

**Strolling to the beat of another drum:  
Living the ‘Slow Life’**

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A thesis  
submitted in partial fulfilment  
of the requirements for the Degree of  
Master of Applied Science

at

Lincoln University

by

J. Zeestraten

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Lincoln University

2008

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# ABSTRACT

Abstract of a thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the  
Degree of M.Appl.Sc.

## **Strolling to the beat of another drum: Living the ‘Slow Life’**

By

J. Zeestraten

As the pace of life in contemporary Western society accelerates, an increasing number of people are engaging in an alternative lifestyle: ‘Slow Living’. Although popular in the media, Slow Living, which addresses issues of quality of life, is a relatively new area of academic enquiry. Given a lack of empirical research, especially on the realities of the Slow Life in a New Zealand context, this ethnographic study aims to augment the knowledge on this lifestyle by focusing on how families experience Slow Living. The key research question is: How do families live their interpretations of a Slow Life? To answer this question, this study examined the everyday lives of five Slow Living families in Canterbury, New Zealand. Adult family members were given a time-use diary to complete over two days. These diaries were then used as a foundation for in-depth interviews and participant observation.

Slow Living families hold to a number of personal values, such as personal agency, conscious living and leading meaningful lives. These comprise their ideal way of living. The families are also faced with a number of challenges and have to employ strategies to balance their ideal and what is possible. The different ways families adapt produces a variety of Slow Living lifestyles.

Keywords: *Slow Living, lifestyles, quality of life, time-use, pace of life, families, Canterbury, New Zealand, ethnography, values, conscious living, personal agency, meaningful living, challenges, strategies, practices, Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs.*

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

There are many people I would like to thank for their support during the preparation of this thesis. Clare Simpson and Bob Gidlow, my supervisors, thank you very much for your constant support, advice and enthusiasm and for reading many drafts throughout the research process.

Thank you to the farmers' markets, organic shops, the Slow Food group and school networks who let me distribute notices to advertise for participants. I would especially like to thank the participating families who welcomed me into their homes and shared their experiences. Your time was invaluable.

A big thank you also goes out to my friends and colleagues. Kate, Kerry, Toni and Victoria, thank you for your support, encouragement, jokes and love. Your support and friendship is priceless. Erin, many thanks for your friendship as well and for talking ideas through and motivating me to get my thesis finished. Mike, Roland, Golda and Dr Jude, thank you all for your inspirational chats. And to the many other students, especially those on the 8<sup>th</sup> floor on Forbes, thanks for the chats and making me laugh.

Mum and Dad, I am very thankful for your continuous support, encouragement and love, 'jullie zijn geweldig'. Also, Tim, Stef, Paula, Em and Preppie, you guys are awesome.

Finally, I would like to thank Felix. Thank you for your love and amazing support. Thanks for listening and making me laugh. Gracias, you are wonderful.

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# CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Introduction

As life in contemporary Western society becomes faster paced, an increasing number of people are starting to search for an alternative way of living; a way that is slower and more meaningful. This way of life has been named ‘Slow Living’, the term having evolved from the concept of ‘Slow Food’. Mainstream media have caught up with this phenomenon and there have been numerous articles dedicated to ‘slowing down’. In 2005, Carl Honoré published his popular book *In Praise of Slowness: Challenging the Cult of Speed*, which became an international best seller. Within academia, studies of Slow Living are still new. Parkins and Craig (2006) published a book called *Slow Living*, which, from a cultural studies perspective, explores the philosophies and politics of ‘slowness’. However, there is a lack of empirical work focussing on the everyday lives of Slow Living families, especially within a New Zealand-specific context. My thesis aims to address this research gap through adopting an ethnographic research approach. The primary research objective was to explore the everyday practices of Slow Living through focusing on how five Canterbury families live their interpretations of a Slow Life. My findings suggest that Slow Living families hold to a number of personal values, such as personal agency, conscious living and leading meaningful lives. These comprise their ideal way of living. The families are also faced with a number of challenges and have to employ strategies to balance their ideal and what is possible. The different ways families adapt produces a variety of Slow Living lifestyles.

What I aim to achieve in this thesis is what has been termed “thick description” (Geertz, 1973). From an ethnographic approach, I focussed not only on what these families are doing in their day-to-day lives, but also on the implied meanings of those actions. In my description I tried to get as close as possible to presenting ‘the total way of life’ of the five families, within a limited time frame. To this end, I developed a conceptual framework based around quality of life and lifestyles, and which incorporated Maslow’s model of the Hierarchy of Needs as an analytical tool.

My aim here is not to generalize about what living a Slow Life is like for all who are attempting to do so across the world, or even in New Zealand. I am simply giving a detailed account of the lifestyle of five Canterbury families, who are trying to live the Slow Life

within a fast-paced society. I also hope to inspire others to use my research as a base for future qualitative and quantitative studies.

The purpose of this chapter is to introduce the research problem and establish the significance of this study. However, in order to establish this significance, the context needs to be considered. Hence, I will firstly set the scene through exploring the context of Slow Living and secondly discuss the significance of the research. Thirdly, I will state the research questions. This will be followed by an outline of the Conceptual model and the organisational structure of my thesis.

## **1.2 Context**

### ***The acceleration of life in Western industrialised society***

In the past, life was based around cyclic time where the passing of seasons, the ebb and flow of the tides, and the orbits of the sun and moon marked time (Robinson & Godbey, 1997). However, with the onset of industrialisation, life, especially in Western societies, became faster paced. A wide range of terms has emerged to explain this phenomenon of the acceleration of life: time famine, time deepening, hurry sickness, time obsession, time scarcity, time compact and time poor (Daly, 2001). In 1970, Linder referred to the increasing scarcity of time in his book *The Harried Leisure Class*. Since then, empirical research (see, for example, Levine & Norenzayan, 1999) has indicated that life has become faster paced, predominantly in economically developed industrialised countries. This acceleration and sense of urgency can be explained by a number of changes within society. These changes are both structural and perceptual and are embedded in: the development of globalisation (and the increase in technology); increased consumerism; changes in family structure, paid work and gender roles (Daly, 2001); and the increase of house sizes. I will comment on each of these.

Many people have argued that globalisation has contributed to a number of ills in society, including the fast pace of life (Parkins & Craig, 2006). Globalisation refers to “a process in which social life within societies is increasingly affected by international influences based on everything from political and trade ties to shared music, clothing styles, and mass media” (Johnson, 1995, p. 122).

With the rise of globalisation, new technologies have emerged worldwide, speeding up communication and transport. This has meant an increase in mobility of goods, services and people around the world, as well as the instant distribution of information (Parkins & Craig, 2006). Harvey (1989) has termed this phenomenon ‘time-space compression’. Although we now have an increasing amount of technology, which is supposed to improve people’s lives and provide more free time, people often pack more things into their day, leading to a fast-paced work- and life-style. A good example is the use of motor vehicles – while travel time is decreased, thus freeing up more time, that free time is used to cram more activities into the day and to travel further to work and ‘leisure’. Globalisation is only one way of understanding current circumstances, though. Another significant contributor to contemporary fast-paced society is consumerism.

Today, people from the Western industrialised world live in a ‘consumer society’, which Schor (1998) has defined as: “ a society in which discretionary consumption has become a mass phenomenon, not just the province of the rich or even the middle class...[and] is based on continuous growth in consumption expenditures” (p. 217). Starting in the 1920s, mass production provided identical or similar consumer goods at lower prices (Ewen, 1976; Schor, 1998). Prior to this, most families used the farm for their survival and “[t]he family was a unit, patterned around the tasks of production and consumption needs” (Ewen, 1976, p. 114). The introduction of the wage system meant there was now a new mode of survival. Work became routinised and took place away from the home and the community. In the 1950s, the ‘Smiths’ wanted what the ‘Jones’s’ had next door: a nice house, an automatic washing machine, and so forth, striving to become more like their neighbours (Schor, 1998). Since then, ‘wanted’ goods, such as microwaves and designer clothes, once considered luxuries, became ‘needed’ goods. This made consumers more frustrated and dissatisfied as they aspired to lifestyles beyond their financial means. People’s consumerist expectations were reinforced by the availability of cheap credit. With credit cards becoming a common sight, companies began to subtly encourage borrowing, giving rise to large financial debts (Schor, 1998). This has led to longer working hours, and the increased consumption of luxury items now perceived as necessities (Schor, 1998). In contemporary Western society, free time “is dominated by the desire for commodities and buying things” (Rojek, 2005, p. 86). The good life has come to be measured by luxury and material goods. However, as Baudrillard (1998) argues, most consumption is not about material ownership, but more about the signs and symbols that come with it. Consequently, life has become fast-paced, as people try to live up to these expectations. Yet, while many people might be materially affluent, their quality of

life and work-life balance are often unsatisfactory, and potentially lead to stress and burnout (Schor, 1998).

The fast-paced lifestyle has also come about due to changes in family structure, paid work and gender roles. Traditionally, within Western Society, the father in the household worked away from the home to support the family while the mother worked at home to provide care for children and prepare food for the family (Daly, 2001). This clear division of labour changed radically after the Second World War when an increasing number of women joined the paid workforce. “In 1986 mothers of 53.7 percent of children in two-parent families were in paid work. One decade later, this proportion had risen to 61.3 percent” (Statistics New Zealand, 2004, para. 2). In addition to paid employment, families still have domestic chores to complete. As Roberts (2006) has pointed out: “There are many women today whose total working weeks, when their paid employment and unpaid domestic work are totalled, exceed 70 [hours]” (p. 43).

There has been much discussion in the sociology literature about whether the number of work hours of people in modern society has increased or decreased. Optimistic forecasts in the 1950s and 1960s announced an increase in leisure opportunities and fewer working hours (Zuzanek, 2004). However, in the 1980s and 1990s, these forecasts of the leisure lifestyle were replaced by discussions of overwork and burnout (Schor, 1991; Zuzanek, 2004). Although discussions continue whether, overall, people work longer hours (see, for example, Robinson & Godbey, 1997; Schor, 1991; Zuzanek, 2004), there seems to be agreement that the pace of life has increased (Parkins & Craig, 2006).

The size of houses is also increasing, which leads to a busier lifestyle as well. Daly (2001) points out several possible explanations for the increase in home sizes. Expectations of private rooms are greater than ever among children. Also, more space is needed to accommodate the accumulation of consumer goods. But how is this related to being busy? Keeping up with cultural trends of consumption requires time invested in work (Daly, 2001; Schor, 1998). As well as time spent shopping for consumer goods and working in paid employment, more time is necessary for household cleaning and management (or, more income is needed to employ others to ‘service’ the home and family – cleaning; childcare; garden and home maintenance). Furthermore, more time needs to be invested in housecleaning because of cultural trends and the pressure of heightened cleanliness standards (Daly, 2001). Schor (1998) views this pattern as a vicious cycle, which she calls the work-and-spend cycle.

In summary, with changing work trends and gender roles, trends in consumption and the increase of technology through the process of globalisation, families are experiencing a greater sense of time stress. This indicates that families have to be more mindful about time, and the management of time becomes an important issue. Daly (2001) notes: “[a]s spouses and partners continue to work through the everyday challenges of harmonizing work and family, time is at the root of their routine negotiations” (p. 3).

### ***Implications of a fast-paced society***

The fast-paced society raises numerous issues for society: time-pressure; health and wellbeing; environmental impacts; decreasing social capital; and loss of meaningful experiences and personal agency.

Research has shown an increase in the number of people feeling time-pressured in Western societies (Zuzanek, 2004). Studies in the U.S., Canada and other industrialised countries (see, for example, Bond, Galinsky, & Swanberg, 1998; Robinson, 1991; Zuzanek & Smale, 1997) have demonstrated that people felt more time-pressured in the late 1990s than was the case in the 1960s and 1970s. Honoré (2005) reported that six minute appointments with the doctor are not uncommon. Doctors are often in a hurry to see all their patients and to make it home at a reasonable hour. Instead of taking the time to look at all aspects of a patient’s health, they run through a quick checklist and prescribe some painkillers (Honoré, 2005). However, questions remain about whether this feeling of time-pressure is a result of longer working hours *per se* or of the increased pace of life in a media and computer-dominated society (Zuzanek, 2004).

Schor (1991) reported that overwork has led to a large number of health and wellbeing problems in America. These issues include exhaustion, stress and stress-related illnesses such as heart attacks, feelings of purposelessness, divorce, and broken homes. Zuzanek (2004) notes that “[i]t is clear that work overload and feelings of time crunch are negatively associated with respondents’ emotional wellbeing, in particular satisfaction with the balance of work-family life and the use of non-working time” (p. 131). These wellbeing issues were also reported in *Take back your time: Fighting overwork and time poverty in America* (De Graaf, 2003). As well as covering the wellbeing implications of fast-paced lifestyles, this book also discusses the implications of the environmental impact of such lifestyles.

The fast-paced life, through an increase in working hours and consumption over recent decades, has negatively affected the natural environment and sustainable development (Baudrillard, 1998; Statistics New Zealand, 2001). Homes are now larger and, with an increase in population, development has led to increased noise, traffic and water and air pollution. Due to long working hours, caring for the environment has dropped to the lower end of many people's priorities. For example, Wann (2003) discovered that individuals who work long hours are less likely to recycle. In a wider context, the fast pace of life and an increasingly consumerist culture has led to unsustainable practices and a decrease in a sense of community (Putnam, 2000).

Western culture has increasingly become more individualistic, which Putnam (2000) argues is largely due to people being too busy. There is a cost to this: the loss of social capital. Social capital refers to "connections among individuals – social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them" (Putnam, 2000, p. 19). Helliwell and Putnam (2004) found that social capital supports subjective well-being, as ties with family, friends, neighbours, community, and religious groups are all related to life-satisfaction and happiness. Countries like the U.S. have experienced a major decline in social capital as individuals have become progressively more disengaged from one another (Putnam, 2000). Putnam (2000) showed, for example, that the occurrence of family dinners, card games, and entertaining friends – activities that have a high degree of face-to-face interaction – have all declined.

Life in late modernity, it is claimed, has become increasingly meaningless (Giddens, 1991). Studies have shown that it is not just free time that people desire, but more time for meaningful things (Reisch, 2001). The satisfactions obtained from material consumption are often found to be temporary and insubstantial (Schor, 1998). Robinson and Godbey (1997), illustrate how experiences have changed over time for many people:

#### A Hypothetical Trip to the Zoo

The kids had talked about the trip for several weeks. Mom packed a lunch the night before and instructed her children about what clothes to wear – their good clothes. The next day, the entire family drove to the zoo, or took a bus, and once their destination was reached spent all morning just roaming around. After a leisurely lunch on the grass, the father perhaps snoozed a bit, the mother cleaned up, and the kids wandered off to see their favourite animals. Once alone, mother and father might even have talked with each other in hushed tones while slowly pulling blades of grass or staring at the clouds. Lying on their backs, hands folded behind their heads, the couple slowly came to realize that a distant cloud bank looked like dreaming elephants bound for home. They watched other people with a passive receptiveness that occasionally led to insights about the world and

their own lives. The children returned. A few arguments were partially settled. The animals were discussed with great enthusiasm as the remains of the picnic basket were depleted. Perhaps blades of grass were pulled from the father's cupped hands to determine who got the last half of a brownie. The family returned home as the sun set, tired but full of wonder.

And today:

Mom or Dad (not both) rushes the kids into the car and gets on the Interstate and drives at 65 miles an hour to Animal Safari Park. There they pay \$10 per person and drive through taking snapshots through rolled-up windows with an instamatic camera. In just 45 minutes they are back on the Interstate looking for a fast-food place for lunch. The only sense of wonder is what to do next. (p. 35)

Moreover, people desire a sense of personal agency<sup>1</sup> (Reisch, 2001) and 'temporal<sup>2</sup> sovereignty' (Nowotny, 1994). Godbey (1999) summed it up by saying: "Starving for time does not result in death; it results, as ancient Athenian philosophers observed, in never having begun to live" (p. 68). As the story of the zoo illustrated, "the quality of experiences has changed dramatically as the pace of life has become faster" (Robinson & Godbey, 1997, p. 35).

As a response to this fast-paced life, a number of individuals and groups began to question this way of living. Slow Living is one such response<sup>3</sup>. In the next section I will describe how Slow Living developed.

### ***The development of Slow Living***

Over the centuries, people have attempted to live a Slow Life for different reasons. However, it was not until the late 1800s that 'slowness' began to emerge as a positive value in response to speed created by increased technologies (Parkins & Craig, 2006). Hence, 'slowness' became a 'virtuous quality' once it became a choice rather than the only option (Parkins & Craig, 2006).

Henry David Thoreau was one of the first notable individuals in modern times to document his experiences and struggles related to Slow Living. Published in 1854, Thoreau's work *Walden* (or sometimes called *Life in the Woods*) reports on his two years spent living in a cabin in the woods by Walden Pond. Thoreau came to live in the woods in order to find out how one should live:

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<sup>1</sup> Agency refers to "the active capacity of the actor to pursue voluntarily chosen goals" (Rojek, 2005, p. 61).

<sup>2</sup> Temporal refers to everyday practice concerned with time.

<sup>3</sup> Other responses include Downshifting and Voluntary Simplicity, which will be discussed in Chapter Two.

I went to the woods because I wished to live deliberately; to front only the essential facts of life and see if I could not learn what it had to teach, and not, when I came to die, discover that I had not lived. (Thoreau, 1992, p. 80)

Thoreau contemplated and wrote about many elements relevant to Slow Living. It can be said that he chose to live the ultimate Slow Life and record his experience, thoughts and questions. He wrote:

Why should we be in such desperate haste to succeed, and in such desperate enterprises? If a man does not keep pace with his companions, perhaps it is because he hears a different drummer. Let him step to the music which he hears, however measured or far away. It is not important that he should mature as soon as an apple-tree or an oak. Shall he turn his spring into summer? (Thoreau, 1992, p. 288)

It can be argued that Thoreau's<sup>4</sup> work set the foundation for discussions about Slow Living, but the term 'Slow Living' has only been formally recognised since the development of the Slow Food Movement in 1989. Slow Food appeared after the formation of a left-wing activist food and wine interest group called Arcigola, in Italy (Parkins & Craig, 2006). In 1989, a new McDonald's restaurant was proposed for Rome, which caused anger and protests. The term 'Slow Food' arose through this resistance to fast food restaurants. However, as Slow Food's founder Carlo Petrini (2003) notes, what the term Slow Food really indicated was "our critical reaction to the symptoms of incipient globalization" (p. 8). The Slow Food manifesto, which was signed in December 1989 in Paris, marked the formal beginning of the international Slow Food Movement. With the international headquarters in Bra, Italy, Slow Food currently has over 80,000 members worldwide. Its philosophy and mission is far-reaching but is based on defending agricultural biodiversity and promoting food and wine cultures (Slow Food, 2007a). Its mission statement reads: "Slow Food works to defend biodiversity in our food supply, spread taste education and connect producers of excellent foods with co-producers through events and initiatives" (Slow Food, 2007b).

Many other, broader-based, organisations and networks modelled on this initiative have since been established. These include the Sloth Club in Japan, the Zeitverein (Society for the Deceleration of Time) in Austria, Città Slow (Slow cities) and SlowSex in Italy, the Simple Living network and Shorter Work Time Group in the U.S., and Tempo Giusto (The right speed – music) in Germany. Though each of these organisations (including Slow Food) promotes a specific aspect of life, they all promote a less hurried lifestyle and can be seen as part of the 'Slow Movement'. While some families choose to live a slower life, unaware of

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<sup>4</sup> Other notable individuals include Robert Owen and William Morris, and religious groups include the Amish and Quakers, but they are beyond the scope of this study to discuss.

the Slow Movement, others join networks, associations or groups, thereby consciously identifying themselves with the movement.

Following the development of these organisations and networks, a number of journalists and academics began to write about Slow Living. In 2005, journalist Carl Honoré published the international bestseller *In Praise of Slowness*. Honoré (2005) claimed that his book is “...the first comprehensive examination of the worldwide Slow movements” (back cover) and aimed to explain what the movement is about, its difficulties and “why it has something to offer us all” (p. 18). Andrews (2006), published a book called *Slow is Beautiful: New Visions of Community, Leisure and Joie de Vivre*. She provides the reader with an image of what she calls ‘a more gratifying life’. In 2006, academic scholars Parkins and Craig published *Slow Living*, which explores Slow Living in a philosophical and political context at an international level (Parkins & Craig, 2006). Using Slow Food as an example, Parkins and Craig investigated the world of slowness, and the growth of the social movement of ‘Slow’. They explored the new ethics of living and examined the challenges of living a ‘Slow Life’ in a global society. Although these works (Andrews, 2006; Honoré, 2005; Parkins & Craig, 2006) are not the only ones that have explored the topic of Slow Living, they seem to be the most prominent and cited studies, providing the reader with a broad overview of the subject, as opposed to a narrow ‘how-it is-done’ approach.

### **1.3 Significance of the research**

While many individuals thrive on a fast-paced life, especially young people, an increasing number of people are dissatisfied with the fast pace of life and are looking at alternative ways to live. The ‘Slow Life’ is one such alternative, addressing such issues as the quality of life, work-life balance and time-use. These social issues are of pressing concern within contemporary society, including New Zealand. Studies on quality of life, work-life balance and time-use have been conducted at national levels (see, for example, Quality of Life Project, 2007; Statistics New Zealand, 2001; Worklifebalance Project, 2004) and will be further discussed in Chapter Two. Slow Living tries to address these issues and my study aims to contribute to knowledge of these matters.

The significance of Slow Living is reflected in increased media attention, the increasing popularity of ‘Slow’ activities and events, and the publicised ‘benefits’ of Slow Living. Newspapers and magazines are replete with articles devoted to the stresses of life, recommending people to slow down and participate in slower recreational activities such as

yoga and gardening. Slow Living, it is claimed, contributes to increased health and productivity, produces thriving environments, builds strong communities and frees people from the ‘disease’ of hurrying (Honoré, 2005). Books and articles about how to live a slower life are appearing at an ever-faster pace (the irony is intentional), and they challenge the consumer world of ‘speed’. Some illustrative headlines from New Zealand newspapers include:

- Easing up the pace of life: Kate Monahan investigates the growth of the slow living movement (Monahan, 2006, June 28).
- Taking it slowly: In a fast-paced, consumerist world, there are those who are determined to put the brakes on (Collett, 2006, July 1).
- Slowly does it: Evolving out of today’s fast-paced lifestyle is a movement dedicated to taking it easy and relaxing (McCrone, 2008, July 5-6).

Articles such as these show that Slow Living is currently a ‘hot topic’ in New Zealand society. One article put it like this: “[M]any Kiwis seem to agree we need more slowness in our lives. And we need it fast” (McCrone, 2008, July 5-6, p. D2). Inevitably, there is a strong element of hyperbole, and a lack of supporting documentation, in these claims.

Despite public interest, little is known about the actual everyday practices of a Slow Lifestyle, especially on the part of New Zealand families. This prompted my initial guiding research question: How do families live their interpretations of a Slow Life? The need to study issues based around everyday life and time is supported by Daly (2001), who stated: “As family members become more mindful of the time in their lives, there is a greater urgency for social scientists to explore the multiple meanings of time and the way that time shapes everyday family experience” (p. 5). My study’s main purpose is not to examine time *per se*, but it does in many ways focus on how time affects the everyday lives of five families trying to live their interpretations of a Slow Life.

## **1.4 Research questions**

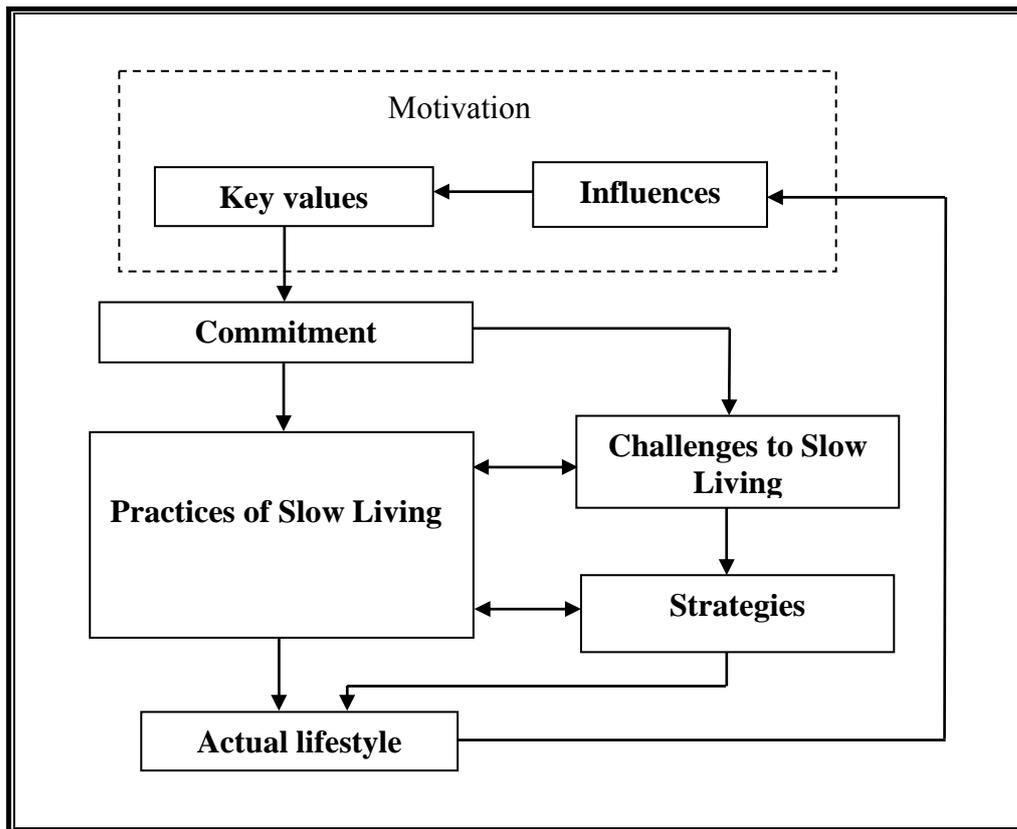
The research objective of my study was to explore the everyday practices of Slow Living by focussing on how five Canterbury families live their interpretations of a Slow Life. In light of this objective I have posed the following questions:

- What are the realities of living a Slow Life in contemporary consumer society?

- How difficult is it for participants to commit to this lifestyle when consumption trends are going in an opposite direction?
- What motivates participants?
- What varieties of lifestyles can be found under the ‘Slow Movement’ banner?
  - To what extent are these variations a matter of individual family and household choice as distinct from representing compromises necessitated by structural and cultural location (e.g., the need to maintain an income flow to support the lifestyle; the need to compromise on values in order to join supply and consumption chains)?
- What material and other resources does one need in order to sustain a Slow Lifestyle and are certain families positively or negatively advantaged in this respect (Weber, 1968)?

## **1.5 Approaching the study of Slow Living New Zealanders – conceptual framework**

In order to answer these research questions, I developed a conceptual framework which is based around exploring the ‘lifestyle’ of Slow Living families. In doing so, it contributes to wider knowledge about quality of life. As I sought to make sense of the data I gathered, I developed a model which I believe will have ongoing value. I present the model in full – see Figure 1 – so that the reader can understand the full ‘picture’ at this early stage, but each stage of the model was initially developed independently, and each of my data chapters will add the relevant stage of the model that is appropriate to the particular chapter. As the discussion proceeds, I will explore different elements of the model, and then show how they come together.



**Figure 1: Conceptual model: The Slow Living Lifestyle**

An important contribution to my interpretations of the data, and to the model, is made by another model, Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs. Hence, the next section will review Maslow’s theory about motivation and his model of the Hierarchy of Needs.

## **1.6 Maslow’s theory of motivation and the Hierarchy of Needs**

Maslow (1987) suggested that our actions are motivated predominantly by our basic needs. He developed a model of the Hierarchy of Needs in which there are five basic needs, with the ‘basic’ needs needing to be satisfied before the higher needs are activated. The first needs to be satisfied are the physiological needs, such as food, water, sleep and sex. Second are the safety needs, which involve protection from harm and security. The third needs are love and belonging, referring to acceptance and affiliation. Fourth are the esteem needs, which involve recognition, achievement, approval and competency. The fifth and top need is self-actualisation, which means being true to one’s nature and fully reaching one’s potential (Maslow, 1987).

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs has been applied in a number of studies of Voluntary Simplicity and quality of life. According to Etzioni (1998):

Maslow's thesis is compatible with the suggestion that voluntary simplicity may appeal to people after their basic needs are satisfied: once they feel secure that these needs will be attended to in the future, they may then objectively feel ready to turn more attention to their higher needs - although their consumeristic addiction may prevent them from noting that they may shift upwards, so to speak. Voluntary simplicity is thus a choice a successful corporate lawyer, not a homeless person, faces. (p. 632)

The Hierarchy of Needs model has also been used to predict developments in the quality of life. Haggerty (1999) used Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs theory to predict the development of quality of life in 88 countries from 1960 to 1995. Haggerty's results confirmed many of Maslow's predictions, but it disconfirmed Maslow's mechanism of growth (i.e. "that countries must slow growth in one area to increase growth in another" (Haggerty, 1999, p. 249)).

Maslow's model, and the theorisation which underpins it, has not been without criticism (see, for example, Geller, 1982; Neher, 1991). According to Neher (1991), Maslow's view of human development is one-sided:

Maslow's tendency to emphasize the role of our innate needs in directing the course of healthy psychological development, and his tendency to downgrade the importance of cultural input in this process, leads to a view of human development that is one-sided and consequently very difficult to support. (p. 96)

Maslow failed to acknowledge a number of needs (such as learning a language) which are required for the development of a fully functioning human (Neher, 1991). In addition, it is difficult to verify whether the *order* of Maslow's needs is accurate (Geller, 1982). Maslow (1987) argues that, generally, our basic needs must be met before we move onto the higher needs. Although this might be the case for many Western individuals, in simpler societies, the higher needs are sometimes met before the basic needs. In these societies, some individuals might have trouble gaining enough food, but they often display "strong social ties and a strong sense of self" (Neher, 1991, p. 97). Neher's critique suggests that Maslow's approach to 'universal' needs is in fact highly ethnocentric – representing an affluent society – where for the affluent middle classes, basic needs can be met. Although I recognise these criticisms, I found that Maslow's Hierarchy provided a useful analytical tool for studying Slow Living, as it predicts how human needs – whether 'innate' or culturally constructed – develop in a Western context. Furthermore, I found the five levels of needs useful as a framework to analyse the challenges of Slow Living, as I will demonstrate.

## **1.7 Thesis organisation**

This thesis is divided into eight chapters. Chapter Two identifies the literature which underpins this study, and examines previous studies related to Slow Living. In Chapter Three the research methods are discussed. Then the five participating families are introduced in Chapter Four. The results and discussion of the research are presented in Chapters Five, Six and Seven, exploring the motivating factors for Slow Living (Chapter Five), the challenges to living a Slow Life (Chapter Six), and the practices and strategies that families employ in order to live their Slow Lifestyles (Chapter Seven). Finally, in Chapter Eight, I summarise the study, discuss the research implications and suggest proposals for future research.

## **CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1 Introduction**

Despite popular interest in Slow Living, academic enquiry is sparse. Scholarly literature places Slow Living predominately in the context of Slow Food and ‘social movements’, but little empirical research has been conducted on the daily practice of Slow Living. Research on similar lifestyles, such as Simple Living and Downshifting, has been better documented. In this chapter I review the literature on Slow Living and related topics. First, the literature on quality of life, such as wellbeing, work-life balance and time-use studies, will be examined. This is followed by a brief review of the literature about social movements. Then I will review literature on lifestyles, including those that are similar to Slow Living. This leads to a discussion of the literature about Slow Living.

### **2.2 Quality of life**

Quality of life is of increasing interest in contemporary society, including New Zealand, which is evident in the number of quality of life related studies. Although the concept of quality of life is elusive, there tends to be agreement that quality of life is multidimensional (Baldwin, Godfrey, & Propper, 1994; Felce & Perry, 1995). From a review of 15 key literature sources, Felce and Perry (1995) concluded that there are five main dimensions of quality of life that overlap with most quality of life studies: these include physical wellbeing, material wellbeing, social wellbeing, development and activity, and emotional wellbeing. Hence they defined ‘quality of life’ as: “an overall general wellbeing that comprises objective descriptors and subjective evaluations of physical, material, social, and emotional wellbeing together with the extent of personal development and purposeful activity, all weighted by a personal set of values” (Felce & Perry, 1995, p. 60). Felce and Perry (1995) developed a model (see Figure 2) to illustrate the dynamic interaction between the elements of quality of life.

**This model has been removed for copyright compliance.**

The model can be found in:

Felce, D., & Perry, J. (1995). Quality of life: Its definition and measurement. *Research in Developmental Disabilities, 16*(1), 51-74.

**Figure 2: Felce and Perry's (1995) model of quality of life**

While this model and definition of quality of life covers a vast range of sub-dimensions which are also relevant to the Slow Life, there is no mention of environmental health and natural resources in the model; the closest mention is 'neighbourhoods', under 'material wellbeing'. In addition, Felce and Perry's (1995) study is placed, primarily, in a disability context.

Nonetheless, it has provided a good framework for future studies regarding quality of life and wellbeing.

Based on the definitions of wellbeing proposed by Felce and Perry (1995), Milligan, Fabian, Coope and Errington (2006) conducted research in New Zealand, titled 'The Family and Whanau Wellbeing Project'. They argue that little qualitative research has been undertaken on New Zealand family and household wellbeing, especially longitudinal studies. Such studies are necessary "in order to better inform social policy...particularly relevant in New Zealand given the changing composition of households, and the rapid social and economic restructuring in health, education, housing, welfare and employment policy that has characterised the past 25 years" (p. 10). In response to these changes, the Family and Whanau Wellbeing Project aimed to "provide new information to improve our [New Zealand's] understanding of family and household wellbeing in New Zealand and how it has changed over time" (Milligan et al., 2006, p. 10). Milligan et al. (2006) identified six key components as indicators of family wellbeing: income, education, work, housing, assets that facilitate social connectedness, and health. The project's objective was directly in line with the Ministry of Social Development's goal to improve "the social policy base so that social science research can better inform social policy development" (Milligan et al., 2006, p. 10).

The Quality of Life Project (2007) assessed the quality of life in twelve New Zealand cities. Its purpose was to "provide information to decision-makers to improve the quality of life in major New Zealand urban areas (Quality of Life Project, 2007, p. 4). Eleven domains were identified as indicators of quality of life: people; knowledge and skills; health; safety; housing; social connectedness; civil and political rights; economic standard of living; economic development; natural environment; built environment. The results indicated that most residents of these twelve cities believed they enjoyed a positive quality of life. In addition, quality of life seemed to be improving due to increased median and household incomes, increased life expectancy and improvements in safety.

The Ministry of Social Development publishes an annual report (called the Social Report) that examines the progress of wellbeing of New Zealanders (Ministry of Social Development, 2004). The 2004 copy of the Social Report included new indicators such as work-life balance and leisure and recreation, showing the importance of such issues in contemporary New Zealand society and awareness of them on the part of the New Zealand government.

### ***Work-life balance***

Academic and government inquiries about work-life balance are also increasing in New Zealand and other societies. ‘Work-life balance’ has been defined as “the absence of unacceptable levels of conflict between work and nonwork (*sic*) demands” (Greenblatt, 2002, para. 11). This refers to the management of competing expectations of the things one has to do and the things one wants to do. Work-life balance, it is claimed, reduces stress and burnout, leading to increased emotional and physical health (Dupuis & De Bruin, 2004). It is important to note that work-life balance means different things at different life stages, and changes in work-life balance often occur as a reaction to a life stage milestone. For example, ‘family time’ might be seen as personal time at one stage of one’s life but be seen as unpaid work or responsibilities at another stage.

The Department of Labour carried out a work-life balance project to aid its decision-making for policies and plans in regards to work-life balance (Department of Labour, 2004). The aim of the Work-Life Balance Project was “to find out how New Zealanders (both employees and employers) manage their work-life balance issues and how paid work and life outside paid work interact” (Department of Labour, 2004, p. 7). The Work-Life Balance Project (2004) identified three components (or roles) that need to be balanced to achieve a healthy lifestyle: paid work, unpaid work and personal time. The consultation process involved individuals and organisations responding to open-ended questions. 600 responses were received from adult individuals and 100 from organisations. Of the individual responses, 73% were from women, 52% had children, 73% worked as employees and 10% were self-employed. Findings of the Work-Life Balance Project indicated long working hours, opportunities for flexible working hours, a positive relationship between work-life balance and relationships, the difficulties for families to live on one income, a frequent neglect of social life and personal time, and the difficulty of participating in recreation and leisure due to work commitments.

In response to work-life balance issues in New Zealand, Green MP Sue Kedgley’s Private Member’s Bill led to an amendment to the current Employment Relations Bill. This amendment aims to make things easier for working parents – in particular those with children aged under five – by giving them the right to request flexible working hours in order to improve their work-life balance (Kedgley, 2005).

### *Time-use studies*

As stated earlier, Slow Living is particularly concerned with everyday time-use. With growing concerns for quality of life, time-use studies have been applied to “search for valid, reliable, and economical quality measures or social indicators” (Harvey & Pentland, 1999, p. 11) . A number of studies have been undertaken to find out how people use their time (see, for example, Australian Bureau of Statistics, 1998; Bittman, 1991; Robinson & Godbey, 1997; Statistics New Zealand, 2001). The Statistics New Zealand Time-Use Survey 1998-99 (2001) was a bench-mark study of the way New Zealanders use their time. Findings showed that females identified 46% of their day as necessary time (e.g., sleeping, eating and personal care), 22% as free time (e.g., religion, entertainment and sport), 20% as committed time (e.g., household work, purchasing goods for the household, and care giving for household members), and 12% as contracted time (e.g., labour force activity, education and training). In comparison, males identified 44% of their day as necessary time, 23% as free time, 12% as committed time, and 21% as contracted time.

The plethora of studies related to quality of life indicates the significance of the subject. However, these studies focus primarily on the structural responses of random samples within society and shed little information on the processes by which individuals and families ‘manage’ their time.

### **2.3 Social movements**

The ‘social movements’ literature addresses quality of life, focusing on particular groups of people; those who resist, in some ways, mainstream society. Blumer (1969) defines social movements as “collective enterprises seeking to establish a new order of life...[which] derive their motive power on one hand from dissatisfaction with the current form of life, and on the other hand, from wishes and hopes for a new system of living” (p. 99). Tilly (2004), states that social movements give ordinary people the chance to participate in politics and notes that there is some confusion in its definition. He argues that some analysts of social movements use the term loosely to extend to “all relevant popular collective action” (p. 6). Tilly (2004) discusses three elements of social movements:

1. a sustained, organized public effort making collective claims on target authorities [a campaign].
2. employment of combinations from among the following forms of political action: creation of special-purpose associations and coalitions, public meetings, solemn processions, vigils, rallies, demonstrations, petition drives, statements to and in public media, and phampleteering ...and

3. participants' concerted public representations of WUNC: worthiness, unity, numbers, and commitment on their part of themselves and/or their constituencies. (p. 3-4)

Social movements can be seen as a collective exploration for identity (Klapp, 1969). Klapp (1969) argued that people can no longer construct their identities from modern social relations. Through new social movements, such as the Slow Movement, individuals are communally claiming the right to become aware of their own identities (Melucci, 1980). In contrast to Tilly (2004) then, while groups and activities, like yoga classes and the Slow Food association, might promote Slow Living independently, together they form a social movement.

Some criticise social movements. In France, for example, some people reject the Slow Food Movement as they say that people should not need to organize how we live; ways of living should occur naturally (Collett, 2006, July 1). Others say that the Slow Movement is just a fad and that it will not become mainstream (Honoré, 2005). However, Honoré (2005) pointed out that McDonald's started to record its first losses in 2002, and that people worldwide were beginning to avoid the McDonald's outlets. Honoré (2005) stated: "For many, boycotting the Big Mac is a way of saying no to the global standardization of taste" (p. 65). Boycotting becomes a way of non-violent protesting, aiming to make a difference.

As a response to globalisation and the consumer society, a number of social movements have arisen, including the Slow Movement (Cohen & Rai, 2000). Yet, the Slow Movement is not the first social movement to advocate a better quality of life. Social movements have arisen throughout human history and can be closely linked to the current objectives of the Slow Movement. These social movements include political, intellectual and religious movements such as the Voluntary Simplicity Movement, anti-globalisation movements, the Arts and Crafts Movement (see, for example, Calhoun, 2000; Kaplan, 1999), labour movements (see, for example, Bennett, 2004), environmental/green movements (see, for example, Yearley, 2005), the Organic Movement, the Feminist Movement, the Vegetarian Movement, and the Black Power Movement. Academics have written detailed accounts on some of these movements, and less on others. Two examples, the Arts and Crafts Movement and the Organic Movement, will be described in brief as these movements are particularly related to the Slow Movement in terms of quality and conscious living respectively.

The Arts and Crafts Movement was an aesthetic movement that began in the late-nineteenth century as a rebellion against the organisation of Victorian society influenced by industrial

society. Beginning in England and later moving to other parts of the world, including New Zealand, this movement sought to fight industrial society which was producing a number of ills, such as exploitation of workers, production of poor quality goods and blighting of the countryside (Calhoun, 2000; Kaplan, 1999). According to Calhoun (2000), what the ‘masses’ needed was to be rescued from “sub-human living and working conditions” (p. 16) and be proud of their handiwork. The preservation of medieval handicrafts became the national cause. When addressing the Trades’ Guild of Learning in 1877, William Morris – one of the key founders of the movement – said “time was when the mystery and wonder of handicrafts were well acknowledged by the world, when imagination and fancy mingled with all things made by man; and in those days all handicraftsmen were artists, as we should now call them” (Morris, Dec 4, 1877). Leaders of the movement believed that perfect products must have an aesthetic component which required the makers of such products to have beauty in their lives. This signified the importance of quality of life (Calhoun, 2000).

The Organic Movement was concerned with knowing where your food comes from, how it is produced and how it arrives at your table. The Organic Movement, which began in the early Twentieth Century, represented a resistance to the use of synthetic fertilisers and pesticides in industrial farming and promoted a more sustainable form of production (Pollan, 2006).

Organic farming became not only about an alternative mode of production (like chemical-free farms), but also about an alternative mode of distribution (like co-operatives) and consumption, and the rejection of war. As Pollan (2006) suggested:

...organic’s [*sic*] rejection of agricultural chemical was also a rejection of the war machine, since the same corporations – Dow, Monsanto – that manufactured pesticides also made napalm and Agent Orange, the herbicide with which the U.S. military was waging war against nature in Southeast Asia. Eating organic thus married the personal to the political. (p. 143)

The original basis of organics was the connection of what you ate, how it was produced and how it reached your table. However, Pollen (2006) points out that the basic principles of organics have been altered over the years and have developed into a money-making industry, where some of the key values have been discarded.

The Slow Movement challenges the globalised fast-paced world and seeks a new order of life by focussing on locality and temporality. Many organisations (for example, Slow Food, The Society for the Deceleration of Time, Città Slow, Slow Education and the Sloth Club), have developed to challenge these temporal pressures, and hence, “slow living is not simply an individual response to the temporal pressures and disparities of the global everyday; it also has a number of collective manifestations” (Parkins & Craig, 2006, p. 51).

While some dispute the conceptualisation of Slow Food, as a social movement (see, for example, Chrzan, 2004), Parkins and Craig (2006) draw widely on the literature of new social movements. They argue that by linking Slow Food to social movements, a better understanding of the complexities and potential of Slow Food can be gained.

Another way of looking at Slow Living is through lifestyle studies, many of which have focussed on related lifestyles, such as Downshifting and Voluntary Simplicity. I will explore this literature in the following section.

## **2.4 Lifestyles**

Whilst there is some disagreement about the definition of the term ‘lifestyle’, there does tend to be an agreement that lifestyles involve activities or practices (Veal, 1993). Veal (1993) has developed a clear, operational and theoretical definition: “Lifestyle is the distinctive pattern of personal and social behaviour characteristic of an individual or a group” (pp. 247-248).

Chaney (1996) suggests that lifestyles “help to make sense of (that is explain but not necessarily justify) what people do, and why they do it, and what doing it means to them and others” (p. 4). With this suggestion in mind, it can be valuable to use ‘lifestyle studies’ as a paradigm for the study of Slow Living.

In *Cultivating a Leisurely Life in a Culture of Crowded Time: Rethinking the Work/Leisure Dichotomy*, Bowers (2007) reported on his ethnographic study of four social groups who were attempting to reframe the concept of a ‘desirable’ lifestyle. The four social groups were the Bodhi Farm and Crystal Waters Eco-village in Australia and Slow Food and Città Slow in Italy. According to Bowers (2007) “[t]heir ideal lifestyle assumes a re-ordering of temporalities which challenges the commodification of leisure implicit in the work/leisure dichotomy, the aim being to regain greater control of their time and the space in which to exercise increased life choices” (p. 30). Bowers’ results show that while each group had varying ideals in their lifestyle, they all challenged the dominant work/leisure dichotomy, aiming for a different temporal ideal. One of the strengths of the use of ethnographic methods is well illustrated in Bowers’ appreciation that members of these groups were required to interact with the wider social globalised world through employment outside their communities and had to cope with the ideals and judgements of mainstream society. Bowers (2007) noted that members of these groups were highly aware that they were involved in multiple temporalities and that they had to make on-going compromises.

Although members of these groups in Bowers' study desired to slow down, participants appeared to make contradictory actions. For example, many of the administrators of the Slow Food organisation reported experiencing time scarcity, and producers of Slow Food reported that they had "the best of intentions planned for some time in the future to be able to slow their lives down" (Bowers, 2007, p. 38). While their ideals were not met to the full extent, they still achieved "a greater control over their time and therefore greater freedom with which to choose" (Bowers, 2007, p. 43).

Bowers provides a valuable and critical appreciation of the 'reality' of attempting to 'swim against the current' by living a Slow Life. It is important to keep in mind, however, that the study was conducted in Australia and Italy. The New Zealand context possibly provides different opportunities and challenges.

### ***Intentional communities***

Intentional communities, sometimes referred to as eco-villages, are an alternative lifestyle which often focuses on similar principles to Slow Living, such as 'choice' and 'meaning'. Svensson (2002) explains eco-villages as: "Communities of people who strive to lead a sustainable lifestyle in harmony with each other, other living beings and the Earth" (p. 10). As discussed earlier, Bowers (2007) conducted research on two intentional communities, Crystal Waters and Bodhi Farm. Apart from its strong environmental focus, Bodhi Farm also aims to create meaningful work and claim greater freedom of time for its members, achieved through a cohesive system of support and communality and by moderating members' involvement in the employment society. (The situation at Crystal Waters was similar.) By creating a community which embraced self-development, community cohesion, shared and meaningful existence and connection to nature, "members assumed they would increase the opportunity to regain control of their time, which in turn would assist them in regaining control of their lives" (Bowers, 2007, p. 34). Some members of Crystal Waters reported that even though they might be quite busy, they loved much of their work, and time was different because any work that was done was by choice (Bowers, 2007).

### ***Time Pioneers***

In Germany, Hörning, Gerhard and Michailow (1995) studied a group of 'Time Pioneers', individuals voluntarily undertaking flexible working time. These individuals worked shorter

hours compared to their mainstream colleagues and regarded this as a privilege. Time Pioneers are different to their time conventionalist colleagues whose motives for working less are individual circumstances such as an illness or childcare. While time conventionalists regard their decrease in working hours as a drawback, in contrast, Time Pioneers aim to distance themselves from the temporal organisation of employment in contemporary society. Study participants stressed the importance of no longer wanting to be a captive to full-time employment, living only for their breaks, weekends and holidays. This is not to say that they reject work, but instead they reject the culture in which work dominates life. Time Pioneers do not want to live a life where socially standardized time systems dictate their existence. Any additional time they gain is not filled up with other activities or responsibilities. Instead, this time is viewed as free time, time for themselves, time to reflect on time and to themselves in relation to time, and to discuss the subject of time with others. However, and reminiscent of Bowers' (2007) finding, this lifestyle is not without a cost:

[Time Pioneers] now find themselves 'between the devil and the deep blue sea', sandwiched between the great antipodes. As yet, working time policy has no place for them....Thus the time pioneers are left to their own resources. They acquire their free time at the cost of a plurality of disadvantages, primarily labour intensification. (Hörning et al., 1995, p. 3)

For Time Pioneers, the emphasis is predominantly on flexible working hours and control, not necessarily on reduced working hours. This is achieved through "adopting certain methods of organizing their working and private lives" (Hörning et al., 1995, p. 2).

### ***Voluntary Simplicity***

While there is a paucity of academic material on Time Pioneers, Voluntary Simplicity has been better documented (see, for example, Elgin, 1993; Huneke, 2005; Pierce, 2003). Voluntary Simplicity, sometimes referred to as Simple Living, has many similarities to Slow Living and also has a long rich human history. Elgin (1993) reviewed the traditions of the Quakers, Puritans and Transcendentalists (such as Emerson and Thoreau) to show the underpinnings of the simple life philosophy. Another similarity between the two lifestyles is the central component of conscious living (Elgin, 1993; Huneke, 2005; Pierce, 2003), noted also by Parkins and Craig (2006) in reference to Slow Living.

Although Voluntary Simplicity has many things in common with Slow Living, several differences have been highlighted. Parkins and Craig (2006) argue that Voluntary Simplicity is less centred on the concept of 'time' than Slow Living. In addition, Voluntary Simplicity differs in that it is more concerned with the economic aspects of life, and the rejection of

consumption, while Slow Living embraces elements of material pleasure. Voluntary Simplicity has a higher emphasis on anti-consumerism, while Slow Living has a higher emphasis on aspects of anti-globalisation (Parkins & Craig, 2006).

According to Etzioni (1998), the practices of Voluntary Simplicity do not represent an outright rejection of consumption, but an accommodation to consumer capitalism. Other modes of consumption have been explored such as the ‘socially conscious consumer’ (Brooker, 1976; Webster, 1975), the ‘consumer boycott’ (Smith, 1990), the ‘green, ethical and charitable consumer’ (Schlegelmilch, 1994) and the ‘simplified consumer’ (Etzioni, 1998). Nelson, Rademacher and Paek (2007) argue that these conscious consumers ask ‘how?’, ‘where?’ and ‘by whom?’ questions. By engaging in ‘political consumption’, by boycotting and using their purchasing powers, these consumers express their social responsibility and bring about social change (Nelson et al., 2007; Webster, 1975).

The academic literature on Voluntary Simplicity has primarily been based on North American research. In 1977, Mitchell and Elgin (Elgin, 1993) conducted a simplicity survey, which asked respondents about their Simple Living experiences and received 420 responses. Between 1996 and 1998, Pierce (2003) carried out a similar study, recruiting 211 participants from around the U.S. through the internet. Likewise, in 2005, Huneke conducted a study based in the U.S., focusing on the daily practices of Voluntary Simplifiers (Huneke, 2005). All three studies found similar results, with Voluntary Simplifiers being primarily Caucasian, well educated, and living in either urban or suburban locations. Reasons for living a simple life included environmental concern, personal and spiritual growth, dissatisfaction with stressful lifestyles, anti-consumption (Elgin, 1993; Huneke, 2005; Pierce, 2003), and “the desire to shift to more satisfying ways to spend their time” (Huneke, 2005, p. 536). While these three studies provide an overview of how people in the U.S. experience living simply, their reliance on survey techniques meant that there is a lack of in-depth understanding of ‘Simple Living’ and similar lifestyles – notably of the daily practices by means of which Simple Living commitments are accomplished.

From the literature, it becomes clear that there is no one type of simplifier. Elgin (2000) identified ten alternative approaches to Simple Living, which, although they overlap, are nevertheless distinct: choiceful, commercial, compassionate, ecological, elegant, frugal, natural, political, soulful and uncluttered simplicity. Etzioni (1998) pointed out that Voluntary Simplicity can be viewed as a lifestyle with three varying levels of intensity: “It ranges from

moderate levels (in which people downshift their consumptive rich lifestyles, but not necessarily into a lower gear), to strong simplification (in which they significantly restructure their lives), to holistic simplification” (p. 621). Thus, Downshifting (see below) can be viewed as a variation of Voluntary Simplicity.

### ***Downshifting***

Downshifting refers to the voluntary choice to slow down at work, usually working less, in order to free up time for living. Etzioni (1998) suggests that Downshifting is the most moderate form of Voluntary Simplicity practiced by “economically well off and secure people who voluntarily give up some consumer goods (often considered luxuries) they could readily afford, but basically maintain their rather rich and consumption-oriented lifestyle” (p. 622). Hamilton and Mail (2003) dispute this suggestion. Their findings, from a study of Downshifting in Australia, indicated that Downshifting “occurs across the income spectrum and includes low-income and blue-collar households” (Hamilton & Mail, 2003, p. 7). Shaw and Newholm (2002) argue that there is no clear distinction between Voluntary Simplicity and Downshifting. Although both terms are used to discuss reduced consumption styles and working hours, the motivations are different (Shaw & Newholm, 2002). The reasons for Downshifting relate to wanting more time, more balance in life and less stress. Thus, the primary motivating factors for these people are, first, to gain time by working less, and, second, to escape from the work-and-spend cycle (Nelson et al., 2007, p. 144). Similarly, Shaw and Newholm (2002) claim that the motives for Downshifting involve seeking quality time as a response to the unsatisfactory hurried culture of society.

### ***Summary***

The lifestyles discussed in this section have many similarities, including some with Slow Living, which is the focus of the current study. Adherents to these lifestyles have distanced themselves, to a certain degree, from conventional society and the lifestyle promotes a common desire for a more meaningful existence and a greater control over one’s own life. The element of ‘choice’ is a key theme that emerged from the literature and each of these lifestyles is embedded in the literature concerned with time, work and flexibility. Although Slow Living has not received the same level of academic attention as these other ‘alternative’ lifestyles, some valuable literature exists.

## 2.5 Slow Living

There is no one definition of Slow Living and there are no set principles or practices that classify Slow Living. In contemporary Western society, the term ‘slow’ is often associated with negative connotations, and there are several misconceptions (Honoré, 2005). The Oxford Dictionary (Pearsall, 1999), for example, defines ‘slow’ as “not prompt to understand, think, or learn...rather dull” (p. 1353). Previous literature has focused on Slow Living as a means to address quality of life and the ethics of living. The term ‘slow’ is a deliberately chosen oppositional term to ‘fast’, and one of its key aspects is the concept of ‘time’. In addition, living a Slow Lifestyle involves joy and pleasure, conscious living, agency and enriching meaning.

Parkins and Craig (2006) argue that Slow Living addresses issues of quality of life and the ethics of living. They proposed that “slow living is a way of cultivating an ethical approach to the everyday” (p. 139). Dawson, Karlis and Heintzman (2008) also pointed out that the goal of Slow Living is to improve quality of life. This is achieved, they say, through “a more complex and nuanced understanding of time” (Dawson et al., 2008, p. 81).

Much of the existing literature suggests that Slow Living involves a certain degree of detachment from the fast life. This is not to say that it rejects change and development. Slow Living is not about living in the past, in pre-industrial and pre-McDonald’s time (Honoré, 2005; Parkins & Craig, 2006). Parkins and Craig (2006) argue that it does not involve escaping contemporary global culture but, instead, it is “part of contemporary arguments about how we are to live now and in the future” (p. 78). Likewise, Slow Living does not reject all globalisation and business, but aspects of globalisation that threaten the local community, economy culture and environment (Parkins & Craig, 2006). As Parkins and Craig (2006) noted, “it [Slow Living] does not represent a retreat from the world but rather involves an active engagement with the contexts of contemporary existence” (p. 137). For example, a Slow subject might choose to ‘microwave a spud’ in order to free up time for more important matters. Slow Living then, is about questioning the values of contemporary everyday life, and embracing relevant technology to ensure a more sustainable future. Capatti (1996) argues that dreaming about a better world and living a Slow Life is not merely a desire, rather it is a real concept, which is achieved through a certain level of detachment from fast living.

‘Time’ and ‘pace’ are primary elements in the conceptualisation of Slow Living (Parkins & Craig, 2006). Honoré (2005) characterized the fast life as hurried, controlling, analytical,

busy, impatient, quantity over quality, superficial, stressed, aggressive and active. In contrast, he defined a Slow Life as careful, patient, receptive, calm, still, intuitive, unhurried, and reflective. In his article *On the Importance of a Certain Slowness*, Cilliers (2006) explains 'slowness' as finding the appropriate speed: "It is experience which determines which piece of meat should be fried quickly and which should simmer slowly in the stew" (p. 10).

Slow Living is often mistaken for laziness, and doing things at a snail's pace. However, as Parkins and Craig (2006) argue, there is a big difference between being 'lazy' and being 'slow'. Alberto Capatti (1996) wrote an article 'In Praise of Rest' in Slow Food's journal *Slow*, depicting the difference between laziness and being at rest<sup>5</sup>:

Casual mention of these topics [Slow practices] often induces puzzled looks on listeners' faces, as though calm, rest and hospitality were regarded not so much as habits or pleasures, but rather as unreal concepts and desires. You slow people, you have shaped an imaginary shell for yourselves so that you can withdraw into it whenever necessary, retreating into the meanders of utopia. (p. 6)

Time becomes a different concept for Slow Livers. One of the root defining conditions of Slow Living is reclaiming time for the important things in life (Parkins & Craig, 2006). In other words, Slow Living is about taking control over time and your life rather than being controlled by the clock. In addition, for people living the 'Slow Life', time is not about being as efficient as possible or resting in order to be more productive at work later; it is about a mindful use of time and time for everyday life (Parkins & Craig, 2006). By taking the time to do things properly, one can be more involved in an activity and, hence, have more opportunities to experience the pleasures of that activity.

Having more time and control over your own time is not all one needs in order to enjoy life. According to Andrews (2006), to enjoy life one also needs to learn to go through life in a unhurried manner. For example, a person might decide to reduce their working hours in order to have more time for family and leisure. But if this person continues to fill her spare time with many other activities and a result is that she rushes from one activity to the next, she has no time to really enjoy those activities and reflect on the day. Therefore, the Slow philosophy stresses the importance of learning how to take the time to just 'be' and reflect, as well as doing things slowly. It is a conscious choice to live an unhurried life in this society and "a choice that helps you experience life more fully" (Andrews, 2006, p. 201):

To be unhurried is to be relaxed, reflective, patient, intentional, leisurely, calm, unruffled, composed, and peaceful!...When you're unhurried, you're relaxed and focussed, yet open

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<sup>5</sup> Being at rest is another term used to conceptualise 'slow'.

to and aware of what's around you. When you're unhurried, you can enjoy the moment and put everything else out of your head. (Andrews, 2006, pp. 201-202)

The difference between being in a hurry and being unhurried can be illustrated by the following example. A person who is in a hurry will probably walk through a city park either thinking about all the things they have to do that day, or making a phone call on their cell-phone to ensure they use their time productively. A person who is not in a hurry, on the other hand, will walk through the park enjoying the sound of the birds, stopping to chat to a friendly neighbour or just reflecting on an interesting conversation from that morning.

By living in an unhurried manner, the important things in life can be deeply experienced (Andrews, 2006; Honoré, 2005; Parkins & Craig, 2006). For Honoré (2005), the things that make people happy are “good health, a thriving environment, strong communities and relationships, [and] freedom from perpetual hurry” (p. 279). Honoré also emphasises that Slow Living achieves “real and meaningful connections” (p. 14) with everything, from people, to nature, food, work and culture. Andrews (2006) agrees, but also emphasises *joie de vivre* (joy of life), enjoying good times and leisure with others, as well as reflecting on the proceedings of the day. Andrews (2006) argues that the decision to enjoy life is the essence of a Slow Lifestyle, and supports Thoreau's philosophy: “Surely joy is the condition of life” (Thoreau, 1842, para. 6). But, as Petrini (2003) suggests, “...in order to live pleasurably, we need to broaden the range of things that give us pleasure, and that means learning to choose differently, even to live differently” (p. 21).

Honoré (2005) reported that more pleasure is gained if one takes the time to do things properly. The central principle of the Slow philosophy, then, can be defined as a mindful use of time (Parkins & Craig, 2006). Capatti (1996) stresses that the Slow philosophy advises people to listen to the rhythms of their life. In an interview with Honoré, Petrini argued a similar point: “Being Slow means that you control the rhythms of your own life” (Honoré, 2005, p. 16).

### ***Slow practices***

Parkins and Craig (2006) argue that there is no set list of practices. Instead, they explain Slow Living as “all those practices that invest the everyday with meaning and pleasure through a mindful use of time” (Parkins & Craig, 2006, p. 4). According to Andrews (2006), Slow Livers “try to work less, spend less and rush less... they take time to sit quietly each day, reflecting on their lives” (p. 215). They spend more time with friends, family and the

community and are involved in their personal passions (Andrews, 2006). Andrews (2006) argues that Slow Livers eat together as a family, watch limited television, do not visit shopping malls and limit their extracurricular activities. Many parents either home-school their children or send their children to alternative schools. Slow Lifestylers also try to walk and bike more, as opposed to taking the car, and many try to drive a hybrid or bio-diesel vehicle (Andrews, 2006). They often live in small homes and get rid of excess material goods. These individuals are often involved in exploring new kinds of spirituality and alternative health. They prefer to eat organically and eliminate meat from their diets. Shopping is done locally and large corporate companies are avoided (Andrews, 2006). Andrews (2006) further claims that Slow Lifestylers invest their money in “socially responsible investments” (p. 215) and “participate in peace and justice activities” (p. 215).

### ***Challenges to Slow Living***

Some of the literature also indicates that Slow Living is not a simple reality but a complex phenomenon. Parkins and Craig (2006), for example, stressed that “[t]here is much in the philosophy of Slow Food to give the idea of Slow Living prominence and credence but the widespread and everyday realization of those principles, with ensuing fundamental political ramifications, remain an unmet ideal” (pp. 36-37). Similarly, Honoré (2005) noted:

...the Slow movement still faces some pretty daunting obstacles – not least our own prejudices. Even when we long to slow down, we feel constrained by a mixture of greed, inertia and fear to keep up the pace. In a world hardwired for speed, the tortoise still has a lot of persuading to do. (pp. 275-276)

Attitudes and social norms are seen as a key challenge to Slow Living in contemporary society. Concepts based around speed are often associated with success and superiority, whereas ‘slow’, in contrast, is often associated with deficiency and weakness (Parkins & Craig, 2006).

Another key challenge to Slow Living are the effects of globalisation and the consumer society. Bauman (1998) noted that “being local in a globalized world is a sign of social deprivation and degradation” (p. 2). Schor (1991) argues that escaping the ‘rat-race’ of contemporary society involves not only an economic transformation, but also a cultural, social and psychological transformation. She believes that gaining a better quality (and more leisurely) lifestyle is not as simple as working fewer hours. One must step away from the consumer lifestyle, in itself a significant social, cultural and psychological challenge. It involves a different way of thinking and living.

## 2.6 Summary

Although Slow Living has become popular in the media, the study of Slow Living is still relatively new in academia. The existing literature is predominantly theoretical in nature. The work of Parkins and Craig (2006), for example, was based primarily on textual and discursive analysis, although interviews and participant observations were conducted in their study of Slow Food.

Current literature has placed Slow Living in the context of social movements. Yet, Slow Living can also be viewed as a lifestyle choice. A good deal of research has focussed on similar lifestyles, such as Simple Living and Downshifting. Despite this, little research has been conducted on the Slow Lifestyle through a focus on the everyday practices of Slow Living.

A common tone among the existing literature about Slow Living, as well as similar lifestyles, is one of moral superiority. These ideal lifestyles are sometimes discussed without locating them in economic, social and cultural contexts. Therefore, my aim is to focus on Slow Lifestyles within these contexts and explore what it is really like to live a Slow Lifestyle.

In addition, most of the existing literature has taken international perspectives, such as Australia, North America, and Italy. Yet, each culture is different and there are bound to be differences between societies regarding how easy or difficult it is to live a Slow Life. Honoré (2005) noted that many North Americans continue to work long hours. In many European countries, by contrast, Slow philosophies are often supported through tradition, policy or climate (Dawson et al., 2008). In countries such as Italy, 'siestas' are often used at midday as a means to take a break from work during the hottest part of the day but also from hectic life. New Zealand is a different culture again with its own traditions, policies and climate, which influence lifestyles. There are no New Zealand-based studies that focus directly on Slow Living. Moreover, there is no empirical study which focuses on exploring the everyday lives of families who try to live a Slow Life. This research begins to address the gap in the research by exploring, through a qualitative empirical study, the realities of living a Slow Life in a New Zealand-specific context.

## CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

### 3.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the research approach which informed my study of the everyday lives of Slow Living families and explains the research process. Within an ethnographic framework, I adopted an exploratory and descriptive approach by using qualitative methods of data collection. These data collection techniques included time-use diaries, intensive interviews and participant observations. I will begin the chapter with a discussion of the research approach, and then proceed to explain the research process.

### 3.2 Research approach

The major purpose of this study was to *explore* the practices of living a Slow Lifestyle. Neuman (2000) stated that exploratory research is used for topics or issues that are new or about which little is written, as is the case with Slow Living in the New Zealand context.

Exploratory research rarely yields definitive answers. It addresses the “what” question: “What is this social activity really about?”... The researcher’s goal is to formulate more precise questions that future research can answer. Exploratory research may be the first stage in a sequence of studies. (Neuman, 2000, p. 21)

The goals of exploratory research are to become familiar with the fundamentals, develop questions for future research, formulate new ideas, establish the feasibility of carrying out research and develop methods of data collection (Neuman, 2000, p. 22). Qualitative data collection techniques, such as participant observation and open-ended interviewing, are commonly used in exploratory research (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999).

A secondary, but related, purpose of this study was to *describe*. The description provides a rich picture of a specific social setting, activity or relationship (Neuman, 2000). In addition, the description can locate new data, develop typologies, clarify stages in a process and report on context and background (Neuman, 2000). In my study, the varied practices of families living a Slow Lifestyle are described in some detail.

#### *Qualitative research*

In order to explore and describe the lifestyles of five Slow Living families, I adopted a qualitative research method, which aims to produce ‘rich’ information about relatively few cases (Veal, 2006, p. 193). According to Flick, Kardorff and Steinke (2004):

Qualitative research can be open to what is new in the material being studied, to the unknown in the apparently familiar... This very openness to the world of experience, its internal design and the principles of its construction are, for qualitative research, not only an end in themselves giving a panorama of 'cultural snapshot' of small life-worlds, but also the main starting point for the construction of a grounded theoretical basis. (p. 5)

Qualitative research also stresses the importance of the participants' viewpoints. Veal (2006) points out that "qualitative research is generally based on the belief that the people personally involved in a particular ... situation are best placed to describe and explain their experiences or feelings in their own words, that they should be allowed to speak without the intermediary of the researcher and without being overly constrained by the framework imposed by the researcher" (p. 193). By focusing the description on the point of view of the participant "...it seeks to contribute to a better understanding of social realities and to draw attention to processes, meaning patterns and structural features" (Flick et al., 2004, p. 3). Becker (1966) has argued that to understand the behaviour of members of a subculture, you must capture their point of view. It is essential to know what they think, how things look to them, and what alternatives they see. One way to achieve this is by employing an ethnographic framework.

### ***Ethnography***

Originating in cultural anthropology, ethnography is used to learn "about the social and cultural life of communities, institutions, and other settings" (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999, p. 1). In particular, according to LeCompte & Schensul:

...it means writing about the *culture* of groups of people. All humans and some animals are defined by the fact that they make, transmit, share, change, reject, and recreate cultural traits in a group. All ethnographers begin – and end – their work with a focus on these patterns and traits that, lumped together, constitute a people's culture. The result of such a focus is the document we call an ethnography. (1999, p. 21)

Culture then, "consists of the beliefs, behaviours, norms, attitudes, social arrangements, and forms of expression that form a describable pattern in the lives of members of a community or institution" (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999, p. 21). Given that my study focuses on the culture of Slow Living, a grouping of people who appear to share similar values, practices and social arrangements, and in some cases see themselves as belonging to a 'community', an ethnographic approach is warranted.

Ethnography assumes that humans' construction of their meaning of the world and their everyday lives varies and is locally specific. The method is distinct from other social science investigation as it assumes "that we must first discover what people actually do and the reasons they give for doing it before we can assign to their actions interpretations drawn from

our own personal experience or from our professional or academic disciplines” (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999, pp. 1-2). Hence, ethnography is primarily descriptive, discovering what meaning participants attribute to their lives through seeing the world through their eyes (Veal, 2006, p. 205).

The outcomes of ethnographic techniques include rich scientific description and inductive theory. Anthropologist Clifford Geertz (1973) noted that ethnography involves *thick description*, referring to an in-depth description of information as opposed to generalisation and summary. Ultimately, such information can contribute to the generation of theories of culture, which can then be used for testing and adoption (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999); thus, as a technique, ethnography is not anti-theoretical. The model I develop (see Figure 1) illustrates a further respect in which ethnographic approaches may facilitate generalisations which go beyond the specific case(s) being observed.

Ethnographic studies are carried out in the natural setting, involve close interaction with participants, and use various data collection techniques to present the perspective and behaviours of participants (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999). The use of multiple research techniques represent attempts to ensure that the data are scientifically reliable and valid, as well as reducing subjectivity (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999). Due to the intimate nature of the method, the ethnographer spends an extended period of time with participants, raising questions, taking note of what is said, and observing what happens through qualitative, and sometimes quantitative, data collection techniques such as in-depth interviews and overt or covert participant observations (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995).

### ***Data collection***

Zimmerman and Wieder (1977) suggested that social scenes with a diffuse nature need to be explored from a range of angles:

If the social scene is more diffuse, as within a counter-culture community, the patterns of behaviour in question may have a less precise definition and lack as well the luxury of an eight-to-five work day. Clearly, the less focussed the activity, the wider the range of observations required. (p. 480)

Therefore, my study used three qualitative data collection techniques in an attempt to gather in-depth data about the respondents’ lifestyle: time-use diaries; intensive interviewing; and participant observation.

Different techniques have been used over the years to analyse social life and how people use their time. The *time-use diary* is one such technique and comes in different formats. In the structured or coded (Harvey, 1999) time-use diary, diarists have to choose from pre-coded categories. This technique can be limiting as it forces unnecessary and irreversible data reduction at early stages (Harvey, 1999). Some studies have used a semi-structured diary, (see, for example, Robinson & Godbey, 1997) where diarists were allowed to use their own words in a limited space provided. An opposite technique involves the use of very unstructured diaries, where diarists are free to write as much as they like without being limited to space. These diaries are referred to as an annotated chronological record (Sorokin & Berger as cited in Zimmerman & Wieder, 1977, p. 481), personal documents (Allport, 1942), documents of life (Plummer, 1983), and logs (Allport, 1942). My research has taken a middle road by incorporating both structured and unstructured aspects of the diary method.

The diaries used in my study became observational logs which were then used as a base for intensive interviewing, corresponding to what Zimmerman and Wieder (1977) term the 'diary: diary-interview method'. The interviews are used to expand on the diaries, filling in gaps, gaining a more in-depth understanding of the lives and behaviour of the participants, and elucidating the meaning and significance of activities.

*Intensive interviewing* can take the form of semi-structured interviews as well as guided conversations. Semi-structured interviews use an interview guide with open-ended questions enabling the researcher to gain rich, qualitative, data while maintaining a structured research environment (Lofland, Snow, Anderson, & Lofland, 2006). Questions are structured in a manner that does not force the interviewee to answer in a specific way.

*Observations* are useful in affirming what has been written in the diaries and said in the interviews. *Participant observation* refers to "the process in which an investigator establishes and sustains a many-sided and situationally appropriate relationship with a human association in its natural setting for the purpose of developing a social scientific understanding of that association" (Lofland et al., 2006, p. 17). As a field strategy, observation combines introspection, document analysis, direct observation and participation, and interviewing (Denzin, 1989). This method is often used to study sub-cultures in an intensive fashion (Flick, 2006), and has an obvious relevance to the study of Slow Lifestylers and their day-to-day practices.

### **3.3 Research process**

Having established the research approach in the previous section, this chapter now moves to describe how the research methods were implemented. This section describes each part of the research process, beginning with pilot testing, and proceeding to discuss how I established contact, the application of the three data collection techniques I used and the methods of data analysis.

#### ***Pilot testing***

Pilot tests are a recommended procedure, especially when there are only a small number of cases involved, because it is vital that the data collection techniques are accurately executed, ensuring all the objectives are met. I conducted a pilot test on one family to ensure the appropriateness of the data collection techniques. By conducting a pilot test, I was able to ensure the interview questions and their wording were appropriate. In addition, the pilot test also allowed a rehearsal of the time-use diary and participant observation. Several key questions evolved from the pilot test that were then used in the actual interviews.

#### ***Establishing contact***

Potential participants were recruited through a notice (see Appendix A) or a referral. Notices were placed at an alternative<sup>6</sup> school, several organics shops around Christchurch, and a popular farmers' market in Christchurch. Notices were also sent via email to local networks such as the Home Educators, the Slow Food group and farmers' markets. One family was referred to the researcher by a colleague. Six families (with children) in total expressed interest in the study. They were asked a few preliminary questions over the phone to identify whether they fitted the required profile of the study (see Appendix B for the recruitment script). The purposive sampling meant that I sought families or households because little research had been conducted on Slow Living families or households. Likewise, I sought households/families that were New Zealand citizens or permanent residents and who had lived in New Zealand for at least five years, as I wanted to explore the New Zealand context. Households/families were also required to have lived a Slow Life for at least two years in order for them to comment sufficiently on their lifestyle. Potential participants were asked what 'Slow Living' meant to them or, if they had never heard of the term 'Slow Living', they were asked to describe their lifestyle. Once participants had demonstrated that they fitted the

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<sup>6</sup> Alternative to mainstream

profile and had indicated that they were still interested in taking part in the research, I sent them an information letter (see Appendix C) and told them I would contact them in the following two weeks. (Five out of six families were still interested and became the participating families in this study<sup>7</sup>.) In the follow-up phone call, I asked the potential participants if they agreed to take part in the research and I arranged a date to meet them face-to-face to answer any further questions, sign consent forms (see Appendix D) and deliver the time-use diaries to them. Meeting face-to-face with the participating families seemed beneficial as it meant that trust and comfort could be developed before the data collection phase began.

The key unit of analysis in this research is the family. In this study, the term ‘family’ refers to the *nuclear family*<sup>8</sup>, a social unit consisting of parent(s) and their natural or adopted children living in the same household. However, I am largely focussing on how adult participants, within a family context, experience Slow Living. From this point forward, when I refer to ‘participants’, I am talking about the ‘adult participants’, unless otherwise stated. For confidentiality reasons, I have used pseudonyms throughout to replace the actual names of the participants.

As mentioned before, only five Canterbury families were studied for this research. The aim in my study was never to generalise what Slow Living is like for everyone, but instead to obtain an in-depth understanding of what Slow Living really involves. Canterbury, New Zealand, was the chosen location, primarily because it was ‘close to home’ and because the area encompasses both urban and rural areas.

### ***The time-use diaries***

The time-use diary that I used for this study was modelled on Zimmerman and Wieder’s (1977) ‘diary, diary-interview method’ and the New Zealand Department of Statistics (1991) time-use pilot survey. The time-use diary asked participants to account for their time-use over 48 hours, on two separate days: one weekday and one weekend day. Participants over the age of 18 were given a time-use diary comprised of an A5 booklet with ten-minute time intervals which contained questions such as: ‘What were you doing?’ ‘Did you do something else at the same time and what?’ ‘Where were you or if you were travelling, how did you travel?’

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<sup>7</sup> A description of the five participating families is provided in Chapter Four.

<sup>8</sup> If families had relatives living with them they would have been considered to be part of the study as well. However, this was not the case for any of the potential participants.

‘Who was with you?’ There was plenty of additional space to write supplementary reflections and extra comments. The semi-unstructured nature of this diary is valuable as respondents were able to describe their day in their own words instead of being limited to set categories. Each diary had a sample page (see Appendix E) and a letter of instructions attached. Respondents were instructed to think about how they felt during a certain activity, why they did it, how they did it and whether the activity was in line with their values. The two rural families sent their time-use diaries to me and I personally picked up the diaries from the three urban families. Eight out of nine<sup>9</sup> diaries were completed. I analysed each diary and used this as a basis for finalising the interview questions. This method was well suited to my study to collect data about the everyday practices of these participants and the time-use diaries served well as stimulators for the interviews.

### ***Interviews***

Nine interviews were conducted between January and March 2008 (i.e. all adults in the five families). They took place at the participants’ homes and each lasted between 45 and 95 minutes. I interviewed respondents on a one-to-one basis (i.e., not couples together). The interviews comprised two main parts. The first was based on the diaries. In addition to asking for further details related to diary entries, I applied a few lines of questioning from Zimmerman and Wieder’s work (1977) that were based on what the participants wrote in their diaries. Probes included: how participants felt about a specific event or about certain people; whether they had considered alternative actions; what the consequences of certain choices were; and whether events or feelings were typical. The second part of the interview asked participants what Slow Living meant to them and what challenges they faced by virtue of their chosen lifestyle. Interviews were recorded and later transcribed. The interviews proved to be a useful method as it provided a flexible and exploratory means to address what Slow Living meant to the participants in the context of their daily lives.

### ***Participant observations***

The participant observation took place between February and March. These observations involved spending a morning or afternoon with each family<sup>10</sup> as they went about their day-to-

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<sup>9</sup> One participant did not complete a time-use diary as he was involved in a busy period at work.

<sup>10</sup> A full and separate (from the interviews) participant observation was carried out with four of the five families. In the case of the Smith family, however, I carried out some observations while visiting their home at the time of the interviews, due to time constraints.

day activities. Ideally, more time with each family would have been preferred to gather more in-depth data. However, due to time constraints, only half a day was allocated to spend with each family. In most cases I was able to be with the whole family, seeing how they interacted as a family unit. There were moments, however, where one partner was at a different location (for example, in the home office working). As the researcher, I was engaged in the everyday lives of these families, assisting with tasks/activities such as walking a child to school, hanging up the washing, having morning tea, home-schooling, harvesting from the vegetable garden and making chutneys. After each participant observation, I sat down and made notes of my observations.

Although each family welcomed me into their home and tried to engage me in their everyday activities, the participant observation was not easy. At times, it was difficult to be a participant and an observer, especially because there were children around who desired my attention. While most families were together at the time of the observation, others were in different locations for some of that time, making it difficult to observe the interactions and any tensions between the family members. Also, peoples' behaviour inevitably changes, at least in some respects, with the presence of a researcher. However, the participant observations were a valuable technique to gather data to confirm the previous data collected in the interviews and time-use diaries. I was able to discover, up front, what some of the daily practices and challenges are of families attempting to live a Slow Lifestyle.

Each of the three data collection techniques employed in this study enabled me to get closer to what it is really like to live a Slow Life. The techniques complemented each other well and provided insightful data for analysis and reflection.

### ***Data analysis***

All diaries, interviews and field notes were transcribed and coded. Coding refers to the organisational process whereby data is arranged into different categories in order to elicit meaning (Lofland et al., 2006). Hence, each theme that emerged from the data became a separate code. An open and thematic coding technique was adopted where each line in the transcript was inspected in depth and linked to a specific code/theme (Lofland et al., 2006). This process was undertaken within NVivo 2.0, a software package to help develop, support and manage qualitative data.

Through the data collection and analysis stage of my research, a number of interpretations developed. One of the more difficult parts of doing research is to present these interpretations in a logical and clear manner. To do this, I developed the model referred to earlier (Figure 1, p. 12), to link the findings. Each of the interpretations relates to an important element in the Slow Lifestyle. Cumulatively, my aim was to provide a description of the lifestyles of these Slow Living families and explain how they manage such a lifestyle.

### **3.4 Chapter summary**

In this chapter I have described and discussed some of the methods that I adopted in order to explore and describe the lifestyles of five Slow Living families. In doing so, it has become clear that an ethnographic approach, using multiple data collection techniques, is a viable option in this exploration. Three specific techniques were used: time-use diaries, intensive interviews, and participant observation. Each of the data collection techniques employed enhances the previous one, adding extra plausibility to the overall data. Through the ethnographic approach of this research, I was able to get a little closer to what it is really like to live a Slow Life for five Canterbury families. In the next chapter these five participating families will be introduced.

## **CHAPTER 4: INTRODUCING FIVE SLOW LIVING FAMILIES**

### **4.1 Introduction to the following chapters**

The purpose of this thesis was to explore and describe how five Canterbury families live their interpretations of a Slow Life. Thus, in this chapter (Chapter Four), I will introduce the five participating families. In the back of the thesis the reader will find a bookmark, which is a replica of Table 1: Family structure, names and ages. This can be used throughout the result and discussion chapters to identify each family. Chapter Five, Six and Seven will present the results and a discussion of these results. Each of these chapters begins with a description of the results and is followed by a discussion. Lastly, Chapter Eight will provide a conclusion.

### **4.2 Introduction to Chapter Four**

This chapter aims to give the reader some familiarity with each of the participating families in preparation for the more detailed analytical material which begins in Chapter Five and continues through Chapters Six and Seven. This chapter is divided into three sections. In the first section I will introduce each of the five families, focussing specifically on: their background and family structure; education and livelihood; financial situation; and living environment. In the second section, I will describe how each of the participants conceptualises Slow Living and in the third section I will discuss whether participants think they are living a Slow Lifestyle.

### **4.3 Introducing the five families**

#### ***Background and family structure***

The participants in my study cover a range of backgrounds and family structures. The Rudd family (see Table 1) consists of June, a single mother, and her 13 year old daughter Helena. June is 42 years old and was born in a small North Island town. There she attended a state mixed-sex school as well as a girl's boarding school. In 2000, she moved to Christchurch with her daughter where they still reside. June and Helena are Christians. June reads the Bible daily, attends a Bible study group and goes to church on Sundays.

**Table 1: Family structure, names and ages**

	<b>Rudd<sup>11</sup></b>	<b>Court</b>	<b>Snook<sup>12</sup></b>	<b>Brown</b>	<b>Smith</b>
<b>Mother</b>	June (42)	Nora (33)	Julia (44)	Maya (31)	Lisa (50)
<b>Father</b>		Ben (37)	Eric (42)	Charlie (34)	John (53)
<b>Child one</b>	Helena (13)	Bobby (9)	Eva (6)	Jacob (5)	Josh (24)
<b>Child two</b>		Keith (4)		Rosa (1)	Suzan (19)
<b>Child three</b>		Jim (2)			Jay (14)
<b>Child four</b>					Jimmy (2)

The Courts are a family of five: Ben (37) and his wife Nora (33) and their three children, Bobby (9), Keith (4) and Jim (2). Ben grew up in Christchurch and Southland while Nora was born in Christchurch and moved homes many times. Some of her time growing up was also spent on a farm in mid-Canterbury. When she was younger, Nora envisioned herself marrying a farmer and living ‘the country life’. Nora believed that her time living on the farm influenced who she is now. The Courts currently live in Christchurch. Ben and Nora are also Christians. The family attends church on a regular basis with the children attending Sunday school. In addition, Nora and Ben host Bible study groups.

Eric Snook (42) and Julia (44) are not married, and have one daughter, Eva (6). Eric was born in the North Island and has lived in both a flat and in the suburbs close to the beach. His partner Julia grew up in South Canterbury and moved to Christchurch in her late teens. The Snooks do not follow a specific religious faith but Julia regards herself as ‘spiritual’.

The Browns consist of Charlie (34) and Maya (31) and their two children Jacob (5) and Rosa (1). Charlie grew up in the North of the South Island of New Zealand. His parents separated when he was three, but he has vivid memories of playing on his BMX and out on the streets. In contrast to Charlie, Maya lived in the same house for 30 years in Christchurch. Maya and Charlie currently live in rural Canterbury and are expecting their third child. Charlie and Maya believe in a higher power, but not in a Christian God. Charlie explained:

She [Maya] is probably more inclined towards Sufism, mystical Islam I guess, or Buddhism would be more her side and I am probably more inclined towards Judaeo-Christian beliefs. I am not a Christian, I don’t believe in the divinity of Christ.

<sup>11</sup> Pseudonyms are used throughout.

<sup>12</sup> The adults in this family have different last names, as they are not married. For simplicity, one pseudonym – Snook – will be used throughout.

John (54) and Lisa (50) Smith have four children, Josh (24), Suzan (19), Jay (14) and Jimmy (2). Lisa is originally from The Netherlands where she grew up in a rural environment. She said that “silence and peace really [were] a big part of my growing up there” and “I was alone a lot in my childhood and I really loved the alone time”. Lisa then came to New Zealand when she was 23 and married John. John was born in Christchurch and grew up in the suburbs with his five sisters, twin brother and parents. John provided an extensive account of his childhood and growing up years:

We moved a lot. We were allowed to do a lot, we were allowed a certain amount, it is amazing what you are allowed and what you are not allowed. We could dig holes in the back yard for instance. Mum had to put a plank down to get across our ditches so that she could get to the washhouse, in the days when the washhouse was still separate from the house. But the farm next door, we would get muddy at the farm next door and we could get hell. We used to get beaten a lot by the old man [father]. We were scared stiff of the old man coming home.

John and Lisa currently reside in rural Canterbury. Their oldest son Josh (24) and daughter Suzan (19) have left home, but their daughter Jay (14), and their adopted son Jimmy (2), still live at home with John and Lisa. Lisa is a ‘Bible believing’ Christian, but John does not follow a religious faith.

### ***From education to livelihood***

Education levels of the participants ranged from high school to postgraduate studies and livelihoods were diverse. June Rudd spent her high school years in the North Island. June had a full-time job before becoming a single parent, but once she became a single parent she started working part-time as a web-designer. Currently June works from home as a freelance designer and undertakes some additional training. She explained that her general working week looks like this:

What I have been working up to now is I have been working from early in the morning you know like 8 o’clock on a Monday and Tuesday and I’ll work right through to about 8 or 9 on Monday and Tuesday and then I usually work on a Wednesday afternoon and Thursday afternoon and Friday, maybe Friday morning depending how much work I have on.

Nora and Ben Court both undertook tertiary education and are currently starting their own business. Ben explained his formal education and career development as follows:

After high school I started a course here in Christchurch at Polytech. At the time, that was called a diploma of visual communications....[I] did a music course...and then over the next number of years I did a part-time job, I did comic books, and did music for fun, stayed at home. Then...came to Christchurch, got married, started cleaning windows and I have basically cleaned windows for about ten years. But it wasn’t really what I wanted to do but couldn’t see a way out of it as I had to have an income. And then I got so sick of

it and threw the job in and decided to finish the course I had started at the Polytech....And so now I finished it and [am] starting a business.

Ben's wife Nora is helping him with the business, in addition to being a full-time mum. Nora studied nutrition at University. She enjoyed the course, even though she found it hard work compared to her high school education. She carried on with postgraduate study and practical work in a hospital where she was under a great deal of pressure. Nora is currently home-schooling her children, which she is passionate about. She explained it like this:

It [home-schooling] doesn't take up bulk block periods of time in my day, because my philosophy is more, sort of apprentice-type style teaching where I just take my kids with me and talk and we learn and go through life. So it is not a 'sit down over here in this room' and learn something. It is 'let's learn through living'.

Eric and Julia Snook are both currently working part-time and have undergone tertiary education. Eric studied electronic engineering and completed both a bachelor's and master's degree. During the last two to three years he has been working four days a week from home, designing computer hardware and software. Sometimes he travels overseas for his job, but most of his time is spent in his home office. When asked why he chose to work part-time, Eric replied:

Kind of life is too short to afford to and basically I get paid enough that I don't need to. And didn't want to. And partly having a young child, it was nice having more time at home and time to do other things. More time for myself, as well as the responsibilities for your child.

Working part-time and from home means that Eric is able to walk his daughter Eva to and from school and complete small household tasks during his breaks.

Eric's partner, Julia, works part-time also. Julia works as a psychologist, but away from their home. Her post-high school journey began with nursing, which was followed by a bachelor's degree and postgraduate qualification in psychology. For the last ten years, Julia has worked part-time. Much of her non-work time is spent gardening, looking after her chickens, caring for her daughter or doing other hobbies and household tasks.

Maya and Charlie both undertook tertiary education but currently have different work situations. Maya began her high school education at a 'public school' and then went to a "private high school". After high school she travelled around the world, usually working for "room and board". These adventures included working at a Buddhist monastery in France, landscaping in Hawaii and volunteering with the Mother Teresa's Sisters in India. After her six years of travelling "off and on", she went to university to complete a degree in the sciences. When asked what she did after university she replied:

I had a baby. I haven't really worked as such for an income. But I have worked everywhere, but not sort of for long periods at a proper job, which is kind of a weird thing to have happened. It wasn't what I intended.

While Maya enjoys her role as a full-time mother (but does not home-school), she also “looks forward to having some sort of professional career” in the future.

Charlie has had a diverse range of life experiences. After attending a variety of different primary and high schools, Charlie “went travelling and worked a little and did a lot of WWOOFing<sup>13</sup>, working on farms”. He then lived in a house bus and “lived out in the bush for quite a while in a hut that [he] had built”. He also spent some time in Australia, working as a busker before returning to New Zealand where he attended university and completed his Bachelor's degree and honours study. In addition, Charlie mentioned the following about further education:

I did units [standards] for carpentry, and since then I have done my primary school teacher training. Neither of which I will ever pursue. The carpentry stuff was for, was more to know about the building [of] our house out here and the teaching was to have the qualification, some kind of professional qualification under my belt.

Charlie currently works as a busker. This job means that he is much busier in summer, usually working five or six days a week, than in winter. Charlie described a typical day as follows:

So an average week might be: Wednesday, no gigs, I go busk, Thursday no gigs, I go busk. Friday a gig at night so I will busk during the day and then do a gig at night. Saturday I might have an all day festival gig. Sunday I might go back busking. And then next week I might only have one gig and I will do Wednesday busking. Thursday it rains, so I do all my bookwork, I will get on the computer and do all my advertising, my contacting, my e-mailing and all that stuff.

Mondays and Tuesdays are his ‘weekend’ days, which he usually spends at home with his family, giving Maya the opportunity to have a break from the children as well. His working days are not nine-to-five, but flexible, which means he can stay at home if needed and replace that day with one of his weekend days.

The journey from education to livelihood was different for Lisa and John Smith. Lisa attended “high school and a few other bits and bobs”. She did some office work for a while in New Zealand before becoming a home-schooling mum. She is currently caring for her two year old adopted son and home-schooling her fourteen year old daughter. Home-schooling, for the Smiths, involves some structured skill-based learning, such as maths, reading and writing, as well as unstructured teaching. Lisa spends a lot of her time reading either for her own interest or together with the children, which she also finds “interesting”. In addition to being a home-

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<sup>13</sup> WWOOF is a world wide network where volunteers work on organic farms and learn about biological farming (WWOOF New Zealand, n.d.).

schooling mother, Lisa works as a home-school consultant, which only takes up a small amount of time. It is John who is the key wage earner in the family. At school, John was not academically inclined. While he enjoyed the smaller district schools where he could pursue sports, he disliked, and did not flourish, in the private boy's high school that he was sent to by his father. John left school when he was 16 to work as a farmer. After that, he worked in a large variety of jobs such as a truck driver, a gardener and working at the harbour. His interests included skateboarding and "smoking a lot of dope". John now works as a self-employed builder. Work for him is flexible:

And because I am a self-employed builder and a contractor, I can say 'fine, I won't be there tomorrow, I have something else on'. And that is our lifestyle....And I always start late. I hardly ever get to work at eight o'clock.

### ***Financial situation***<sup>14</sup>

Financial situations for the participants in this study are varied. June Rudd owns her own home; she does not have much money, but has a lot of time. That is the way she has designed her life for now. June works as a web-designer, but also receives the Domestic Purposes Benefit (income support from the government for sole-parents).

Ben and Nora Court are also home owners. Their income used to come from Ben's job as a window cleaner. However, their illustration business is now their main income. In addition, they receive government support to assist them in starting up their new business. Ben discussed his income in the interview:

I think the thing we are hoping for in this business is a better income with less hours. So having done Polytechnic, I now have a better headspace and am feeling that I can charge better. And now I am supposedly a trained professional and I am worth more than a window cleaner.

Although Eric and Julia Snook indicated that they could also live on one income, Julia has decided to work because that is what she loves doing. The Snooks own a comfortable home in a wealthy area of Christchurch, are "well resourced", and "don't have financial pressures". Nonetheless, Eric and Julia avoid consumption pressures, even though they can afford luxuries. Eric said: "I can probably afford this and that, but generally I don't find it all that satisfying".

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<sup>14</sup> In this thesis, 'financial situation' refers to participants' income and wealth.

The financial situation of Maya and Charlie Brown is slightly different. Charlie and Maya feel “lucky” that they own a piece of land and a house, at such a young age. Charlie provided a detailed account of their financial situation:

For us, we are lucky because we bought a cheap house before the boom. And we are lucky because [Maya] had some inherited money and I had, I saved when I got my post-grad scholarship. I saved all of it....Not having a mortgage to pay, I suppose for most people that is not a choice. We had the choice because we both deliberately bought a really cheap house.

Although Maya and Charlie have mortgage-free land and a house, they have a family of four, and soon to be five, to care for.

John and Lisa Smith own their own home also and have other investments. They do not need a large amount of income because they do almost everything themselves (self-sufficient) and are not “into money” and glamour. Lisa said: “I am not taken in by romanticism of markets. I remain economical in these things”. Many of the Smiths’ belongings are either home-made or second-hand and simple, things that will last as opposed to being in fashion. This is partly because John enjoys collecting second-hand items and making things himself. Because of this approach to money and material goods, the Smiths are able to live a satisfactory life without having to spend many hours in paid work.

### ***Living environment***

Three families live in an urban environment while the other two families live in a rural environment. June and her daughter Helena live in the southern suburbs of Christchurch. Their flat is small, but contains an open-plan living and kitchen and, upstairs, two bedrooms and a bathroom. About three-quarters of their garden contains edible plants such as beans, tomatoes, courgettes, cucumbers and asparagus. Plants are growing together, interwoven, as opposed to neat rows. The inside of the house is arranged to make the best use of space. The living room contains a couch with a throw-over, a small television, a small table and two chairs and a modern-looking work station with a computer and shelving.

Ben and Nora Court live in the Eastern suburbs of Christchurch. Their house is neatly tucked in the middle of what one might call a ‘typical’ Christchurch street, with predominantly brick homes. Surrounding their house is a garden with plenty of space for the children to run around in. There is a variety of fruit trees dotted around the garden, which also contains ornamental plants, a small vegetable garden and a lawn. The washing is hanging outside, even though it is threatening to rain. Inside the house is what you would expect of a family with small children.

Toys are scattered here and there; the couches are covered by a blanket and the computer is conveniently placed between the kitchen and living area.

Situated in the Christchurch hills is the home of Eric, Julia and Eva Snook. While their home overlooks the city, there is a feeling of peace and serenity, as if living far away from the hustle and bustle of city life. Their home has a modern and tidy feel to it, yet it is comfortable. The dining table is scattered with uncompleted craft projects and magazines, but the rest of the house is tidy. The Snook home is divided into two stories. The upper floor is mainly used for living and the lower floor contains Eric's office. Surrounding the house is a wooden veranda. Parts of the veranda are covered where the washing can hang to dry all year round. Eric has installed some bars for his daughter to play on and be physically active. The garden slopes down and contains a large terraced garden in the middle and chickens at the bottom. Eric and Julia planted about five or six varieties of fruit trees, including plum, apple, pear, feijoa, and citrus, when they moved to this residence. These now look well-developed and produce fruit.

In contrast to the three urban families described above, the Browns and the Smiths live in rural Canterbury. Charlie and Maya Brown live one hour's drive from Christchurch. Their cottage is set amongst stunning cliffs, rolling hills, grassland and farms. The beach is only 800 metres away. A barking dog welcomes visitors at the closed gate. Two cars are parked in the driveway, in front of a garage and two sheds. The inside of the house consists of an open-plan living room and kitchen. A wood burner is placed in the centre and a home-made drying rack hangs close to the ceiling. Toys are neatly scattered around the home, but most are found in the children's bedroom. Jacob and Rosa share a bedroom in between their parents' bedroom and the sunny office. While the bathroom is inside the house, the toilet is in a separate old shed outside. The light switch is in the shed next door, so visits to the toilet are often done with the door open, looking out onto the garden. The Browns' large garden contains a variety of ornamentals and a large vegetable garden. There is plenty of lawn for the children to "romp around in" (Charlie) and a large trampoline to play on. The garden provides the Browns with privacy, peace and quiet, and in this respect is similar to the Smiths' garden.

John and Lisa Smith, and two of their children, live 90 kilometres from Christchurch, on a ten-acre organic farm. Their house is surrounded by rolling hills, covered in dry yellow grasses in summer. The house is tucked away, out of view, behind trees and only the occasional train speeding past gets a glimpse of their house. The Smiths' house is a mixture of

wood and pebbled stones. Some of it is in its original form, while the rest John has built or added to. The doors are left open for people to wander in and out. Their home has a comfortable, but untidy appearance with a very natural look. Outside there are a few sheds, full of useable junk, including a couple of old cars. In the paddocks, two horses and two house cows lazily graze.

### *Section summary*

Differences and similarities were evident between the families in regards to their backgrounds and living situation. Table 2 provides a summary of the family characteristics. Two of the differences were the number of children in each family and their age. This raises the question whether it is more difficult to live a Slow Lifestyle with the presence of children, in particular, young children. On the one hand, June Rudd is a single mother with a teenage daughter. On the other hand, the Courts, Browns and Smiths all have small children living at home who need ongoing care. However, these parents have the choice to send their young children to a play-centre, day-care or kindergarten, but have decided not to (with the exception of the Browns who take Rosa to an ‘alternative’ pre-school once a week). Each of these three families (Courts, Browns and Smiths) has also chosen the traditional option in regards to child care responsibility. In the case of these families, it is the female who has the most responsibility for child care.

The ages of the adult participants and their financial situations varied. Respondents ranged in age from 31 (Maya) to 53 (John). John and Lisa Smith are approximately 20 years older than Maya and Charlie and have had more time in their lives to build up their assets and investments. An important finding was that all five participating families were home owners. Notwithstanding, two families also indicated that they receive income support from the government. This raises another important, intriguing question: Does one need to own a home or have a set amount of money, or resources, in order to live a Slow Life? (This question will be discussed further in Chapter Seven.)

<b>Participant</b>	<b>Family Characteristics</b>					<b>Individual Characteristics</b>			
	<b>Marriage Status</b>	<b>Financial Situation</b>	<b>Residence</b>	<b>No. of Children</b>	<b>Age of Children</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Religion</b>	<b>Highest Education</b>	<b>Work Situation</b>
<b>Rudds</b>	<i>Separated</i>	<i>1 income income support home owner</i>	<i>Urban</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>13</i>				
<i>June</i>						<i>42</i>	<i>Christian</i>	<i>High School</i>	<i>Part-time work from home, freelance designer</i>
<b>Courts</b>	<i>Married</i>	<i>Income from business, income support, home owner</i>	<i>Urban</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>9, 4, 2</i>				
<i>Nora</i>						<i>33</i>	<i>Christian</i>	<i>Postgraduate</i>	<i>Full-time home-school mother</i>
<i>Ben</i>						<i>37</i>	<i>Christian</i>	<i>Tertiary</i>	<i>Own business in illustration, from home</i>
<b>Snooks</b>	<i>Not married</i>	<i>2 part-time incomes home owners</i>	<i>Urban</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>6</i>				
<i>Julia</i>						<i>44</i>		<i>Postgraduate</i>	<i>Part-time work, clinical psychologist</i>
<i>Eric</i>						<i>42</i>		<i>Postgraduate</i>	<i>Part-time work from home, electronic engineer</i>
<b>Browns</b>	<i>Married</i>	<i>1 income home and land owners</i>	<i>Rural</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>5, 1</i>				
<i>Maya</i>						<i>31</i>	<i>Sufi/Buddhism</i>	<i>Tertiary</i>	<i>Full-time mother</i>
<i>Charlie</i>						<i>34</i>		<i>Postgraduate</i>	<i>flexible hours, busker</i>
<b>Smiths</b>	<i>Married</i>	<i>1.1 income home and land owners</i>	<i>Rural</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>24, 19, 14, 2</i>				
<i>Lisa</i>						<i>50</i>	<i>Christian</i>	<i>High School</i>	<i>Home-school mother and home-school consultant</i>
<i>John</i>						<i>53</i>		<i>Trade certificate</i>	<i>Self-employed builder</i>

Lastly, two types of living environment were found among the participants: rural and urban. A common misconception is that one can only live a Slow Life in a rural setting; however, three families in this study live in an urban setting. The fact that all five families have gardens, which also contain areas to grow vegetables and some fruit trees, reinforces the importance of taking the context into account when considering attempts to live a Slow Life. New Zealand cities have a history of quarter acre sections on which were placed independent, separate, dwellings – not row houses or apartments – unlike the houses of many city dwellers in North America, Europe, Australia and other parts of the world. Therefore, New Zealand cities have traditionally provided opportunities, if not for self-sufficiency, then certainly for small-scale, intensive horticulture<sup>15</sup>. Further discussion of the rural-urban disparities will follow in Chapter Seven.

In this section I have introduced each of the families, demonstrating their ‘journeys’ which have led them to where they are now. The background and living situation discussed in this chapter can explain some of their differences and similarities in regards to the families’ values and everyday practices, which will be discussed in subsequent chapters. In the next section, consistent with my research objective, I will describe how each of the participants conceptualises Slow Living.

#### **4.4 Participants’ conceptualisation of ‘Slow Living’**

Despite slight differences, participants conceptualise Slow Living in similar ways. One of the key objectives of this research was to look at Slow Living through the eyes of the participants. In this section, I will describe and discuss how the participants conceptualise Slow Living. Each participant was asked whether they had heard of the term ‘Slow Living’ and what it meant to them. As discussed in the literature review (Chapter Two), the concept ‘Slow Living’ is relatively unknown – certainly until recently. Nevertheless, at least one member of each participating family recognised the term and believed they were trying to live a Slow Life.

Stepping back from the ‘rat-race’ and living a less pressured life was the first quality identified. To them, mainstream society is fast-paced and people live stressful lives due to

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<sup>15</sup> The intensification of land use is occurring in New Zealand cities, just as it has occurred overseas. However, this trend has developed later in New Zealand and is uneven in its distribution. Whether future families will be able to offer their children the expansive gardens enjoyed by the Court, Snook and Brown children, is a moot point.

being over-committed. In contrast, Slow Living can be viewed as a “time based lifestyle” (Nora), a life with less “rushing” (June and Lisa), and less “pressure” (Charlie). Nora said that “getting enough sleep and rest” was part of their Slow philosophy (but it is “not being lazy”). Ben described Slow Living as “basically taking the exception to how the world is now, which is extremely busy”. Likewise, Lisa said:

I guess it has to do with knowing what your path is, and not being distracted by other paths that might perhaps run parallel, a little bit here or there, or cross your path. But you simply are happy to stick with the path that you are on, rather than being distracted and therefore being under stress of, ‘perhaps I should do this’, ‘oh I must keep up with this or with that’.

Slow Living means stepping away from this fast society and making your own choices.

Choosing the elements of one’s life was the second key characteristic of Slow Living. Lisa pointed out the importance of choice. In her words, Slow Living means:

...choosing to live outside the pace that is dictated to by most people in their lives. And choose a pace that you want to live at and choosing the elements of your life, or lifestyle that you want, rather than going with the flow of society really, or the culture we live in. That’s in a nutshell I guess what I feel Slow Living is.

This is in line with what Petrini (founder of Slow Food) said: “being slow means that you control the rhythms of your own life” (n.d. as cited in Honoré, 2005, p. 16). This sense of control and choice is closely linked to the importance of values. Maya thought that Slow Living was closely related to values which was backed up by Charlie who said: “It’s the values that are important”. Charlie talked about valuing social, spiritual, artistic and personal wealth, as opposed to material wealth, whereas Eric mentioned ‘green’, family and time values. Ben also commented that Slow Living is about setting your own pace in life and determining your own use of time.

The third key theme of the meaning of Slow Living was conscious living. A Slow Life was defined by making conscious decisions as opposed to “taking it all in by osmosis” (Nora). Nora’s definition of Slow Living is also indicative of stepping back from modern society and being “analytical of the culture we live in”. Charlie gave the most detailed account of this:

I found that people who live a lifestyle that is different to mainstream tend to be the kind of people who look at...the way you should design a house or the way you should run your garden or the way you should, yeah whatever it happens to be. Whatever norm there happens to be in society, they will examine it and decide whether they want it, rather than just unquestionably taking it on board.

However, he did not believe that Slow Living was the best term to use.

...Slow Living I think is not necessarily the best word, the best term for it because I think Slow Living seems to say that you are moving slower than everybody else....A lot of people I know who would I guess fit into the Slow Living side of things are extremely rational thinkers. Very critical thinkers and if anything they are thinking through their

entire lifestyle....But I haven't found another term that hits the same spot, because when you say 'Slow Living', people get it I think. They get that you have chosen to step back from the 'rat-race' a little bit.

Instead, Charlie came up with the term "the examined life".

It is living a life that you have examined every bit of it and decided 'do I want to do it that way?' Yes. So it is the examined life or the chosen life, it is not just the one that you found through a sequence of events.

Conscious living was also a key theme in Eric's explanation of Slow Living. For him, this especially revolves around being conscious about time and the natural environment:

For me it revolves around what I do with my time, the thing about working less and spending more time doing other things and that link with the food, having a garden, spending time doing those kinds of things. Quite a section of life, green ideas I guess, you know what, what a lot of people would kind of say are green ways of living. Taking a bike or walking as opposed to driving. Living in that way.

Conscious living through questioning and examining the elements of one's life is, therefore, a key component to the meaning which Slow Living holds for these participants. In addition to the three shared meanings of Slow Living, several respondents included other definitions or comments of Slow Living such as Simple Living, living in a pleasurable way, and Slow Food.

As Parkins and Craig (2006) found, Slow Living and Simple Living share some common characteristics. Many of the participants highlighted the simple practices in their lives, but only a few participants incorporated Simple Living as part of their definition of Slow Living. When asked whether she had heard of the term Slow Living and what she understands by the term, June Rudd answered:

Yes, I think it is kind of like Voluntary Simplicity. I have heard of Slow Cooking as well. I think it is really like back to basics kind of living and not really living a materialistic so much lifestyle. Just not rushing.

Ben Court also mentioned elements of simplicity in his definition of Slow Living. He believes that people living a Slow Life "probably come by with less, do with less things and live on a lower budget". He elaborated further:

But it could also include people who live on a single income for example. And the wife is staying home with the kids instead of going back to work, all of those kind of things. In a way I guess it is people who like to hold on to the old ways, because feeling that the world has gotten out of hand.

Charlie Brown provided an example of a friend "who lives in a little hut in the middle of nowhere" who he thought was a "classic Slow Living person" and whose lifestyle indicates elements of simplicity.

He spends most of his time playing music. Playing music with other people, grows most of his own food, brews his own alcohol. He works a little every now and then to get a little bit of money that he needs.

Despite some common characteristics, Slow Living and Simple Living are, according to the literature, two separate terms, each with their unique focus (see Chapter Two). Most of the participants were also asked whether they had heard of the term ‘Simple Living’ or ‘Voluntary Simplicity’. Ben, Julia, Lisa and Maya were not aware of the terms while Eric, Charlie and Nora were. Nora explained that Slow Living is more concerned with the ‘pace of life’ than Simple Living, whereas Charlie distinguished Simple Living as “not being burdened with possessions, with the material world”. These claims are, to some degree, in line with Parkins and Craig (2006), who argue that simplicity signifies a greater degree of frugality and a “greater disengagement from, even an outright rejection of, contemporary culture” (p. 3) than Slow Living.

One of the key characteristics which Parkins and Craig (2006) identified regarding Slow Living was ‘living in a pleasurable way’. Only two participants in this study directly related pleasure with the meaning of Slow Living. Eric and Julia Snook explained how ‘enjoying and savouring life’ are major aspects of their definition of Slow Living. Julia had heard of Slow Living through the Slow Food Movement: “The mind set of it [is] about savouring life and enjoying life, and the good things, [the] particular aspect being food”. Although only Julia and Eric explicitly connect the definition of Slow Living with pleasure, the pursuit of pleasure and making space for pleasure, is an important element for all participants.

Eric and Julia also discussed Slow Living in relation to Slow Food. Julia commented that Slow Living is about “recognising and valuing diversity in food, and regional produce, and eating things that are in season, rather than getting them from another part of the world”.

In general, the meaning ascribed to Slow Living by my participants is in line with the literature on Slow Living, as discussed in Chapter Two. The themes discussed in this section will be developed further in Chapter Five, where values are discussed. First, however, I will explore whether participants think they are living a Slow Lifestyle.

#### **4.5 Do participants think they live a Slow Lifestyle?**

Seven of the respondents, June, Ben, Nora, Charlie, Eric, Julia and Lisa, think they are trying to live their understanding of a Slow Life. For example, Charlie said: “Yes definitely. I am very conscious of the lifestyle that I lead”. Other respondents answered as follows:

That is what I think I am doing, basically being on that path, not necessarily seeing where it leads or even what it leads to, but knowing that you can only walk one path at once, and just being happy with that knowledge. (Lisa)

Yes. I am choosing, I guess I am doing the best with what I have got and choose to live that way. Although I guess there are always contradictions. (June)

I think so, I think what we definitely do is consciously try and dictate our own pace and our own elements that we want to include in our lifestyle. (Nora)

Well, basically living the only lifestyle that I can cope with. (Ben)

I think we are testing to do, it is part of our living, is Slow Living. To try and manage it in what is actually a really busy world. Trying to manage to slow down parts of it. Which, to Slow live parts of it. (Julia)

I am not thinking I want to live a Slow Lifestyle...our life, it seems like it might be a slow one. Perhaps in that case it is yes. (Eric)

While some of the answers seemed a little vague, and understandably so, it is important to note that, in order to become part of this study, at least one member of each of the four families<sup>16</sup> responded to a notice or poster which read:

I am looking for families/households who are attempting to live a 'Slow' Life and who would be interested in assisting me with my research.

In other words, at least one member in each of the four families felt that they were trying to live a Slow Life or were sufficiently intrigued by the question and its possibilities as to respond positively.

There were different views within the Brown family. Maya "could see a much slower way of living" than the life she lives, whereas her husband feels he is "definitely" living a Slow Life. This is not to say that Maya does not live a 'conscious lifestyle', as Charlie described it. The differences can be explained by the differing meaning that they assign to Slow Living. Charlie said that he and his wife regularly talk about their lifestyle. Their different explanations as to what Slow Living means to them, and whether they think they are living a Slow Lifestyle, shows that their discussions have probably involved words other than the term 'Slow Living'.

Although Charlie feels that he is definitely living the Slow Life, he is hesitant about using the term 'lifestyle', as in 'Slow Lifestyle'. He believes that Slow Living is more than just a lifestyle:

The thing about the word 'lifestyle' is [it] almost seems like it is laid on top of your personality....but I think that people who examine their lives a little more carefully seem

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<sup>16</sup> This excludes the Brown family as it was referred to me.

to, it goes far deeper inside them....So therefore it goes beyond 'lifestyle' into 'the life'. It is not just a lifestyle; it is actually their whole life.

#### **4.6 Chapter summary**

The participants in this study come from a range of backgrounds and living situations, ranging from an urban single mother, living in a small apartment, to a family with four children living in a partly self-built house in a rural area. (These differences and their implications will be further discussed in Chapter Seven.) Despite slight variations, these families conceptualise 'Slow Living' in similar ways, primarily as stepping back from the 'rat-race', choosing the elements of one's own life and conscious living. Based on these definitions, most of the participants think they are trying to live a Slow Life.

Having introduced the participating families, the following three chapters, Chapter Five, Six and Seven, will present the results of my study. Each chapter consists of two parts. The first part provides a description of the results while the second part considers these results in relation to the literature and discusses continuities and discontinuities regarding that literature.

# CHAPTER 5: WHAT MOTIVATES PEOPLE TO ENGAGE IN A SLOW LIFESTYLE?

## 5.1 Introduction

One of the research questions guiding this study was: ‘What motivates participants to engage in a Slow Lifestyle?’ Motivation has been defined as “the various physiological and psychological factors that cause [people] to act in a specific way at a particular time” (Plotnik, 1996, p. 301). In order to understand how families manage their Slow Life, it is important to identify what the motivating factors are for engaging in such a life. From the data it became clear that participants were predominantly motivated by their personal values. As Figure 3 shows, these values are, in turn, influenced by a number of factors and lead to the commitment, which can either be a conscious effort, or be part of their family culture. However, life is much more complex; individuals are not completely free to do what they want. There are challenges to be overcome, for example, and these will be the focus of the subsequent chapters, Chapter Six and Seven.

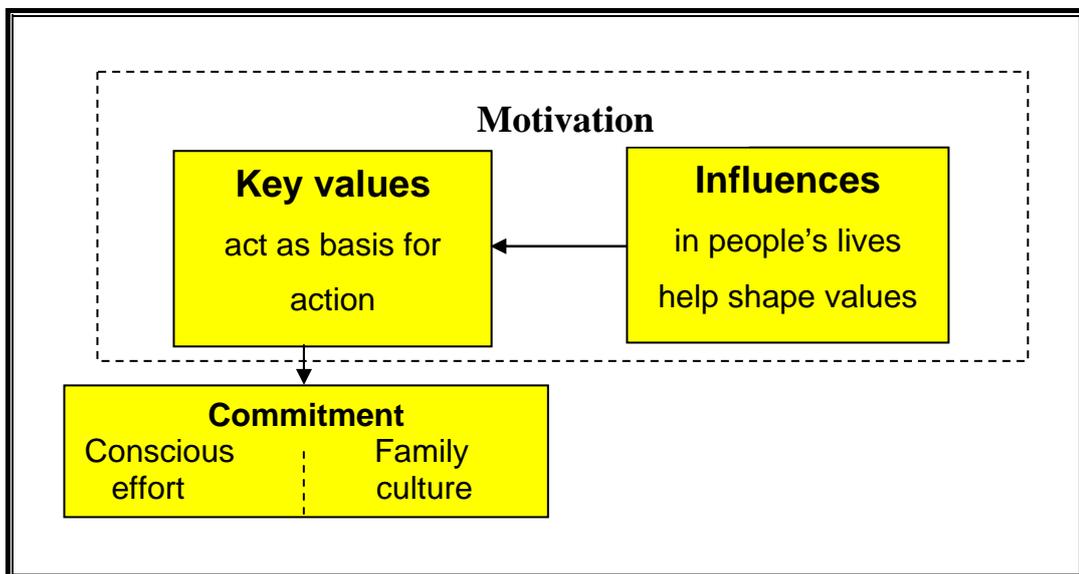


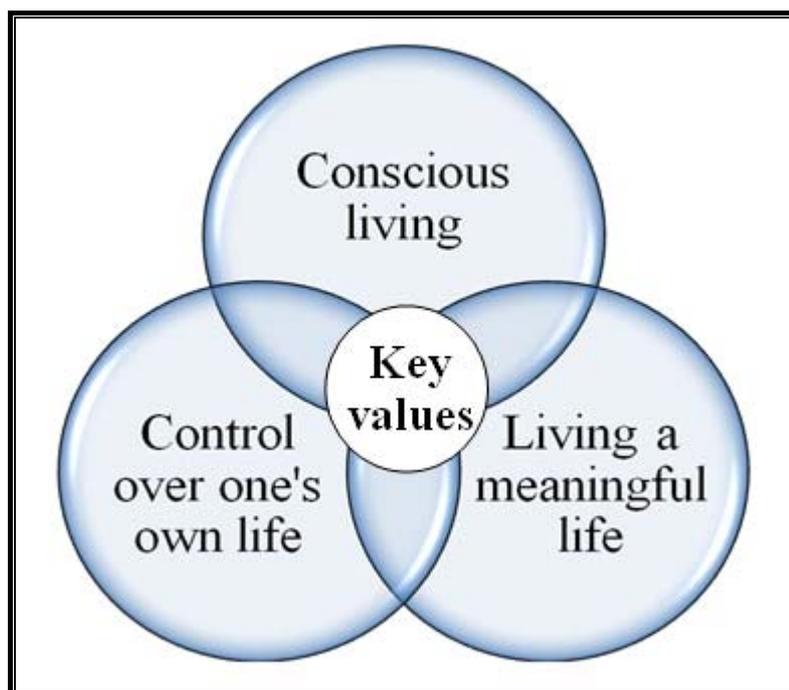
Figure 3: What motivates people to live a Slow Lifestyle?

## 5.2 Values

The Slow Living participants are strongly, and often explicitly, motivated by their values. Values have been defined in a number of ways. Parkins and Craig (2006) define values as the ‘ethics of living’, while Henderson, Thompson and Henderson (2006) define values as “concepts or mental constructs that capture and express what is important to us” (p. 19). In

other words, it is our preferences and their priority that make up our values. Rokeach (1968) considers values to be a type of belief system, “about how one ought or ought not to behave” (p. 124). In this sense, values become a set of ideals and a “criterion for guiding action, for developing and maintaining attitudes towards relevant objects and situations, for justifying one’s own and others’ actions and attitudes, for morally judging self and others, and for comparing self with others” (Rokeach, 1968, p. 160).

Many of the participants in my study perceive they have different values to those in ‘the mainstream’ or ‘the rest’ of society. Three key values (see Figure 4) emerged from my fieldwork: living a meaningful life, control over one’s own life and conscious living. These values, which are inter-related, are closely linked to how participants conceptualise Slow Living, as briefly explained in the previous chapter. Following on from this, I will explore these key values in more depth in this chapter.



**Figure 4: Key values of Slow Living**

Before discussing these specific values, however, it is important to point out that participants’ values are influenced by a number of factors (past and present). Past influences are the factors that *shape* our values, such as the influence of friends and family, past quality of life and previous exposure to different lifestyles. Eric, for example, pointed out that his parents and grandparents lived a similar lifestyle to him and had passed their values onto him, while Nora feels that her introduction to the home-schooling community had a big influence on her

current lifestyle. Current influences *affirm* those values and include participants' resistance to the present pace of life in Western society, religious beliefs and their current lifestyle. I will now examine the key values of the respondents in more detail.

### ***Living a meaningful life***

Many participants feel that life in contemporary fast-paced society lacks meaning; Slow Living, they believe, provides more opportunities for a meaningful life. Dimensions of a meaningful life, for them, include: personal growth; time with family; spending time with others; and stewardship and spending time at home.

Personal growth is an important aspect of a meaningful existence for the participants. A number of examples emerged from the data which were indicative of the importance to them of personal growth. Eight participants reported that time for personal interests are important. Their personal interests all differed, but gardening is one common interest. The garden is a place where participants feel they have the chance to connect with nature and think and reflect on life, which is an important spiritual practice. For seven of the participants, spirituality is an important aspect of personal growth. June, Nora, Ben and Lisa are Bible-believing Christians, which is very important to them and their personal growth. June said that "staying close to God" is important to her because: "It's not that things don't go right or that I am not happy, but I just don't really feel right". In the case of Nora and Ben, religion is important for their wellbeing. Nora said that it is "fundamental to look after the whole person. So not just our body or emotion, but our spirit as well". In other words, to "keep a good spiritual health" (Nora). Maya, Charlie and Nora are not Christians, but they do value their own spiritual beliefs. They believe in a higher power, but "not necessarily the Christian God" (Charlie).

Another example of personal growth involves the experience of pleasure and gaining enjoyment from work. Julia commented explicitly on pleasure as a motivating factor in a Slow Life:

My basic reason for Slow Living is that I believe I only have one life and to make sure I savour it, enjoy it, do what is important to me, [and to] notice what gives me lasting happiness, not just a quick fix. (Time-use diary)

Six participants expressed the importance of gaining enjoyment from their work. This is especially important to Charlie who said he needs a job which fully captivates his imagination and thinking or else he feels he would be "just another cog in the machine". Most of the participants reported that work is not just about meeting the basic survival needs. Charlie, for example, said that life has a bigger purpose:

The idea of going to the same office, doing the same thing....I'd feel like I was just earning money to pay for my house and to buy stuff so that I had somewhere to live, and somewhere to sleep so tomorrow I could go and earn some money, to live somewhere, to buy stuff, you know. Like there is no bigger purpose.

Enjoyment from work means different things to different people. In the case of Ben, enjoyable work involves using his creative skills while for Julia, enjoyable work involves connecting with others.

My data suggest that spending time with immediate family and raising children is another very important element of living a meaningful life. Eric, for example, said that one of the reasons he decided to reduce his working hours was because of the responsibility of his child. He commented that "life is too short" and he prefers to have more personal and family time. Julia finds it is important to have time for her daughter as well as her partner. She feels that her daughter deserves her "undivided attention". She further commented: "I love being at home with my family". Likewise, Nora feels it is important "to take time for each other during the day" (time-use diary). A goal of Nora and Ben is "to keep time for each other and the family to a maximum" (Nora, time-use diary). Ben emphasised the importance of building a tight family. He hopes that his business will free up additional time for him to be with his family. Being good parents is very important to the participants and part of living a meaningful life. According to Nora:

Goals for my kids are huge....And that is a huge sacrifice because really what I am doing is giving up my life so that they can be who I know they are....It is quite interesting because most of my vision is for my family really.

Raising, as well as educating, her children is very important to Lisa also. She feels that one of her big purposes in life is motherhood:

My hobby is life and living it, because that is what holds my interest. I do that through a Christian world view and out of that flows my love for bringing up children, my love, my interest in education and how, because that has an immediate to do with the bringing up of children and the role of motherhood. (Lisa)

Julia also said that she wants to "do a good job" of bringing up her child. She said that she and Eric try hard to limit television for their daughter, for example. Julia and Eric "want to encourage her [Eva] to be creative and use her imagination" (Julia, time-use diary). Most participants expressed the importance of their children using their creativity and imagination as a way of learning. Hence, limiting the media exposure on their children's part is also very important to living a meaningful life, because participants believe the media represses their creativity and encourages instead a consumerist conformity and violence.

A major part of spending time with family involves eating together as a family. This seems to be important to all the participating families. Julia and Eric, for example, stressed the importance of taking time to sit down together to eat a home-cooked meal around the table, as opposed to quickly eating their meal in front of the television. Eric wrote: “eating together as a family has always been important to me”. According to Julia: “We [Julia, Eric and Eva] all enjoy actually having a proper cooked meal and sitting down in the evening together”. Maya commented that her family also ‘tries’ to eat together.

Although not as important as personal growth and time with family, involvement with others, such as friends, and communities based on common interest, is also an important value and part of a meaningful existence for the majority of the participants. All the participants indicated that being with like-minded people is important. However, being with like-minded people means different things to different participants. For some participants it is general like-mindedness, while for others it involves specific friends, work colleagues or the school community. Being around people is important to Lisa, for ‘balance’. The social aspect makes her feel recharged after periods spent alone. Though most the participants highlighted the importance of spending time with like-minded people, spending time with other ‘Slow’ families was not mentioned as particularly important. Charlie, for example, said: “We see other families, but often they are not ones that live a Slow Life. It doesn’t seem to make any difference whether they are or not”. However, social contact with the children’s school community was mentioned as important. Both Nora and Lisa commented on the significance of the interaction with, and support from, the home-schooling community, while Maya made a similar comment about the Alto<sup>17</sup> community. Maya feels that it is “quite an honour being part of the [Alto] community”, indicating a need for belonging. This need for belonging to a community was expressed differently by Julia and Charlie who particularly value their relationship with work colleagues. Julia pointed out the importance of work colleagues and relationships in a list of values in her time-use diary: “Tea and lunch breaks with workmates are important”.

The significance of the connection with the local community is varied. Most of the comments about the local community related to neighbours. June and Ben pointed out that having a good relationship with their neighbours is reasonably important. This was also suggested by John,

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<sup>17</sup> Alto is a pseudonym used for the alternative (non-mainstream) school that the Rudd and Brown children attend.

who said that he feels sad about his fallout with one of his neighbours. Julia and Eric are more neutral on the matter. Julia said that she tries to be friendly with the neighbours and Eric believes that getting along with neighbours is "...kind of important. Not not getting on with your neighbours, like having bad relations, it is kind of important not to have that". Charlie stressed the opposite in regards to local community:

I don't think community is what it is really about for us. And I have to say that in my experiences that is probably not what it is about for most people who live this kind of life...The community is kind of ancillary, it is just an add-on. It is something that happens in the background.

Another important part of a meaningful existence is stewardship and spending time at home. In this thesis, the term 'stewardship' refers to running the house, do-it-yourself (DIY) projects and self-sufficiency. While stewardship and spending time at home relate to the domestic setting, they are not the same as spending time with family; a different relationship or set of relationships is involved. Many of the participants commented on the importance of spending time at home. John pointed out that he does not want to work too much, but instead to spend most of his time at home. Ben provided additional insight with the following: "But I always thought that if I had a really good holiday I would like to spend it at home with my musical projects, instead of going out somewhere". June also commented that she values time at home and enjoys running the house. June, Nora, Julia and Maya all commented on the importance of making things in the kitchen; Nora commented specifically on the importance of preserving:

I love preserving and making jam and...[it] has this little benefit of making you feel good, that I have done something or made something for myself. Or even making yoghurt in the yoghurt maker, rather than buying it, the small amount of preparation, but it has this wholesome feeling of having made something yourself. And I think that adds value to life.

For Charlie and Maya, self-sufficiency is a key goal. They have many plans for the future. "Part of the plan for out the back is to set the land up in a fully permaculture<sup>18</sup> setting" (Charlie). Maya commented that she would like to become "more and more self-sufficient as time goes by".

### ***Control over one's own life (personal agency)***

The second key value which emerged from the data is control over one's own life. The participants value freedom to choose the elements of their lives, and to control the pace of

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<sup>18</sup> "Permaculture is a design system for creating sustainable human environments" (Mollison & Slay, 1994, p. 1). Through working with nature, it aims to develop ecologically-sound and economically viable systems for producing food that do not threaten the natural environment (Mollison & Slay, 1994).

their own lives, rather than being controlled by society. This sense of personal agency involves determining one's own pace of life and time-use, reducing working hours, having flexible working conditions, thinking for oneself, and educating and raising children with the 'right' values.

All nine participants feel they want to be in charge of their own pace of life and time-use, as opposed to being driven by the 'fast' society in which they live. To the participants, conventional society is a 'rat-race'; people are rushing around, they have overscheduled diaries, and they try to 'keep up with the Joneses'. For the participants, it is important not to get caught up in this 'rat-race' but, instead to determine their own pace of life. Participants highlighted the importance of having a low stress lifestyle, avoiding rushing and busy schedules. June feels that "rushing about...is not acceptable". Eric commented:

**Eric:** I probably just sort of make sure that we don't get involved in too many different things, that life gets faster again, there is too much going on.

**Interviewer:** Like what sort of things?

**Eric:** It is kind of anticipating with Eva, potentially she could be doing something different after school every day, going to sports, or ballet or whatever, and she can do some of those things, but probably seeing it as not being such a good thing to do something like that every day of the week. But for me, to go out and do things, but not something everyday.

Similarly, Julia said: "I really value having time to just do what we feel like and not having too much planned". Charlie commented in a more general manner and said that he and Maya both want to live "out of the 'rat-race', out of the busy, modern, mainstream society".

The participants who were in paid work sought to have control over their working conditions, including the number of hours spent at work. June, for example, notices how little energy people have left at the end of a full-time working day. In her case, it is more important to work less and have more time and energy, than to have more money. Likewise, Julia and Eric emphasised that working part-time is important to them in order to create more free time. Eric said that "life is too short" to work too much. Working part-time is a pure lifestyle choice in Julia and Eric's case. Working less and having more free time is also very important to Charlie and John. John commented: "so keeping my jobs small [in his job as a builder] and spending most my time here [at home], that is what I want to do, and with the children".

The flexibility of working from home and self-employment offers participants control as well. June values working from home and the flexibility it gives her. It is important for June to 'be there' for her daughter. "[I]f she [her daughter Helena] gets sick, or something happens, I just

want to be available. I just want to be there”. Ben and Eric value working from home as it means less stress. Eric pointed out that working from home gives him more freedom as he can do tasks around the house in his breaks and there is minimum commuting time. Eric relishes the idea that he does not have to come home from a day at the office all burned out like some of his co-workers. In the case of Ben, Charlie and John, personal agency through flexibility is also very important, which for them is linked to being self-employed. John said:

[B]ecause I [am] self-employed I could work anyway I like, bare feet most of the time....even on the roof, being bare feet. Which I like....And because I am a self-employed builder and a contractor, I can say ‘fine’, I won’t be there tomorrow, I have something else on. And that is our lifestyle....If something is going on, like in the education field and Lisa needs a baby sitter, then I am it.

My data also indicated that ‘thinking for oneself’ is an important element of Slow Living, which is closely linked to the value of personal agency. Charlie, for example, emphasised the importance of thinking for himself, as opposed to spending time thinking for other people:

If I had a boss who said to me, ‘I want you to think about this problem for the next eight hours’, I just feel like, I rather have that time to think about something of my own. So in the past where I have had work I have actually picked menial, boring dishwashing, because I can think while I do it and I can have my own thinking time. Or else I’ll get to the end of my life and at least 40 hours of each week would have been thinking for somebody else.

Other participants too commented on the importance of thinking for themselves, rather than blindly following others. John stated: “I am dealing with office people who only know how to tick boxes...they are not allowed to think for themselves anymore. Whereas 20 years ago, everyone could think for themselves”.

Seven participants commented on the importance of raising their children with the ‘right’ values, which indicates they want more control over what their children learn. June’s life is based around raising her daughter. She stressed the importance of her daughter learning her [June’s] values:

I wanted to embrace her with my values, I didn’t want someone else’s values being taught to her. I wanted her to know what I think is right. If I haven’t got the time to do that because I am working nine to five and then rushing about, it is not acceptable. (June)

### ***Conscious living***

Conscious living was the third key value to emerge from my data. It is important, for the participating families, to examine their lives and be aware of its elements. Conscious living, for them, involves: being aware of their physiological health; having time to think, reflect and be analytical; learning; living by your conviction; efficiently managing resources; and being aware of environmental impacts.

Physical wellbeing is important to people living a Slow Life. Participants commented on the importance of physical wellbeing, primarily in regards to alternative medicine and healthy and natural foods. Two participants discussed the importance of alternative medicine, signalling that they value looking after their own and their families' physical health. For example, June and Maya emphasised how they prefer to use alternative treatments for head lice, as opposed to using commercial treatments. The main focus of discussion regarding physical wellbeing, however, related to food.

Six participants commented on the importance of healthy and 'natural' foods. It is important to them to minimise processed foods, preservatives and artificial colouring and flavours. Nora said: "We try and limit highly processed things, more so like treats, like artificial colourings and things". Maya and Charlie value simple ingredients. Charlie, Maya and their children, like Lisa, try to eat plenty of home-cooked nutritious food containing a large amount of fruit and vegetables. When I asked Maya how she feels about organics and how important it is to her she replied:

I think it is important, but not to the point of spending lots and lots of money. Charlie and I are of the opinion that it is better to have lots and lots of veggies as opposed to less veggies and foods that are organic. So ideally we would love to have everything be organic, that would be preferable.

Lisa, John, and June also prefer to purchase as much organic food as possible, while Ben, Nora, Eric and Julia did not mention the importance of organic food. Three of the participants commented on the importance of eating 'ethically'. Julia noted the importance of eating free-range pork: "The more I know about how they can keep a pig, I feel a bit guilty eating processed pork". Charlie and Maya are also careful when purchasing meat, preferring to purchase hormone- and antibiotic-free meat<sup>19</sup>.

My data showed that having time to think, reflect, and be analytical is also an important part of conscious living. This preference emerged in eight of the participant interviews. When talking about the importance of having the time to think, Lisa said: "...it is just nice to have time to think about the day that comes and the day that was or matter that was the matter at that particular time". Ben and Nora commented that they value questioning the elements of their lives and "being analytical of the culture we live in" (Nora). Below are some examples from their interviews and time-use diaries:

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<sup>19</sup> Though Maya and Charlie have been vegetarian in the past, none of the participants was vegetarian at the time of the study.

...knowing how to critically analyse, so that you don't get sucked into what everyone says, is a really good skill....I think you need to question what people tell you. (Nora)

I think it is important, no matter who you are or what you do, you need to do it for a reason, you need to know why you do it. But then that is just the way I think, some people probably enjoy the bliss of having everything prepared for them. (Ben)

When reading the Bible, or even a book on business, motivational philosophy, it's essential to write down questions, observations and challenges to the content. Our minds are made for searching and testing, not for blindly accepting the words of somebody else. The Bible verse "all we like sheep have gone astray" pretty much says it all: We go astray by mindlessly following the flock! (as in, the flock might be okay, but at least choose your direction with a bit of thought!). (Ben, time-use diary)

These sentiments – the importance of creating opportunities to question – were not restricted to Ben and Nora.

Conscious living also involves living by your convictions, which was explicitly explained by several of the participants.

I think that [doing what is right for you] is the most important, to live by your conviction. And that is really what we are doing. But when you are not living by your convictions imbalances come and everything, it affects your health. (Nora)

What happens now is that you get a subculture will develop for a little while or provide a new mode of dress or behaviour and they will start marketing to it. And then, as soon as it becomes commodified to any great degree, it waters down the rules and values that underpin that subculture and it just becomes a way of looking. (Charlie)

Seven participants discussed the importance of being aware of their impact on the natural environment. Eric and Julia, for example, value "greener living" (Eric). Environmental responsibility is also important to Maya and Charlie, whose long term plan is to purchase an electric car. Charlie and Maya are also "really passionate about organics" (Charlie), as are John and Lisa and June. Using organic methods in their own garden is very important to them, but less important for the Courts and the Snooks. But, for all families, not being wasteful is a key environmental value. Julia, for example, wrote in her time-use diary that "not being wasteful with resources" is one of her key 'Slow' values.

### **5.3 Discussion**

The three key values – living a meaningful life, control over one's own life and conscious living – are inter-related and act as a basis for lifestyle choices. In this section I will discuss the findings that have been described in this chapter by linking them to the existing literature. In addition, Maslow's theory of motivation will be discussed in light of my results, as will be the concept of 'time'.

### *The data and the literature: Similarities and differences in findings*

While some of the existing literature on Slow Living endorses my findings, my data indicate some different findings. The three key values that have emerged from the data of my study are supported by much of the literature (see, for example, Andrews, 2006; Bowers, 2007; Honoré, 2005; Parkins & Craig, 2006).

The importance of a meaningful existence has been depicted through discourses on meaning and pleasure in the existing literature. Parkins and Craig (2006) argue that Slow subjects do not just desire more free time, but time for meaningful things. The results of my study are also supported by the findings of Andrews (2006), who argues that a relaxed pace of life leads to a more meaningful life. Similarly, Honoré (2005) reported that the benefit of Slow Living is “reclaiming the time and tranquillity to make meaningful connections” (p. 277). Bowers (2007), too, suggests that the aim of social groups such as Slow Lifestylers is to produce an alternative way of living, a way which tries to reclaim a sense of meaningfulness. My results indicate that personal growth is valued the most, then time with family, followed by time for others, such as friends and communities based on common interests, and lastly with local communities.

The desire to reclaim control over one’s own life, the second key value, is also current in the literature. Parkins and Craig (2006) argue that Slow Living is not just about slowing down, but more importantly, it “represents an attempt to exercise agency over the pace of everyday existence and the movements across, and investments in, the respective domains of everyday life” (p. 67). Likewise, Petrini claims that “Being Slow means that you control the rhythms of your own life. You decide how fast you have to go in any given context. If today I want to go fast, I go fast; if tomorrow I want to go slow, I go slow. What we are fighting for is the right to determine our own tempos” (as cited in Honoré, 2005, p. 16).

The third key value, conscious living, has also been identified in the literature. According to Parkins (2004): “Slow Living involves the conscious negotiation of the different temporalities which make up our everyday lives, deriving from a commitment to occupy time more attentively” (p. 364). A priority for Slow Livers, then, is to be aware of how one uses their time and to engage in mindful practices.

My findings regarding community involvement were somewhat different to that of the existing literature. Much of the existing literature argues that community involvement is an

important aspect of Slow Living. The work of Andrews (2006) is especially indicative of this. In her opinion, Slow Living is about reclaiming our time for things that matter, which she argues includes community. She has even dedicated an entire chapter to ‘Slow and community’. The results of my study indicate that, for these five families, community involvement is not as important as the literature has portrayed. Involvement with communities of interest, such as school communities, was reasonably important to my participants, but involvement with the local face-to-face community was much less so. My findings are more in line with the findings of the New Zealand quality of life study (Quality of Life Project, 2007) which reported that people living in major New Zealand cities have a greater affiliation with communities based on shared interest and a lower affiliation with local communities. The Quality of Life Project (2007) indicated that this might be due to the busy lives of these city dwellers. It seems unlikely that this explanation applies to my participants, who rank free, i.e., none-obligated, time very highly. They prefer minimal commitments in order to free up time just to ‘be’ and prevent stress, which means reducing time to be involved in the local community.

Another surprising finding, considering the close connection in the literature (see, for example, Andrews, 2006), is that the participants did not comment much on being concerned with the wellbeing of society as a whole. Instead, they prefer to make a difference at a more personal level, for their own and family’s benefit. An exception to this, however, is the value of environmental responsibility, which most participants expressed as important.

### ***Maslow’s theory of motivation***

My results illustrate how lifestyle choices can, in part, be explained by Maslow’s theory of motivation. Participants’ basic needs (physiological, safety and love and belonging) are by and large already met. Physiologically, they have nourishment and shelter. Safety wise, they have financial security and seem in good health. It is important to keep in mind, however, that what counts as adequate ‘security’ is culturally mediated; respondents are making do with minimal financial security rather than giving in to cultural exhortation to buy ‘more’ and hence ‘better’. They belong to loving families and, to a lesser extent, they belong to some type of community based on their interest. The esteem needs for the participants in this study are a little less clear. Although the need for independence, freedom and confidence are important, gaining esteem from others (outside the family) seems less important. As the basic needs are already met, attention is given to the need for self-actualisation. Self-actualisation involves being true to your nature, which the participants in this study highlighted as an important

value. Consequently, the results of this study suggest that the need for self-actualisation is one of the most important motivating factors in living a Slow Life.

### *Concepts of time*

The importance of 'time' in the Slow Lifestyle was a key finding and is supported by the existing literature. Participants referred specifically to 'pace of life', and having free time to do the things that are important to them. The concept of time, however, can be viewed in various ways. From my fieldwork it has become evident that time is sometimes seen as a valuable resource and as something that needs to be used efficiently.

Several participants said that 'having time' is a more important resource than 'having money'. June, for example, pointed out that she has designed her life in a way that allows her to have a lot more free time than money. Similarly, Charlie said:

If somebody said to me if you can have a life with not much money and lots of free time or a life with lots of money and not much free time, it is pretty hard to have a life that gets you both, and they say pick, pick which one you want. And for me it was an absolute no brainer. I want free time.

Julia and Eric also view time as a valuable commodity. During participant observation, Julia discussed how she and Eric conceptualise time. She said that if she tells her partner that she wants a new car, he would say, 'well, are you then prepared to work one extra day a week for a year?' They regularly question whether it is worth giving up free time so as to work more in order to buy more. Her anecdote made it clear that she and Eric view time as a valuable commodity, even though she mentioned that they do not "exactly" think of time as money. That many of the participants view time as a valuable resource is in line with the general view of time in industrialised society (Thrift, 1990).

Nora values time in a slightly different way. She said that it is important to be efficient with time. Nora does not like to "waste time". An example she gave of wasting time was playing computer games. In a similar way to the Protestant work ethic (Furnham, 1990), Nora prefers to spend her time 'wisely', making herself feel productive. Doing the housework and reading out loud to the children are examples of the productive use of time in Nora's view. Reading to the children might not have immediate results, but it has a positive long term effect, hence, reading to the children can be seen as an efficient use of time. It seems that Nora, by her own admission, is as concerned about the 'efficient' use of time as are people in the 'fast lane'. This is surprising considering that Parkins and Craig (2006) argue that time for Slow subjects is not about being efficient or resting in order to be more efficient later. A possible difference

for Nora, in comparison to people living in the ‘fast lane’, is that she is more concerned about control over the way she uses her time.

The reason that free time is more important than material wealth to this group can be explained by the fact that participants feel that money is not the key to their quality of life. Participants see their peers stuck in the work-spend cycle (Schor, 1998), a cycle whereby individuals work long hours to earn a large income with which they purchase luxury goods. These individuals then return home exhausted, and flop in front of the television for some quick escapism before going to bed and beginning the cycle again. What the participants in this study seem to wonder is: ‘Where in that cycle is the time to enjoy life? Where in that cycle is there time to think and reflect about life and have quality time with the family?’ Consistent with their commitment to ‘conscious living’, they seem to see a missing link in the equation corresponding to mainstream society.

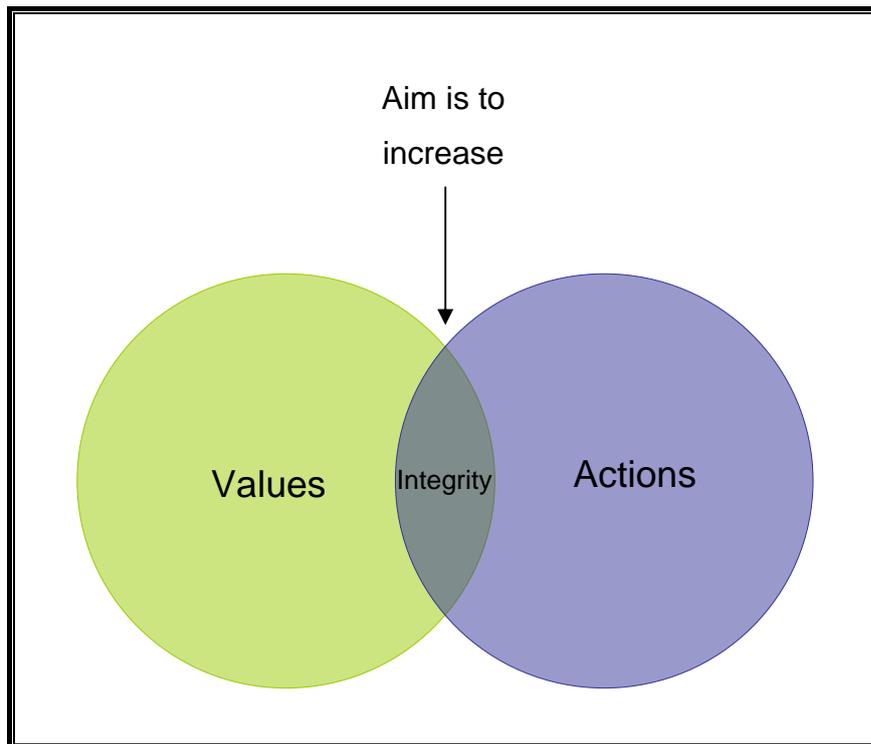
## 5.4 Conclusion

The participants are very conscious of their values. They know what is important to them and what is not. Perhaps the values of these Slow Living individuals are clearer than for many other people living a faster-paced lifestyle because Slow Living provides more time for reflection. Some of their values are in line with contemporary, mainstream society, others are not. Even between the participating families, and in some cases between family members, there are some differences in values. However, each of the participants seems cognisant of their values.

What also came across strongly from my data was that participants have resolved their basic needs (Maslow, 1987) and created space to develop higher ‘needs’. How do they do this? By owning their own homes; by rejecting any embellishment of basic needs according to consumer capitalism; and by therefore making a trade-off between income (work time) and lifestyle. Freeing up time provides opportunities to develop and practice interests which are consistent with self-actualisation.

As the results of my study suggest, living consciously, (which includes being aware of your values) might be the best way to manifest one’s values. According to Parkins and Craig (2006), Slow Living is not just about the *desire* to have time for more meaningful things, but also about the *manifestation* of this desire. In other words, Slow Living can be seen as the manifestation of a set of values, and this set of values underpins what they see as a high

quality of life. Therefore, the pursuit of a high quality of life can be viewed as the overarching motive for Slow Living. In addition, what drives these individuals to live a Slow Life is their desire to live their lives according to their values. Hence, another way of looking at their motivation for Slow Living is that their set of values represents the ideal world, with the aim to increase integrity through matching their values with their actions, as seen in Figure 5. Some actions might not be in line with the values, however. The participants in this study pointed out a number of challenges that might hinder the achievement of integrity in their Slow Life. The following chapter, Chapter Six, aims to address these challenges.



**Figure 5: Values and actions**

## CHAPTER 6: CHALLENGES TO SLOW LIVING

### 6.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter I described and discussed what motivates people to engage in a Slow Life and focussed on the values of the Slow Living participants in my study. The purpose of this chapter is to explore the challenges to living a Slow Life, thus addressing two of the key research questions: How difficult is it for participants to commit to this lifestyle when consumption trends are going in the opposite direction? and What material and other resources does one need in order to sustain a Slow Lifestyle? Consequently, this chapter addresses what the impacts on quality of life are when families are, to some degree, ‘swimming against the tide’.

### 6.2 The ease or difficulty of living a Slow Life

When asked how difficult or easy it is to live a Slow Life, or to engage in their current lifestyle, most participants replied: “Easy”. Lisa said it is ‘easy’ “if you are not afraid to be different” and John believes it is straightforward because he does everything himself and because he is “not into money”. In the case of Eric and Julia, living a Slow Life is relatively simple, mainly because they have the material resources to do so: “I think compared to other people, for us it is relatively easier because we are actually well resourced. We don’t have any money concerns” (Julia). Nora and Ben both said it is “very easy” because they feel that it is the only way they could live. Ben further commented:

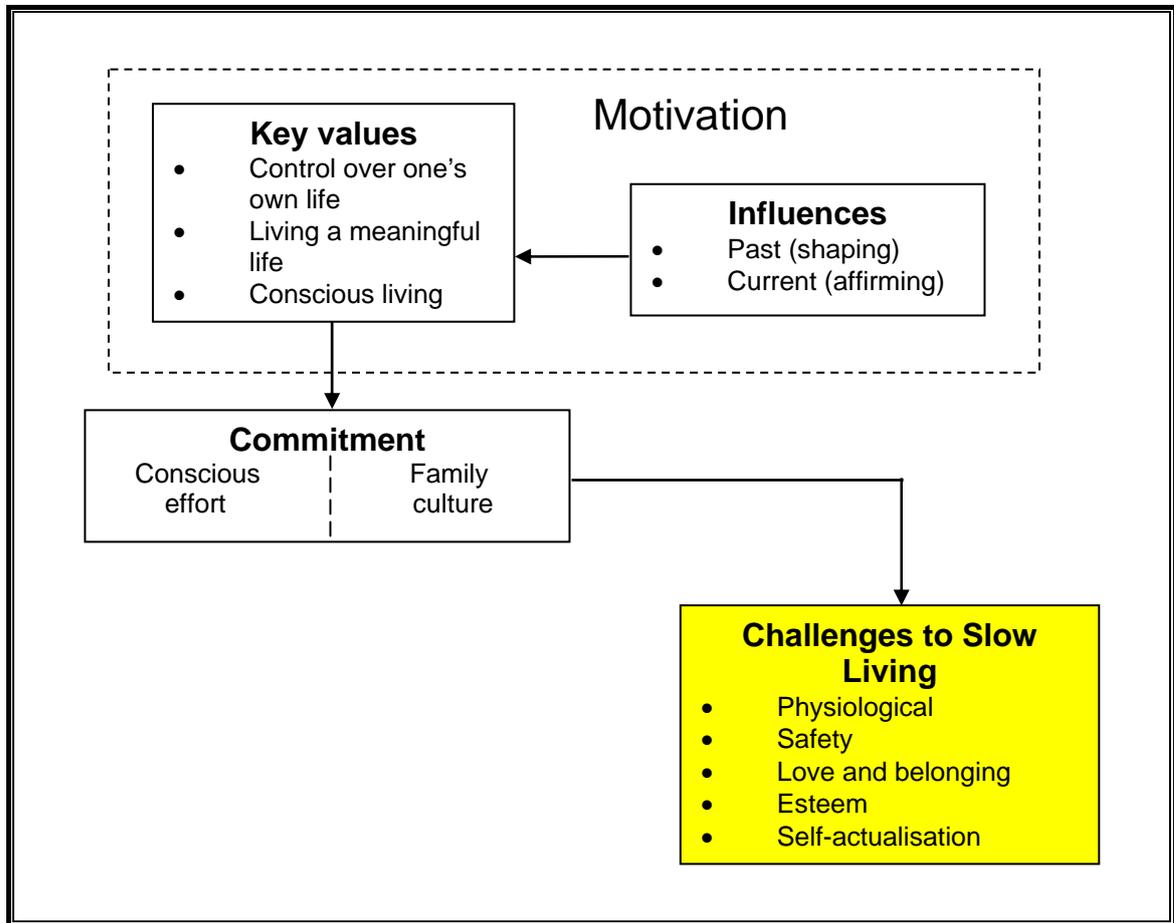
So I think it is much easier living this way than to, well the difference is stress isn’t it? ...We are a couple of people who absolutely hate stress; [it] drives us batty. We can’t cope with it. So it [Slow Living] is easy.

Charlie and Maya commented that Slow Living is both easy and difficult. As with Ben and Nora, Charlie feels it is simpler to live a Slow Life than to have a full-time job. Charlie also believes that Slow Living for him and his family is made easier by having some material assets, which he feels fortunate to have. Maya further commented that living in a rural environment makes it uncomplicated to live a Slow Life as there are not the distractions associated with city living.

### 6.3 The challenges to Slow Living

Despite the general consensus of the easiness of Slow Living, participants highlighted a number of challenges. In this section I will describe the challenges using Maslow’s model of

the Hierarchy of Needs as a framework for analysis (see Figure 6). These findings will be presented in the order suggested by Maslow (1987), starting with physiological needs and moving through the safety needs, belonging and love needs, esteem needs and lastly the need for self-actualisation.



**Figure 6: Challenges to Slow Living**

Physiological needs refer to needs related to hunger, thirst, sleep and sex (Maslow, 1987). From my data, it became evident that physiological needs were only a minor challenge. One physiological need that seems especially relevant to Slow Living is that of sleep. For the Courts, for example, finding enough time to rest is an important part of their Slow philosophy: “I think it is important, if your body needs rest to be able to take that time to do it” (Nora). However, with family life being generally busy, finding the time to rest can be a challenge.

Safety needs refer to financial security, freedom from fear and anxiety, protection, dependency, and need for structure, limits and the use of law. Observations suggest my participants are most concerned with the ‘financial security’ aspect of the safety needs, which

includes housing. In Chapter Four, I raised the question: Does one need to own a home or have a set amount of money or resources in order to live a Slow Life? Most the participants feel that having a certain level of income definitely helps. Maya commented that “a good start financially is a real help”, and Lisa commented: “You need an amount of income”. Likewise, Nora said:

The business that we are setting up is designed to bring in, we are gearing it to bring in just enough that we need to live and survive well, without the stress of having to overdo it. So keeping that simple. We do need it to function for us to be able to be allowed to live this kind of lifestyle really.

Yet several of the participants also commented that in order to sustain a Slow Lifestyle, little money is needed. Clearly, these families do not desire material wealth and have numerous strategies to save money. June, for example, has a very small garden, yet she produces a very large amount of produce from it, which she said does not require much money. Although there might be some initial start-up costs, such as tools and seeds, once the garden is established costs are low. Seeds can be saved from the crops and used the following year. This is just one example to show that there might be initial costs to living a Slow Life, but that to sustain such a lifestyle, only a few ongoing resources are needed.

Even if they do not need much money, most of the participants have to be careful with how they use what money they have. This sometimes clashes with their other values. For example, several of the participants would prefer to purchase organic food; however, organic food is usually more expensive to buy. So they have to make compromises. Maya and Charlie, for example, clearly stated that they prefer to buy more non-organic fruit and vegetables, rather than to purchase smaller amounts of organic fruit and vegetables. Hence, they purchase most of their produce at the Funky Pumpkin:

Ideally we would love to have everything be organic, that would be preferable. But that is just too much money.... But we are pretty committed to buying organic raisins and dried bananas and things like that that definitely have high spray residues. (Maya)

The above quote also indicates that participants like Maya and Charlie are happy to spend more money on certain things than others. Several participants commented on purchasing quality goods that last, such as cloth nappies and wooden toys. Although the initial costs are usually high, it usually works out cheaper in the long run as they are very durable.

The need for belonging and love refers to the need for relations with others and affection (Maslow, 1987). Overall, ‘family time’ is achieved by most participating families, although finding time alone for partners is more difficult. Ironically, Nora and Ben, for example, set

themselves a regular date in order to spend time together as a couple. However, none of the participants emphasised that spending time alone with their spouse is especially important to them at this stage of their lives. This is the reality of family life for many (Daly, 2001), including Slow Livers.

Maslow (1987) classifies esteem needs into two categories: esteem from self and esteem from others. The first category is a desire for achievement, adequacy, strength, independence, freedom, mastery and competence. The second category refers to a desire for prestige, reputation, recognition, appreciation, status, glory, dominance and attention. Data suggests that to live a Slow Life you need the first category, esteem from self, while the second category, esteem from others, is much less important.

Regarding the first category, Ben commented on the challenge of discipline, associated with the need for strength, mastery and competence. He emphasised that “it takes a lot of discipline to do without things”. Yet other participants found this easier, as the accumulation of material goods is such a low priority in their lives.

Another challenge to meeting the esteem needs for the participants is to be confident about their decisions and not worry about what other people might think. In the past, several participants have received negative comments regarding their way of life. The three quotes below show how acceptance by others can be a challenge and how other people often find it difficult to understand the lives of those who choose a Slow Lifestyle:

...the general community will not allow it [being alternative] because we are organic for starters. That is a no-no. We home-educate. Which is another no-no. So therefore our children are not enrolled at the school and so, therefore, we are letting the community down, because of school numbers and loss of teachers and that sort of thing. You are not allowed choice; you [have] got to be a sheep. (John)

There are an amount of people who feel threatened about home-schooling, because if you say I am home-schooling...she will immediately feel belittled if she is not home-schooling....People can't handle that. They feel threatened, or they experience something negative, and they don't like you. They reject you as the whole person. (Lisa)

The difficulty is challenging the social norms and being misunderstood, but that is fine, we can live with that. Every now and then it, you come across people where they have a complete different worldview and it is just dealing with that. And most often it is the type of thing that you just have to let go because they are never going to understand your worldview and you are never going to understand their worldview neither, they are completely different ways of seeing things. So that is a little bit of tension or difficulty, but only very temporarily, because you go 'oh well' and get over it. (Nora)

Furthermore, the challenge is to stick to your personal values. Lisa put it like this: “You have to be aware that you have to live this life on your own two feet...and not depend on other people and their opinions and their likes or dislikes. Not [be] pursued by other people’s opinions”. Clearly, the participants have come across a number of challenges regarding the need for esteem from others. Despite this, most of the participants care little about what other people think of them. June does not mind wearing old clothes and having an old bike and she enjoys doing her own gardening. What other people think of her is of no concern. Similarly, John and Lisa are not concerned about other people’s opinions: “we couldn’t give a shit about the Joneses” (John). “Let it just be their problem if they have any problem with it” (Lisa).

While self-actualisation, the ‘highest’ of Maslow’s needs, is the ultimate goal of personal development, it is seldom attained. Self-actualisation refers to being true to one’s nature, “to become everything that one is capable of becoming” (Maslow, 1987, p. 22). In other words, it refers to “people’s desire for self-fulfillment” (Maslow, 1987, p. 22) or personal growth, and this involves a continuous process of ‘becoming’ rather than the completion of a finite task. According to Maslow (1987), self-actualisation might involve the pursuit of excellence as a painter, an athlete or a parent. Clearly, self-actualisation is experienced differently by each individual, and while this is the case for my respondents too, there is a commonality in that being successful parents and living a Slow Life are priorities for all of them. These are indicative of the families’ commitment to the three key values: living a meaningful life, control over one’s own life, and conscious living. From my observations, it became clear that the challenges which hinder these priorities include the scarcity of time and social pressure.

An important factor enabling self-actualisation is obtaining free time. When I asked June what material and other resources she needed in order to live a Slow Lifestyle she replied:

I guess the luxury of time. That is the main resource. I don’t think you can really live like this if you don’t have enough time, or live in a more relaxed way or it would flow away if you don’t have time.

Many of the practices of these families are time-consuming. For example, home-schooling children, using alternative health treatments, using cloth nappies, and having space for reflection, all require time. Maya feels that because she uses cloth nappies, she spends a lot of time doing washing. Alternative treatments, such as for head lice, also take a long time. June said, in relation to head lice, that it means you have to stay at home with your child and that it takes several weeks before the problem is under control. Many of these practices are part of their Slow Lifestyle and are therefore an important part of their self-actualisation.

Although Slow Living is portrayed as a 'non-busy' lifestyle, the reality is that these Slow Living families also have busy moments in their lives, especially because they all have children. For Eric and Julia there are specifically busy times, like after school. The following excerpt is from the interview with Julia:

**Interviewer:** You wrote that you felt pressured for time on the Wednesday after work. Does that happen usually?

**Julia:** It does at that time of the day. It is that time, I think most people with kids they, we call it 'Zoo Hour'. We get home from work and dinner has to be cooked, there is homework, everyone is a bit tired and scratchy as well.

The busy nature of family life often means that several mothers do not have much time for themselves and for personal hobbies, which is part of their self-fulfillment. At the Brown's household, it is Maya who has most of the child-caring responsibilities as she is a full-time mother and Charlie is the sole-wage earner. This means that Maya has little time for her hobbies. She said: "Hobbies? As a home mum you don't get a lot of time for hobbies". She further commented: "I anticipate to read more when the children get bigger. When I have more time for myself; I don't really get much time for myself". Maya also feels that it is difficult to keep up the garden due to having small children. The full-time mothers are all with the children most of the day which means that most of their time is taken up by caring for and teaching their children. Yet, they see this task as valuable and they have partners with flexible working situations, which enable them to call upon those partners when needed. Time for themselves and for other personal interests, such as learning a language, is more difficult and might be undertaken in the future when the children are older:

I [have] free time when my youngest child is a teenager. That is when I might have free time, to take on something. But at the moment that [learning a new language] is absolutely not on the cards....We were sort of growing towards that [retirement] because you grow with your child's age and you sort of look ahead, and you have a certain picture or expectation of your life of how it is going to go. Something else happened. It just means that your adjustment needs making. (Lisa)

The thing that I find at the moment with young kids, I would always like a little more time to myself. But that is part of my sacrifice of what I am choosing to do and it comes with the territory really, especially home-schooling where my kids are with me all the time. But that is what I choose to do. (Nora)

Although it may seem a big sacrifice to make, all the participating mothers and fathers are very satisfied with their chosen paths as parents. Part of realising their potential is being a good parent. These parents can be busy, but they are busy with things that they have chosen, things that are meaningful to them and things which, for them, constitute self-actualisation. The main challenge, especially for the full-time mothers, is finding time for themselves to

reflect and to just 'be', which is an important part of their self-fulfillment. The fathers from the participating families seem to have more chances for reflection than most of the mothers, as they are more involved in work outside the home. In the case of the Browns, for example, Charlie feels he has plenty of free time, but Maya feels that she does not have much time for her personal interests.

June and Julia seem to have more time for personal interests than the other mothers. As June's daughter is a teenager and is at school during the day, June has more opportunities to be alone and have time for personal interests and reflection. However, she is looking forward to having even more time for personal interests when her daughter is older. Julia works part-time, and also seems to have time for her personal interests:

I think relative to other people, I have a lot of time to do things that I really want to do. A little bit less now that I have Eva because I have to think about looking after her and I want to do a good job of that. Even so, compared to other families with children, I have a lot more free time. It has all worked together so that we both do things that we want to do.

Julia seems to have plenty of time for personal interests because Eva leaves the house to go to school during the day, and because Eric works from home, sharing child-caring responsibilities. Another key factor in June's and Julia's time commitments is that they each only have one child to care for (compared to the other mothers who have more than one child). Therefore, the lifestyle and experience of self-actualisation of the parents, is affected by the 'number of children' in the family.

Reaching the potential of living a Slow Life is also challenging since these individuals still live in a society where life is fast-paced and they are exposed to social pressures from sources such as the media, other people and even government policies that work against them or make life harder for them. Participants pointed out that it is difficult to avoid fast-paced society altogether, especially the media. Their major concern is avoiding the temptations of consumption that they are being exposed to: "The difficult part might be resisting the attractions of excess consumption. And that's made easier by not watching lots of TV and not reading the newspaper a lot" (Eric). While Charlie and Maya try to limit the content and duration of their children's TV watching, they still get "inundated" (Maya) by television when they are at the house of Maya's parents. Maya's parents have a different set of values and ways of doing things, which are not always in line with the values of Charlie and Maya. Maya commented: "My mother requires some organising because...I know if I left her to her own devices, we would end up with all kinds of plastic rubbish which I don't like at all". Consequently, Maya and Charlie's children are being exposed to a consumer lifestyle when

outside the family home, and the pressure of others can make it difficult to keep life simple.

Likewise, Ben commented:

I even found that through the decades...being a member of the church is like, occasionally you pull life back to make it more simple, and then they go 'we would like you to be involved in this thing on Wednesday night and we have got something on Thursday night we would like you to be involved in'. And you find you go out every night of the week. And that makes life extremely complicated and busy and stressful. I think the thing is, life at times has a habit of getting complicated and you have to pull it back.

Laws and policies can also compromise self-actualisation. Eric pointed out that, initially, it was difficult to negotiate shorter working hours. John emphasised his frustration with specific regulations such as Occupational Health and Safety (OSH) and building regulations, which means he is limited in the things he can do himself. John feels that large companies are taking control and that it is difficult to voice one's opinion:

I [would] rather not use treated timber, but now you are not allowed to use untreated timber. All this treated stuff and that is monopolising, I don't like monopolising, I don't like big companies taking control and you have to use their product, I don't like that, I am very anti that. But these days because of politics because that is the way it is, you've got to be careful how you voice your opinion.

The challenges of social pressure are closely related to the challenges of enculturation, which Pearsall (1999) defined as "the gradual acquisition of the norms of a culture or group" (p. 469). While it can be difficult to go against the norms of society, my participants try to make their own decisions and try to experience a certain detachment from the culture in which they live. They achieve this through carefully examining this culture and their own lives.

## **6.4 Discussion**

As seen in this chapter, most of the challenges that the families in this study face are related to the ability to meet the needs of self-actualisation. Challenges based around the other four needs (physiological, safety, love and belonging, and esteem) are less evident, as they are, by and large, already met. All participants are homeowners, for example. Hence, most of their attention lies in overcoming the challenges involved in meeting the self-actualisation need.

Even though the Slow Living families live unconventional lifestyles, they are not fully detached from fast life in modern society. Julia pointed out that it is difficult to manage a Slow Life "in what is actually a really busy world". In this busy world, global trends, policies and laws can hinder attempts at Slow Living. John feels globalisation has made his life challenging. This is a key issue discussed in the literature by Parkins and Craig (2006) who

argue that “globalization threatens to erase the local” (p. 10). Globalisation is said to affect many elements in our everyday lives (Giddens, 1994), and this is confirmed by John’s experience of building regulations limiting his lifestyle. Nevertheless, within New Zealand there are policies that might support Slow Living. One example is the recent policy favouring flexible working hours (New Zealand Parliament, 2008), which might make it easier for families to live a Slow Lifestyle.

The results indicate that Slow Living is often experienced differently by mothers and fathers. The majority of the participating families have, by and large, taken on traditional roles, where the mother assumes most of the child caring responsibilities. Especially, the decision to home-school children can exacerbate pressures on the partner most involved in child-rearing responsibilities. The challenges based around the busy nature of family life are similar to those facing conventional mothers. Davies (2001) argues that finding the time for reflection is difficult to achieve for women due to the nature of their work, which often involves caring for children. In most cases, their caring activities cannot be put aside until later. A mother can not just take two hours to think and reflect while a young child is in the room crying. One might expect Slow Living to be experienced differently by mothers and fathers if each assumes traditional roles related to parenting, and this is certainly true in the case of my respondents.

The results of this study raise the question as to whether one can live a Slow Life when one is ‘busy with other things’. On the one hand, if these individuals are busy, but are reaching their potential, are living a meaningful life, are conscious of the way they live and are in control over how they spend their time, then yes, they can be seen as living a Slow Life. It is not just time that they need, but control over the allocation of time, so that they can decide for themselves how they spend that time. The participants in my study achieve this through careful reflection and analysis of the elements of their lives. On the other hand, it can be argued that while Slow Living individuals can indeed be busy at times, for example, in “zoo hour” after school, in general, she/he needs to have sufficient time for reflection.

In the end, the reality is that compromises need to be made. Charlie explains it like this:

If you want to live a Slow Life you will have to give something up. You will have to give up either material wealth or something. Something will have to go. It has been really interesting watching the changes for women working. I know so many more women who are in full-time work these days. But being at [Alto School] and seeing that most of the mums there don’t work full-time. Because they have to be so involved with what is happening with the school...Because the only people who can afford to be part of that system, who can afford to have one member of the couple not working, are either people who, where one partner earns a lot of money, like the husband is a doctor or whether they

have the choice to live in a really cheap house in a cheap suburb. So some of the families live over in Shirley or Woolston<sup>20</sup>. They have had to sacrifice something. Or they [have] got a really high earning potential. But even those couples with the high earning potential, they have sacrificed something, because the husband is sacrificing his time so the wife doesn't. [So that she] can live a Slow Life basically, or looking at sacrificing her earning potential.

Charlie and Maya make compromises about buying organic food. They value organic food, but since Charlie is the sole wage earner, they have less income. Organic food is expensive so they have to compromise and buy non-organic items. Each family has to make some compromises, and these compromises differ slightly between them, depending on their values. Nora, for example, prefers to purchase baked goods, rather than baking them herself, as this means she will have more time with her children.

Yet, the challenges that the participants face are by no means life threatening and can often be overcome. Each family has a set of strategies to meet many of the challenges that they are faced with. These strategies are discussed in the following chapter.

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<sup>20</sup> Shirley and Woolston are moderate to low socio-economic areas of Christchurch.

## **CHAPTER 7: STRATEGIES AND PRACTICES**

### **7.1 Introduction**

The purpose of this chapter is to explore in greater depth how different families live a Slow Life. There is no standard list of practices that characterise Slow Living and each family has a number of strategies to conquer their challenges and enact their values. In this chapter I will describe the variety of practices and strategies that the Slow Living participants use. These practices and strategies are then compared to the literature. Lastly, I draw out the differences between the Slow Lifestyles of the different participants and integrate the findings from my study as a whole.

### **7.2 Slow Living strategies and practices**

Whilst each family has its own distinct day-to-day practices and strategies, there are some common approaches. Figure 7 illustrates how the strategies and practices are interconnected and become part of the Slow Lifestyle process. In this study, strategies refer to the plans and methods to enact the values of and overcome the challenges to living a Slow Life, while the practices refer to specific actions or processes. The common themes that will be discussed in this chapter are: specific work situations; do-it-yourself (DIY) and self-sufficiency; planning and efficiency; mindful consumption; use of technology; awareness of environmental impact; maintaining high levels of wellbeing; and alternative education. These themes are interconnected and are in no set order of importance. This raises the question whether these common themes are 'unique' to Slow Living. Many of these practices, taken individually, do not distinguish Slow Livers from other New Zealanders. However, when viewed in their totality, and related to the guiding value system which sustains and integrates them, the differences are more apparent.

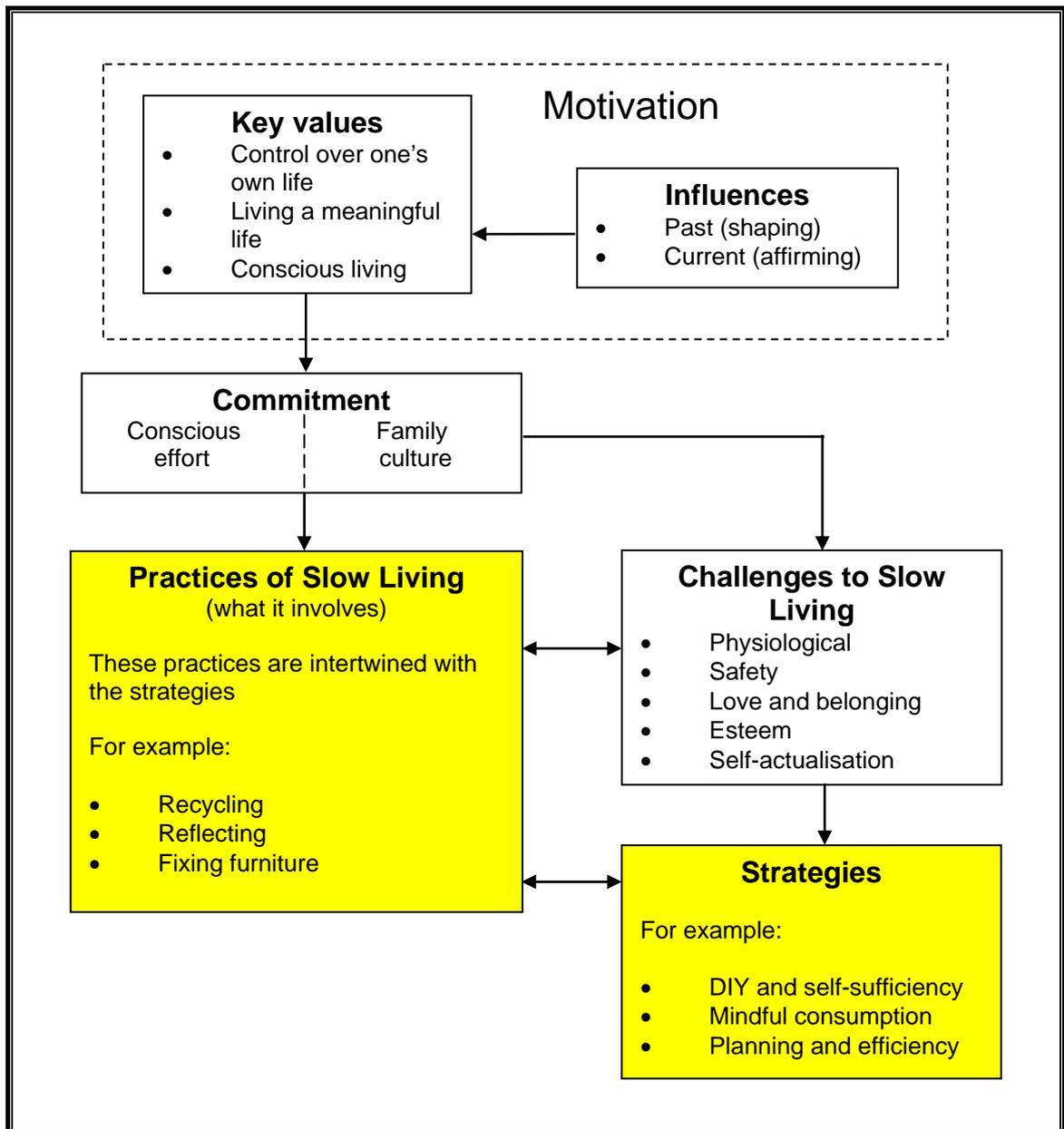


Figure 7: Practices and strategies of the Slow Lifestyle

*Specific work situations*

Specific work situations, such as flexible work, provide Slow Living individuals with more control over how their time is used, and hence produces a more meaningful life. None of the participants in this study works a full-time 40-hour week. June and Charlie work reduced hours by working long hours some days, or some seasons, and having less work at other times. Charlie, Ben and John are self-employed and can be flexible with their work commitments. Working from home also provides for flexibility:

There are more practical things about staying at home because there is no commuting time, that is something you are not paid for but you have to do...I do things like in

between times, like sticking in some washing in the morning and come out at lunch time and hang it up. (Eric)

Julia and Eric both work part-time:

We have reduced our hours more and more over time. But we both started as a nine [working days] a fortnight, which meant that you would have one long weekend every fortnight. And I have worked part time since my graduation really. (Julia)

For the most part, participants seem to enjoy their work. Three of the female participants, Maya, Nora and Lisa, are full-time mothers, and Nora and Lisa are both home-schooling their children. Being mothers and home-schooling their children is their work and their passion. Three other participants, Ben, Julia and Charlie, also commented that they enjoy their work. Charlie, for example, said: “Most [of] my hobbies probably come under my work....I love my job. It is more of a passion than a job”. This indicates that work and leisure are often integrated.

Overall, it seems that participants have consciously chosen specific work situations, such as part-time work, self-employment and working from home, in order to have flexibility and plenty of time for themselves and their family. In addition, having occupations that they enjoy adds value and meaning to their lives.

### ***Do-it-yourself (DIY) and self-sufficiency***

All of the participants in this study are involved, in one way or another, in DIY practices, with the aim of being self-sufficient, and, for the most part, they gain great pleasure from these DIY projects. Participants have a wide range of DIY projects including crafts, gifts, renovation and building. June and her daughter, for example, make mosaic paving stones for the garden. In addition, they make their own gifts, such as cosmetics and calendars, which June said “is quite good because it keeps us quite skillful”. Eric enjoys restoring old furniture, pointing out that he sometimes makes “old things useable or workable, whether it is furniture or some other thing, [such as a] household appliance.” He further commented: “I have a set of tables that belong to my father, I re-surfaced those. I have a collection of wood in the garage, kind of gets used for making things”. Charlie is also involved in DIY projects; he made a drying rack, for example. John is a builder and he enjoys fixing and building things. He has built much of his house himself and he built the swimming pool himself too. He uses simple methods and tools and gains pride out of doing it himself: “I don’t have fancy gear; I do everything with a circular saw and a hand saw and chisel. And I sort of pride myself on that a

little because that is carpentry, good old fashion carpentry”. Similarly, Nora and Ben are working on renovating a bedroom.

All of the participants have gardens, and most of them grow their own vegetables and have fruit trees. June, for example, grows as much as possible in her small, but productive, garden. Since there is little room for fruit trees, every year she bikes down the road where she knows there is a large apple tree along the footpath, and asks the owners if she can take the apples (as they end up bruised on the ground otherwise). She will pack her bicycle basket full with apples and head home to process them in her kitchen.

Two families raise chickens and one family has milking cows. The Browns have one chicken, but the Snooks have a number of chickens which provide them with an abundant egg supply. Having chickens, for Julia, adds to the permaculture idea:

...we don't really have a permaculture garden, but I am aware of the permaculture idea that you put things in the garden that have got several purposes, or you have things planned out so that people, they make people function, and chickens are fantastic in that way....they eat all our garden scraps and they eat all our food scraps and they lay beautiful eggs.

The Smiths have two house cows that are used to obtain fresh organic milk, which in turn is used to make cheese.

Participants also have a wide variety of DIY practices in the kitchen. Instead of purchasing ready-made food items from the supermarket, most participants prefer to make things themselves from scratch. Pre-prepared dinners are rare in the majority of the homes of the Slow Living participants. Eric said: “We like to cook, and do cook, and tend to cook our own things rather than, there are no TV dinners in our freezer for instance. There are more frozen leftovers in there”. Four of the female participants indicated that they do their own baking, such as bread, muffins and biscuits. However, Nora, and sometimes June, feels it is more efficient to purchase baked goods from the supermarket. So efficiency trumps authenticity for them at those times. A common practice among the females in this study is to make preserves and chutneys. Nora and Julia commented on the satisfaction they gain from this and Nora's comment is also a good example of self-actualisation:

I love preserving and making jam and you know all those sorts of things, which I found huge amounts of satisfaction from that, to see rows of preserves. There is something in it that makes my heart glow. (Nora)

We still make really good homemade chutneys and pickles, because we have really nice recipes that I really like....So there are things like that that I'll make probably a lot more

to make it taste really good, than because it is cheaper or more economical or something.  
(Julia)

Other practices include cheese and yoghurt making. Lisa, for example, makes her own cheese: “Making cheese is part of the useful and logical thing to do. I have the time”. Nora pointed out that she makes her own yoghurt and that DIY practices add value to her life.

The reasons that many of the participants do things themselves are varied; for some, they have the time to do it, or they do it to save money or reduce their impact on the environment. Generally, however, they all gain great satisfaction in being able to do it themselves. In this way, these participants are not supporting the large global companies and, hence, it can be seen as a way of resisting global consumer culture, whether or not intentionally. These participants also seem to be part of the revival of traditional methods as was the case in the Arts and Crafts Movement. This was especially illustrated by John’s comment about his pride in using traditional methods and tools for building.

### ***Planning and efficiency***

Practices based around planning and efficiency are very common in the everyday lives of Slow Living participants, especially the females. Planning and efficiency, for them, signifies saving money, saving time, and saving energy and it is often related to reducing impacts on the environment as well. This sense of ‘scientific management’ seems in many ways ironic, and will be further discussed later in this chapter.

Planning and being efficient is achieved in a variety of ways. For grocery shopping, practices include buying in bulk, buying items on special, doing minimal supermarket shopping and participating in the green dollar exchange market. When I asked June why she buys items in bulk she said it was to save money and energy. “It [buying in bulk] means that I don’t have to make as many trips” (June). Lisa also likes bulk shopping, but commented more specifically on saving money and reducing waste:

Because with the sugar for instance, it is cheaper, but it is the paper bag that you buy it in. So you can burn it at the end. You avoid all these little one kilogram plastic [bags] that the sugar is in.

Closely linked to bulk buying is buying items on special, which is purely a money saving practice. June provided a detailed account of her shopping habits:

Well, see normally I only buy what is on special and I buy it in bulk. So that way I figure that everything I buy I get like heavily discounted. So that is why I have special storage shelves built and everything inside. What I normally do is plan my menus and I plan my shopping, say from what I already got and what I need and what is ‘on special’, and then I

just go to what ever supermarkets got the best deals. I never go to Pack and Save because they don't bring out brochures anymore.

June pays a lot of attention to what is 'on special' and puts in the effort to make the most of a bargain. Although this practice might save June money, is it economically efficient? The following observation from my field notes illustrates a shopping trip with the Rudds:

We drove to two separate supermarkets to get items 'on special' on our way to the park. The first supermarket we visited was Countdown. Here June had a voucher that she received two weeks prior. When she visited Countdown then to buy some cheese on special they had run out of stock. She then took the effort to ask for a special voucher, which meant she could get the same item for the discounted price next time it was in store (with a two week expiration date). We took three blocks of cheese from the fridge and took those (no other items) to the counter. June told me that she was one day late, but was hoping they would honour their deal as it was a public holiday the day before and they were closed. She also explained that if they would not give her the cheese for that discounted price she would put the cheese back. She said she does not care what people think. The supermarket accepted the voucher and we drove about seven minutes to the next one. In this supermarket cheese was on special for \$4.99 for a 750 grams block and a litre of juice for 99 cents. The cheese had a two per person limit. June told me that she usually takes her daughter so that they can get two each. But since I was there, I got the honour to make the most of a good bargain.

Furthermore, June also purchases items like boxes of overripe bananas for a very cheap price, and then freezes them. Although June puts in the effort to save some money, she emphasised that it is not much extra effort, as she visits the supermarkets, for example, on her way to the park:

I would never just go out to the shop or I would never just take her [daughter], I always try to do at least two things, if not more. Kind of on a round trip, and checking the mail as well<sup>21</sup>.

Exchanging items is another practise. In the past, Lisa has visited the green dollar exchange market<sup>22</sup> where she is able to trade her milk and home-made cheese for other products.

Whereas most participants do home baking, two participants also commented on purchasing baked goods in order to save time and energy. In her time-use diary, Nora wrote:

Purchased baked goods from Factory Shop is more economic than baking myself. Also a more efficient use of my time to purchase ready made biscuits than spend time in kitchen that could be spend inputting into kids or husband or business.

Similarly, June purchases food items for certain situations where she is asked to provide a plate<sup>23</sup>. In such a scenario, June feels it is more economical to purchase some cheap items, such as biscuits or fizzy drink, from the supermarket, as she will not necessarily be consuming it herself. In contrast to the earlier point about buying 'on special', in this instance time is more important than money.

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<sup>21</sup> This practice is an example of 'time deepening', normally associated with those in the 'fast lane' who seek to economise on time by completing more than one 'task' at a time.

<sup>22</sup> A green dollar exchange market is where people can trade products, hence avoid taxes.

<sup>23</sup> A New Zealand custom whereby a person is asked to bring along some food to share.

Being efficient with time and money requires careful planning and participants use a range of planning tools. Common planning practices, especially among the females, include making 'to-do' and shopping lists and planning in their diaries. The majority of the participants plan their time carefully in order to ensure there are enough opportunities for resting, reflecting and their personal interests. Julia and Eric, for example, made a list of the personal things they wanted to achieve during the holiday period, such as going for a mountain bike ride and spending time in the garden. This is not to say that their time is overly structured and unnatural, but that they are conscious about how they spend their time and ensure enough time is planned for relaxation, reflection and their personal interests. In general, creating that free time does not happen automatically, it is the result of careful planning. Nora commented that it is easy for housework to just 'take over'. Another planning practice used by June and her daughter is to have regular planning meetings. In these meetings they discuss a wide variety of topics, such as what activities they would like to do that week, what tasks need doing and what they will have for lunch and dinner each day. The planning of meals and making shopping lists reduces the amount of food that is wasted and hence saves money. Many of the participants make meals in advance. Some fill up their 'slow' cookers in the morning or the night before, which means that at dinner time they can relax more. Other participants like to cook in bulk and then freeze or preserve the food for later use.

Being efficient with time and being efficient with money are often closely linked. Due to their decision to reduce paid employment, participants have less money, so, to sustain their lifestyles with reduced paid work and more free time, it is vital for them to be efficient with money. However, the priority attached to this varied among the participants. For example, in the case of Eric and Julia, who have good incomes, being efficient with money is not as important as it is for June, who is a single mother. However, for most participants, careful planning and being efficient with money helps them to stay clear of the 'rat-race' of society. June summed this up as follows in her time-use diary:

I love to cook in bulk and freeze things, which is great when you have a garden. I also buy in bulk whatever is on special to save money, this way I don't have to live in the "Rat Race" as I don't need much money. So planning is important, and keeping an inventory.

Part of avoiding the 'rat-race' is staying clear of contemporary consumption trends. The following section will explore the practices of 'mindful' consumption.

### *Mindful consumption*

Although the lifestyles of the Slow Living participants are certainly not based around consumption, some consumption is unavoidable. Where possible, the participants practice ‘mindful’ consumption, which, in this thesis, refers to attentive shopping. By shopping through TradeMe, for example, participants purchase second-hand goods, which mean re-using material goods. This is closely related to their value of conscious living. Three female participants use TradeMe to buy and sell second-hand goods. Julia said she “used to go to garage sales and op shops<sup>24</sup> a lot” to have “a good rummage.” This is now replaced with spending time on the computer looking on the TradeMe website. Maya has also started using TradeMe, predominantly for purchasing second-hand children’s clothing.

Two families pointed out how they purchase good quality products, as opposed to purchasing cheap products. The reason for this is because good quality products last longer. Maya talked about how she buys good quality toys for the children: “I like buying good quality [toys]. Not necessarily wooden, but good quality and more natural cloth dolls and that sort of thing. Rosa is getting a cloth doll for her birthday”. Julia commented that she often prefers to buy “old things that are well made” as opposed to a “\$30 toaster from the Warehouse”, for example.

Other examples of mindful consumption include the green dollar exchange market, referred to earlier, where produce such as home-made cheese is swapped for other products; the swap meet; self production, such as growing own vegetables and making own clothes; and collective buying.

### *Use of technology*

Despite possible misconceptions about Slow Living practices, the participants in this study do use technological tools in their lives, as the use of TradeMe illustrates. Technology, however, is generally used as tool, rather than for entertainment. June commented: “It [the computer] is not just there for fun. It is something that I use to work with”. In the case of the Courts family, though, the computer is sometimes used for the children to play games on and, on the odd occasion, for the entertainment of the parents too. The following excerpt is from the interview with Ben:

**Interviewer:** You wrote [in time-use diary] that you played some computer games as well. Do you do this often?

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<sup>24</sup> An ‘op shop’ is an abbreviation for opportunity shop, where one can buy second-hand goods, usually operated by a charitable organisation.

**Ben:** No not at all. It was just a, every once in a while, maybe once in six months and you just want to waste some time. Because they do take up a lot of time...I just do it once in a blue moon. So it is a binge. Binge playing.

Likewise, in the interview, Nora expanded on her diary entry:

...it [playing computer games] is usually an escape thing from reality, so where you're not in touch with the real world. Actually, most technology things I find like that, I don't have time for it, I don't prioritise that in my day.

Regarding television, most of the participants watch minimal, if any, 'regular' television:

Television is a good one. Most of the people I know that are buskers don't own TVs, don't watch TVs. Most of the parents I know at [Alto School] don't own TVs, don't watch TVs.... It seems surreal that you can have five people sitting in a room staring at this little box in the corner that is just pumping out violence. It just seems absolutely insane to me. (Charlie)

[We watch] very little television and quite a few movies on DVD, like we could go for weeks without watching broadcast television. We probably watch one or more movies on DVD a week. And that is the same for Eva, she doesn't watch TV, she watches DVDs and videos. (Eric)

The above statements show that the participants watch minimal television. Instead, most of the participants and their children, consistent with the value of 'conscious living', watch carefully selected DVDs and videos. Consequently, the participants tend to have limited media exposure, which helps them avoid the temptations of consumption. The exception is the Court's children, who get to watch "quite a bit of TV...they watch more than they probably should" (Ben).

### *Awareness of environmental impact*

Another good example of conscious living is an awareness of environmental impacts. This is especially the case for four of the five participating families<sup>25</sup>. They employ a wide variety of environmentally friendly strategies, many of which are based around minimising waste. They buy in bulk to reduce packaging, for example. Other waste-minimising practices include using cloth nappies as opposed to disposable nappies, using cloth sanitary pads, reading the news online as opposed to wasting paper when subscribing to a hard copy of the newspaper, drying the washing outside or above the fire, recycling, reusing, and composting:

Well it [composting] means we don't have as much rubbish and you know we have compost for the garden and things like that...I just don't like really wasting anything. I like to get as many uses as possible. And I put all sorts of things on the compost heap like we don't buy cleaning rags or anything like that we just, once our clothes are too raggedy

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<sup>25</sup> Environmentally friendly practices were less visible at the Court's household, and the difference between this family and the others will be examined later in this chapter.

they go in the rag bag and we use them for wiping the benches and when finished with them we put them on the compost heap, and they just break down. (June)

Most other participants mentioned that when they use the car to drive to a specific destination, they try to combine the trip to complete other tasks in order to be efficient with their use of time and petrol. Charlie was the only participant who indicated that he tries to take public transport to work when possible. A possible reason why many of the other families might not use public transport is that they perceive that it is a hassle to take children on the bus, or, in the case of the Smiths, because of a lack of bus services in their area.

Another environmentally-friendly practice on the part of some of the participants is to use biodegradable and 'natural' cleaning products. Maya said she feels "quite strong" about using 'natural' and non-synthetic products. She commented that she is "happy" to spend more money on 'natural' products. Similarly, John talked about bleach. He said that he has "not used bleach for 30 years, because it is bad for the environment. You are better off having a mark on your shirt than to bleach it out".

Purchasing organic food and applying the organics philosophy to gardening are also common practices for participants to reduce their environmental impact. Two families said they purchase some organic food. As I explained earlier, most participants believe organic food is more expensive than non-organic food and, hence, do not purchase organic food or purchase only a limited amount<sup>26</sup>. Yet, most of the participating families use organic, or near organic, methods of gardening.

The Snooks have two other practices to reduce impact on the natural environment, one of which is the installation of solar panels:

**Interviewer:** How come you are looking into installing solar heating?

**Eric:** I guess a combination of using less power, which means less power bills, but also kind of greener living.

Another practice relating to the natural environment for Eric is being a member of the Green Party<sup>27</sup>. Julia explained it like this:

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<sup>26</sup> Although the purchasing costs of organic food are usually more expensive than conventional food, "organic food is not expensive if you consider the value of organic food and organic production" (BioGro New Zealand, n.d. para. 3)

<sup>27</sup> The Green Party is one of New Zealand's political parties, focusing primarily on the sustainability of the natural environment. The Green Party has more salience in New Zealand than in some other democracies because proportional representation gives it a presence in Parliament.

I think he [Eric] is probably more political about it [green living] than I am. He is involved in the Green Party and supporting them and reading their material. In conversations with people, he will put forward quite a green perspective about population and growth and those kinds of things.

### ***Maintaining high levels of wellbeing***

Practices to maintain high levels of wellbeing are a high priority for the participating families. Analysis of the data suggests that these practices are based on their aims of achieving personal/spiritual wellbeing, social wellbeing and physical wellbeing.

Regarding personal/spiritual wellbeing, the four Christian respondents read and study the Bible and attend or lead a Bible study group. Lisa, for example, “reads the Bible and tries to apply the kinds of things that Jesus said”. Nora explicitly commented on how her Christian practices influence her wellbeing:

We [the family] are strong Christians and we, I guess for me that is, [it is] fundamental to look after the whole person, so not just our body or emotion, but our spirit as well. [To] keep a good spiritual health. To me that adds huge value to our lives here and now.

The four Christian participants, as well as Maya and Charlie, take the time to pray. In addition, Maya, Charlie and June meditate. (Julia’s spiritual practices are slightly different. She practices yoga at home and feels connected to her spiritual beliefs when gardening.)

To satisfy social wellbeing, participants engage in a number of social activities, even though they try to keep extra-curricular activities to a minimum. Spending time with friends and communities based on shared interests is more common than spending time with the local community. For example, Charlie spends time with his busking colleagues, Maya with the Alto community, Nora and Lisa with the Bible study group and the home-school community, and Julia and Eric with the Slow Food group. However, Eric explained that the Slow Food group based in Canterbury is currently inactive. In the past, though, they have enjoyed communal events such as potluck dinners<sup>28</sup> and wassailing<sup>29</sup>.

Although minimal compared to what the international literature portrays, the participants do have some interaction with their local community. Eric and Julia organise and attend their neighbourhood picnic, Lisa volunteers at the community library, John helps out in school

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<sup>28</sup> A potluck dinner is where a group of people gather and each person or family brings along a dish of food to share.

<sup>29</sup> Wassailing is a traditional ritual originally from England in which people bless fruit trees.

‘working bees’ if necessary, and the Courts send their children to Cubs. Lisa explained her minimal community involvement as follows:

What kind of contact do we have with the community? Not much at all. The community leaves us alone now. But I don’t really take part in the community anymore....the neighbour might wave when he comes past on his four-wheeler. He waves and we wave back. We have been doing that for 25 years....Apart from that there isn’t really much. I deliberately keep on being a voluntary librarian at the local library, the community library. Just to show my face, so that we are some little part of the community. They have a get-together once a year, with all voluntary librarians; we see each other once a year. So that is something.

Lisa and John feel somewhat like outsiders because of their lifestyle commitments.

In regards to physical wellbeing, several of the families use alternative medicine and cosmetics. One example referred to earlier was the use of natural and homemade lice treatment, referred to by Maya and June. The Smiths also commented on their use of natural contraception and home birthing:

We decided we’d use the rhythm method of contraception, because I didn’t like the idea of, certainly not the pill. I don’t like things that play with your hormones.....The rhythm method worked very well, never had any problems, and then we wanted Suzan, we had Suzan, simple as that. So she was born here at home, and that was the first home-birth in the community in more than 60 years. (John)

### ***Alternative education***

Four out of five families have opted out of mainstream schooling. June and the Browns send their children to the Alto School in Christchurch, while the Courts and the Smiths use the home-schooling method to educate their children. The Alto School aims to provide its students with a balance between all aspects of life, cognitive knowledge, creative feeling and experiential learning.

Home-schooling means that parents teach their children at home. Hence, the parent becomes the teacher. Parents have a variety of reasons for teaching their children at home, such as preventing their children from being exposed to violence and peer pressure, to ensure their children grow up with their (the parents’) values (this includes religious values), for lifestyle reasons such as less time commuting to and from school, or because they enjoy being with their children (York, n.d.). In the case of the two home-schooling families in this study, all of those reasons were relevant. Lisa explained that there are several ways that one can home-school children. This is how she does it:

I plan a little bit. You have different types of home-schooling. You have unschooling and you have structured schooling. And structured schooling is with a bit more planning and usually the following of an amount of cultural, amount of textbook stuff. I do that, in the area of skills. To me there are two areas of education. One is skills and one is interest.

Skills is learning to read and learning to write, and numeration is where we are now. All the other things I am not too worried about....So sometimes I say now it is time to do the tables and we do the tables and she has to do it. I decide the pace. Of course I am led by her.

Nora applies an apprentice style of learning:

So it is not a 'sit down over here in this room and learn something', it is 'let's learn through living'. The ironic thing is if you look at how the time is used in the day, there are only a few blocks where we might actually sit and read a book together or, I think in my time-diary I wrote about a game, which was sort of a thinking game you know. Where it kind of looks like education, but we just educate them seven days a week, 365 days a year.

Because Nora and Lisa are home-schooling their children, it means that they are with their children most of the day, whereas Julia and June, for example, have more time for themselves when their children are at school.

### **7.3 Discussion: Similarities and differences between the data and the literature**

While most of the strategies and practices of the participants are supported by the literature on Slow Living, there are a few noteworthy differences. For example, participants in my study do not visit farmers' markets on a regular basis. This finding may seem surprising considering extensive discussions about 'buying local' in the literature on Slow Living and Slow Food (see, for example, Andrews, 2006; Parkins & Craig, 2006; Petrini, 2007). The lack of visits to farmers' markets on the part of my participants can be explained by the perceived costs of products sold at farmers' markets or because of logistics. Maya, for example, said that she finds it difficult to visit farmers' markets as she is often alone with two children in the weekend. For her and for Lisa, the local farmers' market is at least a half hour drive away. Lisa responded with the following when asked if she visits farmers' markets:

No, because they are expensive actually. They have very limited type of supply, they, you have to be there at nine o'clock on the dot to get the best choice. Because if you get there at 10.30, half of them are out of stock already. So it is an inefficient way. It means you have to drive there. Yeah, it is a nice idea, but no.

In addition, farmers' markets have only recently become popular in New Zealand; it is not yet a common way of buying produce.

Another surprising finding is that the participants in this study are not extensively involved with their local communities, which Andrews (2006) stressed as an important element of Slow Living. One explanation for the lack of local community involvement, referred to earlier, is because participants are trying to reduce extra-curricular activities in order to slow down their lives. A second explanation given by some of the participants is that members of

their local community have a different worldview to their own, and hence they find it unappealing to mingle with these people. Lisa pointed out that it only involves “polite chit chat conversation”, as opposed to meaningful conversation and relationships. So why have these incompatibilities not been pointed out before? Do they not apply to everyone trying to live a Slow Life? It is important to remember that my study is the first empirical study to focus on New Zealand families living a Slow Life.

There were a number of other surprising differences between the Slow Living strategies and practices from my study and the Slow Living practices described by Andrews (2006). Slow Living practices that Andrews included in her list were: participating in peace and justice activities; eating organic food; eliminating meat from diet; exploring new spirituality; and changing to hybrid or bio-diesel cars. My participants seem to have limited involvement in activities based around the wellbeing of society, such as peace and justice activities. A possible reason for this includes participants accepting that social change takes time (this is discussed further in Chapter Eight). While most participants value organics, most of these participants believe it is an expensive commitment, and hence purchase mostly non-organic food. None of the participants is vegetarian. Not all families are involved in exploring alternative health options or new spirituality and none of the families have hybrid or bio-diesel cars. Some of these differences can be explained by the issue of money. The reality is that these families have restricted incomes, and hence need to make compromises. Also, Andrews’ (2006) work is U.S. based while my study focuses on a specific New Zealand population. Hence, the fact that none of my participants has a bio-diesel car, for example, can be explained by the very limited availability and high prices of such cars in New Zealand.

Some of the practices and strategies of my participants can be viewed as somewhat anomalous. For example, it seems ironic that some of these Slow Livers feel the need to plan their time in order to relax and so be efficient with their use of time. This sense of ‘scientific management’,<sup>30</sup> present in the lives of some of my participants, contradicts the argument of Parkins and Craig (2006), who argue that Slow Living aims to move away from the paradigm of time-management, productivity and efficiency. Perhaps my participants’ behaviour, concerning time efficiency and planning, can be explained by the fact that they have children. If they did not plan time to relax they might never get any time for themselves. Therefore, it

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<sup>30</sup> Scientific management refers to “the systematic attempt to analyse work in order to identify the most efficient way to accomplish a given task” (Johnson, 1995, p. 246).

could be argued that, by pursuing efficiencies, these participants gain a greater sense of personal agency, which is one of their key values.

The claim made by Parkins and Craig (2006) that ‘Slow Living is not about any specific practices’, is more supportive of my findings. Parkins and Craig (2006) argue that it is the way everyday practices are carried out that determines a Slow Life. Therefore, they see ‘mindfulness’ as a key concept: “To live slowly in this sense, then, means engaging in ‘mindful’ rather than ‘mindless’ practices which make us consider the pleasure or at least the purpose of each task to which we give our time” (Parkins & Craig, 2006, p. 3). Each of the practices discussed in this chapter are undertaken with attention. Many of the day-to-day tasks are enjoyable to the participants and they feel good about the choices they make. Hence, they are not just undertaking these practices because they have to, but because they choose to, and they seek a feeling of satisfaction associated with behaving in ways which reflect and are consistent with their values.

My findings indicate that work and leisure are often integrated. Bowers’ (2007) research indicated that in the case of all the social groups he studied, “the desire to reclaim a connectedness between one’s work and life set them apart from others operating from within mainstream employment society”. For several of my participants, this desire has already been manifested. Lisa and Nora, for example, view home-schooling as their life and passion, which encompasses both work and leisure. Similarly, Charlie views his job as a busker as his leisure.

As mentioned before, there are similarities and differences – regarding strategies and practices – between my findings and the literature about Slow Living. In addition, as illustrated predominantly in this chapter, there are a number of differences in lifestyle between the five Slow Living families who participated in this study.

#### **7.4 Varying Slow Lifestyles**

The variations in Slow Lifestyles between families are due to a number of factors. One is the difference in living environments. The Browns and the Smiths live in a rural area while the other three families live in an urban area. The Browns have to travel a long distance to get their children to and from school, which has economic and time implications. Living rurally means that the Smiths are able to milk their cow to produce their own organic milk. This means they need to invest time for milking but they save money and have possible health

benefits. In contrast, the Courts purchase milk powder to make their own milk each night and the Snooks purchase regular milk at the supermarket.

The numbers and ages of children also affect the Slow Lifestyles. Having young children means there is more to do around the home. However, once the children are a little older, they are often at school and in other ways more independent. In this situation, parents have more time for themselves.

Marital status and levels of income can also have an impact on Slow Lifestyles. For example, the Rudd family consists of a single parent, and hence it is important for June to work more hours because she does not have the extra support which creates the flexibility enjoyed by the Smiths, for example. The Smiths can have one partner stay at home for the day with the children while the other leaves the home. Different incomes also affect the way participants live and make decisions. In the Snook household, both partners work part-time, and they also have good incomes. They have been able to afford a house in a reasonably affluent area of Christchurch. The Browns have also been fortunate because they had the opportunity to buy a property, with land, for a reasonable price early in their lives. In addition, they inherited some money. The Browns are a young family, (31 and 34 years of age with two children) and are mortgage free. Conversely, June Rudd is a single mother who lives in a small flat in a low to medium socio-economic area.

Lifestyle is also influenced by personal values, interests and skills, which are unique to each family. For example, Maya really enjoys baking, so does not purchase many biscuits and cakes. In contrast, the Courts feel it is more efficient to buy baked goods at the bakery as opposed to spending an hour in the kitchen. Another difference in values which affects their everyday practices, relates to organics. The Rudds, Browns and Smiths value organic food, whereas the Courts and Snooks are more neutral on the issue of organics. Television is also a point of difference; all families but the Courts seem to watch very little, if any, regular television, especially in the case of the children. Most of these parents carefully screen the content of DVDs that they let their children watch. In contrast, the Courts allow the children to watch regular cartoons on television. This could be a result of their different interests; comic books are a personal interest of Ben's and this is closely related to cartoons.

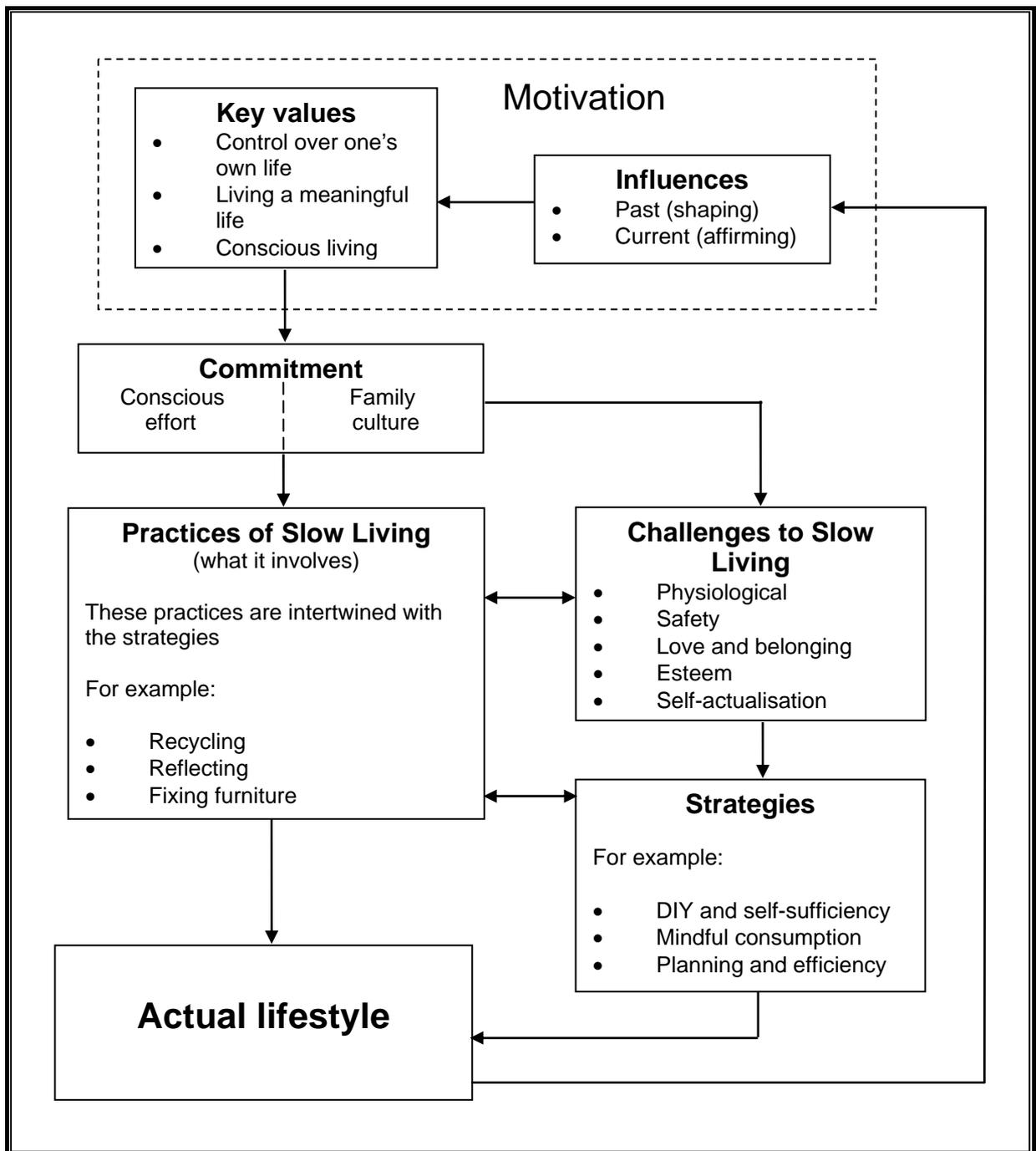
While some literature (see, for example, Parkins & Craig, 2006) has tried to highlight the differences between a number of alternative lifestyles, such as Simple Living and Slow

Living, in practice, it is not as easy to distinguish these lifestyles as the literature implies. This is especially the case for two of the participating families. In many ways, June and her daughter are very frugal which seems to fit the description of Voluntary Simplicity. As mentioned in Chapter Four, June even described Slow Living as being “kind of like Voluntary Simplicity”. She is concerned more with the economic aspects of life than with ‘time’. Parkins and Craig (2006) distinguish Slow Living from Voluntary Simplicity by this dimension. The Courts’ way of living is also different in many ways to the other families. Overall, the Courts watch much more television, they do not appear to be concerned with reducing environmental impact as much as the other families, and time efficiency is very important to them. Some might argue that their lifestyle is best explained by Downshifting as their lives seem to be driven less by distinct values and more by concerns over time management. I argue, however, that the term ‘Slow Living’ embodies a number of different lifestyles under its banner. All the participating families live their Slow Lifestyle slightly differently, yet each family identifies with Slow Living and there are many similarities between the five families. As I noted in the literature review, each of these lifestyles (Slow Living, Simple Living, and Downshifting) address issues of quality of life and, although the emphasis is slightly different, they all promote personal agency, meaningful living and conscious living.

So far, I have discussed the practices and strategies of Slow Living and I have explored the differences in lifestyles. In the concluding section of this chapter I will illustrate the interconnectedness of my key findings.

## **7.5 Integration of the findings**

The principle research question of this study was how do five Canterbury families live their interpretations of a Slow Life? In Chapter One, I introduced a model (Figure 1) which evolved from my data. In each chapter I highlighted a specific component of this model and developed the component further. At this point, as seen in Figure 8, I put the ‘flesh on the bones’, revealing the endpoint of the model and illustrating the way the findings of different data sections are linked systematically.



**Figure 8: The integration of results: The lifestyle process of Slow Living**

In summary, the model illustrates how personal values are a key motivating factor to living the Slow Life. However, these values are shaped and affirmed by a number of influences, from both the past and present. A commitment is made to try and manifest those values. Some people make a conscious effort, while others find it easier as it is part of their family culture. There are a number of challenges that make the commitment more difficult, such as pressure from others and the busy nature of family life. The strategies and practices are very much

intertwined, as each strategy can be viewed as a means to an end as well as an end in itself. Subsequently, the actual lifestyle develops as a compromise, as close as possible as the families can get to what they consider to be Slow Living and a good quality of life.

While many New Zealanders practice recycling, for example, the approach to these practices by Slow Living individuals, as I pointed out earlier, is more systematic, sustained and guided by a distinct value system; many of their decisions are based around a strong moral commitment. In addition, it is their total way of living that distinguishes these individuals. Hence it is important to look at their overall lifestyle and how it is all connected.

In this chapter I have described and discussed the key practices and strategies of Slow Living, demonstrated that there are a variety of Slow Lifestyles and illustrated the integration of the findings. The following chapter, Chapter Eight, summarises the research and draws a number of significant conclusions.

## **CHAPTER 8: CONCLUSION**

### **8.1 Introduction**

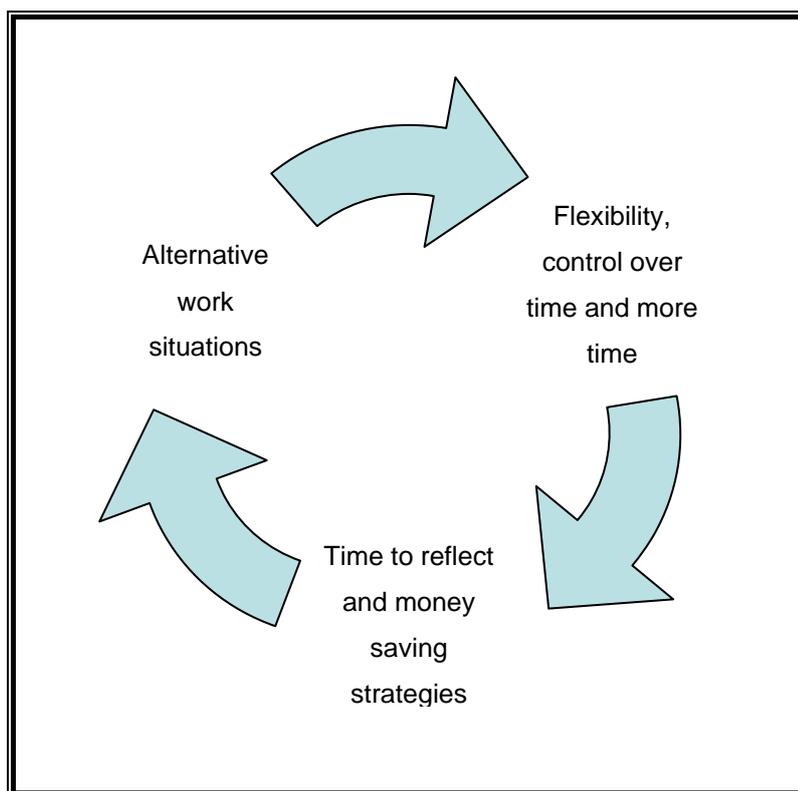
This thesis explored how five Canterbury families live their interpretations of the Slow Life. The purpose of this final chapter is to reiterate the key findings, evaluate the research methods and make suggestions for future research.

### **8.2 Summary of findings**

Overall, my findings suggest that personal values are what drives or motivates people to engage in a Slow Life. These values are influenced by a number of past and current factors. The past influencing factors, which shape their values, include dissatisfactions with quality of life, exposure to different lifestyles and influences of friends and family. The current influencing factors affirm the values and seem to include the present pace of life in contemporary Western society, spiritual beliefs and people's current lifestyle. Based on the data from my fieldwork, three key values were identified: living a meaningful life; control over one's own life; and conscious living. These values are the elements of their quality of life and represent an ideal life; the challenge is to align the actions with these values.

In the journey to their ideal way of living, a number of challenges need to be overcome. Using Maslow's (1987) model of the Hierarchy of Needs as a framework of analysis, these challenges can be categorized by these needs: physiological, safety, love and belonging, esteem, and self-actualisation. The findings of my study suggest that the challenges with which participants are mostly preoccupied relate to self-actualisation. An explanation for this is that these families have their basic needs (physiological, safety, and love and belonging) largely met. All families own their own homes and they have plenty of nourishment to satisfy their physiological needs. In addition, they all belong to loving families. Maslow (1987) has argued that the esteem needs usually must be met before self-actualisation needs can be pursued. However, my findings suggest that the participants were little concerned with gaining esteem from others. What seems more important to them is the need for self-actualisation. This is where a number of challenges appear. These families still live within a fast society where they are exposed to the pressure of the media, other people and various policies. One of the realities is that family life is busy for all people, and hence, the aim to live a Slow Lifestyle can be challenging for those who want to enjoy family life while following a Slow Lifestyle.

My results indicate that each family develops a set of strategies – some consciously, some evolving through practice – to overcome their specific challenges which face them, and to enact their values. These strategies are closely connected to the daily practices, as they are often a means to other ends as well as ends in themselves. The way in which these families live a Slow Life can be viewed as a cyclic process, as seen in Figure 9. The results suggest that by careful planning and efficient practice, these Slow Living families can save money, time and energy and have a reduced environmental impact. By saving money these families can make do with less income and hence work less. This means they have more time for the things that are important to them and which contribute to their self-actualisation, for example, spending time with their families. They also gain a greater control over time and a greater amount of flexibility in this way, which leads them to having time to reflect and engage in money saving strategies.



**Figure 9: How Slow Living families manage their lives**

Ultimately, one of the realities of living a Slow Lifestyle is that compromises have to be made. The results of my study suggest that the actual lifestyles of these families involve a satisfactory level of personal agency and flexibility to live the lives they want. However, while they might feel that they have more control over the way they use their time and their

pace of life, they do not necessarily have more time, as family life is often busy. Furthermore, although Slow Livers can reduce aspirations and escape materialism, certain basic physiological and security needs cannot just be ‘scaled back’, especially when there are children’s needs to consider.

To reiterate, the results of my study suggest that there are a number of ways to live a Slow Life. My study supports the claim by Parkins and Craig (2006) who suggest that there is no set checklist of practices. However, the Rudds and the Courts stood out as particularly different to the other three families. The Courts’ lifestyle is more in line with the Downshifting lifestyle, as their motives are driven less by moral concerns and more with concerns of reducing stress and gaining more free-time. The Rudds’ lifestyle, on the other hand, is more consistent with Voluntary Simplicity, as frugality is an important element in their lives. It could be argued that the term ‘Slow Living’ embodies a number of different lifestyles under its banner, including Simple Living and Downshifting. They all have a common concern, which is achieving greater quality of life through gaining greater control over the elements of one’s life.

Much of the existing literature about Slow Living has focussed on the Slow Life in relation to social movements and social change. Although my study did not use such a paradigm, it is important to discuss how my findings fit into this framework in order consider the wider context.

### **8.3 Social movements and social change**

The results of my study suggest that most of the Slow subjects in this study are not consciously involved in Slow Living as a social movement<sup>31</sup>, yet much of the literature (see, for example, Honoré, 2005; Parkins & Craig, 2006) focuses on Slow Living as a social movement. My participants do not seem to be consciously part of an intentional and organised effort by a group, aimed at changing the social order of life or particular social institutions (Kornblum & Smith, 2002).

Nonetheless, I do believe that the participants are contributing to social change by resisting a way of life that they see as unattractive, unsustainable and unhealthy, even if they are not fully aware of, and aiming for, wider social change. As Parkins and Craig (2006) explain,

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<sup>31</sup> The exceptions perhaps are Eric and Julia Snook, who are members of the Canterbury Slow Food group.

slowness is potentially used “as a means of critiquing or challenging dominant narratives or values that characterise contemporary modernity for so many” (preface). By rejecting aspects of this conventional way of living, the Slow subjects of this study are sending the message: ‘there is an alternative way to live’. For example, by using alternative education systems such as home-schooling and the Alto School, these families are resisting an element of conventional culture and showing to others that there is an alternative way of living. They are setting an example, and creating national dialogue which, Andrews (2006) argues, brings about social change.

Andrews (2006) maintains that Slow Living uses a subversive approach to create social change. Being subversive, in her view, involves questioning conventional society and developing one’s own ideas. Slow living is subversive as it provides individuals with the time to reflect and notice the (arguably) negative things in society. The participants in my study are not necessarily saying that their way of living is better than others, but they are saying that there is another way; a way that puts great emphasis on wellbeing, sustainability, meaning and enjoyment.

Maslow’s (1987) theory of enculturation, which he views as an important facilitator of self-actualisation, also highlights social change. Maslow (1987) views the relationship between individuals who resist enculturation and others in conventional society as complex; a set of healthy people living in a less healthy culture. This does not mean that these individuals are rebels, wanting to make desperate changes in society. Although they see problems in the society in which they live, they are patient with it; they are not occupied with changing it speedily. In actual fact, most of my participants showed little interest in doing things to change the society in which they live. Maslow (1987) commented that individuals who resist enculturation have often accepted the fate that social change takes time, and that desperate fighting for change is ineffective. Instead they have a “calm, long-term concern with cultural improvement” (Maslow, 1987, p. 144). They may care, but they calmly put in a “good-humoured everyday effort to improve the culture, usually from within, rather than to reject it wholly and fight it from without” (Maslow, 1987, p. 144).

If ‘intentionality’ is a prerequisite of any definition of ‘social movements’ then my families are not part of a social movement. If, however, the key element of any definition of ‘social movements’ is the collective consequences of individual changes of behaviour, then certainly

my families would be consistent. (Even then, however, reasons why levels of intentionality differ become an interesting research question.)

#### **8.4 Limitations of the research**

There are two key research limitations that need to be considered. The first limitation relates to the methods used to select participants. Because there was no clear definition of what a Slow Lifestyle encompassed, selecting a sample was difficult. I employed a list of characteristics, derived from the literature (see Appendix B), to guide me in selecting participants best suited to the study. While participants did not necessarily display all these characteristics when explaining what Slow Living meant to them or when describing their lifestyle, a working rule I used was that participants should satisfy at least 80% of the characteristics. There is one noteworthy implication concerning the recruitment method. Beside other locations, notices advertising for participants for this study were distributed at the Alto School and among the home-schooling network in Canterbury. It is questionable whether Slow Living families, overall, use alternative forms of education. A larger and more random sample would need to be chosen to 'test' this.

The second key research limitation concerned the timing of the research. The main period during which the first stage (time-use diaries) of the data collection took place was in the children's summer school holidays. Before handing out the time-use diaries, I asked the adult participants if their days during the holidays would be much different from other days. Most participants indicated that there would not be much difference. Hence, I distributed the diaries and many were filled in over the summer school holiday period in January and February. However, it became clear that for three of the participants, the 'diary' days were used very differently from other days in the year. This finding required me to go into more detail in the interviews about how their days were different. (In the case of the other diarists, the timing of the diaries was not such a problem as they home-schooled their children and therefore there was no difference between a school day and a vacation day.)

Finally, I need to make explicit that the data of my study is based on the lives of five self-selected families living in Canterbury. Therefore, I am not making any generalisations about what Slow Living is like all across the world, or even within New Zealand, but I hope to provide a base for future qualitative and quantitative research, and I hope the model I developed on the basis of my research has further potential.

## 8.5 Future research

A number of topics for future research have evolved from this study. Future research could focus on the following:

- Quantify the results of my study. It could be beneficial to develop my qualitative research findings into focus groups or a quantitative questionnaire applied to a greater number of families, with random sampling or purposive sampling to draw out firstly, rural and urban differences, and secondly, differences between families with and without young children at home.
- Further investigate the connection between Slow Living and community involvement and why it seems that Slow Living involves more connection with communities based on common interests than local communities.
- Further investigate whether spirituality/religion is a motivating factor for Slow Living.
- Examine identity as a motivating factor for Slow Living.
- Further investigate the question: ‘If people are *busy* doing meaningful things, is that still considered Slow Living?’
- Explore the changes that may be required in the infrastructure of society to reduce the barriers to Slow Living as a lifestyle.
- Investigate whether families who do not have their basic needs met, for example, beneficiaries or families with small children who are paying rent or paying off a mortgage, are able to live a Slow Life.
- Address the question of the extent to which individuals have deliberately chosen to live a Slow Life or whether it is a ‘default’ position they have adopted in response to life events and challenges.
- Investigate the extent to which the model I developed (see Figure 8) can be a useful research guide for other lifestyle studies.

## 8.6 Concluding statement

The main research objective of my study was to explore how five Canterbury families live their interpretations of a Slow Life. This research objective evolved because of a lack of empirical studies of the everyday lives of Slow Living families in a New Zealand context. To address this objective, I employed an ethnographic research approach and used qualitative data collection techniques. Time-use diaries, intensive interviews and participant observation were used to collect the data.

As life in contemporary Western society is becoming faster paced, more people are likely to search for alternative and more sustainable lifestyles. My research has contributed to the existing knowledge about Slow Living through exploring the everyday lives of five families who are engaged in a Slow Lifestyle. It seems that my study is the first New Zealand empirical study to look at how families manage their Slow Lives and to discuss the implications of such a lifestyle. I hope my study can inform future discussion and research on the reality of Slow Living.

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## APPENDIX A: RECRUITMENT NOTICE

# Get involved in research about **Slow Living**



I am looking for families / households who are attempting to live a 'Slow' life and who would be interested in assisting me with my research.

**Has your household / family opted out of the fast lane of today's consumer society?**

This research is part of my Masters thesis at Lincoln University, focussing on the practices and realities of living a 'slow' life in Canterbury. The research would involve household / family members aged 18 or over completing a time-use diary over 48 hours, taking part in one interview, and allowing me to spend a few hours with you to observe your everyday life.

This is a great chance for you to share your experience and be part of what I hope will be an interesting research project.

For more information please contact: Jettie Zeestraten  
ESD Division  
PO Box 84, Lincoln University  
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Email: [zeestrj2@lincoln.ac.nz](mailto:zeestrj2@lincoln.ac.nz)  
Ph. (03) 3257188 or 021 1444411

This research has been reviewed and approved by the Lincoln University Human Ethics Committee

## APPENDIX B: RECRUITMENT SCRIPT

### Recruitment script

When a potential participant calls the researcher in response to an advert

Thank you very much for contacting me. Let me tell you a little bit about myself to begin with. My name is Jettie Zeestraten; I am a researcher in the Environment, Society and Design Division at Lincoln University, undertaking a research project as part of my Masters thesis. The research is called “Ethnographic study of Slow Living in New Zealand”. I am interested in exploring the practice of living a ‘Slow’ Life in Canterbury through examining a number of examples of Slow Living lifestyles in Canterbury, New Zealand.

Because I am only looking at a small number of households / families, there has to be some limit on the number and types of people I talk to. Therefore, I would like to ask you a few preliminary questions including some demographics to see if you ‘fit’ my study. So the answers you give me are not used for my thesis, just to see if you meet my study needs.

Did you have any questions to start with?

[IF THEY ASK ME TO CLARIFY WHAT I MEAN BY ‘SLOW LIVING’, I WILL RESPOND WITH THE FOLLOWING STATEMENT]

There is no set definition. That is what I want to ask you about.

1. Is your household / family NZ citizen or permanent resident + Have you lived in NZ for at least 5 years + proficient in English?
2. What does ‘Slow Living’ mean to you and your household / family?

Preferable criteria (tick as they mention them or probe in non-leading way on these topics if needed)

- Family/household usually has enough time to do the things they want (as opposed to need) to do
- Meaningful use of time
- Family / household regularly take time to pause/rest/reflect
- Meaningful work / leisure life – not just to fill in time & pay the bills
- Resists aspects of corporate globalisation
- Promotes local tradition and culture
- Sustainable living

Other details

3. Are you and you family / household attempting to live a Slow Lifestyle and how long would you say you have been living a Slow Lifestyle?
4. Please tell me about your living situation? (i.e. do you live alone, are you married, do you have children etc)
- 4a [IF THEY HAVE CHILDREN] Do your children live at home?
5. How many members fit into the age category of:
  - 0-17
  - 18-35
  - 36-52
  - 53-69
  - 70+
6. Do you live in Canterbury and where? (Urban or Rural)
7. If your family / household situation matched my study needs, would you be agreeable to fill out a time-use diary over 2 days (for members 18 and over), for me to interview members 18 and over and for me to spend some time, perhaps half a day, in your home as you go about your normal day-to-day activity?
8. I am planning to conduct the interviews and getting you to fill out the time-use diary in early February, are you and your family / household around at that time?

[IF NO] Thank you for your time. Would you like me to send you a copy of the summary with the major findings once I have completed my research? [IF YES] take down name and address. Good-bye.

[IF YES], OK, if you and your household are potentially still interested in participating in this research, I can send you an information letter, outlining some more details, and what is involved in the research.

I will then see if your family / household best suit my study needs in comparison to other families/ households and I will then contact you in December to let you know this. If you then suit my study needs and you are still potentially interested, we can arrange a time to meet to discuss any further questions and sign consent forms.

You do not have to decide whether you want to participate or not until you sign the consent forms, and even then you can withdrawal your participation until a certain point.

Are you and your household possibly still interested in participating?

[IF NO] Thank you for your time. Good-bye

[IF YES] Great I will get that letter in the mail for you. Can I please take your postal address and phone number?

Thank you for your time.

## APPENDIX C: INFORMATION LETTER

Date .....

Dear .....

Thank you for your interest in my research about Slow Living. I am looking for households / families to assist me in my research as part of my Master's thesis at Lincoln University. The aim of the study is to explore the practices of living a 'Slow' Life in New Zealand, through examining examples of Slow Living lifestyles in Canterbury, New Zealand. I am interested in gaining an in-depth understanding of your household / family's lifestyle; how you go about everyday life, the barriers to living a Slow Life, the rewards, how you use your time, and your work-life balance.

If you fit this profile and you are keen to participate, I will arrange a time to visit you to give you more details about the study, and for you to ask any further questions. If your household / family agree to participate, I will ask you to fill out a consent form, which is a requirement for gaining ethical approval from Lincoln University.

Your participation in this project will involve you and members over the age of 18 of your family / household completing a time-use diary, one interview per person, and allowing me to spend a morning or afternoon with you to observe your day-to-day life. The time-use diary will involve all household members aged 18 and over, to note down in depth what activities they do through the day for 48 hours, (from Wednesday 4am to Thursday 4am and Saturday 4am to Sunday 4am). This does not mean you have to wake up at 4 in the morning, but instead I ask if you could spend some time after each main activity to reflect on that part of the day. Interviews would take approximately 50 to 90 minutes (depending on how detailed your answers are) and I would like to tape record them if you approve. In addition, I would like to spend a morning or afternoon in your household to observe your day-to-day activities including for example, preparing meals, doing the groceries, and attending community, school and social events.

I would really appreciate your support in this study. Of course, participation in this study is completely voluntary, and you have the right to withdraw without explanation at any time up to when all interviews have been completed and final analysis has begun (in March 2008). If you wish to withdraw your participation, please contact me at the address given below and any information you have provided will be destroyed.

The results of the project may be published, but you may be assured of the complete confidentiality of data gathered in this investigation: the identity of participants will not be made public without their consents. To ensure anonymity and confidentiality, the researcher will use pseudonyms, not real names, if any individual responses are quoted in published material. It will be impossible to trace down any response to a particular participant. Individual identifying information will not be used in any way. All collected data will be securely stored in locked premises, only accessible to the researcher.

If you do agree to participate and if you fit the profile, your support would really be appreciated and I would be happy to make a summary of the results available to you as a 'thank you' for your assistance.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact:

**Researcher**

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The project has been reviewed and approved by Lincoln University Human Ethics Committee.

## APPENDIX D: CONSENT FORMS

### Consent Form

*Name of Project:* Ethnographic study of Slow Living in Canterbury, New Zealand

I have read and understood the description of the above-named project. On this basis I agree to participate as a subject in the project, and I consent to publication of the results of the project with the understanding that anonymity will be preserved. I understand also that I may withdraw from the project, including withdrawal of any information I have provided, up until when all interviews have been completed and final analysis has began (this will be about March 2008). I also agree to have the interview tape recorded.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Child Consent Form

*Name of Project:* Ethnographic study of Slow Living in Canterbury, New Zealand

I have read and understood the description of the above-named project. On this basis I agree for my child / children to participate as a subject in the project, with the understanding that my child / children will not be interviewed and will not be the focus of the observation of our daily activity made by the researcher. I consent to publication of the results of the project with the understanding that anonymity will be preserved. I understand also that I may withdraw my child / children from the project, including withdrawal of any information he / she has provided up until when all observations have been completed and final analysis has began (this will be about March 2008).

Name of parent: \_\_\_\_\_

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of child: \_\_\_\_\_

# APPENDIX E: SAMPLE DIARY PAGE

Please write about your reflections of the day and any additional comments.

- Think about (but do not limit yourself to):
- How you felt during certain activities
  - Why you did certain activities
  - How you did certain activities
  - Whether or not these activities were in line with your values

I made porridge for breakfast today, and I added kiwi fruit & apple because they had to be eaten (so they wouldn't go off). It makes me feel good eating a healthy, simple breakfast in the morning, and that will give me enough energy until late morning. I usually bake my own bread on Wednesdays. I love baking my own because I know exactly what goes in it (no preservatives). It feels great kneading the dough with my hands and it is a great sense of achievement pulling a fresh loaf of bread out of the oven.

I always give myself plenty of time at morning tea, just to relax and I have reached so I often read a good novel or a book on organic gardening.

Gardening gives me plenty of time to reflect on ideas, issues and life in general. To me, reflection is an important part of life, and of slow living.

Please continue over the page if necessary

Wednesday 8 am - 11:59 am

Time	What were you doing? Main activity	Did you do something else at the same time and what?	Where were you? Or if you were travelling, how did you travel?	Who was with you?
8.00	Make breakfast		Kitchen	
.10	Eat breakfast	Read Newspaper		Husband
.20			home	
.30	brush teeth, to toilet			
.40	get dressed		Kitchen	
.50	do dishes			
9.00	bake bread	listen to music		
.10	+ biscuits			
.20				
.30				
.40				
.50				
10.00	Make cup of tea			
.10	have morning tea		Veranda	
.20	- herbal tea	Read		
.30	- fresh biscuit	Novel		
.40			Garden	
.50	Gardening			
11.00				
.10				
.20				
.30				
.40	Grocery shopping	Chat to Walk		
.50		a friend Piko's friend		