation that they were potential supplementary questions, aimed at exploring in more detail the story that emerged in response to the first main question.

1. I understand that at some point you decided to make a change in your relationship to religious authority. Please tell me about your experience.
2. Tell me more about the faith community where these experiences occurred.
3. How did you come to be a part of this community?
4. How did religious authority/leadership work in this community?
5. In practical terms, how did the practice of religious authority/leadership in this community affect your life—both in terms of your involvement in the community and your wider life?
6. How were people in the community encouraged to relate to structures of authority/leadership?
7. What do you remember about your own view of these beliefs and practices, in the earlier stages of your involvement?
8. At this earlier stage, did you have some ideas of your own about the way spiritual authority/leadership should function in a Christian context?
9. Do you remember how you come to these ideas? What helped to keep them in place?
10. At this stage, what place did you see for your own choices as to how you might pursue your life as a Christian?
11. How had you come to those ideas about the place of individual choice?
12. How was it that changes began to occur in your view of the beliefs and practices around religious authority in your community? For example,
 - Were there any particular experiences or defining moments that contributed to these changes?
 - Were you influenced by other peoples' experiences or actions?
 - Did you somehow become aware of alternative ideas about religious authority?
13. Tell me more about the process of change from holding your earlier beliefs to coming to new ideas.
14. When you began to experience a desire for change, what was that like?
15. When did you begin to think that you may need to take action, to change your relationship to the ideas and practices of religious authority in your community? What was it like for you to think about this?
16. What and/or who (no need to give names) supported your movement toward making changes?

17. What was the first thing you did, in practice, that represented a challenge to the beliefs and practices of religious authority in the community?
18. Tell me about other things that happened after that, that were also contradictory to the way in which religious authority functioned in the community?
19. What do you think was your most significant act of resistance?
20. What was supporting you in these acts of resistance?
21. Tell me about any changes that were taking in place in your ideas about the place of personal choice in the Christian faith journey.
22. What did you think about the way you were changing?
23. How did people in your community respond?
24. How did the person(s) in positions of authority respond?
25. What do you think of your actions as you look back on them now? What did you achieve?
26. Tell me about the time after your actions. What happened? Did your ideas about religious authority continue to change?
27. What is your present relationship, if any, to a Christian faith community?
28. How is this community similar or different to the one where these events took place?
29. Thinking back to the ideas you originally had about religious authority, what do you think of those ideas now?
30. And thinking back to the changing ideas that eventually led to your acts of resistance, what do you think of those ideas now?
31. Tell me about any further changes in your ideas about religious authority and/or about the place of individual choice in the Christian faith journey.
32. What has helped to shape your current ideas about these things?
33. Have your experiences led you to any further actions in terms of challenging the kind of beliefs and practices around religious authority/leadership that you experienced?
34. Have you had involvement with other people who have had similar experiences? If so, what kind of involvement?

Appendix 6: Follow up letter and response form for participants

Dear

Thank you for agreeing to help me with this last step in relation to my PhD project. I do very much appreciate the time and thought you are giving to this.

The questions are attached. You can write as much or as little as you like. I don't want this to be onerous.

There are three ways you can choose to give me the feedback I'm asking for:

1. Save this document on your computer and type your responses directly into the boxes—save the document again and then email it back to me as an attachment.

or

2. Type up your answers in a separate document and email it to me as an attachment.

or

3. Type or write your answers and then post them to me at this address: David Crawley, XXXXX.

In my thesis, I have changed your name to .

It is important for me to explain that in writing about your experiences, I have not attempted to tell the whole story. I have had to be selective, with nine stories to analyse in total. The parts I have selected relate to the two specific theoretical questions that I am addressing in my thesis. These questions concern:

- (i) ways of thinking (referred to as “discourses” in my thesis) that subvert the Judaeo-Christian traditions of freedom and justice in some Christian communities; and
- (ii) what enables people to resist oppressive forms of religious authority in their communities.

In addition to what I am sending you, there is further discussion of common themes later in the thesis, with reference back to the participants' stories. When that chapter is finalised, you are welcome to read it for your own interest. Of course, there are many interesting aspects of the issue of religious authority, some of which may have been important to you, which fell outside of my topic and couldn't be included.

Finally, I'm also aware that I use a lot of postmodern philosophical language (jargon!) used in my thesis. One day I hope to write something more reader-friendly for a wider audience.

Thanks again
David Crawley

Response form for David Crawley in relation to University of Waikato PhD

1. I have attached a copy of the transcript of our interview conversation with this email. This transcript will not appear in full in my thesis, but you may like to read it through anyway, to remind yourself of the story you shared with me. If you see any errors of transcription or fact that you would like to bring to my attention, please list them here. Just give the number of the section concerned, and an instruction as to the correction.
2. When you read the draft of what I have written about your story in my thesis (also attached), are you happy that I have sufficiently disguised your identity and the identities (and locations, etc) of others involved?

(Type YES or NO):

If NO, please indicate which details you would like to me to omit or disguise more carefully. Again, give the page number and specific details.

3. Is there anything I have written that misunderstands something you said, or which is factually wrong? (This is a little tricky—you may not agree with my *interpretation* or point of view on something, or fully understand it, but I'm not asking about that here. It's more whether I have completely got the wrong end of the stick and misconstrued something you said).
4. What was it like for you to read what I have written about your story? How did you find yourself responding?
5. Is there any brief postscript to your story that you would like to tell me about? (It may or may not be included in what I write, but I'm interested anyway!)
6. If I write something for a more public readership in the future, would you like me to check with you again before including aspects of your story?

YES = Please check in with me again first

NO = I'm happy for you to go ahead without needing to check again

(Type YES or NO):

7. Anything else you want to say?