

The homing of the home:
Exploring gendered work, leisure, social construction, and loss through
women's family memory keeping

by
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Author's declaration

I hereby declare that I am the sole author of this thesis. This is a true copy of the thesis, including any required final revisions, as accepted by my examiners.

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Abstract

Using a feminist, autoethnographic methodology and in depth interviews with twenty-three participants, I sought to better understand the meaning of family memory keeping for women and their families through this research, paying particular attention to the ways that dominant gender ideologies shape family memory and the act of preserving family memory. This research also endeavoured to explore those instances wherein families lose that memory keeper due to memory loss, absence, or death. Interviews revealed that, despite its absence from the literature, women's family memory keeping is a valuable form of gendered labour – and leisure – that makes significant individual, familial, and social contributions, while simultaneously reproducing dominant gender ideologies and gendered constructions of fatherhood, motherhood, and the family. Through an exploration of the loss of a mother's memory due to illness, death, or absence, this study also demonstrated the loss of a mother's memory is both deeply felt, and deeply gendered. However, this study illustrated participants challenging these dominant gender ideologies, as well, and using family memory keeping as a way to resist, critique, and cope. As such, this study speaks to the absence of women's family memory keeping from the gendered work, leisure studies, social construction, and loss literature, contributing a better understanding of both the activity itself and the gendered ideologies that shape the activity, as well. Not only does this study speak to gaps in existing literature, but findings make fresh theoretical contributions to this literature through three new concepts: the notion of the good mother as the “remembering mother”, the concept of “compliance leisure”, and the re-envisioning of women's unpaid labour as contributing to “the homing of the home”. And with these contributions to the literature, this research also provides valuable insight for

professionals working to improve policy and services surrounding postpartum care, individual and family therapy, caregiving, extended care, and palliative care.

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Dedication

For Andy

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1.0 Introduction: An excavation

My mother has several bags stowed in various closets around our house. Before she got sick, she would take these bags out every now and then to look through them or to add to them. I have two sisters and when we are in our hometown at the same time, we often sit downstairs with a bottle of wine and take these bags out.

“Oh! Remember this?”

“Oh, look at that!”

“What is that?”

“You weren’t born yet.”

“Oh.”

“I can’t believe she kept this...”

In 2004 our mother was diagnosed with Huntington’s disease, a rare genetic neurological illness that slowly robs the individual of control over the body and the mind. We were unaware that this disease was lurking in our family history. Now it has become a part of the family tree, deeply rooted in the lives of our ancestors and branching out into future generations. Mum began developing symptoms of the disease at forty-seven and has slowly been losing her memory ever since. At fifty-eight she is now having great difficulty walking, swallowing and communicating. This is the likely trajectory that my siblings and I will follow, with the exception of my oldest sister who has tested negative for the HD gene.

“We should show her this.”

“She’d love that.”

“Do you think she’d remember?”

“Probably not. But this’ll jog her memory.”

My brother will sometimes rifle through the bags with us, though he usually goes back upstairs eventually, shaking his head.

“You girls’ll be down here all night!”

And it will be all night. My sisters and I, intoxicated by wine and recollection, will be downstairs all night, sifting through our mother’s memories. The memories she keeps for us.

“Look at this.”

“Oh god, please don’t look at that.”

“Look at this!”

“Give it to me.”

“Oh man!”

“Seriously, give it to me now.”

Memory is a tricky thing. Memory among family is even trickier. Like anything in families, from the trivial to the essential, memories can be something to bicker about. But often these bags of memories will unite my sisters and me as well. The bags were brought out to do research when prepping for each other’s wedding speeches. They were consulted during our father’s 60th birthday party. If they haven’t been ravaged by the passage of time, they’ll likely be turned to for eulogies and epitaphs. In these bags lies our mother’s collection of family memories, memories we revisit in order to remember who we are, who we were, to imagine who we’ll become. The notes, cards, drawings, crafts, pictures, school reports, and seemingly random household items were all saved by our mother while other childhood materials were lost. No one but our mother knows why, and perhaps even she would have forgotten their specific significances by now.

“Hey, smell this!”

“Why do you want me to smell that.”

“Just smell it.”

“Fine. Hey, yeah, you’re right!”

“What, what does it smell like? I can’t smell anything.”

“You don’t remember that?”

“Remember what?”

“Remember that smell?”

“You don’t remember it?”

“Here, try again. Get closer.”

It’s a good thing our mother laid out our memories for us in these bags. It’s kind of like she used to lay out an outfit for each of us every morning. Sometimes it’s helpful to have someone pick things out for you. Otherwise we’d face the world naked every morning.

“What is this?”

“What is what?”

“This. Who... what is this?”

“Yeah, what is that?”

“Let me see.”

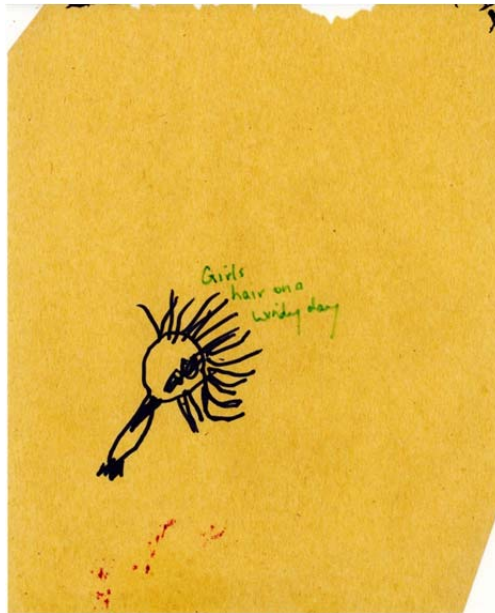
“Yeah, show us.”

“Huh. It’s kind of abstract, isn’t it? Interpretive?”

“Look how Mum labeled it.”

“You haven’t really grown much as an artist since then, have you?”

“I was ahead of my time.”



Memory 1: Girl's hair on a windy day (Clare, age 4)

“Check these out.”

“So *that's* what was weighing the whole bag down.”

“I swear they were cool at the time. Dad told me I looked like John Lennon.”

“John Lennon was a 40-year-old man who had been dead for 10 years.”

“What're you saying?”



Memory 2: Glasses (Caitlin, age 12-19)

“Hey! Something of Brendan’s that doesn’t involve sports!”

“By god. I didn’t know the man was literate.”

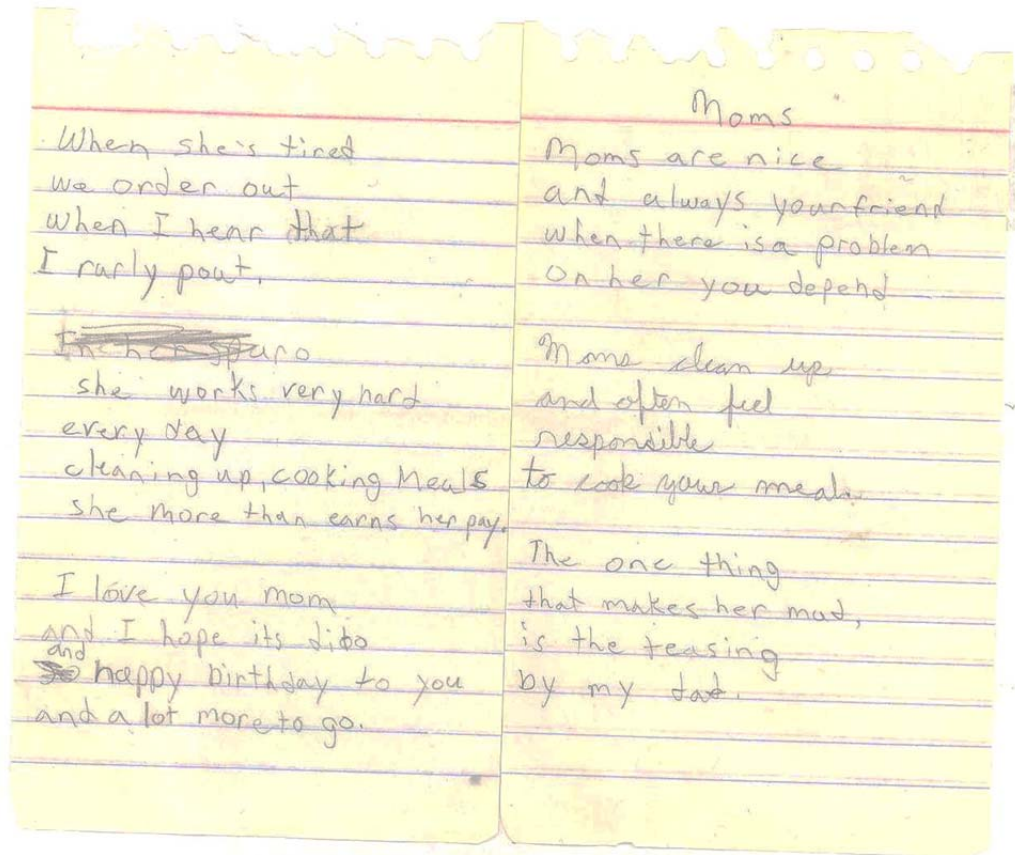
“Apparently at some point, he was.”

“This is downright beautiful.”

“How old do you think he was?”

“19? 20?”

“Just something he scribbled down between basketball practice and Biochem.”



Memory 3: Ode to Moms (Brendan, age 10)

“You know what I find amazing about all this?”

“What’s that?”

“How Mum saved the most touching, heart-warming, beautiful things from our childhood-”

“Yeah.”

“-and then she saved this.”

“Let’s see.”

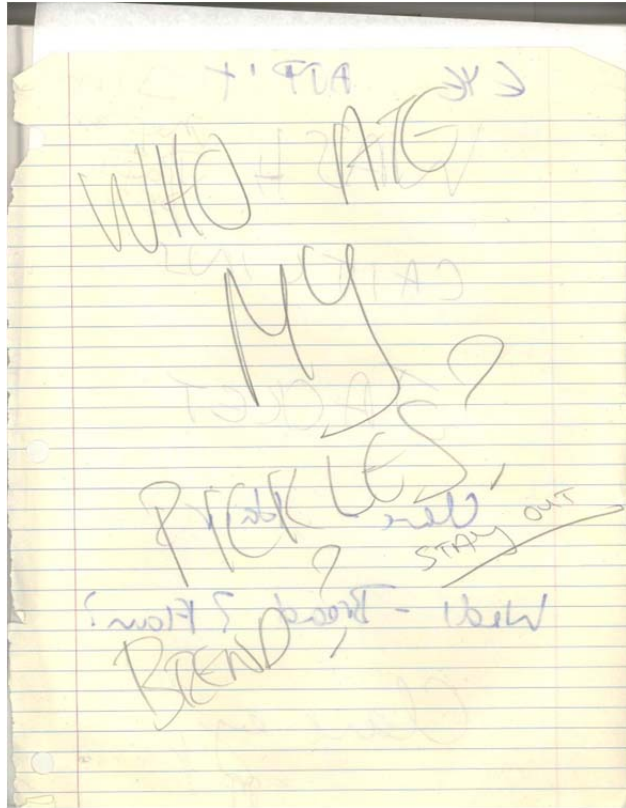
“Ah.”

“Ooh! A mystery!”

“And the culprit is still at large.”

“It was probably you.”

“Look at you. Still so quick to point a finger.”



Memory 4: Who ate my pickles? (Meghan, age 17)

“And look at this.”

“What a guy.”

“Every morning.”

“Hm?”

“Every morning there would be some sort of note like it.”

“Really?”

“If you hadn’t slept through class every morning you would have noticed these things.”

“He usually left notes for each of us.”

“Yeah, that’s right. Remember the morning we woke up and he had decorated the Christmas tree with my bras?”

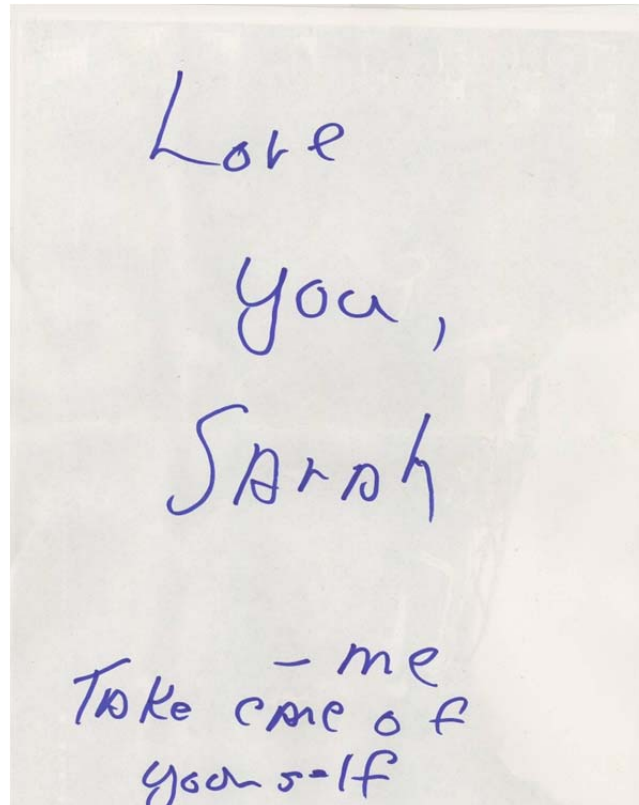
“Oh yeah. That was hilarious. Well for god’s sake, you left them all over the house.”

“I think that was his point.”

“He’s very good at saying a lot by saying very little, isn’t he?”

“And vice versa.”

“Ha. That’s the pot calling the kettle black.”



Memory 5: Morning messages (Dad, age unknown)

“Which one of us is that?”

“Turn it around. Is it labeled?”

“Nope.”

“No date?”

“Uh uh.”

“Let me see.”

“That’s Brendan.”

“No it’s not, Mum had shorter hair when Brendan was born. That’s me.”

“No she had long hair. That’s Brendan.”

“Let’s ask her.”

“She might not know.”

“It’s useless asking Dad.”

“We should email Auntie Helen.”

“Yeah, she’d know.”

“Hm. Well... Mum looks happy.”

“Yeah.”

“So I guess it must have been me.”

“Yes. You brought so much joy to this family.”

“When you were born we tried to sell you at our lemonade stand.”

“That’s not true.”

“Yes it is!”

“No it’s not. Brendan just always told you that.”

“No, I remember it for sure.”

“No you don’t.”

“Yes I do!”

“Well, regardless, we were unsuccessful. And here you are.”

“Look at how cute I was!”

“Oh for god’s sakes, that’s not even you!”



Memory 6: Mum and Meghan (1977)

“Can you pour me another glass?”

“Be careful. If we spill wine on this stuff, we’re dead.”

“Maybe we should put the wine away.”

“Or we could put the bags away, open another bottle of wine, and watch Top Chef.”

“I like option number two.”

“Yeah, that sounds more like us.”

“Ok. Pack it up.”

“Here, I’ll hold the bag.”

“Do you have one of these started for your kids?”

“One of what? A memory bag? No. Should I?”

“I don’t know. We’ve certainly benefited from Mum doing it.”

“Obviously, since we’re still looking through these things well into adulthood.”

“It’s funny how important this stuff is to us, and yet, we keep it all in garbage bags.”

“Ha. That’s true.”

“I have other stuff for the kids, you know. I have hair clippings somewhere and I used to keep some baby books. It’s hard, ok? I’m a busy and important person!”

“Don’t get so defensive. It’s not for everyone. Obviously Mum liked doing it, or she wouldn’t have spent so much time saving this stuff.”

“Did she like doing it? Do we know that?”

“Well, a lot of women like the whole scrap-booking thing. It’s relaxing, crafty, creative. You can show your friends. I don’t know.”

“It wouldn’t be relaxing for me. I’m breaking into a sweat just thinking about it.”

“So don’t do it then.”

“But then won’t my kids miss out on sitting around with their siblings and drinking wine like we’re doing?”

“James probably won’t want to do it anyway. He’s a boy.”

“It’s a lot of responsibility, you know.”

“Oh for goodness sakes. I’m sorry I brought it up. Just hold the bag.”

“I think that’s the last of it.”

“Is Top Chef downloaded?”

“Just have to press play.”

“Shall we begin?”

“I think we shall.”

1.1 **Overview**

This “excavation” scene, common in both my childhood and adulthood, inspired my dissertation research. My mother’s memory keeping – which I define as the collection,

preservation, and maintenance of family memories – included remembering anything from birthdays, anniversaries, and old family stories, to saving hospital bracelets, baby hair clippings, and school report cards. The deterioration of my mother’s memory to dementia associated with Huntington’s disease inspired me to explore both the significant value of women’s family memory keeping and the significant trauma created by the loss of this memory keeping. Using my own experiences with women’s family memory keeping and loss, I designed and executed a feminist, autoethnographic study that resulted in significant and theoretically valuable findings.

The overview of this dissertation research is as follows: Chapter 2 will explore the existing literature on family memory from psychological, sociological, and feminist research, exposing the gaps in this literature as well. This chapter will also introduce bodies of literature that provided possible conceptualizations of women’s family memory work, including oral history, gendered work, the ideology of familism, and feminist leisure studies; I will argue for the usefulness of these bodies of literature in framing women’s family memory keeping, yet once more draw attention to the ways in which this literature has neglected to theorize about the activity. This chapter will conclude with a purpose statement and the research questions that grounded this dissertation. Chapter 3 will outline my theoretical orientation and methodologies for the study, namely the theoretical underpinnings for my feminist, autoethnographic research design. Chapter 4 describes the methods involved in this project, including the recruitment process, a profile of the participants, data collection, an exploration of the interviews used (including the complications of conducting autoethnographic interviews), ethical issues encountered, data analysis procedures, and a discussion of how I reported the findings using both traditional, qualitative methods and an autoethnographic performance text. Chapter 5 reveals the findings of this study, which are presented in four sections (The Process, The Role, The

Meaning, and The Loss) and structured through theoretical groups and categories of meaning. These sections are followed by the findings from my interviews with my mother, father, brother, and sisters, presented through creative analytic practice as a performance text entitled “Shaking up the family tree: An autoethnographic performance text in three acts”. Chapter 6 critically explores these findings under four analytical themes: family memory keeping as gendered work, family memory keeping as gendered leisure, family memory keeping as gendered social construction, and family memory keeping as gendered loss. Each theme concludes with the major contributions this research makes to specific bodies of literature, and suggests ideas for future research in these individual areas. Finally, Chapter 7 concludes this dissertation by highlighting the principal themes and contributions of the study, and making note of both the limitations of this research and the overarching directions for future research this project might inspire. To begin, I now turn to the existing literature that provided the foundation for this project.

2.0 Literature review

“...each of us must possess a created version of the past...

*If we refuse to do the work of creating this personal version of the past,
someone else will do it for us.”*

- Patricia Hampl, “Memory and Imagination”

We are, as many scholars have attested, made of memories (cf Halbwachs, 1941; Hirsch, 1999; Miller, 1988). These memories help define not only our individual identities but our collective identities as well. Through memory we come to know who we are and where we belong, and what those two pieces of knowledge mean. As Kuhn (2002) describes, memory is thus a complex study:

As the veils of forgetfulness are drawn aside, layer upon layer of meaning and association peel away; revealing not ultimate truth, but greater knowledge. Memory work has about it the quality of pursuing the enigma in a mystery novel that turns on characters’ remembering things buried deep in their past and long forgotten: except that in a novel there is always an ending, and usually a resolution. Memory work, on the other hand, is potentially interminable: at every turn, as further questions are raised, there is always something else to look into. (p. 6)

Studying memory is difficult because it is complicated and intricate, yet the study of memory is worthwhile for these very reasons as well.

Family memory is a particularly complicated and intricate area of memory studies (cf Martin, 1991; Reese et al, 1996; Stone, 2006). The literature produced by these scholars will be explored in this review, and will be complicated once more by the investigation of the role that gender plays in family memory. Here I will explore existing frameworks for studying women’s family memory keeping, using theories from psychology, sociology, and feminist research, concepts like oral history and gendered work, and a leisure studies perspective. I begin with the ways that family memory has been theorized in social science literature.

2.1 Theories of family memory

There are three key areas of literature that contribute to our understanding of family memory in the social sciences. Much of this theorizing comes from psychological research. A smaller portion of family memory scholars are sociologists. Finally, there is a growing area of research on family memory within feminist research. The literature from these three areas – psychology, sociology, and feminist research – stresses the importance of family memory to an individual’s sense of self (cf Bohanek et al, 2008; Halbwachs, 1941; Hirsch, 1999). This research also demonstrates the apparently universal prevalence of family memory (Jedlowski, 2001). Given the value and magnitude of the practice of family memory, this literature begs the question, who is producing memory within families and for whose benefit?

2.1.1. *Family memory in psychology*

The psychological literature tends to theorize about notions of intersubjectivity in family memory. This literature involves looking for the meaning of personal identity and family relationships in the stories that families tell (cf Fivush & Haden, 1997; Labov, 1982; Treacher, 2000). As Bohanek et al (2006) describe, “The process by which families narrate their shared history together provides a framework for each individual family member to understand and integrate shared events into their own individual life stories” (p. 39). Psychologists are also concerned with family memories insofar as they reveal unresolved encounters in family relationships (cf Bassin, 1994; Bohanek et al, 2008; Crawford et al, 1992). These scholars theorize that the experiences we remember (and forget) are significant and relevant to our present-day identities and relationships with others (Haug, 1987). Family memories can be

traumatic (cf Crawford et al, 1992), ecstatic (cf Crawford et al, 1992), or mundane (cf Treacher, 2000), but psychologists consider all of these memories to be vital to our construction of ourselves in relation to those in our family.

Psychology theorists have also contributed to a better understanding of family memory and gender. For instance, research suggests that women recount longer, more detailed and more vivid accounts of the past than do men (deVries, Blando, & Walker, 1995; Thorne, 1995; Yarmey, 1993). Buckner and Fivush (1998) found this to be true for young girls as well; girls told far more elaborate family narratives than their male counterparts. Other researchers have found that girls' narratives also tend to be more emotionally complex (Stapley & Haviland, 1989). And when asked to recount their earliest memory, women have been shown to reach back further into the past than men (Cowan & Davidson, 1984; Mullen, 1994; Orlofsky & Frank, 1986). Women and men's recollections differ in purpose as well. Research has found that women tell family stories in an attempt to maintain relationships or to socialize with others. In contrast, men reported participating in remembering to relive a past accomplishment or re-evaluate their lives thus far (Adcock & Ross, 1983). Thematically, women's family narratives tend to revolve around other people and relationships, whereas men's family narratives focus on themes of independence, perseverance, and triumph (Merriam & Cross, 1982). Feminist psychologists theorize that these gender differences likely arise due to dominant gender ideologies such as the ethic of care, in which women and girls are expected to care for others and maintain relationships; men and boys, on the other hand, are encouraged to strive for distinction from others (Chodorow, 1978; Gilligan, 1992). Thus, psychologists have found that family memory is vital to personal and family identity, but that the process of creating and maintaining family memory differs between genders.

2.1.2 *Family memory in sociology*

The second body of literature that helps define the concept of family memory comes from sociological research. There is a long tradition of studying memory in sociology (cf Connerton, 1989; DeSoucey et al, 2008; Halbwachs, 1941). This research often places personal memory within a social or historical context, wherein the personal memory is seen as representative of the collective memory of that society (Jedlowski, 2001). For instance, there is a wealth of sociological literature that theorizes about personal and collective memory and the Holocaust (Bauman, 1988; Hartmann, 1993; Huyssen, 1993; Irwin-Zarecka, 1994; Linenthal, 2001; Olick & Levy, 1997). Such literature conceptualizes memory as central to both personal identity and collective identity. Yet in studying these large-scale, public examples of collective memory, sociologists have tended to overlook the importance of memories that might be more private and everyday. Scott and Scott (2001) suggest that analyses of private memories, including family memories, must be explored to contribute towards a better ‘sociology of the intimate’. They maintain that “Despite the huge popularity of tracing family trees, or the pictorial histories represented by a century of family albums, the role of narratives in families has attracted little sociological attention” (p. 129). Scott and Scott’s work is indeed unique in sociological literature; the two sisters critically examined their own family narratives to explore issues of motherhood, sisterhood, gender, nationality and class. Hence, despite the purported ‘boom’ in memory’s valuation in postmodern society (Huyssen, 1993), and despite the assertion by many sociologists that we are ‘made’ of memories (Radstone, 2000), explorations of memory in the context of the family remain rare in sociological literature.

However, the scant research on family and memory by sociologists has provided invaluable insight into the gendered processes of memory-keeping in families. For instance, Layne's (2004) material culture analysis of pregnancy, motherhood and loss contributes a strong gender analysis to notions of family memory. Layne draws attention to the artefacts of memory that represent a woman's identity as a mother, and explores the meaning of those artefacts to women who have suffered miscarriages, stillbirths, and the loss of an infant. This research provides a solid sociological framework for the study of gender and family memory by examining the gendered nature of memory collection and the meaning of memories to a mother's (and family's) identity. Holland's (1991) analysis of family photo albums similarly draws attention (albeit briefly) to women's role in family memory-keeping:

...it is largely they who have become the historians, the guardians of memory, selecting and preserving the family archive. The continuity of women's stories has always been harder to reconstruct, but here, the affirmation of the everyday can itself reassert the coherence of women's memories. (p. 9)

Holland stresses the importance of family memory to personal and collective identity, yet spends little time theorizing about the processes of maintaining those vital family memories. However, she does introduce the notion of women as family archivists, which provokes thought about the gendered nature of family memory preservation. Goodall (2005) terms this process 'narrative inheritance', in which the guardian of family memory passes down these narratives to the next generation. For Goodall, the focus of analysis was the secrets his father kept from him, which stood in stark contrast to the memories his mother passed on to him. Goodall complicates the study of gender and family memory by theorizing about the multiple and competing narratives within a family and the meaning that each of those narratives has for an individual's identity. This sociological literature gives a social and historical context to the theorizing done by psychologists. What each area of literature has in common, however, is the insistence that

family memory is crucial to the development of personal and family identity. And yet what both the psychological and sociological literature is missing is a thorough analysis of gender and family memory. For such an analysis, we turn to feminist research.

2.1.3 *Family memory in feminist research*

Many feminist researchers have offered insight into the gendered nature of remembering (cf Bold, Knowles & Leach, 2002; Rosenberg, 1998; Sontag, 1977). This analysis involves a critical exploration of memories in connection with multiple intersecting identities and social contexts. As Kuhn (2002) theorizes:

... memories are at the centre of a radiating web of associations, reflections, and interpretations. But if the memories are one individual's, their associations extend far beyond the personal. They spread into an extended network of meanings that bring together the personal with the familial, the cultural, the economic, the social, the historical. Memory work makes it possible to explore connections between 'public' historical events, structures of feeling, family dramas, relations of class, national identity and gender, and 'personal' memory. In these case histories outer and inner, social and personal, historical and psychical coalesce; and the web of interconnections that binds them together is made visible. (p. 5)

Many feminists have focused their research on family memory in particular, where they found that mothers and daughters bear the primary responsibility for transmitting family history (cf Heilbrun, 1988; Scott & Scott, 2001; Hochberg, 2003). Scholars have referred to this kind of memory as 'maternal memory' that can be passed down orally (cf Scott & Scott, 2001; Hochberg, 2003), or through private materials such as letters (cf Heilbrun, 1988), journals (cf Jokinen, 2005), the increasingly popular scrapbooks (cf Hof, 2006), or through collections of various other meaningful artefacts, like clothing and toys (Bassin, 1994). Recently, feminist scholars have taken a keen interest in domestic photography and family memory (cf Gallop & Blau, 1999; Hirsch, 1999; Kuhn, 2002). These scholars theorize that family photo albums are a

way of presenting a particular family identity, often a particularly idyllic family identity. This representation is carefully and meticulously crafted by mothers; for the image of the private family life captured in these photographs reflects upon their own role as mothers (Leonard, 1999; Rose, 2005). As Hirsch (1997) describes, “Every picture of a child is also, however indirectly, a picture of the mother... For as much as they might wish to remain unseen, when they snap the shutter they inevitably expose themselves and their own ambivalences about maternity” (p. 165 & 187). This feminist literature provides a framework for understanding the gendered processes behind family memory and the unique role that mothers play in that process.

Yet what this literature often neglects to discuss is what grounds this act; why do women in particular assume this “duty of preserving memories”? (Hof, 2006, p. 379) Several pieces of research stand as exceptions to this assertion. Leonard (1999) digs deeper in her analysis of family memory and gender, theorizing from the position of both a producer and a consumer of maternal family memory. She examines the scrapbooks and photographs she worked on during her daughter’s infancy, and she also revisits the scrapbooks and photographs her mother, and her grandmother, made for their children. These artefacts of family memory represent what Leonard describes as “the socially constructed images of the good life, good family and the good, or at least the good enough mother” (p. 294). Though she does not linger long on this analysis, Leonard has introduced a key concept to the study of family memory: the memory-keeping mother as the ‘good (or at least good enough) mother’. Like Leonard, Martin (1991) touches briefly on the connection between family memory and dominant ideologies of motherhood: “It seems that in most families mothers are the archivists and guardians of family history, selecting what shall be remembered, what forgotten; constructing a mythology which validates their own ‘good mothering’” (p. 210). Unlike the existing feminist literature on gender and family

memory, Leonard (1999) and Martin (1991) trouble the taken-for-granted role of mother as family archivist. They provoke questions about the relationship between mother and memory keeper, and the dominant gender ideologies embedded in that relationship. Further, these two scholars encourage us to investigate memory, family, and performing the role of the “good mother”. In the literature on family memory from psychology, sociology, and feminist research, these kinds of inquiries have yet to be fully theorized.

In sum, the aforementioned psychological literature suggests that family memory is experienced differently by different genders, and is crucial to personal and family identities. Sociological explorations maintain that family memory is shaped by a web of associations with race, class, gender, nationality and history, all of which relate to individual identity as well. Feminist memory scholars argue that remembering is a gendered process, and that women (and more specifically, mothers) play a unique role as the guardians of family memory. This literature has given my research a rich foundation for the study of gender, family, and memory.

However, what has yet to be explored in these bodies of literature is the meaning of memory keeper for women as family archivists. What function does the family memory keeper play in family life? How do dominant gender ideologies about women and motherhood shape this role? How do women grapple with the responsibility of this role? How does the role of family memory keeper play into women’s identities, past and present? When does this role commence in women’s lives? When does it end? How do women become socialized into this role? And finally, what happens when women cannot or do not fulfill their role as memory-keeper? The family memory literature neglects to explore the role of women as memory-keepers; hence, this literature also neglects to explore the consequences for women and their families when that role goes unfulfilled. What are the consequences for women and their

families when women do not, will not, or cannot be family memory-keeper? Many feminist scholars have studied the loss of a mother (cf Kuhn, 2002; Miller, 2000; Rich, 1976); however, the literature has neglected to explore the significance of the loss of a mother as memory keeper. Inspired by my own family experience with the slow loss of my mother's memory, I will address this gap in the literature through this dissertation research. First, I turn to possible conceptualizations of the gendered role of family memory-keeper.

2.2 Conceptualizations of women's family memory-keeping

Theories of family memory-keeping share conceptual themes with theories of oral history, gendered work, and the gendered dominant ideology of "familism". A deeper look at these theories provides the study of women's family memory-keeping with a stronger conceptual framework. Scholars who study oral history define the concept as the cultural transmission of stories about lived experiences through processes other than writing (Leydesdorff et al, 1996). Many oral historians note that this is often a gendered process (Chamberlain, 2000; Gluck & Patai, 1991; Stuart, 1994). Gendered work is defined by scholars as the recognition that men and women provide different kinds of labour in our society (Lorber, 1994). Feminist scholars have suggested women's labour is relegated to the private sphere and is often depended upon yet devalued, whereas men's labour in the public sphere is often depended upon yet valued and celebrated (cf Doucet, 2007b; Eichler, 1997; Luxton, 1980). Researchers define familism as a dominant ideology in our society that promotes particular family values: togetherness, stability, loyalty, and a focus on the family as a united whole (Riedmann et al., 2003). Feminists have argued, however, that there are different expectations placed on mothers for maintaining these family values than on fathers (Thompson & Walker, 1991). These theories of oral history,

gendered work, and familism provide conceptual frameworks for both valuing and remaining critical of the process of family memory-keeping for women.

2.2.1 *Oral history*

Scholars of oral history have long noted the gendered nature of remembering (cf Gittins, 1982; Hall, 1977; Roberts, 1977). Traditionally, Rowbotham (1973) asserted, women's voices have been hidden from history. Scholars argue that history has been written by men, and thus oral history has been women's way of subverting that tradition by sustaining their own histories through non-written methods (Leydesdorff et al, 1996). Researchers found that uncovering oral histories allowed them to give voice to those hidden memories kept by women (cf Chamberlain, 1975; Sangster, 1994). For, according to Leydesdorff et al (1996), "every account from a female voice is potentially dissonant to existing histories" (p. 12-13). This literature seeks to demonstrate the importance of women's "unique ways of knowing" and to acknowledge the contributions made by women to history and culture (cf Gluck & Patai, 1991; Stuart, 1994). Feminist argue that through oral history women can express and value the experiences of the private sphere, and at the same time, experience their own subjectivity (Heilbrun, 1988; Miller, 1988; Personal Narratives Group, 1989; Smith & Watson, 1998). However, other scholars have complicated the notion of women's oral history, exploring narratives passed down through women that contained themes of misogyny (Kingston, 1976), racism (Berman, 1999), and classism (Scott & Scott, 2001). And many scholars problematize this literature by pointing out the different experiences and valuations of women's oral history across cultures (cf Anim-Addo, 2002, Easton, 2000; Haley, 1998; Larranaga, 1995). Thus while many oral historians seek to

celebrate women's private narrative tradition, many are also cautious about heralding these narratives as uniquely female and inherently empowering.

The literature on oral history adds several key points of analysis to the study of women's family memory-keeping: the recognition *and* critique of women's "unique way of knowing", the public acknowledgment of women's histories and lived experiences in the private sphere, the gendered nature of transmitting cultural and social values, and the notion of intersubjectivity between women in families. The study of women's family memory keeping can benefit from these points of analysis; in many ways women can be conceptualized as the oral historians of families. However, women's memory-keeping is not always oral and in this sense, oral history does not perfectly conceptualize women's family memory-keeping. Also, the oral history literature could benefit from a critical analysis of the processes involved in transmitting family memory. This literature neglected to ask whether or not this role as oral historian is oppressive or restrictive for women. Instead, the literature was largely delighted with the gendered tradition insofar as it provided an alternate view of history from a woman's perspective (cf Sangster, 1994; Stuart, 1994). Hence, for a more critical conceptualization of the women's family memory-keeping, I turn now to the notion of gendered work.

2.2.2. *Gendered work*

Research has demonstrated that women and men contribute different kinds of labour in our society (cf Eichler, 1997; Hartmann, 1981; Hochschild, 1997; Luxton, 1980; Oakley, 1974). This research has suggested that despite increasing participation in the work-force, women still have the primary responsibility for work that takes place in the home (Eichler, 1997). In this sense, gendered work refers to the social division of labour between men in the public sphere,

and women in the private sphere. Lorber (1994) identifies two main aspects of women's work in the private sphere. First, women provide "subsistence production", which includes housework and childcare, and ensuring the family is fed, clothed, and clean. Second, women's work involves "social reproduction", which includes responsibility for the emotional, social, moral, and spiritual well-being of the family members. The work of social reproduction includes nurturing individual identities (Young, 2005), providing love and care (Lynch, 2007), creating and maintaining kin ties (di Leonardo, 1987), and transmitting cultural values (Vasquez, 2010). Women perform the bulk of the social reproduction work for the family, yet it is often hidden, unpaid and socially undervalued (Lorber, 1994). Women's family memory keeping shares conceptual themes with the notion of gendered work, yet, despite these connections, family memory keeping has not been critically explored in the literature as an example of gendered work. Thus, this research will speak to that gap in the literature and suggest that women's family memory keeping be recognized and valued as an example of gendered work.

2.2.3 The gendered ideology of familism

The ideology of familism permeates our society, maintaining traditional notions of the family as a cohesive, loyal, and stable unit. Both parents are expected to contribute to the maintenance and reproduction of these family values; however, scholars have argued that mothers and fathers are expected to contribute in different ways (Riedmann et al., 2003). These different ways of keeping the family a cohesive whole are tied up in what Doucet (2007a) calls the gendered "shoulds and oughts" of parenting. What mothers 'ought' to do to maintain a cohesive family unit is different from what fathers 'ought' to do. For instance, mothers are expected to be present and available as mediators of family conflict; any crisis that might lead to

the fragmentation of the cohesive family unit must be negotiated and smoothed out. Mothers are also expected to manage each family member's individualistic orientation – that is, mothers need to foster yet police each individual's need for personal fulfillment outside the family unit (Riedmann et al., 2003). Although expectations are changing to incorporate greater emotional responsibility for fathers, mothers are still primarily responsible for the emotional well-being of their children (Doucet, 2007a). Both mothers and fathers have been found to promote family togetherness through creating “good” family vacation memories; however, mothers have been shown to do the majority of the work of keeping everyone happy during these family vacations (Shaw & Dawson, 2001). Thus, while fathers maintain familism largely by engaging in play (Coakley, 2006) and providing financially (Doucet, 2007a), mothers are expected to maintain family cohesion by monitoring the emotional growth of moral, loyal, and stable children and ensuring that conflict is avoided or diffused (Riedmann et al., 2006).

A key to promoting familism and thus maintaining family togetherness and cohesion is the ritualistic act of performing the “archival family function”, wherein “... families create, store, preserve, and pass on particular objects, events, or rituals that members consider relevant to their personal identities and to maintaining the family as a unique existential reality or group” (Riedmann et al., 2003, p. 27). Weigert and Hastings (1977) describe this family ritual as an opportunity to revisit the good times, the happy times, and the posed times in a particular family's life. Recalling these memories allows families to feel both valued as an individual (“you were always the reckless one!”) yet secure as a whole (“we've put this angel on the top of the tree every Christmas since our wedding day”) (Weigert and Hastings, 1977). However, researchers fail to indicate who is primarily responsible for this aspect of maintaining family togetherness. Researchers also neglect to mention the negative outcomes of reinforcing the

ideology of familism. If mothers are responsible for smoothing away conflict and maintaining a cohesive whole, what then happens to stories of the bad times, the unhappy times, or the unposed times? What happens to the child whose choices, identities, and behaviours fail to fit neatly into their family as a whole, or indeed their society as a whole? Does the mother's responsibility as family memory keeper also include maintaining traditional social norms, roles and ideologies? If so, at what cost? Creative non-fiction literature reveals instances where mothers have used family stories to prevent inter-racial marriage (Berman, 1999), to encourage male dominance (Kogawa, 1981), and to justify violence against women (Kingston, 1976). These examples of family "cautionary tales" have exposed the possibility of a mother's memory being grounded in racist, classist, sexist, homophobic, and exclusionary values. At the very least, this literature has challenged the neutrality of family memory and urges us to look more critically at the supposedly innocent family stories we tell. My research will explore this possibility and the connection that women's family memory-keeping has to the dominant gender ideology of familism.

Theories of oral history, gendered work, and the dominant gender ideology of familism lend a conceptual framework to the analysis of women's family memory keeping that both values and remains critical of the activity. Research on women and oral history draws attention to the unique, empowering, and subversive nature of women's family memory-keeping and the importance of this activity to transmitting stories of the private sphere. Yet theories of gendered work draw attention to the expectations and pressures associated with women's work in the home, and warn not to overlook the laborious nature of memory keeping. Similarly, the gendered ideology of familism outlines the important role mothers play in keeping family together as a cohesive whole through performing the 'archival family function'. However, the

gendered ideology of familism also draws attention to instances where mothers might be responsible for hiding, smoothing out, or even rejecting aspects of family memory that might create conflict or indicate social deviance. For, if a mother is judged on her ability to maintain a family story that illustrates togetherness, emotional stability, and conflict-free family time, it is no wonder that only the posed photos make the family scrapbook.

2.3 A leisure studies perspective on women's family memory-keeping

Contrary to the leisurely appearance of scrapbooking, album-keeping, and home video-making, these activities are not undertaken without effort and perhaps a sense of responsibility created by dominant ideologies about gender and family. These tasks are often undertaken on top of women's already considerable workload both inside and outside the home. Women's memory-keeping, then, is another example of the contradictions of women's family life; women are expected to do this work, yet they are also expected to experience it as leisurely.

There is a long tradition of important research on women's leisure (cf Freysinger & Flannery, 1992; Henderson, Hodges, & Kivel, 2002; Parry, 2005; Shaw, 1994; Sky, 1994; Wearing, 1998). This research has complicated understandings of gender and free time by problematizing the work/leisure dichotomy, and by studying the connections between leisure and dominant gender ideologies. Leisure studies scholars have drawn attention to the complex meaning of women's leisure and work within the context of the family; however, there has yet to be a leisure studies analysis of the activity of family memory-keeping for women. Here the case will be made for the importance of a leisure studies perspective on women's family memory-keeping.

2.3.1 *The work/leisure dichotomy*

Leisure researchers have contributed to our understanding of women's activities by problematizing the work/leisure dichotomy. This dichotomy infers that places of work are not typically considered places for leisure and vice versa. The public sphere then becomes defined as a place for work, and the private sphere becomes defined as a place for leisure (Wearing, 1998). Thus men's full-time employment in the public sphere legitimates their leisure time in the private sphere, at home with their family (Kay, 1998). Traditionally, Wearing (1998) argues, leisure studies was organized around the male-centred dichotomy of work vs. leisure. Leisure theory surfaced in the 1970s, an era when people began working less and having more time away from the workforce. Leisure theory, thus, tended to revolve around "non-work" time (p. iix). This conceptualization of leisure has contributed to a gender bias in leisure studies, namely because of conventional assumptions about work. Work, Wilson (1988) argues, is typically conceptualized as paid work outside the home that is rewarded by leisure. As the binary opposite of work, it then follows that leisure is unpaid activity that takes place outside the workplace. Wilson contends that this creates a gender-biased approach to leisure studies, as these assumptions about work and leisure are male-centred. Women, even those who work outside the home, are more likely to do a substantial amount of unpaid domestic work (Wearing, 1998). This means that the sharp divide between work and leisure is not representative for women. Through the work/leisure dichotomy, women's work is often devalued and misconceptualized and their leisure is often overlooked and misconstrued (Wearing, 1998). Leisure studies scholars have problematized the work/leisure dichotomy, and in doing so, have provoked questions about the meaning of women's work and leisure activities.

2.3.2 *Women's work and leisure in the family*

The literature on women's leisure has often specifically theorized about the connections between women's work, leisure and family life (cf Green et al, 1990; Shaw, 1988; Trussell & Shaw, 2007; Wearing, 1984; Wimbush & Talbot, 1988). This research has provided a complicated perspective on the intersections of leisure, work, and dominant gender ideologies. For instance, Bella's (1992) research on Christmas celebrations demonstrated that there are different expectations for men and women during family holidays. Family events like Christmas often involve a considerable amount of planning and effort for women, despite the seemingly leisurely nature of the holiday. Indeed, Shaw (1985) suggests that because women are responsible for the household labour and for the emotional well-being of the family, family leisure activities are often far from leisurely for women. Along with the responsibilities of subsistence reproduction (for example, the cooking and cleaning), women are also responsible for doing the work of social reproduction during family leisure; they are frequently responsible for planning, organizing, packing, mediating conflicts between children, and other laborious tasks (Shaw, 2001). This work is often hidden and undervalued. Gendered ideologies such as the "ethic of care" and "lack of entitlement" are explored by Henderson et al (1996) as contributing to the responsibility that women feel for this social reproduction work during family leisure. Women often sacrifice their own leisure time in an effort to coordinate and provide for the leisure lives of their families (Wearing, 1998). Of course, there is always room for resistance (cf Henderson & Samdahl, 1995; Kay, 1998; Shaw, 2001). Shaw (1994) argues that leisure provides a unique space for the resistance of dominant gender ideologies. In this conceptualization, women might participate in leisure activities that resist dominant ideologies about gender and family. For instance, the women in Parry's (2005) study made leisure choices

that emphasized agency, self-worth, and a social contribution beyond motherhood, allowing them to resist dominant gender discourses. Similarly, Wearing (1990) found that many mothers resisted the expectation that they sacrifice their own leisure for the leisure pursuits of their families, arriving at the assertion that “mothers need leisure, too”. This research further complicates our understanding of women’s work and leisure in the family by suggesting that women’s family life can be both pleasurable and laborious.

Through a leisure studies perspective, we come to understand that the division between work and leisure for women is not always clear, and that the meaning of women’s activities in family life is not always obvious. Thus, for the study of women’s family memory-keeping, a leisure studies perspective provides a particularly complex analysis. A leisure studies perspective is useful, for instance, because the memories that women keep for their families are often memories of leisure experiences, preserved by women through souvenirs, keepsakes, visual records and stories (di Leonardo, 1987; Hirsch, 1997; Kuhn, 2002). But a leisure studies perspective is also useful in that it compels us to delve deeper into the meaning of this activity for women. Whose memories of leisure are these? What motivates women to preserve them? Is the act of archiving these memories leisurely, or is it laborious? Could it be both? A leisure studies perspective requires an analysis of the nuances of women’s family memory keeping to better understand the pleasures and perhaps obligations that surround this activity.

2.4 Purpose statement

The purpose of this study was to better understand the meaning of family memory-keeping for women and their families. In doing so, this research paid particular attention to the ways that dominant gender ideologies shape family memory and the act of preserving family

memory, including the process of constructing the role of family memory keeper as essentially feminine. The study centered on the meaning of fulfilling the role of family memory keeper, but also involved an exploration of the difficulties, challenges, and resistance to this role, as well. Finally, this study explored the experience of losing a mother's memory, examining the subsequent family transitions that occurred, as well as the role family memory played in enabling families to cope with the loss. For the purpose of exploring these experiences, I designed a feminist, autoethnographic research study that will be discussed in detail in the sections on theoretical orientation and method. To begin, I turn now to the research questions guiding this study.

2.5 **Research questions**

1. What is the meaning of family memory keeping for women and their families?
2. How do dominant ideologies of gender and the family shape family memory?
3. What happens when mothers challenge this role, or do not fulfill this role, due to absence, illness, or death?

3.0 Theoretical orientation and methodologies

This research is guided by a feminist, autoethnographic theoretical orientation grounded in the need for change at the individual and social level, but also at the academic level. That is, my feminist perspective shapes this research by emphasizing a methodology that seeks to expose and examine the dominant gender ideologies that impact our lives while also challenging notions of voice, text, and representation (Parry, 2003). My autoethnographic perspective shapes this research by emphasizing a methodology that values engaging, evocative, and experimental social science research from an intimate and vulnerable perspective (Ellis, 2004). A feminist autoethnographic theoretical orientation brings together the personal and the political. Both traditions rely heavily on personal experience and reflexivity, and both question and reassess dominant ways of knowing in the social sciences. Here I will outline both of the traditions that frame the scope and design of this research.

3.1 Feminist research

Olesen (1994) describes a feminist researcher as one who adheres to four basic principles: (1) feminists value women, their experiences, needs, and ideas (2) see phenomena from the perspective of women (3) recognize the existence of conditions that oppress women and (4) desire to change those conditions through research, leading to political action. Social change is a core tenet of feminist research, which can be achieved through research that benefits women or other oppressed groups. Feminists employ a variety of methods through which they achieve this social change, but the linking thread is that research is conducted within the context of women's lives, valuing women as legitimate knowers and experts of their experience, and empowering female participants through the research process rather than aiding in their

oppression (Bunting & Campbell, 1994). At the heart of all feminist methodologies in the social sciences is an exploration of the elements that organize the experience of being a woman within a patriarchal society. Feminist theorists work to identify those elements organizing women's experiences and investigate the ways that they interact with the systems that organize society (Harding, 1987; Smith, 1999; Young, 1994). However, despite this common ground, feminist researchers work in a variety of ways. I turn next to a discussion of feminist methodologies and methods, including feminist qualitative research, to establish the guiding goals and challenges that characterize my research as feminist.

3.1.2 *Feminist methodologies and methods*

C. Wright Mills (1959) suggests that method is not so much “the codification of procedures,” but rather “information about... actual ways of working” (p. 195). The actual ways that feminists work are diverse. Some feminists gather data through oral histories, some through participant observation, and some through questionnaires and indexes. Some feminists argue that qualitative methods must be embraced because for years quantitative methods have been used to the exclusion of women from academia (Mies, 1983; Reinharz, 1983; Smith 1987, cited in Thompson 1992). Some feminists resent this assertion, maintaining that if feminism is to be inclusive that must mean embracing all methods, quantitative included (Jayaratne, 1983; Kelly, 1978, Osmond 1984, cited in Thompson, 1992). In 1992 Thompson argued for a push “beyond a squabble about methods” in feminist research, and a turn towards examining our feminist research methodology instead (p. 3). She suggested that a feminist methodology, regardless of method, be guided by four tenets:

- a. All inquiry is value-sustaining, and feminist work is politicized inquiry.

- b. Separation between researcher and researched does not ensure objectivity and a closer connection between the two may reconcile objectivity and subjectivity.
- c. Women's experience can be considered a source and justification of knowledge.
- d. There may be no such thing as truth and objectivity. (p. 9)

My research is guided by these overarching tenets, but has also been confronted with the challenges associated with doing feminist qualitative research.

3.1.3 *Feminist qualitative research*

Like all feminist methodologies, feminist qualitative research is vast and variant. However, this area of research is characterized by common, important goals. According to Richardson (1993), feminist qualitative research “blurs genres, probes lived experiences, enacts science, creates a female imagery, breaks down dualisms, inscribes female labour and emotional response as valid, deconstructs the myth of an emotion-free social science, and makes a space for partiality, self-reflexivity, tension, and difference” (p. 695). Perhaps most importantly, feminist qualitative research analyzes women's representations of experience while connecting those analyses back to the social conditions and contexts in which those experiences took place. And finally, feminist qualitative researchers then aim for social change. As Olesen (2005) articulates:

Qualitative feminist research in its many variants... problematizes women's diverse situations as well as the gendered institutions and material and historical structures that frame those. It refers to an examination of that problematic to theoretical, policy, or action frameworks to realize social justice for women (and men) in specific contexts. (p. 236)

These definitions of feminist qualitative research allow feminists of the new millennium some sense of cohesion, and yet despite that solidarity, millennial feminists doing qualitative work are still faced with troubling challenges.

Whereas in previous decades the concern for feminists doing qualitative work centered on bias and validity and the need to legitimize qualitative inquiry (cf Mies, 1983; Oakley, 1991; Reinharz, 1992), the newer worries tend to surround debates about voice, text, and ethics (Oleson, 2005). For instance, qualitative feminist researchers have begun troubling the widely held goal of “giving voice” (Gorelick, 1991; MacMillan, 1995; Patai, 1994), questioning the presumed innocence of qualitative text (Ellis, 2004; Harding, 1991; Richardson, 1997), and problematizing claims to “collaborative” research (Alldred, 1998; Richardson, 2002; Smith, 1999). As a result, feminist qualitative researchers of the new millennium have begun experimenting with voice, text, form, and method, with a heavy focus on reflexivity. This means constantly revisiting Richardson’s (1990) challenge that we must always ask ourselves *how* we write, and for *whom*. It means confronting the crisis of representation. And it means grappling with the realization that no textual staging is ever innocent (Richardson, 1997). My attempt to rise to the challenges of doing feminist qualitative research in the new millennium and speak to the tensions of voice, text, and representation, will be partly addressed through the use of autoethnography.

3.2 **Autoethnographic research**

Autoethnographic research is in itself a study in voice, text, and representation. The autoethnographic researcher hopes not to mirror others’ voices and experiences through text; rather, she hopes to use her voice to create a textual representation of her own and others’ experiences (Ellis, 2004). The representation that results, is a story meant to engage the reader, evoke emotional response, and create change. The goal of this research in terms of creating change was to recognize and value women’s unpaid labour via memory keeping, and move

readers to consider both the academic and practical implications of the loss of women's family memory keeping. The usefulness of the autoethnography lies in the ability the text has to engage the reader both creatively and critically (Bochner, 1997). In this dissertation, part of the autoethnography is written as a performance text, which will be explored in detail in section 4.6. Here we will discuss more broadly the goals of autoethnographic research and the criteria for judging this research as well.

3.2.1 *The objectives of autoethnographic research*

Autoethnography is part of the autobiographical genre of writing and researching. It is a narrative characterized by a multi-layered, complex, often fragmented writing style, infused with a critical social analysis. This narrative looks inward and outward, exposing a vulnerable self and the web of social and cultural influences in which that self resides (Ellis, 1999).

Autoethnographic texts are usually written in the first person and appear in a variety of forms including performance text, poetry, prose, short stories, personal essays, photographic essays, fiction, novels, and plays (Ellis, 2004). The focus for researchers working in this tradition is on aesthetics, empathy, and social transformation, rather than abstracting, generalizing, and making claims to some sort of scientific, provable, truth. Whereas more traditionally post-positivist researchers might consider themselves reporters of data, autoethnographers consider themselves story-tellers (Ellis & Bochner, 2006).

Not only do autoethnographers aim to tell stories, they aim to tell stories that are evocative. Autoethnographers do that in part by writing about themselves. For, as Ellis and Bochner (2006) note, "It's amazing how much impact personal stories have, isn't it? (p. 430). The autoethnographer studies herself, her own lived experiences, and the lives of others

connected to those experiences; she is a walking laboratory. The goal of using oneself as a laboratory of sorts is to become a “vulnerable observer” as a researcher (Behar, 1996). The vulnerable observer is one who is intimately embedded in the text, engaging the reader and evoking empathy and reflection. Researchers have long been making themselves vulnerable in academic work to bring awareness to particular social experiences. For instance, Ronai (1995) drew upon her own experiences with childhood molestation to present a layered account of child abuse. Ellis and Bochner (1992) provided an analysis of abortion from both the male and female perspective, using their own experience as a couple deciding to terminate a pregnancy. More recently, Pinney (2005) explored the culture of strip-clubs by layering her anthropologist’s perspective with her perspective as a former exotic dancer. And Halley (2003) used her childhood experiences to provoke thought about a range of social issues, including divorce, gender roles, social stigma, and child abuse. Each of these pieces of research, and countless others (cf Jago, 2006; Lee, 2006; Poulos, 2006; Richardson, 2003; Tillmann-Healy, 1996), kept the reader engaged both creatively and critically through autoethnography.

The objective to keep readers engaged through evocative writing arose out of the crisis of representation in social science literature (Richardson, 1990). Many researchers were questioning what social scientists are writing, how they were writing it, and for whom they wrote. Bochner (1997) suggested some scholars were also frustrated with the quality of social science literature; indeed, Bochner described the bulk of social science literature as boring and poorly written:

We pay a steep price for producing texts that sustain the illusion of disinterest and neutrality by keeping the personal voice out. Our work is underread, undergraduates find many of our publications boring, graduate students say our scholarship is dry and inaccessible, seasoned scholars confess they don’t finish half of what they start reading, and the public hardly knows we exist. (p. 433)

By deeming traditional sociological literature dry and inaccessible, and by replacing the traditional goals of objectivity and neutrality with vulnerability and intimacy, Bochner and other autoethnographers are questioning the very parameters and possibilities of social science research. Because, as Behar (1996) puts it, “anthropology that doesn’t break your heart just isn’t worth doing anymore” (p. 177). So what kind of anthropology is worth doing anymore? What do the parameters of this new tradition of research look like? By what criteria should this thing called autoethnography be judged?

3.2.2 *The criteria for judging autoethnographic research*

Clough (2000) uses caution when she discusses possible criteria for judging autoethnographic research. For, she argues, too much emphasis on criteria can invite and encourage methodological policing, leaving less emphasis on imagination, ethics, and producing good, innovative work. Instead, she suggests asking oneself the following kinds of questions when reading autoethnography: does the work have the possibility to create a better world? Does it motivate cultural criticism? Is it closely aligned with theoretical reflection, thus inspiring new sociological thought? On a more aesthetic note, Denzin (2000) offers this advice: these texts should be “poetic, performative, and narrative... hopeful, well-written, and well-plotted stories that show memorable characters and unforgettable scenes” (p. 260). Bochner (2000) looks for six criteria when reading autoethnography: concrete details, structurally complex narratives, the author’s attempt to dig under the superficial to get to vulnerability and honesty, a standard of ethical self-consciousness, a moving story, and transformation, wherein the main character moves in a believable way from who she was to who she becomes. Ellis (2004), on the

other hand, resists setting out criteria, instead arguing simply that she wishes to be “emotionally aroused and cognitively engaged” by autoethnographic writing (p. 254).

I personally find Richardson’s (2000) criteria most helpful when judging autoethnographic research. Parry and Johnson (2007) outline Richardson’s five criteria for judging autoethnographic research as follows. The first criterion is the substantive contribution of the text. For a text to succeed substantively, it must contribute to a deeper understanding of social life, including being grounded or embedded in a human perspective. The human perspective must then inform the ways in which the text itself is constructed. For example, if people make sense of the lives through stories, then a vignette or a short story may be the best way to represent their experience. Or, if the participants in the study understand their world through poetry, song lyrics or performances (such as a play) then the text may be constructed in those forms. The second criterion is aesthetic merit. Aesthetically, a text should draw the audience in and encourage them to form their own interpretation of the social world being presented. The text needs to be complex, interesting, engaging – in other words, not boring! Reflexivity is the third criterion utilized to judge texts developed utilizing creative analytic practice. The author of a text needs to be clear about how the text was created including the role of the researcher. In this sense, the author of a text needs to hold him or herself accountable for the knowledge they put forth. The author needs to disclose any ethical issues surrounding the creation of the text and bring adequate self-awareness/self-exposure to the text so that readers are able to judge their point of view. Impact of the text is the fourth criterion for judging this type of work. Richardson suggests asking how the text affects you as a reader on an emotional and intellectual level. A good text created should generate new questions, motivate you to write and/or to try new research practices. Because texts created through creative analytic practice

draw the reader in and open themselves up for interpretation, they often motivate readers towards social action or change. Lastly, the final criterion for judging these texts involves an expression of a reality. A text needs to convey an embodied sense of lived experience. In other words, a text needs to be believable and convey a credible account of a cultural, social, individual, or communal sense of the “real”. Above all, autoethnography should be judged on its usefulness. We should look to the effect the autoethnography had on participants, researchers, and readers. In other words, the reader should never be left asking, “So what?” (Ellis, 2004).

The theoretical orientation that guides and shapes this research is ultimately concerned with social change and changing the social sciences. Autoethnographic research, like feminist research, is personal *and* political. Both areas of research value intimacy, reflexivity, and the private sphere. Both attempt to undercut social science conventions that promote neutrality and distance. And both feminist researchers and autoethnographic researchers are constantly engaged in debates surrounding voice, text, and representation (Ellis, 1997). In short, feminist autoethnography is a theoretical orientation effective for accomplishing two goals: telling women’s stories, and making good use of our own experiences.

4.0 Method

I made considerable use of my own experiences through a research project designed to emphasize the important, intimate, and multi-layered nature of family memory. My theoretical orientation valued the personal and the political, and my methods were centered on exploring the personal to expose the political. Here I will elaborate on that research design, detailing the recruitment process (including a profile of the participants), data collection, interviewing (including the three different kinds of interviewing used, and the complications of conducting these interviews), grappling with ethical issues, analyzing the data, and reporting the findings (through both traditional qualitative methods and an autoethnographic performance text).

4.1 The recruitment process

In an autoethnography, the researcher necessarily recruits herself as a participant (Ellis, 2004). In telling her own story, the researcher also necessarily tells the story of those close to her. As such, participants for this study were recruited from my family, my friends, extended family and friends, and some new acquaintances were made as well. Despite at times deviating from previously known participants in this way, the study remains classifiable as an autoethnography. Autoethnography was first described as simply ethnographic work done on one's "own people"; the researcher is an "insider" in the culture or experience studied, as opposed to traditional ethnography that necessarily positioned the researcher as an "outsider" studying a culture or experience that was foreign to the anthropologist (Hayano, 1979). Since the coining of the term by Hayano (1979), autoethnographers have used their own experience as a starting point for analysis, often recruiting participants who share membership in the culture or experience under study, but who might be previously unknown to the researcher (cf Doloriert &

Sambrook, 2009; Ellis, 1999; Jago, 2006). In this sense, my dissertation research remains an autoethnography because the research is grounded in my “insider” perspective on this experience of women’s memory keeping and draws from my personal life and my personal acquaintances, for the purposes of branching out into a broader analysis of the experience in the larger culture (Ellis, 2004).

Recruitment took place from July 2010 to December 2010. I recruited 17 people from my life to be involved in this study; however, because several participants asked to bring a friend or family member along to the interview, the final number of participants was 23. In this sense, this research made use of both purposive and snowball sampling. That is, I was purposeful in recruiting participants who represented “information-rich cases”, and I also recruited new participants at the suggestion of individuals I was interviewing (Patton, 2002). In these cases, prior to the interview a participant would (without prompting from me) suggest they bring along a friend or family member who was interested in participating. This occurred before four interviews, and in each case the individual interview was then changed to a group interview. I was grateful for the added perspectives, and also felt the participants seemed more at ease with the friend or family member present.

To initiate the recruitment process, I informally asked specific friends and family if they would like to participate in this study. Two family friends and one family member declined due to significant health problems. However, many friends and family members indicated interest in participating, and upon this confirmation, I contacted them through email to provide more formal information about the study. I sent the following email:

Hello, my name is Caitlin Mulcahy and I am a Doctoral Candidate in the Department of Recreation and Leisure Studies. I am currently working with Dr. Diana Parry and Dr. Sue Shaw on my dissertation work surrounding mothers and family memory. This research

will hopefully contribute to a better understanding of mothering and family memory keeping. It will also explore the challenges and difficulties of fulfilling the role of family memory keeping for women and their families.

If you volunteer as a participant in this study, we will arrange a time that is convenient for you to engage in an open-ended, audio-taped interview where we will discuss your experiences with mothering and family memory. This interview will take approximately one to two hours of your time.

It is important to note that this interview will be confidential and I will make every attempt to protect your anonymity. However, this is an autoethnographic study, and therefore many of the participants are well known to each other and complete anonymity might not always be realistic. If you become uncomfortable with this level of anonymity at any point before, during, or after the interview you can always withdraw yourself and your interview transcript from the study by letting me know how you feel.

I would like to assure you that this study has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through the Office of Research Ethics. However, the final decision about participation is yours.

If you are interested in participating, please fill out the following information and I will be in touch with you. Alternatively, you can phone me (902-463-2796) or email me (cmmulcah@uwaterloo.ca) with any questions or comments. Thanks very much, I look forward to speaking with you!

Name:

Email:

Phone Number:

Best Days:

Best Times:

4.1.1 *Profile of the participants*

Five men and 18 women participated in this study. Initially, I did not make any attempt to recruit an equal number of men and women for this study. In retrospect, I wish I had made more of an effort to include the perspective of men, particularly fathers. However, upon noting

the lack of men in the study, I contacted the spouses of women I interviewed and invited these men to participate in an interview. Unfortunately, all six male spouses declined my invitation to participate, all citing a lack of time. Given my suspicions about the gendered nature of memory keeping, I wondered if the subject matter left men feeling they would have little to contribute; perhaps they imagined discussions surrounding scrapbooking and baby books, the very items this dissertation demonstrates to be associated strongly with women. My recruitment email (see above) also specified I was interested in “motherhood and memory keeping”, and I now see that description was not particularly inclusive to men and fathers. I was disappointed by my inability to address these issues before the recruitment and interview process began.

As a group, the 23 participants were well educated; education levels ranged from high school to PhD, with many participants holding professional degrees in education, nursing, social work, and engineering. Five participants were retired from full time employment. Most participants were from rural and urban Nova Scotia, with four individuals coming from urban Ontario. Ages ranged from 20-75 years old. In terms of socio-economic status, participants reported household incomes ranged from 20 000 to 100 000+. Most participants were married, though one participant was single, two were engaged, one was widowed, and one was separated. Four participants were childless, though most were parents. Two subsets of parents were represented: one group of participants had children under three and the other was made up of parents of adult children. Only two participants had children (teenagers) who fell between these two age groups. Three parents were adoptive parents and two were single mothers. Of the eight mothers of young children, four were currently on parental leave from full-time work. Three others were working full time and one was working part time. Of the seven mothers of adult children, five had been stay-at-home mothers during their children’s childhood (but went on to

be employed full time outside the home) and two had been employed continuously full time. All men interviewed were employed full time outside the home, and no men reported having taken a parental leave. All participants were Caucasian-Canadian. Two individuals identified as queer, and one as the mother of a teenaged transgender daughter. One woman was living with a brain tumour and another with dementia. Many participants (see Chapter 4: “The Loss”) are living with the loss of a mother’s memory. In four cases, the mother is still living yet due to factors including estrangement and dementia, her memory has been lost. In four other cases, the mother’s memory has been lost due to death from breast cancer, Alzheimer’s Disease, and suicide. At the time of the study, two men identified as caregivers for spouses, though unfortunately one man was widowed shortly after the interview took place.

4.2 Data collection

Data collection took place from August 2010 to December 2010 in Nova Scotia and Ontario. I conducted seven group interviews. One of these group interviews was an ‘interactive interview’ (Ellis, 2004), while the rest followed the guidelines for more traditional focus group interviews (Lindeloef & Taylor, 2002). I also conducted seven individual interviews, using the ‘reflexive, dyadic’ interview style (Ellis, 2004). These interviews and the philosophies behind them, including why some interviews were individual while others were group, will be further detailed in section 4.3. Each interview was digitally recorded with the participant’s informed consent (see Appendix A for individual interviews and Appendix B for group interviews) and lasted somewhere between one hour and two and a half hours in length. The interviews took place wherever was convenient and comfortable for the participants. This meant their home, a friend’s home, a family home, or my home. In one instance, the interview took place at a coffee

shop. All participants were invited beforehand to bring along a family memory artefact that was meaningful to them in some way, but several participants either declined or forgot. I described this artefact as something their mother collected for them, something they collected as mothers, or any other family memory artefact of choice. This is referred to as an “elicitation method”, wherein the participant might find their memories easier to recall by having a memory artefact on hand (Loizos, 2000). As Loizos (2000) suggests:

Images are resonant with submerged memories, and can help focus interviewees, free up their memory, and create a piece of ‘shared business’ in which the researcher and the interviewee can talk together, perhaps in a more relaxed manner than without such a stimulus. (p. 98)

I indeed found the elicitation method effective for participants, often simply as a starting point for conversation. Before the interview, I asked participants if I might take a photograph of their memory artefact to include anonymously in my research, and in any publications that might follow. This agreement was documented in writing on a separate informed consent form (see Appendix C). The ethics of collecting this kind of data will be discussed in the ethics section (4.4). Every participant who brought an artefact agreed to have it photographed. Photographs were taken often while the participant was describing his or her artefact, and can be viewed in the findings section of this dissertation.

All information and photographs collected from participants has been presented and stored anonymously, with the exception of the data collected from my father, my mother, my sisters, and my brother (for the ethical ramifications and justifications of this decision, see section 4.4.2). The data will be kept indefinitely and is securely stored in a locked filing cabinet in the researcher’s home. The digital recordings, transcripts, and photographs of all participants outside my immediate family are labeled with pseudonyms or a code.

4.3 **The interviews**

This study involved the use of three separate forms of interviewing: reflexive, dyadic interviews, interactive interviewing, and focus groups. Each method resulted in successes and challenges, and the process of interviewing family members had its advantages and disadvantages as well. These interview techniques, along with the challenges of the interviews themselves, will be discussed in detail here.

4.3.1 *The reflexive, dyadic interviews*

The reflexive, dyadic interview is characterized by an inclusion of the interviewer's thoughts, feelings, and perceptions, alongside the interviewee's words, stories, and interpretations. As Ellis (2004) describes, this gives the interviewer permission to attempt to "tune in to the interactively produced meanings and emotional dynamics within the interview itself" (p. 62). Although the focus remains on the participant's story, the inclusion of the researcher's reflections on the interview allows for a more reflexive, layered account of the experience. Another characteristic of the reflexive, dyadic interview is the conversational style fostered by the interviewer. However, the interviewer is still in control of the interview to some extent, and an interview guide is still recommended (see Appendix D). I used this style of interviewing during my individual interviews. I made use of an interview guide (see Appendix D), but allowed the conversation to deviate from the specific questions frequently, which often led the interview into different and unexpected areas. After the interview I journalled my thoughts and impressions about the conversation, and returned to these notes when transcribing. These notes, and subsequent thoughts, were then typed into the transcript using the "comments" feature. I found this process to be deeply helpful in both maintaining a sense of reflexivity and laying the groundwork for future analysis. Though I failed to notice many significant differences

between this technique and the “active interviews” (Dupuis, 1999) I had conducted in previous research (cf Mulcahy, Parry, & Glover, forthcoming), I did appreciate this method for the explicit emphasis on reflexivity and the specific positioning of the researcher within the research.

4.3.2 *The interactive interviews*

Another interview technique practiced in this research was interactive interviewing (Ellis, 2004). In interactive interviewing there are usually more than two individuals, and all those participating act as both researcher and participant. As opposed to the more reflexive, one-on-one style of the dyadic interviews outlined above, this style of interviewing is more collaborative, focused on the story that evolves out of the interaction amid this particular group of people. And as opposed to other group interviewing techniques, this style actively attempts to minimize the researcher’s authority and control over the direction of the conversation. There is no interview guide, just the announcement of the topic of conversation. I used this technique when interviewing my three siblings in our family home. I began the conversation by simply stating, “Let’s talk about Mum’s role in our lives as family memory-keeper”. This is a topic that my siblings and I have already discussed (albeit much more informally and for far more brief periods of time), so I was confident that the conversation will flow somewhat easily from there. Ellis (2004) posits that this technique is most useful when “all participants have had personal experience with the topic under discussion... this strategy is particularly useful when researching personal and/or emotional topics” (p. 64). This style of interviewing recognizes each player as an expert and as an equal contributor to the content and direction of the conversation; however, I was not entirely successful in this regard. Though the conversation flowed easily and organically, helped along by the practiced dynamic between the four of us, my siblings

understandably returned to me at regular intervals to ask for direction and/or clarification. Incidentally, these were always important interruptions that allowed us to return to the more raw, emotional conversations we were often attempting to circumvent with surface-level digressions. Thus, while the interactive interview was successful in terms of collaborative story-telling among a group of experts in a particular experience, I found a guiding voice was still necessary and in my case the sense of a researcher's authority was never completely vanquished.

4.3.3 *The focus group interviews*

Lastly, I used focus groups with groups of individuals known to each other in my life. This included specific groups of friends, couples, and parents and children. I utilized focus groups in these instances rather than interactive interviewing because I wanted to remain a facilitator and a guide in these discussions, rather than relinquish control in the more collaborative interactive interview. As such, the interview guide was used again, though once again conversation often deviated from the guide. During the group interviews, I found participants seemed at ease, insofar as those individuals could be listeners and/or speakers, drawing inspiration from what others have said about the topic at hand (Ellis, 2004). I also found focus groups allowed for participants to disagree, to challenge each other, to affirm the others' experiences, and in doing so, an interactive picture of the experience began to form. As Lindlof and Taylor (2002) describe:

Group discussion produces data and insights that would be less accessible without interaction found in a group setting—listening to others' verbalized experiences stimulates memories, ideas, and experiences in participants. This is also known as the group effect where group members engage in a kind of 'chaining' or 'cascading' effect; talk links to, or tumbles out of, the topics and expressions preceding it. (p. 182)

Finally, I found the focus group interviews helpful in the comfort they appeared to bring to participants. Many of my focus group interviews were created at the request of individual participants who suggested a friend or family member come along. Thus, while focus groups can certainly result in less in-depth information, excluded voices, and “group think” (Lindelof & Taylor, 2002), the interviews were successful insofar as they put participants at ease, enabled me to bear witness to fascinating dynamics between friends and family members, and provided a level of comfort the participants might have found necessary to partake in the discussion. This level of comfort was often essential, given the sensitive and complicated nature of the interviews I conducted.

4.3.4 *Gendered complications*

The interviews were also complicated in terms of the gendered ideologies surrounding memory keeping. When interviewing mothers, it became clear to me that memory keeping was an activity that many women felt was used to measure a mother’s worth, or perhaps, lack of maternal competency. I became aware that my questions about their memory keeping activities could work to create or compound guilt and reinforce dominant ideologies surrounding what constitutes a good mother. For instance, one participant stated, “Listening to you guys talk makes me feel so guilty about what I haven’t kept.” This participant was already marginalized due to her status as a former teen mother, a current single mother, and a low-income mother. When transcribing our group interview, I was disheartened by this comment; had I contributed another judgment on this woman’s abilities as a mother? Though I felt my interview guide was well designed to direct a more neutral conversation about memory keeping (i.e. withholding assumptions about who does the memory keeping in the family, withholding assumptions about

the meaningfulness of the activity), the informal nature of the interviews created opportunities for mothers to judge themselves against each other. This particular mother's comment led to some fascinating conversation about memory keeping and guilt; however, I was conscious from that point forward of the precarious and gendered tightrope I was walking in these interviews.

Similarly, interviewing men about memory keeping created complications surrounding dominant gender ideologies. The five men interviewed for this study required a considerable amount of coaxing to discuss memory keeping. The childless men interviewed seemed either not to understand what I meant by the activity, or could not grasp the meaning of the activity at all (one man described the pile of memories his mother had kept as "a bunch of crap"). This certainly reinforced to me the gendered nature of memory keeping – that women more readily saw the activity as a meaningful family contribution – however, I also wondered if the men interviewed were reluctant to delve into deeper, more emotional, more traditionally feminine conversations about the meaning of things like baby books. As this dissertation demonstrates (see findings and discussion), memory keeping is associated with sentimentality, sensitivity, and emotion, and these traits are commonly attributed to women and discouraged in men. I wondered if men were reluctant to expand upon their experiences with memory keeping due to the gendered nature of the interview. The three fathers I interviewed had a better notion of what memory keeping was and were more comfortable discussing the meaning of these memories, but I sensed they felt defensive about their participation (or lack of participation) in the memory keeping process. Once again, I wondered if they were experiencing gendered ideologies of parenting; perhaps they felt I was accusing them of failing to be a "good father". These themes and issues will be developed further in the dissertation (see discussion); however I felt they offered interesting complexity and complication methodologically as well.

4.3.5 *The advantages of autoethnographic interviews*

Complication was also created during the interview process due to the use of autoethnographic interviews. Here, I will discuss both the advantages and disadvantages I encountered through the use of this approach. There are many reported benefits to using autoethnographic interviews. Indeed, such “insider interviews” are touted for their advantages, including personal knowledge of the experience at hand (Crossley, 2009), expediency of rapport-building (Jenks, 2002), and the easy detection of nonverbal gestures (Chavez, 2008). My experience with autoethnographic interviews confirmed these advantages. Quite frequently, I felt my personal knowledge of the experience at hand enabled a more comfortable interview environment. For instance, I could easily draw upon my experience as a memory keeper, as a recipient of memory keeping, and as a daughter of a mother losing her memory. Because my participants had prior knowledge of our shared experiences, there was a level of depth to our interviews that was more easily accessed than if the participant had viewed me as an “outsider”. Likewise, because of this pre-existing relationship, rapport was very naturally established and an intimate interview quickly developed. I was also particularly attuned to nearly every participant’s nonverbal gestures, given the pre-existing familiarity between us. This enabled me to navigate the interview carefully and sensitively, and with great attention paid to underlying meanings and responses that were going unsaid. Each of these advantages to the autoethnographic interview allowed me to conduct interviews that remained true to my methodological promise to handle the subject matter as intimate, important, and multi-layered (see section 4.4).

However, one advantage to the autoethnographic interview I had not anticipated or read about in current literature was the benefits of the social reproduction work exerted through the interview process. Fittingly, in a study exploring the importance of women's work maintaining family and community ties, I found myself making visits to family and friends, bearing gifts, and sharing coffee and conversation around the kitchen table. We exchanged family news, inquired about the health and activities of mutual friends, and marveled over community gossip. Such rituals would normally be performed by women in rural communities to touch base, gather and share information, enjoy each other's company, and sustain important bonds (Casella, 2012); indeed, I found through interviewing I was conducting the social reproduction work of representing my family and maintaining these kin ties. Moreover, the autoethnographic interviews enabled me to add depth to these kin ties. Given the intimate, important, and multi-layered nature of the subject matter, I left interviews feeling the relationship had been strengthened and a new level of trust had been developed. Not only did this create a more significant bond between me and the interviewee, but the strengthened bond extended to our families as well, strengthening the kin ties between families.

The autoethnographic interview was also beneficial in enabling me to collect family memory, an advantage I have yet to see discussed in the autoethnographic literature. For instance, during interviews with my husband's family, the discussion would often depart from the interview guide and digress into describing family characters and relationships, recalling family backgrounds and histories, and establishing family myths and identities. I was attuned to these digressions and allowed them to unfold with the understanding that I was recording important family histories for my husband, his brothers, and my children. Similarly, during interviews with my own family, I often used the interview as a space in which to confirm and

record family facts and details, as well as more subjective family stories and anecdotes. I was conscious of the precarious health of many participants, in particular my mother, and was grateful to have their voices, stories, and our specific dynamic on record. As such, in a project on the meaningful yet gendered nature of family memory keeping, I was incredibly successful in enacting my thesis.

The insider perspective facilitated by the autoethnographic interview was advantageous both in ways predicted by the literature, and in ways the literature has yet to document. I indeed experienced benefits due to the personal knowledge of the experience at hand (Crossley, 2009), expediency of rapport-building (Jenks, 2002), and the easy detection of nonverbal gestures (Chavez, 2008). I also encountered unexpected benefits associated with the outcome of my emotion work on the interviews: strengthened kin ties and family memory collection. However, this form of interviewing is not without its disadvantages. As Beoku-Betts (1994) describes, “I came to realize that while the insider standpoint was a valid approach to the research process it was more fragile and complex than it is often portrayed as being” (p. 430).

4.3.6 *The disadvantages of autoethnographic interviews*

Despite my intensive reading of autoethnographic methodology (Bochner, 2002; Ellis, 2004; Ellis, 2008; Goodall, 2008) and assumed understanding of the intricacies of the autoethnographic interview, I found I was ultimately unprepared for the disadvantages of interviewing family members. Indeed, very little has been written about these disadvantages. Chavez (2008) argues that despite the wealth of recent literature published on the advantages of an “insider” perspective, and despite the emergence of autoethnography as an increasingly popular method, there is “a lack of development of an insider methodology to systematically

describe what insiders actually experience” (p. 475). As such, I found myself reflecting upon interviews during transcription, marveling at the many places I went wrong.

Many of the reported advantages of “insider” interviews (the personal knowledge of the experience at hand, the expediency of rapport-building, the easy detection of nonverbal gestures), often created my biggest challenges during interviews, as well. My personal knowledge of the experience at hand often led to incomplete exchanges wherein, without realizing it, the participant and I would fail to completely flesh out our discussion, relying instead on shorthand, or the shared understanding we had of the experience. For example, during one interview, the following dialogue occurred: “*Well, it was like that time when he wouldn’t save that card you sent, and I was so... remember?*” “*Yeah, I remember, that’s exactly what I mean.*” “*So, you know, it’s important.*” While transcribing, I frustratedly made notes beside this passage for future use: “*What time? What happened? Who was there? What does it mean? Why was it important?*” During the interview, I was so personally involved that I failed to oscillate between an insider and outsider perspective, and as a result, did not collect the data I was hoping to gather.

Likewise, the expediency of rapport-building was incredibly useful in gaining access to participants with relative ease; however, this easy rapport was necessarily accompanied by an already established relationship between me and the interviewee. The existent dynamic often guided and shaped the interview and the data I collected from the interview. For instance, when interviewing members of my husband’s family, the established comfortable dynamic was helpful, yet this in-law relationship also positioned me as an outsider still in need of approval. For these interviews, I felt restrained by my need to remain extremely polite and respectful of boundaries and conscious of leaving the interview with the relationships firmly intact. As Ellis

(2004) notes, “With autoethnography, the context you’re representing is yourself and your life, which is messier than ethnographies of people who live apart from you; here you’re writing about individuals you talk to on birthdays and holidays” (p. 324). This often prevented me from asking questions that were more direct or probing in nature.

Similarly, my existing relationships to these participants enabled easy detection of the meaning of verbal cues and nonverbal gestures. However, this knowledge also resulted in the failure to probe for more information or emotional depth during an interview. Because I was familiar with certain participants, I easily recognized signs that we were approaching sensitive topics and would redirect the conversation. In many instances, I wondered if this redirection was helpful and ultimately wished I had asked the question and left the decision to speak about it up to the participant. Yet again I was conscious of needing to respect boundaries and leave the interview with our relationship intact.

Unfortunately, it was only upon transcribing the interviews that I noted these patterns. However, I can at this point make several suggestions for preparing for “insider” interviews in the future. First, while I prepared myself for intense emotional connections and steeled myself for extremely personal conversations, I failed to properly prepare myself to emotionally detach during the interview as well. I needed this detachment to remind myself of the larger intentions of the interview – to collect data for a particular project. As such, I would recommend preparing a more structured, practiced interview when interviewing family and close friends that acts to consistently remind the interviewer to oscillate between insider and outsider perspectives. Though this seems counter-intuitive given the intimate and informal nature of the autoethnographic interview, such structure could guard against the difficulty focusing that comes with being too deep “inside” an interview (Kanuha, 2000). Second, a useful strategy is to

prepare a statement, perhaps even written on an interview guide, reminding the interviewer to collect data that is fleshed out with as little shorthand as possible (DeLyser, 2001). Phrases such as, “pretend we don’t know each other”, “I know we’ve spoken about this before, but...”, and “imagine you’re describing this to a stranger”, could be helpful in creating richer data. Finally, given the concerns I had with leaving an interview with existing relationships intact, I would now prepare beforehand by journaling about the boundaries of each specific relationship. I would describe the relationship in detail, outlining the boundaries and weighing the possible risks and benefits associated with crossing those boundaries. I would write about questions I feared asking and workshop a variety of ways I could ask those questions in a manner sensitive to this particular relationship. Given my experience, it is clear to me that such preparation would need to be done before each interview with specific family and friends. As Chavez (2008) maintains,

This complex positionality requires a new framework for training insider scholars, an element of insider scholarship which has yet to emerge... Traditional training begins with “getting to know the field;” understanding participants, gaining access, and developing rapport. Insider scholars, on the other hand, need to be trained in a reverse manner: They need to get into their own heads first before getting into those of participants’. (p. 491)

Had I been more prepared “in my own head”, I am confident I would have been more successful at navigating the challenges of autoethnographic interviews.

4.4 **Ethical issues**

Navigating the ethical issues contained in this project was just as complicated as the interview process. This project was rife with ethical issues. Researching family memory is ethically troubling on its own. When one adds autoethnography to the design of the study, things get even more problematic. Memory among family is complex and often contradictory. And

when doing research on one's own family, those complexities and contradictions become all the more personal. Here I will outline the ethical issues I faced throughout this project, and suggest ways these ethical issues in both family memory and autoethnographic research were addressed in my research.

4.4.1. *Ethical issues in family memory research*

Many scholars have suggested that researchers tread very carefully when attempting to explore family memory (cf Denzin, 2008; Ellis, 2004; Hirsch, 1999). Because the study of family memory is so complex, it follows that this research will not be methodologically or ethically simplistic either. Each of the characteristics that make family memory a fascinating study (its importance to identity, its intimate nature, its multi-layered composition) also make this area precarious for researchers to study.

Family memory is important. As Holland (1991) posits:

Small wonder that a family album is a treasured possession, nervously approached for its ambiguities, scrutinised for its secrets, poignant in its recall of loves and lovers now dead. It interweaves the trivial and the intense, the moment and the momentous, as it challenges any simple concept of memory. (p. 2)

For some family members, these memories might be wonderful, for others they might be unpleasant, and for others still, these memories might be vague or non-existent. However, taken together, these memories tell the story of who they are and from where they have come. And for that, family memories are priceless.

The importance of memory to families means that for the researcher of family memory, it is crucial to be very careful. For what might appear to be an ordinary photo, a crumpled up letter, or an infant-sized shoe, likely has significant value beyond what the researcher can readily observe. Not only should the researcher be delicate when handling family memories, she should

also take great care to understand the deeper meaning of the memories and the moments they represent. Hence, in my research I approached family memories as though, as Holland (1991) suggests, I were asking to handle the family's most valued treasures; I attempted to understand the weightiness of the subject matter for the participants. Just as my methods favoured a delicate approach, I was also concerned ethically with the responsibility of handling these valuable possessions as well. For example, when several participants brought out 20 year old baby teeth for me to examine as their memory artefacts, I attempted to treat these teeth as valuable signifiers of a motherhood rather than recoil or dismiss their significance. Questions were always phrased as carefully and sensitively as possible. No memory artefacts were borrowed or taken during the data collection process. I was also careful in my documentation of family memories; though they are representations of the 'real thing', photos, transcripts and other recordings of family memory are still imbued with great value. I attempted to photograph and present these items (see findings section) as cherished and significant artefacts rather than diminish the items by presenting them in simple or stark terms.

I utilized 'member-checking' in an attempt to collaborate with the participants for a better understanding of the importance of the artefact and their interpretation of our interview and my subsequent analysis. Member-checking recognizes the participants as having ownership over the data they share with me (Patton, 2002). Because of the value of the data in a study on family memory, care must be shown in appreciation of what has been shared. I sent typed transcripts of our interview to each participant via email asking for feedback on parts of the interview that the participant might wish to alter for the final project. Then in later months I sent them each a draft of the findings (with pseudonyms) and a summary of the major discussion points so that they could react and respond to my initial thoughts about the data. I was open to discussion

surrounding my interpretation of the interviews and invited participants to do so through email. I received feedback and input from four participants, and this feedback was discussed through several email exchanges. These exchanges led to changes in the final draft of the findings. For instance, one participant wrote and requested I remove a quote describing her mother's illness in what she felt were particularly graphic terms. I wrote back and attempted to explain the power of the quote, and asked if there was a way we could modify the quote rather than remove it altogether. She sent me back a modified quote – multiple ellipses were used for removed text – and the following note: *“I don't know who I'm trying to protect, me or my mother! But I do know that I just can't bear to read what I said, or maybe it's because of the way I said it. Can you use this instead?”* I used the modified quote, which to me had lost some of its original power. However, as I will discuss in section 4.4.2, her concerns about representing her mother hit very close to home for me. Ultimately, it was simply more important that I honor her wishes than use her quote. Following a successful dissertation defense, my thesis will also be sent to participants via email, and they will be contacted again if I intend on publishing any material that results from the study.

Family memory is intimate. Though family memory is at times rather public (for instance, subjecting neighbours and friends to viewings of family vacation footage) many of these memories involve personal, private moments. These intimate reflections of our identity are kept within the privacy of our home for a reason. For, as Kuhn (2002) suggests, certain family memories are not meant to be projected for the viewing pleasure of neighbours and friends: “Secrets haunt our memory-stories... Family secrets are the other side of the family's public face” (p. 2). As such, family members are not always interested in making private memories public.

For researchers, this intimate nature of family memory creates ethical concerns. Gallop and Blau (1999) discuss the complicated decision-making process when considering whether or not to reveal family photos in academic work and photography exhibits. After all, they reasoned, these images were private representations of their home life, memories that were meaningful in part due to the very intimacy of their nature. When they, like others (cf Hirsch, 1999; Kuhn, 2002; Leonard, 1999), decided to include these family memories in their academic work, they confessed to feeling uncomfortable with exposing their private lives. And not only were they revealing their own intimacies, they were also revealing the intimacies of others in their family, including their children (cf Hirsch, 1999; Kuhn, 2002; Leonard, 1999), parents (Denzin, 2008), and partners (cf Ellis, 1995). At times, these family memories involved depictions of family members who were in positions of vulnerability, including illness (cf Ellis, 2007), sexual situations (cf Ellis, 1995) and nudity (cf Gallop & Blau, 1999; Leonard, 1999). As such, the intimate nature of family memories poses ethical questions about consent and representation. In some interviews I conducted, very private and at times painful family memories were shared. And yet, even when the family memories were not particularly painful, all family memories shared with me were private in that they are cultivated, collected, and maintained in the private sphere. Thus, I had to be prepared to be party to the intimacies of family life, which necessitated ethical quandaries surrounding how to reveal these private stories in the public sphere of academia, if at all. I worked through these ethical issues by encouraging feedback through member-checking and presenting only those family memories that pertained specifically to the study. I also made the key decision to write my findings in a way that protected the identity of these participants as much as possible (see a more detailed exploration of this decision in section 4.6). This meant utilizing pseudonyms, removing all identifying information, and being strategic

about which quotations to present and which to exclude. Ultimately, some private family memories discussed in the interviews remained private.

Family memory is multi-layered. A significant aspect of this research that complicates these already complicated ethical questions is the multi-layered nature of family memory. As I have demonstrated, the researcher faces ethical dilemmas because family memories are so very important and so very private as well. But to complicate matters further, these memories vary in importance and intimacy for different family members (Hirsch, 1999; Holland, 1991; Kuhn, 2002). As Favart-Jardon (2002) posits:

Family memory is not a monolith, it is an active process. It is fundamentally plural... memory constantly evolves according to the individuals' and the group's needs... It has of course an encompassing dimension, especially in united families, but it also contains a personal, subjective dimension... We thus have to keep in mind that there will be rivalries about how people stand to the family, since everyone defends their own version. (p. 310)

Family memory consists of many different layers, and these layers are always in flux. Memories belong to us individually, yet we are not their sole owner (Kuhn, 2002). Hence, there is constant negotiation of memory within families, making the study of family memory very complex indeed. How are we to establish the meaning of memories when that meaning and those memories are contested between the people responsible for creating them? And how do we represent family memory as a collective story without privileging one telling of that story over another?

I encountered this complexity when interviewing family members and struggled with how to properly represent the family story. Several family memory researchers would suggest that we must always struggle with these issues, for this struggle enables us to represent family memory in a more complex way (cf Ellis, 2007; Favart-Jardon, 2002; Scott & Scott, 2001).

Family memory is indeed multi-layered, and as Kuhn (2000) suggests, researchers should present

it as such. Hence, I reconciled these representational issues by attempting to present both the harmony and the dissonance of family memory between members interviewed. I often presented both the individual's perspective on family memory and the dialogue (and at times, disagreement) between family members as well. I also attempted to speak to the complexity of family memory by conducting my study through a methodologically multi-layered research design; I endeavored to design a layered study for a layered subject of analysis. I considered multiple sources of data, such as an exploration of photographs, baby books, and other memory artefacts. And I conducted multiple forms of interviews with multiple family members and friends (both in groups and individually), contributing to a more layered understanding of family memory. And rather than combing the data for one, 'true' account of a family memory, I presented an analysis that shows appreciation for the nuances of individual family memory, while also highlighting the common themes that create a collective family memory. For, as many scholars attest (Hirsch, 1999; Holland, 1991; Kuhn, 2002), family memory is a fluctuating and evolving process; hence, a search for one true representation of a family event might prove fruitless for the researcher. Ethically, this meant I often engaged in a negotiation of meaning between family members. I committed to collaboration through member-checking, which at times led to the exclusion of data, the alteration of details, and the presentation of multiple interpretations. Again, this made the study of family memory an extremely complicated process, but arguably an extremely worthwhile one, as well.

As demonstrated here, family memory is very important, very intimate, and involves an intricately multi-layered process. These three characteristics of family memory created methodological dilemmas for my research that made the ethical study of this subject challenging. However, I found these three characteristics of family memory also provided the solution to

those dilemmas. I employed these three characteristics in the design of my study. I handled the family memories as I would valuable family heirlooms. I strived to create an intimate interview process that honoured the intimacy of family memory. And I approached the project with an appreciation for the multi-layered nature of these memories, both individually and collectively. As I will discuss in section 4.6, this also involved representing the findings of the study in a multi-layered way. So just as family memories are important, intimate, and multi-layered, the study of family memories can be as well.

4.4.2 *Ethical issues in autoethnographic research*

The blessing and the curse of autoethnographic research is that autoethnographers are revealing their own experiences. The trouble with that is that “self-revelations always involve revelations about others” (Ellis, 2007, p. 25). And in these revelations about ourselves and others it is difficult to ensure complete anonymity for those close to us. To protect my participants and myself as a researcher, I made clear to participants prior to our interview that I could not completely guarantee their anonymity. Indeed, the informed consent forms specified these concerns by stating:

It is important to note that this interview will be confidential and I will make every attempt to protect your anonymity. However, this is an autoethnographic study, and therefore many of the participants are well known to each other and complete anonymity might not always be realistic. If you become uncomfortable with this level of anonymity at any point before, during, or after the interview you can always withdraw yourself and your interview transcript from the study by letting me know how you feel. (see Appendix A for individual interviews and Appendix B for group interviews).

Before each interview, these issues of anonymity were discussed at length. Interestingly, no participants expressed concern with this aspect of the project. Yet, in the end, because of the intimate, important, and multi-layered quality of the information they shared, I felt most

comfortable using pseudonyms for all participants (with the exception of my mother, my father, my sisters, and my brother – more on this decision to follow) to protect the individuals and their family members. Given the sensitive and private nature of the quotations I used, and because many of the participants were known to each other, I wanted to keep their information as private and unidentifiable as possible. I felt these pseudonyms did nothing to take away from the impact of the participants' contributions, and this decision fit well with my plans for reporting the findings (see section 4.6).

However, the ethical issues in autoethnography do not end at informed consent. I had to be “permanently vigilant” in my reflections about the ethics of this research; I had to constantly ask myself “do the benefits of writing and sharing these stories outweigh the risks?” (Ellis, 2009, p. 19). I grappled with these ethical dilemmas in varying ways, and often looked to leading autoethnographers for guidance. Several autoethnographers have found ways of increasing levels of anonymity for family members in their research. Aside from himself and a few close family members, Denzin (2008) does not include recognizable people in his work, instead preferring to focus on symbols, places, events, historical figures, and cultural practices. He uses performance text with unnamed narrators and fictional dialogues between numbered voices to represent his analysis. Similarly, Richardson (1997) often creates poetry and performance text using fictional characters and narrators to express her research. And Poulos (2008) writes about family but does not specifically reveal the person's identity. He leaves characters nameless, and often obscures their identity by referring to them only by their role. Hence readers are left wondering whether “Father” is Poulos' father, his father's father, or Poulos himself as a father. I made several attempts at this type of abstract, symbolic writing. Needless to say, these drafts

were not worth producing here; I am, simply put, not a poet. I moved on to different autoethnographic strategies.

Other autoethnographers, like Bochner (1997) and Ellis (2009), continue to write and publish using real people, places, and plots. In a discussion that resonated strongly with my experience, Ellis (2007) describes the fear she felt when working on a project about her ill mother:

My biggest fears in writing about my mother while she was alive included hurting her... I feared my mother would become angry and tell me these aren't things you talk about in public... and a voice inside my head whispered that she would never see this story anyway. However, not telling my mother about publishing this story felt ethically suspicious... Although I wanted to share what I had written with my mother, I still did not want to affect negatively her self-image nor take away her hope that she could get better. I did not want her to be hurt, upset, or disappointed with me. (p. 18-19)

Ellis found that the most useful way to deal with these ethical issues was to reflect upon why she wanted to reveal particular details about her mother and why she wanted to conceal particular details as well. She found that incorporating these reflections into her analysis helped her better understand her own experiences as a caregiver to her mother. Then she found she was better able to share these stories with her mother rather than share the account only upon her mother's death.

When writing the performance piece (see findings) for this dissertation, I encountered similar ethical dilemmas. My biggest fear was that my mother would be hurt by the revelations from my father, my sisters, my brother, and me, which also placed me in an ethically precarious position as the person meant to protect my family as research participants. I was also concerned that my description of her body, her movements, and her speech might cause my mother hurt or embarrassment. However, as Ellis puts it, I felt "ethically suspect" in keeping the research from my mother. Who was I protecting in doing so? Was this about my mother's discomfort or my

own? Do these questions mean there might be a better way of representing these interviews? Ultimately, returning to these questions again and again enabled my writing to take shape and my performance text became richer and more complex. In my descriptions of my mother's illness and body, I tried to be, as Ellis (2004) puts it "lovingly honest". Critique and feedback on my writing from my father, my sisters and my brother helped me work through the ethical dilemmas as well (for verbatim examples of this feedback, see the final act of the performance text). My mother politely declined to read the text, deferring that responsibility to my father, which she is apt to do these days with many tasks she feels she is unable to perform given the progression of her disease. I have plans to read it aloud to her in August, when we are next face-to-face. I feel I know what her response will be, given her now-limited vocabulary and near-constant support of anything I do; however, if there is anything I have learned from my mother, it is that she is always full of surprises. Perhaps a raging academic debate will take place – one never quite knows with Sarah Mulcahy.

Ultimately, Ellis (2007) suggested these dilemmas over the research with her mother came down to a "relational ethics": an ethics wherein we must constantly consider "which questions to ask, which secrets to keep, and which truths are worth telling" (p. 26). I used Ellis's 'relational ethics' as a guide throughout the research and writing process. Relational ethics, as outlined by Ellis, include the following pieces of advice:

- Seek the good.
- Be wise, but not cynical.
- Pay attention to IRB guidelines, but know that your ethical work is not done with the granted of IRB approval.
- Make ethical decisions in research the way you make them in your personal life. Question the authorial and privileged role that being a researcher gives you.
- Ask questions and talk about their research with others, constantly reflecting critically on ethical practices at every step.
- Relationships may change in the course of research and ethical considerations may change as well. Much ethnographic and autoethnographic research is emergent.

- Even when you do get consent from those in your study, be prepared for new complexities along the way.
- Practice “process consent,” checking at each stage to make sure participants still want to be part of your project.
- Include multiple voices and multiple interpretations in your study when you can.
- Don’t ask too much of participants who may get little out of being part of their study.
- Think about ethical considerations before writing, but don’t censure anything in the first draft to get the story as nuanced and truthful as possible.
- Then deal with the ethics of what to tell.
- Sometimes it may be appropriate to write and not publish.
- Let participants and those you write about read your work. However, sometimes you may decide not to take your work back to those you write about. In those cases, you should be able to defend your reasons for not seeking their responses.
- Assume everyone in your story will read it.
- Writing about people who have died will not solve your ethical dilemmas.
- You don’t own your story. Your story is also other people’s stories.
- Your study should lead to positive change. In the best of all worlds, all of those involved in our studies will feel better. But sometimes they won’t; you won’t.
- Writing difficult stories is a gift to self, a reflexive attempt to construct meaning in our lives and heal or grow from our pain.
- Most importantly, do not negatively affect your life and relationships, hurt yourself, or others in your world.

It was these pieces of advice that I continued to revisit throughout the research and writing process. For just as ethics are important, telling this story is important as well. As Poulos (2008) puts it, “to tell the story may well be the *only* ethical thing to do” (p. 21).

Researching family memory – one’s own family memory – is a troubling task. But troubling projects are often the projects most worth undertaking. Ethical issues abound in this research because family memory is important, intimate, and multi-layered, and because autoethnography ultimately reveals not only the researcher but those close to the researcher as well. Through relational ethics and a research design that reflected the importance, intimacy, and multi-layered nature of family memory, I engaged with these ethical issues and attempted to work through the dilemmas they created. However, I anticipate revisiting these dilemmas again and again; this might simply be the nature of (good) autoethnographic research.

4.5 Data analysis procedures

I used Charmaz's (2006) constant comparison approach, narrative analysis, and Ellis's (2004) thematic analysis of narrative to analyze the data. However, the data analysis process for the project was neither linear nor straight-forward. Though I initially intended on analyzing all transcripts using narrative analysis and thematic analysis of narrative, in the end I analyzed only the three interviews with my immediate family using these approaches. The twenty remaining transcripts were analyzed using Charmaz's (2006) approach. These procedures, and the decisions behind the procedures, will be described in detail below.

Data analysis began during transcription, when comments were inserted into individual transcripts as I typed, noting my impressions and relating the participant's experience back to my own experiences and/or the experiences of others. When transcription was finished, I then turned to the process of narrative analysis, used in conjunction with Ellis's (2004) thematic analysis of narrative. As Patton (2002) explains, "The central idea of narrative analysis is that stories and narratives offer especially translucent windows into cultural and social meanings" (p. 116). Narrative analysis entails paying particular attention to the narrative structure of the participants' stories, including recurring symbols, metaphors, figures of speech and sequences of events. The key to analyzing this data using narrative analysis is to pay keen attention to plot, character development, and the "meaningful whole" that the narrative seeks to communicate (Polkinghorne, 1988). Ellis's (2004) thematic analysis of narrative is similar in approach to grounded theory. Using this analysis means that the researcher is "treating stories as data and using analysis to arrive at themes that illuminate the content and hold within or across stories" (p. 196). The process involves coding interview transcripts and other forms of data individually

and collectively to develop themes and overarching meanings. The difference is that grounded theory tends to be presented in theoretical groups and categories, whereas narrative analysis utilizes the story-telling form to express findings. As such, I began coding my interviews.

During the coding process I began wondering about the usefulness of the story-telling style in presenting the themes that were emerging from the data. To explore my concerns further, I began writing the findings as a story. I quickly discovered the story-telling method was not suited for my intentions with the data. I had 23 transcripts to represent, each with their own unique and fascinating contributions to the overarching themes of the research; I felt my attempts to turn the data into a single narrative was obscuring my ability to communicate the nuanced experiences of each individual participant. At the very least, I did not have the artistic skill to successfully convey the complexity of each individual story in a single narrative. In other words, my data analysis procedures were not doing the data, or the participants, justice. Thus, I abandoned these procedures and scrapped the narrative I had written. I returned to the data, and resumed coding, this time guided by Charmaz's (2006) constant comparison approach.

I conducted open coding within and between interview transcripts, resulting in the identification of recurrent conceptual themes. Each interview transcript was initially analyzed using open categories to develop preliminary descriptive categories (e.g. "remembering places"). Focused or selective coding was then used to compare categories both within and between interviews, and to look for emerging conceptual themes (e.g. "Geography in family memory"). Subsequently, patterns of relationships among themes were also examined (e.g. as the relationship between "Geography in family memory" and "Social class in family memory"). These patterns of relationships were developed into the subthemes themes for the findings (for instance "Cultural identity"). This process was repeated to develop the major themes of the

findings (e.g. Patterns of relationships were noted between “Cultural identity”, “Family identity”, and “Individual identity”, creating the overarching theme “Identity”.) Patterns of relationships were then established to create the overarching themes of the findings (e.g. relationships between the themes of “Identity”, “Evidence”, and “Documentation”, established the overarching theme “The meaning of family memory keeping”.) This data analysis laid the groundwork for reporting the findings in a traditional constant comparison style of theoretical groups and categories.

However, during this second round of coding, I became interested in the idea of two different forms of data analysis for two different representations of the findings for this study: one traditional representation based upon Charmaz’s (2006) constant comparison method, and one narrative representation, based upon narrative analysis and Ellis’s (2004) thematic analysis of narrative. The interviews with my father, my mother, and siblings seemed to succinctly represent and evoke the larger themes of the study, and yet I could see potential in using these transcripts for their story-telling ability. The experiences were contained within one family, the participants consented to revealing their identities, and I was most comfortable telling the story of my own family. Thus, I used narrative analysis and thematic analysis of narrative to analyze these transcripts. I coded the data using Charmaz’s (2006) constant comparison method, but I paid particular attention to the narrative structure of the stories, including recurring symbols, metaphors, figures of speech and sequences of events. I then looked for overarching themes that brought these stories together, and began the process of representing these findings as a play.

4.6 **Reporting the findings**

Ellis (2004) argues the most powerful autoethnographies are often those that “join the autoethnographic voice to the voice of others” (p. 327). I reported the findings of this study in this spirit, joining the voices of the 20 participants represented in traditional, constant comparison style, with those of my family, represented in the form of an autoethnographic performance text. Both processes will be detailed further below.

4.6.1 *Reporting through constant comparison*

The findings represented through constant comparison in this research fall into four sections structured through theoretical groups and categories of meaning. Each section has an overarching theme, followed by two or three major themes, each with their own accompanying subthemes. Scant commentary was included to place focus on the quotations from the 20 participants whose transcripts were drawn upon for these sections. Despite the traditional organization of these findings into theoretical groups and categories, the sections do tell a story of sorts. The first section, “The Process”, is intended to introduce the reader to the activity of family memory keeping in a relatively basic way. The reader learns what is kept, what is left behind, how memories are preserved, where memories are preserved, and how the memories are eventually passed down. The next section, “The Role”, adds a layer of complexity to the activity by introducing readers to the characters involved in the memory keeping process. In this section, readers come to understand the different roles for men and women in memory keeping, the different social expectations men and women experience in terms of these roles, and the ways that these roles are negotiated. These developments complicate the more basic notion of memory keeping presented in the previous section. The following section, “The Meaning”, adds yet another layer to this understanding by exploring the significance of memory keeping for

participants and their families. The reader learns what memory keeping means to participants and their families in terms of complex and often contradictory themes of documentation, evidence, and identity. In true narrative form, a crisis is then introduced in “The Loss”, where readers explore the loss of a mother’s memory. This loss painfully re-emphasizes the deep and multi-layered significance of a mother’s memory and produces complications that arise as a family transitions in the wake of this loss. Finally, as the narrative concludes, a resolution of sorts is reached, as readers observe participants attempting to cope with that loss through memory.

Through the use of theoretical groups and categories, these findings were reported using an approach that showcased the nuances of each individual participant’s experience, yet explored the overarching themes of the interviews collectively. For these data, and this researcher, this method of reporting the findings was the best technique for communicating the meaning of family memory keeping. However, I felt these “voices of others” should be joined with my own “autoethnographic voice” to present the most powerful representation of family memory keeping this research could offer (Ellis, 2004).

4.6.2 Reporting through an autoethnographic performance text

I chose to represent the findings of my interviews with my father, mother, and siblings, through an autoethnographic performance text. Autoethnographies come in many different forms. Some feature narrative (Halley, 2003), poetry (Richardson, 2002), short stories (Goodall, 2005; Wyatt, 2005), drawings (Gillies, 2007; Lee, 2006), photography (Denzin, 2008), and video (Havitz, 2008). Some feature a bit of each (Denzin, 2008). Some are published in peer-reviewed social science journals (Bochner, 1997, 2001) some as novels (Ellis, 1995, 2004). Some blur the

lines between social science writing and narrative writing (Pinney, 2005), while others keep the story separate from the traditional analysis (Ellis, 2004). In this project, I was most comfortable taking Ellis's (2004) approach and keeping the story separate from the traditional analysis, as described in section 4.6.1. However, like many aspects of this project, the final product was the result of many varying drafts. How we write our autoethnographies largely depends on where our project takes us, and this project has taken me on a very interesting, and at times quite frustrating, autoethnographic journey. Here I will discuss the writing process and the many decisions involved in crafting an autoethnographic performance text.

The writing process began with journaling. Following the transcription process, and using Ellis's (2004) guide to writing autoethnography, I began by taking retrospective field notes on my experiences with family memory keeping. This included every detail I could remember about why I was interested in the topic, what had drawn me to the project, and what life experiences I had with family memory keeping. Next I turned to the interviews, journaling about the tone, setting, and atmosphere of each interview. I concentrated on emotions and dialogue, place, colours, smells, sounds, and movements. As Ellis (2004) suggested, I wrote about the interviews when my feelings were intense, and then returned to them when I felt more emotionally removed. I reread the transcripts, inserting notes on what went unsaid during particular exchanges. At times, I found this process supremely boring and time-consuming. Initially, I used none of this information in crafting my story and resented having to adhere to the process. Yet as drafts continued to be rewritten, I found I returned to these notes to layer the text with meaning, sound, atmosphere, character, tension, movement, and setting.

My first draft was terrible. Kind and constructive feedback from my sister and husband confirmed this fact. I attempted to write as Ellis (2004) writes, in first person narrative form

with an emphasis on realism rather than abstract prose. I wrote with “thick description” (Geertz, 1973) and used participants’ own words as often as possible, as Ellis suggests. Unfortunately for my participants’ words, my writing was cloying and forced, resulting in a dull piece with very little to offer theoretically. The narrative I constructed was far too neat, linear, and clean for the complex data it was supposedly representing. My voice was far too dominant and thus the story had the sense of being too confident, too in control. I began revisions, only to find I was unhappy with the entire structure of the piece. I considered starting again, for as Ellis (2004) maintains, “One of the values of this approach is its flexibility... you must be aware of possible dynamics and open to improvisation and changing strategies along the way to better match the constraints and needs of the project” (p. 68). I knew I needed a new structure for the piece, but I was actively resisting writing a performance text, a method I had used with success in the past (cf Mulcahy & Parry, 2012, Mulcahy, Parry, & Glover, 2009); I was eager to prove that I was not a one-trick autoethnographic pony.

As it turns out, I am. On a self-dare, I opened a new document and began to write a fresh performance text that turned out to be far superior to my first narrative. Through performance text, I was able to portray the complex, multi-layered, multi-dimensional nature of family memory. For, as Denzin (2003) describes, performance texts are uniquely powerful in their ability to convey complicated life experiences. Performance texts create the opportunity for multiple speakers, meanings, layers, realities, experiences, and interpretations (Denzin, 1997; Ellis, 2004; Richardson, 2003). In writing theatre, I gave myself space to play with emotions, space, and voice; I could be disorderly, autobiographical, fragmented and incomplete (Paget, 1993; Pifer, 1999). I could quite literally stage my struggle and see how it played out. Thus, I created a character sitting at a desk listening to the recordings of her interviews with her family

and attempting to write something about those interviews – just as I was. I staged my struggles with this dissertation, and watched as the characters interacted and ultimately came to insights and realizations, seemingly on their own. Convinced of the efficacy of the performance text for communicating these findings, I embarked on creating my autoethnographic family play.

Several key decisions were made in terms of the structure of the performance text. To create narrative cohesion, I used Goodall's (2008) suggestion for framing a narrative with recurring themes to add structure and consistency to the text. In his work on family secrets, Poulos (2006) created this consistency using a series of written dreams spread throughout the autoethnography. I explored this method by recalling dreams different family members had spoken about (which were later confirmed and clarified by those family members) that seemed to frame each section of the text thematically. I also decided to use participants' own words as often as possible, as Ellis' (2004) suggests. The words spoken by the characters of my father, my mother, and my siblings, are all verbatim quotes. Most of the words spoken by my character during the interviews are verbatim as well. I did this to create a sense of polyvocality, but also quite simply because the characters' unique voices and personalities rang true when using their own words. Without the careful attention paid to verbatim quotes, my voice was once again too dominant, the dialogue too smooth, the tensions and incongruities erased. The interview transcripts were, however, edited for the purposes of time, space, and narrative flow. At times the transcripts were also edited to protect the participants and to remain true to the ethics of the project, wherein Ellis (2007) maintains "Most importantly, do not negatively affect your life and relationships, hurt yourself, or others in your world" (p. 26). Through several rounds of feedback and revisions from my family members (some given to more elaborate feedback due to

personality – my father, my sisters –than others – my brother), I produced a script I feel ethically comfortable and methodologically confident sharing.

At times the performance text, however, diverges thematically from the traditional qualitative sections that preceded it. As I have noted, I was inspired by my own experiences with women’s family memory keeping, loss, and genetic disease to begin this project five years ago. These experiences grounded the study, enabling me a starting point for the entire project. And yet, when I embarked on this study, I found my participants’ experiences with memory keeping deeply engrossing and complex in ways that deviated from and expanded upon my own experiences. The interviews pulled my dissertation away, in some regards, from my original focus particularly on my family’s experiences with genetic disease. I am grateful for this deviation; participants offered incredibly rich data that provided this dissertation with unexpected and exciting analytical contributions. Yet, there are also ways in which I feel this is unfortunate; I think the performance piece offers the beginnings of some fascinating theoretical insight into the connections between family memory and genetic disease that could have been further developed and supported had I recruited participants differently and gathered additional data. However, as I will demonstrate in the discussion chapter, the piece also contributes considerably to my analysis of women’s family memory keeping, dominant gender ideologies, caregiving, trauma, narrative reconstruction, loss and coping. Thus, I am, in some ways, back where I started. I am still inspired by my family’s experiences with family memory and genetic disease and look forward to future studies that can develop upon the initial findings the performance text provided.

The goal of this project was to better understand the politics of mothering and family memory through the personal experiences of myself and those close to me. Each method I have

employed (from recruitment, to interview style, from data collection to data analysis) was chosen for its emphasis on the important, intimate, and multi-layered nature of family memory and autoethnography. Each method I employed also reflected my feminist, autoethnographic theoretical orientation that values the use of the personal to explore the political, including attention paid to the intersecting identities of race, class, gender, sexuality, disability, and so forth. There were many methodological missteps along the way, and there are many aspects of this project I would do differently in retrospect. But I suspect these are the lessons we only learn from doing. In the meantime, we now move to the culmination of these methodological efforts: the findings from this study.

5.0 Findings

The findings represented through constant comparison in this research fall into four sections structured through theoretical groups and categories of meaning. Each section has an overarching theme, followed by two or three major themes, each with their own accompanying subthemes. These sections are then followed by an autoethnographic performance text representing the findings from my interviews with my mother, father, sisters, and brother. The four main categories, with accompanying subcategories, are as follows: The Process (the selection process, the preserving process, the inheritance process), The Role (different roles for men and women, different social expectations for men and women, negotiating the role), The Meaning (documentation, evidence, identity), and The Loss (loss of a mother's memory, coping with the loss through memory).

5.1 The Process

What is memory keeping? To gain a better understanding of this practice, I asked participants to take me through the process of memory keeping in their families. Analysis of the data revealed three themes surrounding the memory-keeping process, each with accompanying subthemes: the selection process (what is kept, what is left behind), the preserving process (how memories are preserved, where memories are preserved), and the inheritance process (inheriting the memories, inheriting the role). You will note the predominance of women, and mainly mothers, represented in the quotations. This section is meant to introduce the activity of memory keeping in a general way; yet, by concluding with the exploration of the inheritance of the role of memory keeper, this section will transition into a more critical investigation into the gendered role of memory keeper in section 5.2.

5.1.1 The selection process

Keeping memory for one's family necessitates a selection process. Memory keeping can involve a conscious, deliberate, decision-making process or a conflicted, confused, tension-riddled process, or an accidental, unplanned, unintentional process. Indeed, the selection process often involves all of the above. Regardless, the memory keeping process begins with *what is kept*, and *what is left behind*.

5.1.1.1 *What is kept*

The participants interviewed for this study described saving everything from children's drawings to school report cards to university papers for their children. Participants who were mothers often took these memories out during the interview and we sorted through them as we talked:

So there's cute little things in there. Isn't that cute? One of Karen's first creations. It was a series of books... and then she used to draw pictures related to it. These are horrible, she'd be mortified. Yeah, she's quite artistic. Oh here we go...you can see a pineapple, and I think a pickle man, and a garlic person. ...And then I have a lot of Matt's works. ...A lot of cartooning, sketches. So that's him. But then a lot of report cards, certificates, kindergarten graduations. What's that? Oh, to get his RRSP money. So I have a lot of that stuff all the way up to university. And then Kristen, Kristen is not an artistic kid in the slightest sense, but we have newspaper clippings...Ninja turtles. I don't know who wrote that... That's Matt's, his magazine that he co-edits... A diaper. The kids were allergic to disposables... (Kay, 50)

Well, I have first haircut clippings, and then I have on scrap paper the first things they ate. When they ate the pineapple, when they ate the banana, stuff like that... All their birthday cards from their friends... (Mary, 55)

Some participants were mothers of adult children sorting through memories spanning anywhere from twenty to fifty years:

Oh yeah, that ring, the little bracelet, the baby spoon. And Johnny had one, and Linda, too. Those are going on fifty-five years now. (Pat, 75)

Well, like Marc when he was little had a wood burning set. And he made a little square and burned "to Mum, love Marc". Or just over the years, a little clay ash tray made by him, that's in there. And there's also the letter that our Dad wrote to us before he died. And just anything I felt was meaningful that can't be put out as a decoration. Just things that I've kept over the years. I mean, Marc's forty years old, so most of them are from when he was little. Just little mementos that they had given me. (Colleen, 62)

While others were new mothers, navigating the waters of collecting memories for their young children:

I have the receiving blankets I took her home in, as well as many pairs of sleepers. I have billions of digital photos... videos, and imprints that I took of her little footprints with ink, as well as her first bandages... (Lindsey, 32)

I save his clothes ...blankets, certain stuffed animals ...cards...certain drawings... (Lara, 35)

A number of mothers reported saving baby teeth:

And I did discover two teeth. But I have no idea who they belong to, and they're dug out of two different jewellery boxes. I don't know whose they are. And there's probably more of them up there. (Kay, 50)

Phil's mum saves all their teeth... every single tooth that they have lost. And now 30 years later, they still have their baby teeth. I can see myself doing that sort of thing, though. But it would be weird for a child to see. (Lara, 35)

One mother even had a tiny plastic chest entitled "tooth saver":

I found this little plastic chest. It's got two baby teeth in it. I don't know whose those are, could be any of them. It does say "tooth saver" on the chest! (Mary, 55)

Hospital bracelets were identified by many mothers as a cherished object saved:

I was going to bring his hospital bracelet [to the interview] and then I thought, no, I wouldn't want to lose it... That's one to cherish. (Lara, 35)

This is his little baby band from when he was a newborn. And it wasn't on tight enough so his little foot slipped right out. (Kay, 50)

I still have the clamp that was on Olivia's umbilical cord and the little wrist bracelet she wore in the hospital. (Lindsey, 32)

They all have their hospital bracelets. (Mary, 55)

Though the majority of the mothers interviewed noted they saved and cherished their children's hospital bracelets, one mother found having a home birth left different options for memory-keeping:

I was going to say I kept his hospital bracelet, but, no! I would've kept the placenta if I had somewhere to put it...[The midwives] just had a little ruler and they wrote his weight and head size at birth on it. So that's what I'm trying to do. And I kind of traced his hand in there, and I included in the back of the book his in utero photos and the thing they measured his head with when he was born and stuff like that. (Erin, 33)

Photographs were often cited as prized memory artefacts:

Well, especially when Joe, Chris and Tom were little we did it a lot, every year we'd get a professional picture taken. But after that we only have maybe just one with all of them. It was important. (Mary, 55)

One mother made a photo album for each of her sibling's families, and kept one for her own daughter as well:

Yeah, well she'll have that photo album because each family has a photo album... But we have a number of photos also of different things. (Elsa, 45)

Another woman described the significance of the photos she kept of extended family:

You know what, at the same time, I have some photocopies of photographs ... photographs are really special anyways, I think. That's my great grandpa, I guess. Some neat old pictures. And how special that is to have them. (Nell, 38)

Other participants described ornaments saved, regardless of their financial value:

If you look at our family Christmas tree though, you'll see that a great deal of the ornaments are like homemade Christmas crafts that my sister and I made over the years. I think it's sweet that she never threw them out. (Katie, 27)

Some mothers kept very few memory artefacts over the years:

I have some things of Alexandra's, because I'm not really that materialistic that I'd keep a whole bunch of stuff. But like in a trunk I have, like a jacket that I bought her in the Netherlands that she'll hopefully do whatever she wants with ...I have a box about this big (gestures approximately the size of a shoe box) with different things like that that she's made over the years. Yeah, I have that. Just once in a while, things that... stick with you. (Elsa, 45)

Another way memories were kept in our house was through saving crafts and school work. I don't think Mum went overboard with this though, because I think she felt there was only a certain number of things that needed to be saved. They would just taking up space and never looked it. (Katie, 27)

Others noted they kept memory artefacts, but perhaps less traditional artefacts. One mother gestured around the room as she described which memories she keeps:

There's memories around, and there's different things, but maybe not traditional things... You can look around and all these little bits of stuff... There's a jar there that's stuff that Aggie's kids have collected for me at the cabin. And I keep a lot of things like that. We really enjoy the outdoors. I mean, I know where that little bird's nest comes from, when we went for a walk one day around the lakes and stuff. So there's a lot of that kind of stuff around. It's just different memories. (Nell, 38)

Many women commented that the first born child has far more memories kept for them than subsequent children:

I have a baby book that my mum made for me. My younger sister doesn't have one, though. Or maybe half of one or something. (Danielle, 35)

My mum did save things, but we didn't have a video camera, she saved report cards, and we have a little photo album. Well, we have one for me, but we don't really have one for my sister. They often say, the first child you do more, but each consecutive child doesn't have so much. (Lara, 35)

Time is cited as the major reason for the decline of memory-keeping as more children are born:

And now you have to see, this is what happens when you have children very close together. The third one gets nothing. (Kay, 50)

And then as the kids go on, well by the fifth, the pictures are less and the keepsakes, the things, are less. Mum finds that with my sister, she'll say, where's the pictures of me? Because you start off with good intentions but then other things take over. You just don't have the time. (Mary, 55)

I have a baby book that my mother kept for me, just for me. There's nothing for my younger brothers and sisters. She ran out of time. (Erin, 33)

While mothers did describe keeping memory artefacts for their children, it was apparent that what was kept for whom depended largely on birth order.

Despite the time constraints experienced by women raising children, every mother interviewed for this study reported saving some sort of memory artefacts for their children, though many women noted that more items were saved for the first-born child than for subsequent children. These memory artefacts ranged from Ninja Turtles to insurance forms, expensive jewellery to “chintzy Santas”, teeth to birds’ nests. Some women had been saving memories for over fifty years, while others were collecting memories for children just a few months old. The most commonly cited saved memory artefact was undoubtedly the hospital bracelet (as well as inked footprints and handprints, hair clippings, and arts and crafts); however some women described saving fewer and less traditional artefacts such as a warm coat for future wear and a jar of beach glass. In the end, many mothers imparted that not every memory artefact could be saved.

5.1.1.2 *What is left behind*

Women often reported feeling conflicted when it came to deciding which memory artefacts to keep and which to leave behind:

It’s hard to know how much. Like, I have two little boxes, and I’ve got the two little outfits that I think I want to keep... (Erin, 33)

I don’t know, I have to decide. I’m not keeping all of them. Not their Spanish school midterms. (Kay, 50)

Often, this debate resulted in some memory artefacts being “recycled”:

Like the birthday cards or, well I don’t chuck those out, but the drawings, that’s something I struggle with. Because he does so much. Which one do I put on the fridge?

Do I put everything? You're really concerned about their self-esteem (laughter), so you don't want to turn your back on something that maybe they thought was very important. But I do recycle some of them. (Lara, 35)

Lord knows, I didn't keep everything that they made me! And even with that, I still have things in a box of my stuff that I have culled many times over the years. I mean, over the years you don't need old letters from old boyfriends, but I still have odds and ends, like Girl Guide things that have meant something to me, so who knows who will get that or who will want it... (Colleen, 62)

Interestingly, as frequently as the conversation turned to saving hospital bracelets, discussion also turned to whether or not the umbilical cord stump should be saved:

We saved his umbilical cord stump for the longest time... To the point where it was so dried up and so tiny that someone would say, what is that? That's his belly button. And most people say, that's disgusting. We still have it. (Lara, 35)

Seriously though. What are we going to do with that? I don't want to see what that's going to look like right now. (Suzanne, 35)

I don't know. It looked pretty gross attached to the baby. (Danielle, 35).

Pete was like, nope. There's no keeping that. (Erin, 33)

Dilemmas also emerged surrounding what memories to keep in baby books:

Writing in it [baby book], writing to him, am I writing to him as a child? Do I include the inappropriate details? Like, I know when you were conceived! (laughter) Do you want to know that? (Erin, 33)

There were certainly times when I didn't know what to put in there. Like how I wasn't sure what to put about how I felt about her at first. But also, Rob's reaction...when I told him I was pregnant, I ran to his work and like, brought the stick thing, and he was just like, "What does that mean?" And he was just kind of confused and he's not the most overt with his feelings. So I wasn't going to write, "Your dad said 'What is this?' ...I cried and he said "why are you crying"? I didn't really put those parts in there. You're not really sure what to put. (Mandy, 29)

Often, decisions regarding which memory artefacts to keep were made for women when their families faced sudden change, complicating the selection process. Many women spoke about leaving memory artefacts behind during a move:

I have no idea where those photos are now... I should mention that my family moved a lot. By the time I was 10 years old, we had lived in 3 different locations and 5 different houses. With each move comes losing things, that just seems to be part of it... That or my dad is going around throwing everything out before we move and just telling us they got lost! ...And my parents also sold our childhood home that we lived in and moved to a condo so they downsized and have no storage now. I believe a lot of things were thrown out with that move as well. (Katie, 28)

When I was a kid...our memory stuff, our toys, when we moved, we would just chuck.

(Mary, 55)

Several women expressed considerable regret and sadness over leaving memories behind:

We've moved around a lot... At this point, I'm 38 and I've lived in more than 19 different houses. Evie's probably lived in 12. Maddy said she was talking about it in class one day, and she's lived in 6 different places. And Eric, same amount. And listening to you talk about keeping things or not, I do feel guilty about that because I haven't done a lot of that. I've moved and moved and moved, you know? (Nell, 38)

It was so hard, it was so hard. When you move so much. But I kept a Santa that she had made at school, the legs moved like this...I saved it for the longest time. (Pat, 75)

Some families had memories damaged or destroyed due to elements outside their control. For one woman, moving homes due to a separation from her husband made the memory-keeping process charged with complication, tension, and emotion:

It's tough too, like last year at Christmas to have to split ornaments with Mike. Things like that. A lot of pictures I just said, you know, I'm taking them... There's a box of stuff, there's things that are over at Mike's house unfortunately that he's gone through. Quite a bit of my stuff that he's garbaged or burned because he's been angry and it stayed at that house. (Nell, 38)

Another complicating factor in the selection process was natural elements; one family lost memories to fire and turned to their grandmother for the artefacts she had preserved:

Travis' family moved to France for a year when he was six and they put everything in storage, all their toys and clothes and everything. And then all the storage lockers were

broken into and burned, so they lost everything. So his baby stuff and his sister's and his brother's baby stuff is all burned, except his grandmother had photos and she had a few, so those are the photos that we have now. (Danielle, 35)

In these cases, memory selection was complicated by elements outside women's control, and at times, fraught with tension, as well.

The memory-keeping process entails a process of selection. Women described debating whether or not to save particular memory artefacts or to let them go. Other women felt conflicted in their decisions to record particular memories or to leave particular memories undocumented. Yet women also discussed instances where the selection process became complicated by external factors such as moving homes or separating from a spouse. Several women described circumstances wherein memories were destroyed without their consent. Thus, the selection process in terms of memory artefacts is not without its tensions and complications (further tensions and complications of memory keeping will be explored in section 5.3). What gets saved and what gets left behind is at times accidental, at other times a conscious and careful process of selection, and at other times the result of factors and pressures outside a woman's control. How and where we save these memory artefacts is similarly complex.

5.1.2 The preserving process

Upon selecting their memory artefacts, participants interviewed detailed the process of then preserving or storing these memories. The preserving process was often described as disorganized, unfinished, and ongoing, and many participants expressed concern over the effectiveness of their preserving methods. In particular, they discussed *how* and *where* their family memory was preserved.

5.1.2.1 *How memory is preserved*

The most common form of preserving memory was overwhelmingly the baby book. Many women described purchasing these or other baby keepsake albums designed to help mothers save memories:

I keep a baby book for Sadie. (Katie, 28)

I have a baby book for him, yeah. (Danielle, 35)

All three have baby books. (Kay, 50)

I think I have four baby books done. (Mary, 55)

One mother brought out her baby book and showed me each separate compartment designed by the product to organize a mother's memory-keeping:

Anyway, see, it's got a little drawer, and it has like, first tooth, and first hair...ID bracelet ...footprint...stuff like that. (Amanda, 29)

Though mothers of all ages seemed to keep baby books, one mother commented on the generational change in memory-keeping products and fashions:

Did your mother ever bronze your booties? That was their era, though, wasn't it? That they did that...I find that funny. Bronzing anything – why would we do that? (Lara, 35)

But the same mother noted these products are helpful insofar as they help mothers keep memories despite their exhaustion and time-crunched lives:

I bought this stuff at a craft store, you can buy little kits, and it's ridiculous because it's just plaster, but these are little manufactured kits with a little frame on it. You can just buy the kit for \$15 and do his handprints... This seems more, I don't know what the word is, structured. And I just don't have the creativity or energy to get all that stuff. And it means he gets to do a craft and gets to have a memory. (Lara, 35)

Other mothers felt too exhausted by the traditional baby books and instead recorded their own notes in a less structured way:

I have started a book, but I found it was too exhausting to remember to record all of the special dates so I wrote some in my agenda, like, “She first laughed on her one-year-old birthday at Mum’s”. (Lindsey, 32)

Likewise, another mother described assembling her own baby book out of a photo album:

Well, when the kids were younger I think I had four baby books done. I had a typewriter and I would put little scripts beside all the pictures and put them in the sticky pages. (Mary, 55)

Another mother used multi-purpose boxes as a way of storing her memories. One box was reserved for each of her sons (and their families), as well as one for her husband and her sister:

They’re just banker’s boxes, they’re about a foot high by ten by twelve or something. They’re not huge, but I can fit stuff into them... So yes, I have made something and now if Marc gives me a Mother’s Day card, it’s easy, because everything’s sorted. (Colleen, 62)

Another mother purchased several secure boxes:

Safety deposit box. For all of your memories. All of your legal documents in one, and another for just your memories. Including your love letters from different men in your life. (Lara, 35)

Others cited technological tools like video cameras and blogs as a way of better preserving their family memories:

We want to get a video camera. For Christmas. We have little snippets on cell phones, or Dave’s camera takes two minute little clips, but that’s something I wish we had had

when I was little. I always found it really interesting to watch my friends when they were little and their little voices, just to see what you were like when you were young.

(Lindsey, 35)

And I have a blog. It's not as good as some other people's blog, but I add like two photos a month. (Danielle, 35)

But for some women saving memories for adult children, technology created obstacles for preserving their memories:

The technology just goes faster and faster. Like, I had the VHS figured out. I knew exactly the plugs. But now I'm behind. HTMI's and thumb-drives and everything.

(Mary, 55)

I've got mine on a – what's the other one? – VHS? I got that far with it. (Pat, 75)

Women often mentioned wishing they could preserve memory differently but simply not having the time:

I kept a little cute outfit that he would wear and I put it in a box under his bed. So we have that. And I just picture throwing things in there and then they'll go into the baby album if I ever get to it. (Danielle, 35)

Yeah, well I was very, "Oh! The first time they had pineapple!" Or something like that. (laughter) But what I did is I wrote it on scrap paper, and you mean to do it on something better, and you never get there because you're so busy. (Mary, 55)

Time was often cited as a reason for preserving memories via particular methods. Either products were purchased, ranging from ceramics to electronics, to aid in the process and therefore save time, or the process was scattered and disorganized as a result of having so little time. This also affected women's experiences of where memory was preserved.

5.1.2.2 *Where memory is preserved*

Just as women described feeling unsystematic in their ability to preserve memory, women reported feeling equally disorganized when it came to finding a place in which to store their memory artefacts. Indeed, many women recalled their own mothers storing memories in a similarly haphazard fashion:

I think Mum... she kept all the important papers, but most of her passport stuff and important official documents were in her jewellery box. It used to be all shoved, it couldn't close. Like bills and receipts plus these things we'd make for her ... (Nicole, 26)

In her night side drawer, in a top cupboard that we weren't allowed into as kids, in the attic in boxes, in Dad's night side table... (Lindsey, 32)

In my family, memories were kept in a number of different ways, but very disorganized sort of ways. We had boxes of random photos everywhere, the occasional album but mainly just cardboard boxes stuffed with photos. No rhyme or reason at all. (Katie, 28)

And yet, many women seemed content simply knowing the memories were "somewhere in the house":

I've got a whole box full of baby clothes and things. The keepers. But I don't know where those are. Somewhere in this house. (Kay, 50)

Like, somewhere around I probably have the outfit I brought Marion home from the hospital in. No wait, that was the one I bought for Nancy. Because I had bought a little pinstripe baseball outfit to bring my child home from the hospital in. So that was a girl. And the next one was a girl. And then the next one was a girl. So I said, screw that! I'm bringing that third one home in the baseball outfit! (laughter) It's probably still around somewhere. (Leona, 49)

Often this disorganization was described as simply never being able to "get around to it":

As you might have already figured out, my method for memory keeping is incredibly disorganized. Organizational skills have never come naturally to me, I think I'm a bit of a scatter-brain. Like, I have several junk closets, drawers, cupboards, and whatever. I like to keep my house tidy but just don't open any closed doors! You can find random photos in any of these designated junk areas. And usually the photos were printed out for a reason, to be framed, or put in a scrap book or something but just never got around to it. (Katie, 28)

One mother noted she was proud of her memory-keeping, despite the appearance of being disorganized:

And I think for me, as long as I just keep it together, that is a huge feat for me, to even compile it and have it somewhat organized. Because that feels organized to me. It's not all over the place, it's in one little box. (Lara, 35)

But often women described the nagging need to eventually store their memories in a more organized place:

Especially pictures. They're all in boxes, they should be in albums. If you don't do them right away, you just get swamped with them. (Mary, 55)

I keep memories mainly through photos. I have a cheap old digital camera and I do the best I can to capture our family moments... I love having photos. My problem is getting them printed out. I have thousands upon thousands of photos on multiple computers I've had throughout my life and yet I still don't have any printed. It's something that really upsets me too but I haven't done anything about it yet. And then the older I get, the more photos I take, the harder it is to imagine trying to print even a fraction of them out, you know what I mean? Like, sometimes I miss the days of rolls of film, you know? You didn't take as many photos, but you always had hard copies of them. I do know that someday I'll want these albums to hold on to and look back on so I made a New Years' resolution to make a photo album for the first year of Sadie's life... I'll go through month by month and pick ten or fifteen of my favourite pictures from each month and put them all in an album, maybe as a first birthday gift for her...I just thought of that right now!
(Katie, 28)

For some women, technological innovations such as digital photographs and Facebook have allowed them to better organize and preserve their memory artefacts by having them in one place:

We have a lot of photographs. And we have a lot of photographs that are online. We actually have two hard-drives from two old computers, because I know we have photographs on them... Eric had to do a project the other day and he said, there aren't any pictures of me. And I said, there's tonnes of pictures of you, but we don't print them

out, they're on the computer. I don't know if you've looked, but I have something like 135 Facebook photo albums (laughter), something ridiculous and indulgent like that.

(Nell, 38)

One thing I do keep is Facebook albums. Like, I have 100 Facebook photo albums, I just counted. ...Since Sadie was born I've made a Facebook album for every month of her life, and separate albums for special occasions like going to the family cottage or Christmas. (Katie, 28)

However, many women also described being apprehensive about memory-keeping in cyberspace:

I use Facebook. Lots of photos. I question if it's always gonna be like that because you don't know what's going to happen with Facebook. (Danielle, 35)

But what happens if the internet blows up? What if you lose all of it? Totally devastating to lose all that. We have an external hard drive and Dave backs stuff up every couple of months, but it's still just sitting by the computer. So it should go in a safety deposit box. (Lara, 35)

I get this sick feeling in the pit of my stomach when I think about someday being old and having no photos because I never took them off the computer and I lose them forever or something. (Katie, 28)

While technology often allowed women the opportunity to preserve their memory artefacts in one place, women were also deeply concerned about the risks associated with preserving their memories electronically.

The women interviewed for this study described preserving memory artefacts in a variety of ways and places. Many mothers described purchasing products designed to help mothers keep memory for their children, including baby books, keepsake boxes, and hand-printing kits. Other women used less structured ways of preserving memory, creating scrapbooks from scratch, using safety deposit boxes and shoeboxes. Many women described their memory-keeping process as disorganized; inestimable amounts of artefacts stowed in a variety of places around the house, or indeed, preserved in the more risky realm of cyberspace. And though many women were comfortable with the disorganization characteristic of their memory-keeping, most women also indicated they were time-stressed and described the desire to preserve these family memory artefacts effectively. For how we store memory and where we store memory impacts directly upon the process of passing that memory down.

5.1.3. The inheritance process

All memory keepers interviewed stressed the memory keeping process was leading to the inevitable act of passing along the artefacts. Though for some these inheritance processes were positive and even seemingly ritualistic, for others the inheritance process was not as smooth. Many participants also alluded to the inheritance of the role of family memory keeper, a process often occurring in conjunction with the inheritance of memory artefacts. Thus, the memory keeping process involves passing down both the *memories* and the *role* of family memory keeper as well.

5.1.3.1 *Inheriting the memories*

Participants described both the process of passing down memories and the process of receiving inherited memories. Many participants recalled memory artefacts they inherited from mothers or grandmothers, significant with or without financial value:

I have some old ornaments which are like really crappy and old and they weren't kept very well, but they were my grandma's. You know, they were like dollar store ornaments, cheap things, but it doesn't matter. (Nell, 38)

I have two plastic Santas, one came from my mother's mother and one came from my father's mother. And they're chintzy, cheesy plastic Santas but I love my plastic Santas! (Leona, 49)

One participant brought out her own baby ring, a family heirloom, but had to call her seventy-five year old mother when she could not remember who had given it to her:

And then this is my baby ring. I forget who gave this to me. Just hang on, I'll have to ask Mum. (Mary, 55)

All mothers interviewed reported plans for eventually passing down at least some of the memory artefacts they had collected:

I'm sure Olivia will treasure these memories as she gets older especially if I present them in a sentimental and special way. (Lindsey, 32)

What a nice artefact for him to have, to look at when he's older. (Lara, 35)

Oh definitely. I want them to have them. (Colleen, 62)

Some mothers were less assured that their children would appreciate the inheritance:

Well, I'm keeping them as keepsakes, and later on I'm going to give them to them. And see if they would appreciate it. If they would like it. Maybe some won't mean anything to them, and maybe some will. (Mary, 55)

And maybe right now, they don't want them. But maybe someday, maybe twenty years from now, they will. (Colleen, 62)

And some were reluctant to part with particular artefacts:

I have my mother's wedding ring. It's my wedding ring. It was my great-grandmother's, my mother's, now mine. And now I've got my three out there saying, I get that when you die! No, I get that when you die! I got news for you, I'm not dying! (Leona, 49)

Others suggested they would simply make copies of memory artefacts when possible:

I'd like to get all the videos and edit them all and give them all videos. We'll just do copies. (Mary, 55)

Some mothers had already passed many memory artefacts on to their children:

At our house I had a big clean out and I basically said to Marc and Mitchell, this stuff is yours, take it. If you don't want it, get rid of it. You know, we've had your stuff all these years. (Colleen, 62)

Some recalled the process of inheriting memory artefacts from their mother as almost ceremonial:

Mum toll painted a scene [on a wooden box] from a photo of us as a family. And one was for me and one was for my brother. And she put a whole bunch of stuff in there. Like graduation pamphlets, scribblers, things like that. But she didn't organize it, but when I graduated from high school she gave it to me and then she gave one to my

brother. It didn't take her a lot of work, but that's where it is. And she weeded a ton of stuff out. That's what we have. (Danielle, 35)

One woman described the process almost as if it were a rite of passage initiated from her mother and mother-in-law in preparation for her own transition to motherhood:

It's been very important to me to keep a baby book for Sadie because when I was pregnant, mine and Luke's mothers both gave us our baby books and I really enjoyed reading them and seeing what we were like as babies and seeing the emotions they went through. So I have made a very big effort to keep a baby book for Sadie and I put a lot of effort into keeping it pretty and decorated. (Katie, 28)

When men were interviewed, they described the inheritance process in less ceremonial terms:

She saved them all in her room. But I don't know if we ever paid much attention to it. And one day she was cleaning up the house and she was like, "Ok, you guys can take this stuff. I'm not keeping it anymore." (Alex, 27)

When interviewed together, one son indicated to his mother that he might not want to inherit the memories she had kept:

To be honest, I wouldn't want this stuff passed along to me. (Matt, 22)

But your own stuff you would. So I was careful not to throw out anything that I got that I found in your room, it was all boxed. Except for a couple of things. Well, I told you those shoes with holes in them. I threw those out. (Kay, 50)

However, the same son went on to say that perhaps he would someday change his mind:

But it's actually one of those things that I'm not even sure I want that stuff, but I like knowing that it's sort of in the basement somewhere...I don't really care about these things now, but who knows if my attitude will change. So that's why it might be better to

keep some of this stuff. Like, sure, it's no use to me now, or I think, meh, ok, interesting, neat little sentimental trip down memory lane, but nothing more. Whereas like, maybe in the future it will serve some vital function that I haven't even imagined now. (Matt, 22)

Similarly, one woman wondered why her son resisted taking the memories she had tried to pass along:

Maybe it's just knowing this stuff is around, maybe they're even happy that it's all still in my house... My son, who's not an action sort of person, was like, well, it's not hurting anyone here. (laughter) And it wasn't, it's true. (Colleen, 62)

The process of inheriting memories was unnerving for some. One woman described feeling alarmed when her parents began passing their memory artefacts down to her:

They say, this is all for you, I'm holding it all for you guys...Now they're going through a transition where they've painted their room and they're moving everything, so now I'm getting kind of worried that something's wrong with them, because they just started giving me stuff. And that kind of freaked me out. (Amanda, 29)

Another woman was concerned that what was meaningful for her might simply be clutter for her sons and daughters-in-law:

There are a lot of things that might mean something to me, that might have been given to me by say my father, that are meaningless, or not meaningless, but worthless as far as a monetary value. So you wouldn't put it in a will or anything. But there are things like, for instance, some of these books that were a prize that Mummy had received, so do they want more clutter? People are de-cluttering all over the place. And so I don't know what will happen with that stuff. And when my step-mother was closing down her house, she kept going through and saying, do you want this, do you want that? Well, I didn't really

need another table cloth that had stains on them, but they were my grandmother's. And so I didn't take a lot of things. I took some books that were my dad's. And what'll happen to those? My daughter-in-law is a very organized person, I don't think she'll want any more stuff. So I'm not sure what'll happen to all of that stuff. It'll probably go to a second hand store. (Colleen, 62)

And some women did describe the inheritance process as burdensome, particularly when describing inheriting memories from mothers-in-law:

I mean, my mother-in-law is still, I think she's finally done now, but she, like, every time Frank would go home, she would send him home with another little box or an envelope full of his report cards, his drawings from school and his tests. And like all this stuff it's like... arg!! And he's the oldest of five kids, so I have no idea what the others have.

(Leona, 49)

Hence, the inheritance process, both passing along memory and receiving memory, is complicated by the layers of meanings and histories associated with the artefacts themselves.

Many mothers described keeping memory with the intention of passing the artefacts along to their children. Some mothers had already begun this process, and some participants had already been on the receiving end of this process. While many participants felt the inheritance of memory was a positive transition, others found the transition complicated and unnerving. And due to the layers of meaning associated with each artefact, many participants described feeling ambivalent about both passing memories down to younger generations and receiving memories from older generations. Some women found that in inheriting memories from older generations, they also inherited the role of memory-keeper.

5.1.3.2 *Inheriting the role*

Many women described the process of inheriting the role of memory-keeper from their mother or mother-in-law. This seemed to coincide with the inheriting of memory artefacts:

My sister and I will be given our baby books eventually. All of our favourite children's books have been given to me, as well as the scribblers, and all that kind of stuff. I suspect Mum will give me the pictures since I am the collector of the family and keeper of the treasures... (Lindsey, 32)

This role often included saving memory for their husbands:

I have Walter's math book from when he was little. I have his book from when he was a pilot. I have that. And I have three little toys that he used to have, I kept that. (Pat, 75)

In some cases, this transition was initiated by a woman's mother-in-law:

Travis' mum gave us a bunch of photos of his and I put them all in an album. ...she got one of those books made, from Walmart or something, and she gave it to me for Christmas, or our wedding, or something, or my birthday... And it's a photo book of Travis's kid photos...So I'm starting for him. So now I made an album with photos of him when he was a baby, photos of me when I was a baby, and now photos of our baby. ... So I did start that. I did a photo album. (Danielle, 35)

A number of women discussed inheriting the role of memory-keeper not only for their husbands, but for their siblings and their husband's siblings as well:

I made a photo album, like a family scrapbook for each family...So they all have an album, all of my sisters' and brothers' children. (Elsa, 45)

When I met Bill I made an album where I put all his siblings from oldest to youngest in the album, and then when they gave me pictures of their kids and that kind of thing I stuck it in each compartment. But I have their wedding pictures, invitations, anniversaries, all those things. (Mary, 55)

One woman remarked that her sister-in-law would be more interested in her family memory-keeping than her brother would:

Can you imagine, like, my children's children, having their great-grandmother's report cards, and their great-great grandfather's report cards? So cool. I mean, it's cool for me, but I never know if, like, my brother would care. But his wife would. (Nicole, 27)

The men interviewed who had lost mothers were less sure about the inheritance process but discussed family members who might assume the role:

Not Alicia, she's too far away. Maybe Beth will do it? (Alex, 27)

It really has been my sister. And I'm not sure what initiates that. She's the oldest girl, the oldest person, she retired earliest... and to the benefit of all of us. I have only a passing understanding of all those connections. She thoroughly understands it. But the fact that she's done it has been a great gift to us. (Jack, 64)

Despite being uncertain about the process of inheritance, the men interviewed both indicated the role seemed to be inherited by their sisters.

The inheritance process in terms of family memory involves both inheriting memory artefacts and inheriting the role of family memory-keeper. Many participants described the significance of passing along and receiving memories; however, many also admitted to feeling ambivalent about the process as well. In many cases, inheriting memories also signalled the

inheritance of the role of memory-keeper. Women described this role being passed down by a mother or mother-in-law, and other participants including men reported memory being kept by sisters or sisters-in-law. Thus, the memory-keeping role appears to be a gendered role, one passed down from woman to woman along with the memory artefacts saved.

And so what is memory-keeping? Memory-keeping entails a series of processes beginning with the intentional or sometimes unintentional selection of which memories are kept and which memories are left behind, followed by processes surrounding how and where to preserve these memories. The selection and preserving processes culminate in the inheritance process wherein memory artefacts are passed down and the role of memory-keeper is inherited. Each of these processes, while descriptive of the seemingly innocuous process of memory keeping, also subtly revealed the gendered nature of memory keeping; however, nowhere was it more apparent than when exploring the inheritance of the role of memory keeper, a gendered role into which we delve more deeply in the following section.

5.2 **The Role**

Interviews demonstrated the role of memory keeper to be deeply gendered. To better understand the gendered role of memory keeper, I will explore who the memory keeper in the family is, how the role of memory keeper comes to be gendered, and in what ways that gendered role is negotiated by the women who assume the position. Three themes with accompanying subthemes emerged: different roles for men and women (different realms, different sentiments, different memory keeping), different social expectations for men and women (modeling, encouragement, pressure), and negotiating the role (roles enjoyed, roles unfinished, roles resisted).

5.2.1. Different roles for men and women

The majority of participants interviewed for this study identified memory keeping as a woman's role in the family. Many also went on to say that men were either not suited for the role or they simply were uninterested in filling the position. Participants reported that women and men occupy *different realms* and experience *different sentiments* about family memory, leading to *different memory keeping* between men and women.

5.2.1.1 *Different realms*

The women interviewed for this study overwhelmingly declared themselves or their mothers as the memory keeper for their family as opposed to their husbands or fathers:

My mom was certainly the one in charge of memory keeping in our family. I think that's probably fairly common, right? Not because anyone ever said to my mother that she had to do it, it's just something she was more inclined to do than my father. (Katie, 28)

It's the woman's role to have all the keepsakes. Dad just didn't keep anything. If he did, he'd hand it over to Mum to put away. (Nicole, 26)

One man confirmed he was definitely not the memory keeper for his family:

I want to find a way in which I do that concretely, but I don't. I want to say, oh yeah, but secretly I'm doing this. I've saved all the emails and photographed them all, too!

(laughter) But it's not the case. (Jack, 64)

One woman described her role as memory keeper as just one aspect of the care work for which she – not her husband – is responsible:

Mothers have to be a wife. And they have to be a mother to the children. They have to be a nurse. They have to be a cook. They have to be a housekeeper. They have to be a financial planner. An entertainment planner. When are we going to visit so and so? Call them up and make arrangements, have people come over for dinner. Discipline the children the best way you know how. Reassure them. A counsellor. Housekeeper, babysitter, typist! You have to do that for your kids. Finding things. Solving problems. ...you've got a wash going, you're cooking dinner, the baby's crying, got him in one arm, you're stirring your stew in another, multitasking... See, many, many roles as a woman. So we have all these roles. And if someone was to pay us money for what we do...! (laughter) Good lord, they wouldn't be able to afford us! And so yes, I save that stuff, and I write the cards. That's important. To me, anyway, that's what's important. The card is your communication. Those are the things your mother does for you. It's the mothers, the grandmothers that do it. (Pat, 75)

In this sense, many women reasoned that men and women occupy different “realms”, and because memory keeping falls within the woman's realm:

It's not his job, quote unquote. And I don't know whether it's just society, whether it's just expected of us, or whether... But really and truly... He does know all of the kids' birthdays, I'll give him that! He does know them. But as for when they walked, when they got their first tooth, what their first words were, who their first teacher was, you know, all of those things, he couldn't bring any of that up, I don't think, to save his soul. It's just not in his realm of things that he needed to focus on. (Leona, 49)

And dads are even less involved, right? Because my Mum, just because gender-wise, she would keep track of those things instead of my Dad. But even so, she was just more involved than my Dad was. She was a stay-at-home Mum, and she was with us all the time. (Lara, 35)

Many women, however, were employed outside the home, yet still remarked their husbands simply would not think to keep memories:

On top of the majority of the child rearing, I also feel that if I didn't assume the role of memory keeping, those memories would simply not be kept or given much thought to. I don't think Tim is aware of the memory-keeping aspect of our parenthood or my efforts personally. He regrets not taking more video, I know that, but he hardly initiates taking photos. (Lindsey, 32)

One woman explained that these different realms lead to different priorities, and those priorities were evident in the memories they kept:

We definitely play different roles. But as far as taking pictures, we both would take pictures. And I remember early comments of Wayne, you'd get a roll of film back, because it was different in those days, you had to get them developed, he would say, but they're all of the kids! So he would take pictures if he went to see an interesting airplane, or waterfalls... So we were both taking pictures, we both took pictures, but he took pictures of different things than me! (Colleen, 62)

Many participants attributed the gender divide in memory keeping to the amount of time men had to spend away from the family to earn a living:

I think ideally keeping memories should be more of a joint effort but I can respect the fact that my husband works 12-14 hour days, six or seven days a week so I do tend to have the most time to keep the memories. (Katie, 27)

Other participants noted memory keeping was often done by women when their husbands were travelling for work:

Yeah, I'd say with me that Frank never really took a whole lot of pictures, it was pretty much always me... He was away a lot. He was in the Navy and he was away a lot. (Leona, 49)

Mum certainly would have been the one that made up all those photo albums that we have with her little notes, sometimes that were absolutely inaccurate, but yeah. And that would have been what she would have been doing during the war when Dad was overseas. (Jack, 64)

One woman suggested the memory artefacts might cause her father a mixture of nostalgia and regret because of his time spent away from the family:

The memories mean a lot. When Dad sees them he regrets not spending as much time with us as he would've liked, while he was out earning a living for the family. So for him, they're poignant, I think. (Lindsey, 32)

Thus, although men maintain a separate realm in terms of memory keeping, these separate realms are not without emotional consequence for men.

Most participants described the memory keeping role as falling to the women in their families, namely the mothers and grandmothers. And despite many of these women working outside the home, this gender divide was attributed to men and women occupying different

“realms”. Participants noted that for men, memory keeping was simply not in “their realm of things to think about,” particularly considering the amount of time men spent outside the home attempting to earn a living for their families. However, one participant wondered if men might experience regret over being unable to collect memory for their families. For, just as participants suggested men and women occupy different realms in terms of memory keeping, they also maintained men and women attach different sentiments to family memory as well.

5.2.1.2 *Different sentiments*

For many participants, the different roles women and men play in terms of memory keeping could be attributed to men having different sentiments when it comes to family memory. Many women maintained men simply do not realize memory keeping is important:

I remember my father, he used to clean and I would come back and I'd be like, “Why did you...??” Like, he would throw stuff out that he thought were so incidental, but I would be like, those were memories! Like ticket stubs, those kinds of things, like, I was saving those. Or like pieces of clothing that I wore during an evening that was like really special, like my first make-out session or something, and I would be like, that shirt is so important! (Lara, 35)

One woman articulated similar comments, though she clearly maintained that she did not hold this lack of sentiment against her husband's character:

Men don't realize it's important. Poor Walter didn't know who's birthday was when or any of that stuff. He didn't hardly ever remember our anniversary until I'd say to him, “You know our anniversary is coming up”. Things like that didn't mean anything to Walter, but that was ok. He was still a good man. (Pat, 75)

Other women wondered if men did not glean the same sentiments from the memory artefacts as they did:

I'm the saver. I'm the keeper. And I would say more women would tend to do that.

Even if it were a handmade card, women would think, "oh my gosh, they went through the trouble to make this for me, that's a treasure, I'm going to keep this." So yes, I think it is a man/woman thing. (Colleen, 62)

Indeed, one man confirmed he simply did not take the same meaning from memory artefacts as did his fiancée:

Do I save things? Like, you're talking to a guy who just went out and threw out all the family cards. I just did that. "What am I gonna do with these?" When I was throwing them out, Nicole was like, "Well, at least save the good ones" and I was like, "What do you mean, the good ones??" "The ones where someone wrote a nice note, or something!" I just. I don't understand. (laughter) (Alex, 27)

One woman in this study maintained that her father did the majority of the memory keeping in her family. She attributed this to the fact that her father exhibited sentimental traits while her mother did not:

Well, it's weird because my mum hasn't really done much. It's been my dad. ... I think my mum is just reserved and... sentimentality is not her strong suit. I'm sure she feels it, but we don't see it. Whereas my dad is super sensitive and very emotional about family and stuff. (Amanda, 29)

Another woman noted that her husband was the sentimental one in the family; however, she was still in charge of the memory keeping:

I'm definitely the memory keeper. That being said, my husband is the sentimental one. But he doesn't actually do the memory keeping, he just pesters me about the memories I choose to keep and not keep, if that makes sense. If it were up to him, we would throw nothing out. Save it all. In a box somewhere. No thanks! (Katie, 28)

Many women, however, attributed men's absence in memory keeping to a lack of sentimentality:

He's extremely unsentimental. I don't mean that in a bad way... his attachment to his family is not the same as mine. We went to visit his family for Easter and I saved the little, you know, stubs, for the three of us and his grandmother. And pictures of course, right? This is something that I'll keep. But Brent doesn't. ...Not that he's insensitive about it, but I just don't think it has the same meaning. (Lara, 35)

My mother did all of the memory keeping. Dad did not. Those were the roles and still are... It would seem odd if Dad did the memory keeping, because it's a more sentimental role than he usually takes on. Dad just doesn't seem to think about those more emotional types of things or maybe, maybe it's more accurate to say that he just doesn't express them. (Katie, 28)

One woman described being hurt by what she perceived as a lack of sentimentality from her father about her childhood years:

Years ago I gave Dad this memory book where specific questions were outlined for him to like, to fill in about his relationship with me as a daughter. He never filled it out, and I wish he would have. I crave to hear him talk about, you know, about how much I meant to him, as Mum does, but Dad is more introverted. I honestly don't know how much he

does remember of my sister and me when we were young because he was away a lot of the time. (Lindsey, 32)

Many women connected the lack of sentimentality among men to men's desire to "live in the present" rather than dwell on old memories:

My Dad just believed in experiencing the moment and enjoying it that way. He never saw the need to look back on things, he's not at all sentimental. He had this weird hang up about people who video-taped stuff and felt that they weren't experiencing the moments because they always had a camera stuck to their face. (Katie, 28)

He just doesn't think about those things. It's not on his radar. It's more about spending time with our son in the moment. (Lara, 35)

Indeed, one man confirmed this preference to live in the present:

As much as I enjoy the past, I'm so present in the present now. I get excited about what my kids and grandkids are doing and thinking and talking about. (Jack, 64)

And one woman wondered whether her memory keeping was keeping her from enjoying the moment:

He always says, you need to live another lifetime just to watch them all [home videos]. And the way he likes it is to just enjoy the moment and forget about those pictures. And he's probably right. Because sometimes you're at a children's concert, and you want to enjoy it. But here you are rooting through your bag looking for your camera. And then at the end you think, gee, what did I even see? And then you have to go home and watch the video to see what you saw. (Mary, 55)

In this case, men's different sentiments regarding living in the present rather than dwelling in the past was something that made this participant question her role as a memory keeper.

Participants explained gender differences in the role of memory keeper by suggesting men and women occupy different realms, despite many women in this study working outside the home. Along with this explanation, participants also attributed the gender differences in memory keeping to a difference of sentiments. Many suggested that men and women simply felt differently about family memory (though not necessarily about the importance of family). In particular, some maintained that men do not realize family memory artefacts are important, while others wondered if their husbands and fathers were less sentimental than they were, leading these men to value "living in the present" over dwelling in the past. However, one woman asserted that her father was far more sentimental than her mother and suggested that he was the family memory keeper in their family. Indeed, other examples emerged indicating that though men and women appear to occupy different spheres and experience different sentiments in terms of family memory keeping, there are nuances that suggest men do play a role in memory keeping to varying degrees.

5.2.1.3 *Different memory keeping*

Many participants suggested women are the memory keepers in the family, but that men contribute their own different forms of memory keeping as well. Quite frequently, both men and women described men playing a supporting role:

Mum was always the one who bought all the gifts, wrapped them, made all the stuffed animals, made all the cardboard houses at Easter time, did all the things like that. Dad played the supporting role. (Jack, 64)

If directed to do so by the women in their lives, many men would play a supporting part in the memory keeping process. Many women noted this in terms of baby books:

I involved Rob in this process by reading it to him, asking him what to add and whatnot. So he was involved. (Amanda, 29)

Since Sadie was born, I have been the one doing the baby book. There was a couple of pages dedicated to the Daddy, and Luke filled in his information, thoughts and feelings for Sadie, but the rest has been me. (Katie, 28)

Another woman created a calendar for her husband so he would remember family birthdays, anniversaries, and other important dates:

It's all on the calendar, that's how he knows. The calendar helps. Get a calendar and write it all in. And then check every day, that's what Bill does. (Mary, 55)

During our interview, one man offered to support his fiancée's memory keeping by building her a memory box:

So where did you keep the proposal letter I wrote you? (Alex, 27)

Oh, it's in my box of important papers, which is actually an Aldo box. It's not anything fancy. (Nicole, 26)

Would you like a fancy box for Christmas? (Alex, 27)

Other participants suggested men play a role in the process as an appreciator of the family memories women collect:

Oh, he never put any pictures in an album, no. But he would want to look at them, though. He likes looking at them. The videos of the kids. (Mary, 55)

He does have some interest. He does have a very strong want to remember... He does like knowing that stuff. But he would not record it himself. (Danielle, 35)

I don't really have the hard copy stuff... My wife has kept the treasure, and I'm certainly nostalgic and sentimental and moved by them when I stumble upon them and open them up and look and see my kids when they were young. (Jack, 64)

Many participants reported that men play the supportive role in terms of operating memory keeping technology:

I think he's more organized when it comes to the pictures and the videos. And I think that's how he makes himself feel that he has contributed. I'll go down late at night and he'll be on the computer organizing photos. Or he'll bring Oliver and show him videos of when he was six months old. ...So the technological piece, right? But the sort of sentimental little memories, little construction paper pumpkin that I have on the fridge, that's me. (Lara, 35)

I haven't bought a camera or recorder or computer in ten years. He buys it and I use it. He set up the blog, he fixes anything that happens. He transfers tapes from his childhood to DVD, that kind of thing. He does that. He sets it up, tells me how it works, and I do it. (Danielle, 35)

Often participants attributed men's technological support to their excitement over the gadgetry:

In the past Dad didn't even take pictures, though now that he has his own digital camera, he's definitely more eager to record the family experiences. (Lindsey, 32)

He took pictures because of the camera. We had, you know, the one with the flash. ...And he was in charge of the camera and I think he gets pride in taking the pictures, like, isn't this a great shot? Isn't it? Isn't it? (Amanda, 29)

We had videos. Dad bought a camera, because cameras are cool, especially back then, it was high tech. So there are actually quite a few videos of us when we were kids. He knew how to work it. It was kind of a new thing at the time, right? So he bought it because it was cool and he wanted to know how to use it. (Alex, 27)

One man compared his interest in the technological aspects of memory keeping to women's scrapbooking:

Part of the reason why the camera or the computer is interesting for the guy is the technology, not just the memory. Whereas here [holding a child's drawing preserved by his wife], it's the memory. It's pure. Scrapbooking would be a change again, but this is pure memory. But if I have this high-fire computer that'll turn it into 3-D imaging, part of my delight is the expertise and the management of all of that. And so I might get more heavily involved in that. But then who files it, and who keeps it and who manages it and who makes certain that the copies are still good, and who wants to reminisce, who has maintained the kind of soft copies? I think, personally, there is something about the woman, innately, that inclines that person more to that as part of the caregiving. (Jack, 64)

Though they were in the minority, several women reported their husbands or fathers to be uninterested in the technological side of memory keeping:

Walter wouldn't take them. How many pictures do I have with me in them? He'd miss the head, he'd miss the feet. And he'd say to me, "You do it, you can do a better job than I can." And I would just take it. (Pat, 75)

I have a lot of pictures with Bill and the boys and even with the grandchildren, it's always Bill holding them and I'm grabbing the camera. (Mary, 55)

Other participants discussed the roles men play in family memory keeping beyond the supporting role. Many participants talked about men actively saving family memory:

Walter was good to save stuff, though. Like special cards, he'd save. And, well, he used to save a lot of junk, but special junk (laughter). He saved paper towels. Don't know if that was the Alzheimer's or what. Oh my gosh, the stuff we found after he passed away. (Pat, 75)

Several participants described the memories their husbands saved following the birth of their children:

He started the night that I was in labour and he wrote a letter to the baby. It's a beautiful letter. And his dad wrote him a letter, an email, just a couple weeks before, which inspired him to do that. So we have his grandfather's letter and Travis's letter. (Danielle, 35)

Two men saved umbilical cord stumps:

He wanted to save, he was pretty adamant about saving the hospital bracelet, things like that. He even wanted to save, you know the vitamin K shot they give in the foot? He was like, let's save that! The umbilical cord, do we save this?? I was like, that's

disgusting, I'm not saving that! And he wouldn't let me throw it out, so I said fine. Bury it in a plant. So I guess he did want to keep things, just random things. (Amanda, 29)

We saved his umbilical cord stump for the longest time. To the point where it was so dried up and so tiny that someone would say, what is that? That's his belly button. And most people say, that's disgusting. We still have it. It's funny that he wanted to save that. (Lara, 35)

Others cautioned that men's family memories might be expressed (or not expressed) in different ways than the methods women employ:

We had a stillborn child in between Marc and Mitchell. And time went by, fifteen years approximately, we moved to a new city. And we were missing our friends, all those thoughts about moving to a different city. And Wayne said, (choking up) "We're leaving our baby. The baby is buried back there." And it never occurred to me. Fifteen years had gone by, I was busy in my life. And he said that. So certainly (choking up) men have a lot of feeling that they don't show. And I think that maybe men of his generation were taught to be strong for their wife. And they can't be as sensitive. But they often hold it back because they feel they have to be the strong one. And women are strong in their own way, but I never would diminish the role of a man in the relationship. Because they certainly have a lot to give. (Colleen, 62)

And other participants suggested men keep memories, they simply take different forms than the artefacts women typically keep. One man discussed the importance his father attached to family memory via their family home:

And it was the only really concrete, substantially concrete, artefact, if you want to call a house an artefact, in our history. Mum had moved from house to house to house to house... There was no concrete reminders of Mum's past. As opposed to with Dad, there was this house...we all looked upon the house as kind of a magical place. And a real tragedy in our family when it wasn't bequeathed to Dad, and it was destroyed. He was haunted by that. (Jack, 64)

Several participants asserted that their husband or father was the keeper of family toys. A mother and her twenty-year old son debated the importance of her husband's memory artefacts versus her own:

Matt: Have you talked at all about keeping toys? Ninja Turtles, Lego? The Lego itself, that's more of a practicality thing, because I think I had stupidly expensive Lego and it's like, man, in who knows how many years I might have kids of my own who want to play with Lego, and it's useful to hang on to it. It's like, intergenerational wealth, you know?

Kay: So does it bother you that Daddy didn't fill [your baby book] out?

Matt: No.

Kay: But you like how he keeps artefacts?

Matt: Comic books. Ninja Turtles. Lego.

I was unable to interview the father in this family; however, it was clear he saved some memory artefacts that were in fact quite meaningful to his children.

Interviews revealed women and men play different roles in family memory keeping. With the exception of one individual, all participants identified women as the family memory keepers in their homes. Yet despite the fact that participants overwhelmingly reported women to be the family memory keepers – attributing this to the division between the private and public spheres

and differences in sentiment – interviews also revealed that men are playing a variety of different roles in family memory keeping. Thus, while there does appear to be different roles for men and women in terms of memory keeping, the nuances of those roles cannot be ignored. Men are playing a supporting role (often at women’s direction) and are appreciators of the memory artefacts saved. Men also play a significant role in terms of technology, often due to excitement over the gadgetry involved. Finally, men are actively saving memories, perhaps in different forms and perhaps expressed in different ways, but these memories are being collected and preserved by men all the same. However, women are clearly doing the bulk of the memory keeping for their families and the role of memory keeper is also clearly understood to be a woman’s role. How women come to assume this role and how this role becomes gendered is a question of social expectations.

5.2.2 Different social expectations for men and women

There are different social expectations for women and men in terms of memory keeping, and different memory keeping behaviours are encouraged from an early age. While women reported being active in the memory keeping process from childhood by watching and participating in their mothers’ activities, many men had only vague recollections of family memory keeping and often mentioned their father’s lack of interest in the activity. And while most women reported feeling significant family and social pressure to keep family memory, not one man reported feeling similarly pressured. Thus, three themes emerged from my analysis of the data describing the process of reinforcing different social expectations for men and women in terms of memory keeping: *modeling*, *encouragement*, and *pressure*.

5.2.2.1 *Modeling*

Interviews revealed different memory keeping behaviours from women and men. For women, this behaviour often appeared to be modeled after the way their mother kept memory:

I do think the way my mom kept memories was sort of a disorganized mess. Aside from our baby books, they were very well done and very orderly. But as I mentioned earlier, photos were often just shoved in boxes scattered around the house. I can see myself going in that direction as well. I just don't think it was a priority to my mom to sit around and do photo albums that were perfectly dated and organized. And honestly, I don't feel it's a big deal, either. (Katie, 28)

I think that in my case, my mother modeled that role for me, and so it was natural for me to assume the role in my own life. (Lindsey, 32)

Often women described modeling their behaviour after their mothers as a sign of genuine appreciation for the memory keeping their mothers did for them as children:

I want to be good at that, because our mother was very, very good, she kept all kinds of stuff. I have a baby book that she kept for me that I always liked when I was younger. And I know I love my baby shoes that mum kept, I loved my baby book. I loved that mum kept my little plastic band. (Erin, 33)

My mother had a very well documented baby book for both me and my sister. And I have it upstairs. So I wanted the same thing for these guys... There've always been lots of stories throughout our lives, and I wanted them to have a similarly rich childhood. (Suzanne, 35)

One woman reported modeling her memory keeping after her older sister's:

What my sister did, she got it from a talk show, every year she's written the children a letter. And she's going to give it to the children when they're 18... And she said when they move out, she's going to give them that stack. (Amanda, 29)

Often women described their mothers as modeling memory keeping during family bonding time:

The stories were often retold, the pictures often shared. The leafing through the baby-book was a special and sacred event. (Lindsey, 32)

Even as a kid I liked learning all that stuff about my parents and me. So I'm wondering, not that all men are the same and all women are the same, but I wonder if it definitely is that women find it more important. My mum has kept this book for two decades at our cottage that everybody writes down in. Now my father, I think probably thousands of people maybe have gone through, wouldn't have ever asked anyone to sign it. He doesn't care. He doesn't go back and look at it like my mom and I have always done. (Danielle, 35)

This memory keeping behaviour was then often reinforced by bonding with sisters over family memory:

We'd go through it over the years, me and my sister. (Suzanne, 35)

When I look back, my sister and I always had so much fun rooting through the boxes looking at photos and laughing because every photo was from a different time in our life so we would experience so many different memories at once, you know? Looking

through those messy photo boxes was so much fun. I kind of want to go do that right now! (Katie, 28)

Many women agreed that, as girls, memory keeping provided both family bonding time and fun:

Mum had the one baby book and then she had a gigantic box of pictures from when I was six months to the time I was 25. And every once in a while we'd pull it out and we'd just go through it and it was fun. (Lara, 35)

I would try to get Mum to talk about when she was a kid...because Mum would tell us. I just liked the history. The family history thing. (Nicole, 26)

In contrast, men seemed to model their memory keeping behaviour after often uninterested fathers:

Dad always told me that he only saw *one* photo from his childhood of himself and it never bothered him. I'm not sure if he just says that to make himself feel better or if he just genuinely doesn't care. (Matt, 20)

Saving things? Well, I don't think my Dad would have saved my grade one report card. Yeah, no, he wouldn't have thought about it. (Alex, 27)

Again, in contrast to many women's very specific recollections about their mothers' memory keeping, men often recalled very little about their father's memory keeping:

Dad kept his stuff in his own little hiding places, I think, in his drawers or whatever...

Dad wasn't talkative at all, so we didn't hear very much from him. Dad just was quiet.

He was silent like that. (Jack, 64)

Fathers were often cited as uninterested in terms of memory keeping, and sons seemed to model this lack of interest.

Whereas women clearly seemed to model their memory keeping after their mothers, often reinforcing these behaviours with their sisters, men's lack of interest in memory keeping seemed connected to watching their fathers seem similarly uninterested. Women reported watching their mothers keep memory as children, participating in memory keeping as family bonding time, and emulating their mothers' memory keeping style as adults as an homage to their mothers' family memory work. Men, in contrast, seemed to model their memory keeping after their fathers, which is to say, memory keeping was either vague and private, or entirely non-existent. Indeed, women and men also reported learning different memory keeping expectations through encouragement, or for men, a lack thereof.

5.2.2.2 Encouragement

The women interviewed were far more likely than the men to recall being encouraged to keep family memory by other individuals in their lives. Many women remarked that they began keeping memory for their own children at their mother's encouragement:

My mother also gave me baby books to fill out. (Danielle, 35)

Oh yeah, I got the baby books from my mum for sure. (Suzanne, 35)

Several women reported keeping memory for their children at their sister's encouragement:

I received the baby book as a gift from my sister while I was still pregnant. It's called "My Baby Journal" and it was meant to chronicle the first three years of a child's life. My sister even started it for me by putting in pictures of Luke and I in the places for "Mommy" and "Daddy" photos. (Katie, 28)

Another mother described the influence of many women, including her sister, on her memory keeping:

I have two books given to me at an all-woman baby shower. My sister gave me one and it's the more delicate one. And the other thing I have was from my grandmother, who has Alzheimer's, she gave it to me, and my midwife did the footprints... (Amanda, 29)

Several other mothers described being encouraged by midwives to keep memory for their newborns:

And actually, when Will was born the midwives encouraged us to take photos and that was good, because we were both not thinking about it. And now I'm kind of glad we have a few of just that moment, when he's fresh and new. (Erin, 34)

In contrast to women's specific recollections about being encouraged to keep memory, men were often unclear and vague about the memory keeping process:

Well, yeah, there's lots of pictures. They'd get into albums somehow, and then they'd be in the chest upstairs. (Alex, 27)

And the men interviewed often had no memories of being encouraged to keep memory as boys:

I don't ever remember Mum doing that, but she obviously did. I don't remember sitting down with her and looking at photo albums. My daughters did all the time later on, but I didn't. I don't ever remember doing that. I mean, in later years I do, but I don't remember as a kid being in the household with her at the kitchen table pasting photos in photo albums, no I don't. (Jack, 64)

One man discussed being encouraged to keep memory by his sister, though her suggestions were ultimately rejected:

When I went to France when I was 16, we were having champagne. And I popped the cork. And my sister picked it up and gave it to me, and said “There you go. You can put that in your scrapbook when you get home.” And I didn’t understand what she meant. “Keep it in your keepsake box, or whatever.” And I didn’t understand. This is a plastic cork. And she was like, “But isn’t that the first time you’ve popped a champagne bottle?” And I said, “Yes...?” And she gave me coasters from all the restaurants we went to. She gave me coasters, so that I could keep them. And when I got home, I threw them out. (Alex, 27)

Despite the encouragement from his sister, this participant could not see the significance of keeping memory.

Just as women and men appear to model their memory keeping behaviours after different behaviour from their mothers and fathers, women and men also appear to be encouraged toward memory keeping differently as well. Women were overtly encouraged by the women in their lives (mothers, sisters, grandmothers, midwives) to keep memory for their families; however, men did not recall such encouragement from individuals of either gender. And in the one instance where a man was encouraged to keep memory by his sister, the participant was entirely baffled by the suggestion and ultimately rejected the notion. Thus, women and men appear to be exposed to different memory keeping expectations through modeling, encouragement, and of course, through pressure.

5.2.2.3 *Pressure*

Women reported feeling pressure to keep memory for their families, whereas not one man interviewed reported feeling any pressure to be the memory keeper. Many women discussed this pressure in terms of “expectations”:

I remember people got upset with us because we didn't save our wedding cake. Because the tradition is that you save the top of the wedding cake. And I feel like it's the same with a lot of baby things. We're expected to save a lot. (Danielle, 35)

I definitely think there's a difference in what's expected of men and women in our family memory keeping. I think the responsibility's on my shoulders with an expectation to do it a certain way that doesn't necessarily agree with what I want to do. (Katie, 28)

“Guilt” was another oft cited feeling surrounding memory keeping:

Just listening to you talk, I just have so much guilt about so many things... It's tough, and I feel selfish sometimes, too, that I probably haven't... they don't have stuff that's been kept, really. Because we've moved around a lot. (Nell, 36)

In one case, a woman recalled her mother stepping in to fulfill the memory keeping role, when it appeared she was performing the task inadequately:

I have a bit of guilt, because both grandmothers have mentioned having to keep a baby book and printing off photos because we don't print off photos anymore. They're on my computer. So my mom prints off photos quite often and then gives them to me 'cause she knows I don't. And she'll even take the ones that I've put up online and she'll print them off and give them to me. (Danielle, 35)

For many women, memory keeping also came with the guilt of not being a good enough mother:

I feel like I haven't really done a lot for Oliver, so what is the next baby going to have? I do think we worry about that, that we're not fulfilling our role as a mother. If I don't do this, then I'm going to miss out on something. Or I'm a bad mother. Or I don't care about preserving that history. (Lara, 35)

It's too hard. A lot of emotional labour. What do you keep? What do you not keep? Are you a bad person if you throw out this? (Kay, 50)

Other women discussed feeling guilty when comparing themselves to the memory keeping behaviour of other mothers:

It's like when my sister-in-law does something, I'll be like, "Oh should I be doing that? Should I be doing that?" (Danielle, 35)

Many women compared themselves to their friends when sizing up their own memory keeping abilities:

Angela is very good at that. And I'm always like, I wish I could be that mother, you know? Because I find that often we'll go places and we'll forget cameras, or we'll think, this would have been really nice to capture. So she's very good at that. And Trish does her blog. And I just could not even imagine doing that. They keep people up to date on their progress, and pictures and videos. And so I feel like, wow, I haven't done enough, or I should do that. But I do feel somewhat like that, right? That guilt. (Lara, 35)

My pictures went in boxes, and then they got all mixed up, and now they're just everywhere. Then I would talk to someone, like Christine MacDonald down the road was so good, when her pictures came in from the store, she had her picture right there

and she'd slip them right into the pockets. I mean, how easy is that? You take it and put them in, then put it on your bookcase. But I got too complicated. (Mary, 55)

Along with feeling expectation and guilt, several women described feeling a sense of obligation in terms of memory keeping:

I'm the one keeping Sadie's baby book. I'm also the one who takes all the photos. I enjoy doing Sadie's baby book to an extent, but I admit it doesn't exactly come naturally to me. I have to work at it. And remind myself to do it and remind myself the importance of keeping these memories. (Katie, 28)

Some women contrasted these feelings of obligation to the lack of obligation their husbands appeared to feel:

He doesn't feel the social pressure, I think that's the other thing. I think a lot of that is just social pressure. Like feeling like you need to be everything to everyone all the time. And that's probably why mums burn out and have mental break downs and take Valium or their kid's Ritalin. Because they feel like they have to be the perfect, manufactured mother. (Lara, 35)

Even when I worked at the hospital and I was pregnant, certain types of conversations happened more often. Even then, one of the secretaries at work gave me a baby book for my baby shower. And comparatively, I don't think Pete feels an obligation. (Erin, 33)

One woman wondered if this lack of obligation for men was rooted in men's sense of entitlement to leisure time that did not involve maintaining and nurturing the family.

With memory keeping, then you're doing something for your family as well. And I think a lot of the times when I'm doing something that I enjoy as a hobby, it also involves

making something, like a contribution to the family. So it's almost like a useful use of my time. And that's poor, because men I think are better at just relaxing...everything I do as a hobby is, as I say, creative but it's useful. Maybe it's a bracelet or somebody can cover themselves with a quilt. Whereas, you know, with Wayne you can sit down and you can press the remote. You're not doing anything else. But you are relaxing. And women tend to get angry with men for that. Women, when you do have, maybe you have an hour, and you think, oh my gosh! I haven't seen my best friend Betsy, let's get together for coffee! You're always filling in every moment you have with something useful! With something that is beneficial, but you can't always do that. You need to do nothing once in a while, or crawl into a book. (Colleen, 62)

Another woman echoed these sentiments:

It has to be something that betters your children, or involves your children. I feel that as well. No more yoga and no more gym. It's swimming lessons and music classes and let's do something to nurture my child's creativity and education and maybe that'll make me feel better about myself. (Lara, 35)

In terms of creating this obligation or pressure, men were only mentioned twice. One woman felt pressure from her husband, while another felt pressure from her father:

I think I am the one to take on the role of memory keeping for our family because simply put, no one else would do it. As I said earlier, that doesn't mean my husband won't complain about something I'm doing or not doing. He is constantly after me 'cause there's a spot in her baby book to do her hand and foot prints. She's almost 10 months old and we have not done it yet. He's constantly bugging me to pick up ink. (Katie, 28)

Since my dad retired early, he did the cleaning and the cooking so we had a really off-gendered house. My dad did put a little pressure on me, like, “Document the process, document the process...” (Amanda, 29)

And there were women who maintained they felt no pressure from their husbands, and for one woman, felt no pressure at all:

If I didn't do it, Rob wouldn't do it. But it doesn't really matter to him, so I don't know what's pressuring me to do it. So if I didn't do it, it's not like Rob would be like, oh, why didn't you buy that baby book and get that going? (Amanda, 29)

I wouldn't necessarily say it was a role. I did it because I wanted to. I didn't do it because I thought, “Oh moms are supposed to do it”, or “I'm expected to do it”. A person like my husband might get birthday cards from people and I would have them placed all over somewhere, the table or something. And when he deems that the time was passed, like a week maybe, he'd say, ok, time to toss them. Well, I would bundle them up, label them “1999 cards, birthday cards” and keep them. So it's just my nature. (Colleen, 62)

Thus for some women, the source of the pressure to keep memory is more ambiguous, while for others, the pressure is not felt at all.

However, most interviews demonstrated women and men experience different degrees of pressure when it comes to memory keeping. Whereas not one man reported feeling pressure to keep memory, nearly every women described some form of pressure in terms of expectations, guilt, and obligation. In a few cases, women felt actively pressured by the men in their lives, but for the most part, women described feeling pressured by other women in their lives. Moreover,

women discussed feeling as though their memory keeping reflected on their character and abilities as a mother; if they were unsuccessful at memory keeping, perhaps that meant they were not a good enough mother. Others wondered why they felt an obligation to keep memory while their husbands seemed to feel entitled to leisure that had little to do with family maintenance or sustenance. Some, but very few, women reported feeling no pressure at all.

This pressure most women reported to feel surrounding family memory is one more example of the ways in which women and men are exposed to different social expectations in terms of memory keeping. Women and men have different experiences of modeling memory keeping behaviour, different levels of encouragement in terms of the activity, and undergo different degrees of pressure to keep memory. The most significant difference is that women and girls, and men and boys, are clearly expected to understand memory keeping as a woman's role. Men and boys are taught to see their role in memory keeping as minimal and the activity as largely unimportant. Interviews revealed the strongest influence appears to be the mother – mothers more clearly model memory keeping for their daughters, they more actively encourage family memory keeping in their daughters (and not in their sons), and they are more likely to be the source of pressure for women to keep memory (whether consciously or unconsciously). Fathers, in contrast, were far less visible in terms of modeling, encouraging, and pressuring their sons or daughters to become memory keepers. For fathers, memory keeping was a vague and at times, seemingly insignificant task, and these sentiments were often modeled by their sons. Hence, this study has demonstrated women do the bulk of memory keeping in the family, and the role of memory keeper becomes gendered through the social expectations reinforced through modeling, encouraging, and pressuring women and men into different roles. However, despite these firmly gendered roles, findings suggest there is room for negotiation.

5.2.3 Negotiating the Role

Though interviews revealed the memory keeping role to be a highly gendered one, often fraught with guilt, expectations, and obligation, many women found opportunities to negotiate the role and the accompanying pressures. At times women felt the role obligatory, yet they also experienced the role as enjoyable; at times women felt guilty for leaving memory work unfinished, yet they also were quick to forgive themselves; at times women felt considerable social pressure to successfully fulfill the role, yet they also challenged and resisted the role of family memory keeper. As such, three themes emerged demonstrating a negotiation of these social pressures and adding complexity and nuance to our understanding of the role of memory keeper: *roles enjoyed*, *roles unfinished*, and *roles resisted*.

5.2.3.1 *Roles enjoyed*

Some women described taking genuine pleasure in the role of family memory keeper:

I made an album. It was fun. I really enjoyed doing that. And organizing them. I enjoy organizing things. (Danielle, 35)

It's so much fun, though, isn't it? (Katie, 28)

Others were adamant that though there were pressures associated with the role, the activity was freely chosen:

I've never seen it as a role I had to fulfill. I wanted to do it. (Colleen, 62)

I take that role on because I want to. (Katie, 28)

One woman described enjoying the activity, while also acknowledging the pressure they experienced:

I guess I picked it up because Bill worked and I stayed home. And I enjoyed it immensely. I enjoyed doing it. I didn't mind. Because he was busy working so I stayed home and did those things...But I did put a little bit too much on myself when I was younger... I put a little too much on myself. And you're giving all along, and all of a sudden you don't get anything back. (Mary, 55)

Several women suggested that while the activity itself was often laborious, the results enabled them pleasure:

But they sure are fun to look at, aren't they? (Kay, 50)

I think even if I don't enjoy it at the time, I know I'll enjoy it afterwards... I like going back and looking at what I did. I just hate doing it at the time. (Amanda, 29)

Several women described their enjoyment of memory keeping as linked to the love of arts and crafts:

I think women tend to enjoy making things. And whether it's crocheting or putting pictures in an album, I think they enjoy being creative... I think they like doing it, and if they get together with other women, then you are also doing it, you know, women enjoy being social, so it's a good way to be social. (Colleen, 62)

If I were to get into scrapbooking, because I do like arts and crafts, it would not have anything to do with my children. It's just that I like little crafty things. ...I could see

myself liking to cut little pretty things and then having stamps and stickers. Like, that would be fine because I like stamps and stickers and colours. (Amanda, 29)

For these women, the memories seemed to provide the materials for their larger, or at least equally significant, interest in arts and crafts.

Some women did report taking genuine enjoyment in their role as family memory keeper. These women described memory keeping as freely chosen, despite the accompanying pressure some women confessed to feeling. Others felt the role was laborious yet the work ultimately provided them with something fun to look through. Two women felt memory keeping fit well with their long-standing interest in arts and crafts, giving them the raw material for a creative outlet. These accounts complicate the notion of memory keeping as a guilt-ridden, gendered role by introducing instances wherein women felt both enjoyment and social pressure simultaneously. These social pressures were also negotiated when women discussed leaving their roles unfinished.

5.2.3.2 *Roles unfinished*

Women often encountered the pressure to fulfill the role of memory keeper, but in many cases, women reported being unable to finish various memory keeping jobs due to the realities of their lives:

I know once I go back to work, it'll all go out the window. Because I'll be marking other kids' drawings and scribbles and I definitely won't have time. For me this year of mat leave was going to be the big time of documentation and organizing things because I know that as soon as I go back to work, that's not going to happen. But that's when the daycare comes in. The one I went to last night, she has you sign consent for taking

photos. He'll probably take his first step and do all that "first" stuff in daycare.

(Danielle, 35)

Similarly, many women noted that a lack of time made it nearly impossible to complete their duties as memory keeper:

You mean to do something better, and you never get there because you're so busy. And my pictures went in boxes, and then they got all mixed up, and now one of these days I have to, I've been putting them in by years now. Trying to eventually put them in an album. But they're just everywhere. I just have to sit there and do that. (Mary, 55)

However, many women seemed not to judge themselves too harshly for leaving the work unfinished:

I wonder how people have time. I'll be looking at blogs or people's craft sites and I'll think, how do they have time? And you think, I could do that. But I don't. (Danielle, 35)

Other women echoed this matter-of-fact stance on unfinished memory keeping:

They don't remember any of it. And I had no time to put it together. (Kay, 50)

I have a baby book, too, one that I bought at Chapters. And I wrote one thing in it. And the rest I've just collected in this steel box, all the cards, all of the pictures, his hospital bracelet, with the intention that I'll do it someday. But it'll probably just stay in the box. You think, "What a nice artefact for him to have, to look at when he's older." But I haven't touched it. (Lara, 35)

One woman expressed concern about the blank spots left in her baby book:

I wonder what she'll think when she sees the blank spots. What will she think?

(Amanda, 29)

And one mother asked her adult son that very question when looking back through his baby book:

What do you think about those blank spots? (Kay, 50)

Oh, I don't fault you. Mostly I think baby books are very, very goofy, so... I don't think any less of you for not filling it out. In fact, I'd be a little concerned if you had a really detailed one. I think you would need a bit of a hug. (Matt, 20)

One woman negotiated her feelings surrounding unfinished memory keeping by pointing out how telling those blank spots really are in baby books:

In a way, though, it's kind of neat because it's like it reminds you of how little time you had. You can be like, "Awww. Look at this. I didn't fill out any of it." That's meaningful! (Erin, 33)

These mothers seemed to feel pressure to finish their work as memory keepers, but they negotiated that pressure by having relatively reasonable expectations for themselves.

Women often reported ambivalence about their inability to complete their work as memory keepers. They reported feeling social pressure to fulfill their role as memory keeper and remain efficient and effective in their memory keeping work. However, they were relatively reasonable in their expectations of themselves as well, allowing them to negotiate these social pressures by reminding themselves of the reality of their lives. Time, or lack thereof, was reported as a major constraint to memory keeping, and women seemed, at the very least, resigned to the toll this had on their memory keeping. One woman went so far as to say that the unfinished memory artefact is in fact the best possible representation of life as a mother.

Statements like these, suggesting that women are negotiating the meaning of memory keeping, indicate there is room in these negotiations to resist the role as well.

5.2.3.3 *Roles resisted*

During the interviews, women frequently expressed annoyance with the role of memory keeper, or at the very least, aspects of the activity of memory keeping. Several women dismissed the very act of reminiscing outright:

I don't really spend much time reminiscing. I don't even reminisce about my own children when they were little. I don't, I just don't. (Kay, 50)

I don't have a strong desire to sit around and go through boxes of old toys or clothes or anything like that. I think it can get a little out of hand and no one's ever even going to look at this old stuff and it just takes up space everywhere. I believe in saving a few important memories, but don't hold on to every single thing your child ever used or touched, you know? It's just stuff! (Katie, 27)

Some women negotiated their role as memory keepers by critiquing certain memory keeping activities. For instance, many women were critical of baby books:

The books seem to be into measuring a lot. Like height, weight, putting the hand and foot in ink and then putting it on and I didn't buy into any of that stuff. But I see new [baby books], and I almost buy them. Like this store is selling one that you write every year for 18 years, you write on their birthday. It's just one entry per year. Then I thought, "I should get that!" Then I think, "No! You're not going to do it!" (Danielle, 35)

I was going through one of my baby's books, and there are parts that I don't know how to answer. One of the points was, the language is like, "my first reaction to seeing you was..." Ok. When you have a second degree tear and the placenta got torn and people are jabbing themselves into you and the baby's gone and I didn't see her, finally when she comes it's just to breastfeed and I'm feeling used and exhausted... I remember thinking that, on the table, I remember thinking, "How do people say this is the best day of their life? This is not the best day of my life." I honestly thought that. And someone even said, "Do you want your baby back? And I was like, "No." It took me three days before I felt connected to her...So what's my first reaction...? (Amanda, 29)

Other women were similarly critical of the particular slant baby books put on motherhood:

It's very biased. It's assuming you feel a certain way. Like, "I got weepy when I opened the gift from..." Well, I didn't get weepy! And now she's going to look at this and think, oh, mama doesn't cry. There's so many blank spots. "When I opened your gifts I remember thinking for the first time..." I don't know! I was overwhelmed and like... tired. "About dreams of your future, I imagined..." I don't know! I don't think about that! And they want you to say, "You being happy! Your well-being!" (Katie, 27)

Several women agreed the format of their baby books often denied them their experience of early motherhood:

The spaces are like, "Every moment with my child is wonderful." "It's all worthwhile" And I think, "That's not relevant!" (Suzanne, 35)

I was terrified of Will, actually, for like days. So when it comes to those places, where it's like, "Tell the story of when I was born!" I'm like, "Umm... I loved you so much!" (Erin, 33)

Many women were also critical of scrapbooking:

I've never gotten scrapbooking, it would never be something I would do. (Danielle, 35)

I can't stand stamps and stickers. (Kay, 50)

Oh I'm not a scrapbooker. That would be phenomenally frustrating for me to try to do that. (Leona, 48)

Several women pointed specifically to the social pressure associated with scrapbooking:

It's about the presentation. I think there's a lot of pressure and marketing around scrapbooking and this is what your baby book should look like. And what's wrong with having all of that in a steel box? It's still collected. (Lara, 35)

Can I say a word about scrapbooking? I think the scrapbooking industry is evil. I think there's intense pressure on young mothers to scrapbook. And I got roped into that once. It was a Saturday party where you learned how to do this. And it was supposed to be fun. And it did nothing but create anxiety. It was extremely expensive. I had no time to do this. And my next door neighbour has three young children, too, and they have people over, but one time in the summer when somebody was over, she was saying that she wanted something else, beyond what she was doing. Like a hobby or something. And the guy who was visiting, I could hear this over the fence, said why don't you take up

scrapbooking? And I just thought, no!!! (laughter) Don't do it! Do anything but scrapbooking! Because she was looking for an identity beyond her children. And this was supposed to be her hobby. Her leisure time. Her identity. (Kay, 50)

Some women negotiated their role as memory keeper by distancing themselves from baby books and scrapbooks, and keeping less traditional memories:

My friend has a daughter who was born with one unusable leg. She was born with like one regular leg, and the other leg is amputated and she has a brace. And I was laughing at her one day because her new album on Facebook was "Shelby's New Leg" and I'm like, "List of albums you never thought you'd keep as a mother!" (Nell, 36)

I have one picture of Karen screaming. Just one. I did manage to take some of her screaming. And screaming and screaming. Because that's what I remember about the first three months. Her screaming and screaming. Non-stop screaming. And I thought, well, I'm not going to take pictures of her only when she's happy, because, this isn't our reality. She's usually miserable. ...that's who you are, that's what I remember. (Kay, 50)

And other women reported keeping memories in ways that reflected their own interests, rather than baby books or scrapbooks:

I really hate journaling, but I find I can keep those memories in other ways. I do things in craftier ways, like I make her toys or I paint her a picture. I do more artistic things. And that's more of a "me" way. (Amanda, 29)

I'm not very creative, so I keep a journal. Someday he's going to have to read through his mother's tiny little handwriting. "What are you trying to tell me??? I did WHAT???"

(Erin, 33)

Some women resisted the memory keeping role by refusing to keep the memory artefacts typically saved by women:

Somebody would have given me, probably my mum, Evie's first five years of birthday cards stuffed in some kind of thing. Who was there and all that. The other two don't have that. I was probably like, "The hell with that, I'm not doing that." (Nell, 36)

I kept the umbilical cord clipping for like a few days and I thought, that's gross, throw it away. Did not keep the placenta. Did not keep it. I doubt I will keep a hair clipping.

(Danielle, 35)

One woman refused pressure from her husband to save memories that were not meaningful to her:

To be honest, I don't pick up ink because I just don't care if we have her hand and foot prints. Sometimes I'm scared that makes me weird. I just don't get what the big deal is to have hand and foot prints captured forever, I really don't care. And since we're on the subject, I also do not plan to save a lock of her hair, in fact, I've already trimmed her hair several times since she was born and just threw it in the garbage. I'll continue to keep memories as I see fit, you know, if my husband wants feet prints and locks of hair then he can do it. I'm not opposed to him keeping whatever memories he sees as important. I just don't think I should be expected to feel the same things are important.

(Katie, 28)

Many women also refused to feel guilty about not performing certain aspects of the memory keeper role:

Sometimes I feel like, “Oh my goodness I haven’t put their feet in ink (laughter) oh my goodness, I haven’t done that! Is that going to bother me??” But I’m pretty sure it won’t. If I’m not interested in doing it, then it probably won’t bother me. (Suzanne, 35)

I tend to just throw things out without thinking they may hold some sentimental value later in life, like, one example is when Luke and I got married, my mother and some other relatives threw me a wedding shower and one of the games they played was they passed around a piece of paper and asked everyone to write one piece of marriage advice and titled it “Our Wedding Vows”. My grandmother wrote “don’t ever go to bed angry”, so it was that kind of thing. Well, shortly after we got married we also moved to a new house and I had been throwing a lot of garbage out on the deck for Andrew to eventually get rid of. And he found the piece of paper titled “Our Wedding Vows” in the trash pile and was pretty hurt. But my thinking was just yeah, it was nice, I read it, when will I ever look at it again? (Katie, 28)

Where the fuck would I find the time to do that? I’m doing everything I can. ...It’s balance. And I don’t feel like, in the long run, he’s going to miss out because I didn’t do a blog. (Lara, 35)

And several mothers of grown children indicated these memories saved might not be as important in the scheme of things:

If it all washed out in a flood tomorrow, I'd be sort of sorry that I'd lose some of the artwork. But the report cards... No. Some things in there are more meaningful than others. So maybe that's what we should go through and decide. Or not, because we have other things to do. (Kay, 50)

Well, at my stage, at my age, they're all material things to me. But when I was younger, they were important. But right now, seeing my kids, and seeing them happy and getting along, that means more to me than any other stuff. Like, I don't need anything anymore in life. You know what I mean? You get to the point where you just don't need anything. But you need your family. That's why I'm getting rid of my dishes, like that set of dishes when we got married, they don't mean anything to me. It's not, you know, you have souvenirs that people gave you at your 40th anniversary, you look at it, but it's just material. Maybe at that time it was important, but not anymore. Communication. Phone calls. Contacts. That means something. The rest you can't take with you. (Pat, 75)

These women resisted memory keeping by focusing on the meaning behind the artefact – the relationships, the love, the connections – rather than the artefact itself.

Many mothers were critical of the role of memory keeper, and resisted some aspects of the memory keeping activity. Some mothers denied being interested in reminiscing in general, and felt memory keeping was akin to hoarding. Others complained the format of their baby books denied them their true experiences motherhood, and many women pointed specifically to scrapbooking as an agent of social pressure and conformity. Several mothers refused to keep memory artefacts that mothers traditionally have saved, while other mothers described keeping

less traditional family memories as a way of preserving their own unique experience of motherhood and family. Some mothers also resisted the feelings of guilt that accompany the failure to save traditional memory artefacts and expressed feeling that these artefacts are above all, material items that “you can’t take with you”. As such, women described resistant experiences with memory keeping, experiences that acted to negotiate memory keeping in terms of both the activity and the role.

The interviews clearly revealed the role of memory keeping to be gendered. Women are doing the bulk of memory keeping for their families, and the role of memory keeper is overwhelmingly understood by both men and women to be “women’s work”. Men do, however, keep memory despite the insistence that men and women occupy different spheres and have different sentiments when it comes to family memory; yet men’s memory keeping – if not through technology, then quiet and hidden – is gendered in itself. Interviews demonstrated that men and women are largely socialized into these roles by their parents through modeling, encouragement, and pressure (for men, this often meant a lack thereof). However, interviews also demonstrated that women are actively negotiating the role of memory keeper. Women negotiated the role by taking pleasure in the admittedly obligatory activity, by leaving their memory keeping role at times unfinished, and by resisting the role through criticizing the activity and refusing to feel guilty about pursuing their own, untraditional forms of memory keeping. Yet, it is important to note that although there were instances where women were critical of the role of memory keeper, none of these women denounced the role outright or insisted their husband adopt the role, or even share the role equally between them. Despite their expressed annoyance with the activity, women still appeared to view memory keeping as important and

even necessary. To better understand the import of this activity, we turn now to the meaning of memory keeping.



Memory 7: Footprints



Memory 8: Two generations of baby books



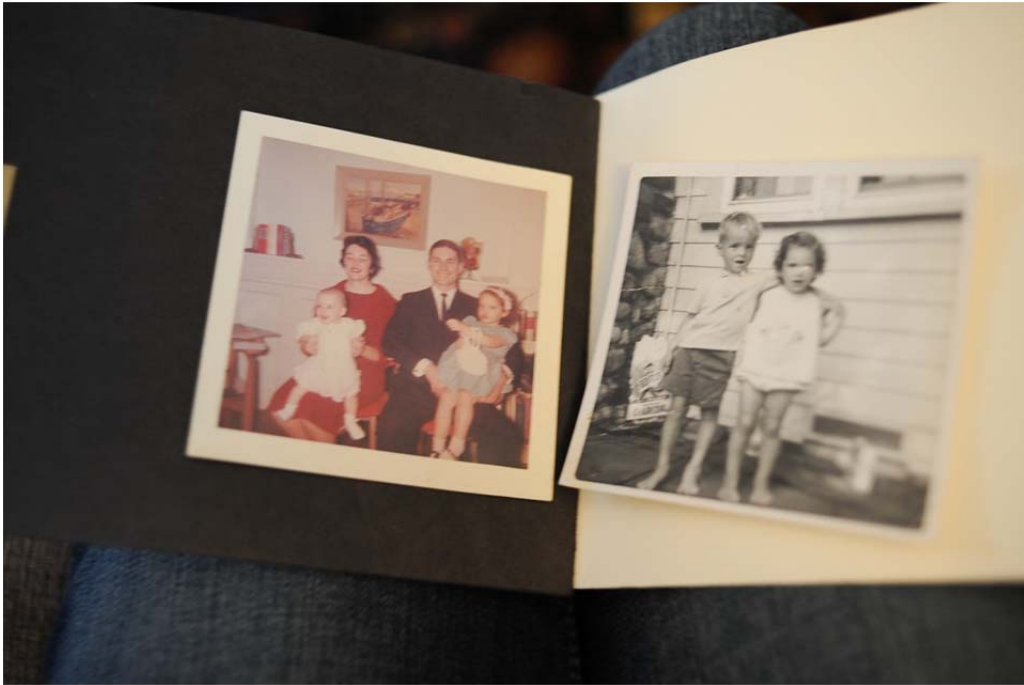
Memory 9: Memories and more



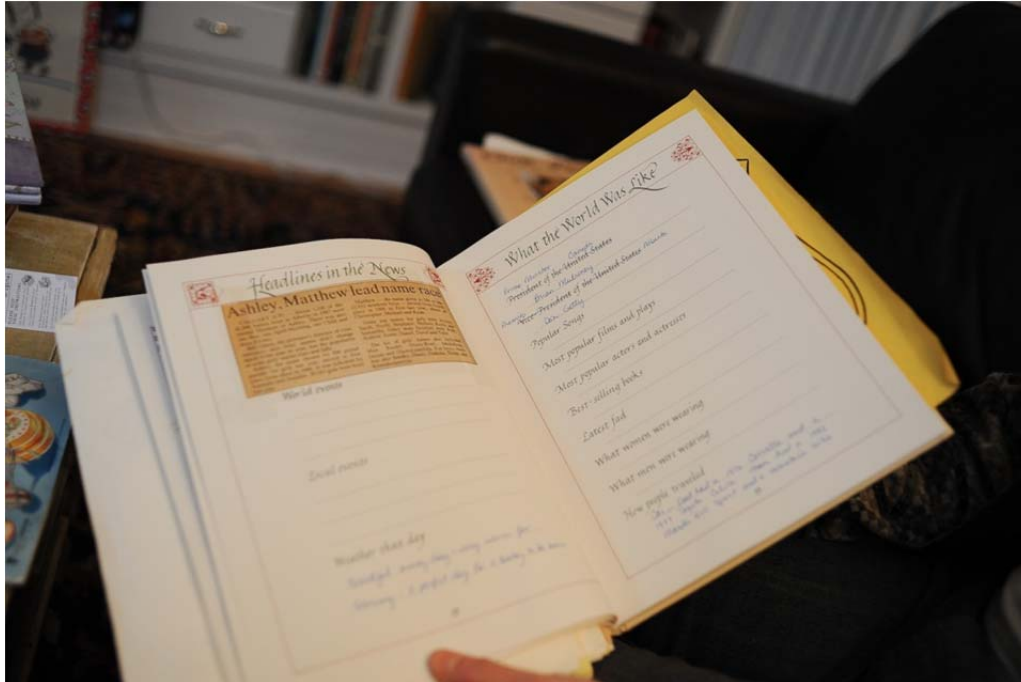
Memory 10: Christmas angel



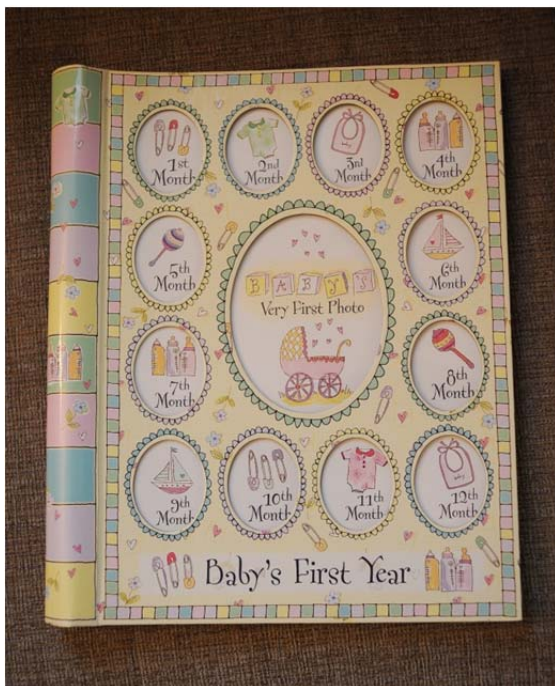
Memory 11: Be mine



Memory 12: Passed from grandmother, to mother, to daughter



Memory 13: What the world was like



Memory 14: Baby book unfinished



Memory 15: From mother-in-law to new daughter-in-law



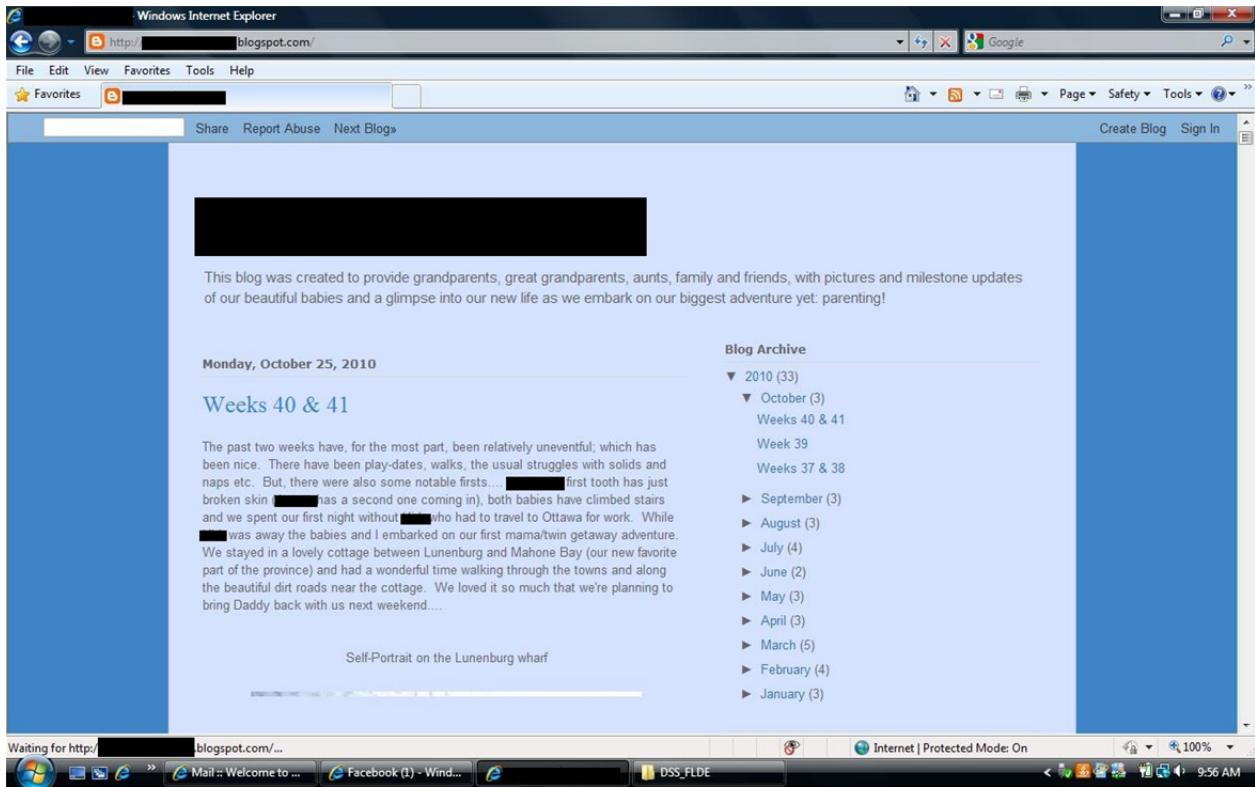
Memory 16: Diaper pin



Memory 17: Participant



Memory 18: Filing system



Memory 19: Memory keeping online



Memory 20: Baby's first photo



Memory 22: Mothers saving teeth



Memory 22: Mothers saving teeth II

5.3 The Meaning

Interviews demonstrated the meaning of memory keeping revolves around three key themes, each with three accompanying subthemes: documentation (for fear of forgetting, for the children, for mother, child and family), evidence (that I loved you, that I was loved, that there was pain), and identity (individual identity, family identity, cultural identity).

5.3.1 Documentation

In part, the meaning of memory keeping is that the activity documents family life. Participants described this documentation as meaningful because they felt without memory keeping important family histories would be forgotten. Some mothers felt it was meaningful to document these histories for their children's benefit. Others noted that memory keeping allowed them to document family life for themselves *and* their families. In each case, the meaningful aspect of the activity was simply having preserved a record of their family life, *for fear of forgetting, for the children, and for mother, child, and family.*

5.3.1.1 *For fear of forgetting*

Many mothers reported documenting their family lives through memory keeping in an effort to protect against forgetting.

We forget tonnes. And you don't think you're going to. Well other people might, but I'm not going to. We're quite an arrogant species! (laughter) But you do forget a lot.
(Elsa, 45)

They grow so fast and there's all sorts of stuff we'll forget, you know? (Erin, 33)

Often women drew upon their own mothers' forgetfulness as a way of affirming the importance of documenting their children's lives now:

You ask your mothers and they can't really remember things. Like, a lot of things I thought Mum would remember and be able to tell me about babies and she'll say, "I can't remember that." And I'll say, "did I make those noises?" And she says, "I can't. No, I can't remember." And that means we'll forget, too. (Danielle, 35)

These women at times seemed to be documenting aspects of their children's lives they wished their mother had remembered about their own childhood:

I already am forgetting, right? Like, I have in that baby book, there's all those, like first thing he ate, like "August 31st, ate avocado for the first time" "September 22nd, stood up". That is how I've recorded it. Because I ask my mum those things now, you know? "When was my first food," or "when did I first walk?" And she can't remember. (Lara, 35)

I love that I remembered to take video of him, because I would have loved to have seen a video of myself at this age. (Erin, 33)

Many women noted, however, that they would have forgotten many childhood memories if not for their mother's memory work:

It's amazing how much we forget. And then you look at a photo your Mum kept and you say, "oh yeah, I remember that day." So, otherwise we'd forget. (Danielle, 35)

I only retain certain memories because of certain photos she kept. (Katie, 27)

For these women, aspects of their childhood were remembered solely because their mother did not forget.

The documentation provided by women's family memory keeping helps guard against forgetfulness. Many participants were deeply concerned they would forget important memories about their children. At times, this fear came from what they perceived as a lack of documentation of their own childhood by their mother. However, many participants also noted the successful documentation of childhood memories by their mother gave them a tangible means of reconnecting with a past that might have otherwise been forgotten. Indeed, many mothers described their memory keeping as meaningful insofar as the documentation benefitted their children.

5.3.1.2 *For the children*

Participants noted memory keeping was meaningful because the process documented family life for the children in the family. Many mothers saw their memory keeping as a way of documenting their children's lives for their children's benefit:

Well, I think it preserves their childhood somewhat. Because those memories are so fleeting because time goes by so quickly. It's half memory, half archival record keeping. So when they need to fill out an application form or a CV or something, we just go through your file and see, ok, you won this award, this award, this award. And you don't even remember half the time that you won them. (Kay, 50)

Several mothers described feeling grateful their mothers documented their own childhood milestones so that they now, as new mothers, could compare notes:

The memories included in the baby books were documented extremely well. She has every milestone documented right down to the day, even time sometimes, that it happened. If I want to know the day I started to crawl, it's in there. The day I rolled over, it's in there. The day I ate first solid food, it's there. And it's been neat to look back and see when I first did things and then see when my own daughter's doing them, because it's so cool to see if we share any similarities that I wouldn't remember myself if it wasn't for the baby book. (Katie, 27)

Many men interviewed discussed the benefits they received from their mother's memory collection:

The memory, that's the only thing left of your childhood, something you can hold in your hand. (Alex, 27)

For the most part, I don't have a lot of clear memories that don't come from the pictures and the notes and the videos and the stories. Other than that, I don't have a lot of clear memories of my childhood. So those are what preserve, kind of, how I grew up. (Dan, 31)

It's kind of cool in that it helps me remember things. I don't know, I think it's kind of cool, because it serves kind of an artefact journal. You don't have to bother writing down, in this year so-and-so did X, because to a certain extent, these little artefacts call up these memories... it's sort of like a cue in a way... Like, you don't have to write out the story of it, I can kind of gather it from the constituent parts. (Matt, 20)

The documentation of family memory was also cited as a meaningful record of family history:

Family trees... It's a good thing we have this stuff, though, because I don't think we recorded it anywhere. And you forget, people die and the memories are gone. (Kay, 50)

This mother sees the usefulness of her memory keeping in terms of future generations.

Documenting family memory was meaningful to many participants in terms of the benefits provided to the children of the family. Children took comfort in the memories saved for them as records of their young lives and accounts of their major milestones – often used to compare with the milestones of their own children. Mothers cited the need to attempt to preserve their children's childhoods and pass down records of their family histories. However, many mothers also expressed ambiguity when defining the importance of their family memory keeping. They often had difficulty defining whether this documentation was for their children, or for themselves.

5.3.1.3 *For mother, child, and family*

Many women described feeling conflicted about the benefactors of their memory documentation. Often, women expressed the notion that the memories documented were both for their children, *and* for themselves:

It's a negotiation of what you put in that you want her to remember and what you put in that I want me to remember. And I think I'm constantly trying to think about the two.
(Amanda, 29)

They're a little of both. If he were to ask for them when he left home, I would give them to him. But right now, they're just for us. That is, for both of us. I guess it's for all of us, right? For the family. But it's also just for me, you know? (Lara, 35)

For many women, the memories they documented of their child's youth were also memories of their own experiences with motherhood:

And then I ended up thinking, well, maybe I'm writing this more for myself anyway.

That's what I thought. Maybe this is my diary. My diary of being a mother. (Erin, 33)

I don't know whether this is for me or for her. ...But I think it's both. I always play back kind of, my version now of her birth story... Because I don't want to forget it.

(Amanda, 29)

Many mothers described the pride they felt over particular memory artefacts; not only pride over their children's accomplishments, but pride in terms of their own mothering:

Oliver got his first swimming report and his little badge, Brent just chucked it aside, or something like that. And I was really mad. I said, "That's his swimming report." And he was like, "He's not gonna care, he's two and a half!" And I was like, "But he needs to see that he's finished it!" But he didn't think it was a big deal. But I was the one who went to the swimming lessons with him, so we did it together. It was kind of like I accomplished this with him. We passed! (Lara, 35)

I don't have any pictures of Joey when he was eight because all the pictures got lost in the mail. He was eight and I made a race track cake. They were all lost in the mail. It's just something that happens, but I got pretty worked up about it at the time. (Mary, 55)

Another woman, whose father is the memory keeper in the family, described the pride he took in her childhood memory artefacts:

The frog one is cute because my dad was obsessed with making sure everything was fair. My sister was in swimming and I wasn't, and my dad didn't want me to be left out, so he gave me this badge when my sister got her first swimming badge. So my dad put that in there. He put them together, he bought the frames, he put them together like that. ...And so it was just a reminder that it meant a big deal to him, as much as it was a big deal to me. (Amanda, 29)

Similarly, many women discussed their childhood memory artefacts as extremely meaningful to their mothers:

When she looks through this stuff, Mum bursts with pride and also I think experiences a sense of sadness for those times that time can't get back for her. (Lindsey, 32)

Many mothers refused to part with memory artefacts because they were so meaningful:

We took my baby book a couple of months ago. Just to look because we wanted to see how much Oliver looked like me. And Mum said, "I want that back." So she still wants that. That's still, that's not ours, that is hers. It's fine for us to look at, but it's hers. (Lara, 35)

There were several things, for instance, his stuffed animals, that Mitch didn't choose to bring with him when he moved out. And so, me the sucker, I still have them. (Colleen, 62)

Well, some you can't bear to part with them. (Kay, 50)

Indeed, one son wondered if the memories his mother kept were for him, or in fact, for his mother:

Half of this stuff, I didn't even know it exists. How do I feel about it? I don't know. It's sort of interesting in terms of it being an archive... But like, I think these are more for my mother than for me... (Matt, 20)

Several women noted the memories kept were for their children, for themselves, and for other members of the family as well. Interestingly, in each instance women spoke about documenting and sharing memories online:

I've created a blog, with full recognition that it's probably mostly for me. But it's my record, for myself. Then my plan for these guys is once they're a year I want to print it off and have a CD with the videos on it. So it's physical. And give it to their grandparents, too. (Suzanne, 35)

I share the blog with family, people who aren't on Facebook. (Danielle, 35)

I put a lot of energy into keeping the photos up to date on Facebook and I guess part of that is 'cause I know people will see them, and that's important to me. The vast majority of my friends and family live away, many have never even met Sadie, including my best friend, so I guess I want to be able to share her pictures with everyone. (Katie, 27)

For these women, documenting the memories was partly for their children, partly for themselves, and partly for family and friends.

The meaning of memory keeping is, to a certain degree, about documentation. Women save family memory for fear that they, and their families, might otherwise forget important details, milestones, moments, and family histories. Indeed, participants confirmed they might have no memories of their childhoods were it not for their mother's memory keeping. Women

preserve this memory in part because they feel it might be meaningful someday to their children. However, women also expressed ambiguity in terms of the meaning of the memory they kept. Often, mothers reported saving memory to document both their child's life and their own life as a mother. And still others described documenting family memory as important to them, their children, and their family and close friends. In this sense, women's family memory keeping is meaningful insofar as the activity provides mother, child, and family with a meaningful record of their families' lives. However, interviews also suggested family memory keeping was meaningful insofar as it provided mother, child, and family with evidence.

5.3.2 Evidence

The meaning of family memory is also rooted in the ability these artefacts have to provide family members with evidence. Interviews revealed family memory artefacts were used by mothers to demonstrate their love for their children, by individuals as a reminder that they are loved by their families, and by family members to demonstrate that among these happy moments there was also pain. As such, three subthemes emerged. Family memory was seen to provide evidence *that I loved you, that I was loved, and that there was pain.*

5.3.2.1 *That I loved you*

Many mothers spoke of the need to keep memory for their children as a means of providing evidence to their children that they were loved by their mother:

I remember my mom showing me my baby book throughout my life but I never really cared. Until I was pregnant. I read that book cover to cover and bawled my eyes out,

maybe the hormones, but I guess I hope that someday I can give this book to Sadie and she'll be touched reading about her beginning and how I felt about her. (Katie, 27)

I think if anything ever happened to me I would want him to know I had thought this stuff. So it's a little bit of, this is what I think of you, I think you're wonderful. (Erin, 33)

One mother described her need to provide this evidence to her child as a reaction to how she was parented by her mother:

I think that I want to do things differently than my mum. So that's part of a conscious effort to do things differently. And not that she did anything badly, but she wasn't the most overt. So I want to be more like, letting my daughter know how I feel. Like those letters, I really want to do that so there's no doubt about how I felt about her. (Amanda, 29)

One adoptive mother describes how important this evidence is in demonstrating how much she, in particular, loves her child:

I would feel threatened if Olivia thought of her birth mother as her "real mother". I want her to see that it was *I* who gave her her very first bath, which I captured on video, that *I* carried her in my sling to the health center, that *I* dressed her as a skunk for her first Halloween, and that *I* took care of her from the minute of her birth. And I have that documented for those reasons. (Lindsey, 32)

For this mother, her memories provided key evidence that she was, in fact, her daughter's mother:

I keep lots of things to ensure she sees, and will always see, *me*, as her mother... I see these memories as my own and very personal because I see them as proof of my motherhood, you know? I have no physical or mental scars of actual labour or even pregnancy and in that regard I've had moments of not feeling like a real mum. And so they serve to remind *me* that I really am her Mumma. I feel as though I've had more to prove, and the memories I keep help me to do that, even if they are just for me. (Lindsey, 32)

The evidence these memories provided are hugely meaningful in terms of demonstrating both love and identity as a mother, particularly, it would seem, for new and adoptive mothers.

Family memories can serve as evidence of a mother's love for her child. Many mothers described the significance of saving artefacts for their children that will help communicate the love they felt for their children, particularly when their children were young. One mother collected this evidence as a direct reaction to the lack of evidence she felt her own mother provided. Another mother collected this evidence in an attempt to demonstrate to her adopted daughter just how much she cared for her child, despite not having carried and birthed her. This evidence also served to prove her identity and worth as a mother. And just as many mothers sought to demonstrate that they loved their child through family memory keeping, many participants also felt family memory provided evidence that they were, in fact, loved as well.

5.3.2.2 *That I was loved*

Many participants noted the meaning of family memory keeping laid in the evidence these artefacts provided that they were loved. Often the memories were evidence that they were loved by their mother:

What did my mother keep... Ok, baby books, complete with first band-aids from my first immunizations, first lock of hair, first scribbles, baby clothes, pictures, birth announcements, lists of every present given to me as a baby, lists of words as I learned them, written stories of little adventures I had. Every school photo, report card, scribbler, school work, certificates, cards from me to her and Dad...written, pictures, baby-books, school days books, a poem she wrote to me when I turned 30. And these memories represent the love that my mother felt for me. She always told me that when she had me, it was just she and her baby in the whole world. Not even Dad. Everyone and everything just melted away. And how no one compared to me. And the memories she kept for me reinforce that. It reflects the love my mother had for my sister and me. ...The memories gave me a sense of belonging, of being loved and desperately wanted. (Lindsey, 32)

One woman described the connection she felt to her mother while looking through her baby book:

My mother put a great deal of her heart into those baby books. There are many places in the book where she was able to just write about her feelings and I think that's what made me cry the most. Reading about her love for me as a little baby, because obviously I have no memory of that time in my life, so to read those words from her heart and to imagine her being 23 years old writing them was just something else. (Katie, 27)

Indeed, these memories often stood as symbols of a mother's love:

I have to show you this. I turned 50 this summer... But it was a big deal for my mother. So she put this together... With pictures that she had from my grandmother. My grandmother had kept these. So these are really nice memories of my childhood. She's

not a really crafty person, but she put this together. So I was really touched by that. (Kay, 50)

You feel that as a symbol of your mum loving you so much that she loved every drawing you did, loved everything you did so much that she held onto it. (Amanda, 29)

Another woman saved an artefact as a reminder that her mother was proud of her:

Did you see my name plate from work in there where you put your coat? Isn't that nice? After I retired, I was going to throw it out, but I thought, no, I'm going to keep that. I earned it... I didn't do much education, and my mum didn't have any education. So all my mum wanted was for someone to work in an office, and I worked in an office. So she was so proud of me. (Pat, 75)

Several mothers noted the importance of these memories in reminding them that their children loved them:

Here, I have a little heart my daughter made, it says "I'm so sorry you didn't sleep all night because of me!" And you can just hear her little voice...! "I love you. I hope you had a good sleep tonight." (Elsa, 45)

If a little kid makes you, even at the instruction of a nursery school teacher, makes you some sort of ash tray, it's not as if they thought of it themselves, oh I think I'll make this for my mum, still, they've made it for me, they did that for me. And I appreciate that, and I keep it. (Colleen, 62)

These connections forged by family memory artefacts often left participants feeling valued:

I save the cards, the cards I'll save. My daughter would always find cards that had special words in it. Like, you should read the cards that my grandkids sent me. Like, that has special words in it. And for somebody to take the time to look, I mean, you don't just find the cards off the rack, you gotta really look. Now, for them to do that, that's important...they found a card that said what they wanted to say. This is what's important. (Pat, 75)

It's like a comfort feeling... safe...comfort...no worries... That connection translates those things. Peace and everything. And it's good. No pain, no bad memories. And paid attention to. You're special. You're valued. (Mary, 55)

These family memory artefacts were saved because they gave participants the comfort of knowing they were cared for.

For many participants, family memory artefacts stood as reminders that they were loved. For some participants, the memories saved by their mothers were symbols of how much their mothers cherished them and were proud of them. Others spoke about saving memories from their children as reminders that they are loved as mothers, as well. The memory artefacts serve as tokens of the connections participants have forged with family, and above all, reminders that they are in some way special, valued, and cared for. While many participants described family memory artefacts as meaningful insofar as they provide evidence that they are loved, others described family memory as evidence of family pain.

5.3.2.3 *That there was pain*

Unfortunately, whereas many participants described family memory as providing comforting evidence that they were cared for, safe, and loved, some participants found family memory a source of discomfort and pain. One woman described a conversation she recently had with her mother surrounding family memory:

My mother gave me this memory recently. She said, “When you were little and I would lay you down at night, you would say I love you and you would try to hug me. And I would say don’t be foolish, and I would push you off until you stopped doing it.” For her to give me that memory, I didn’t even remember that. ...So no. I don’t want to look at a picture of my mom. (Nell, 36)

Similarly, another woman found certain family memories remind her of pain rather than comfort:

There are one or two pictures of me the year after my mother died and I was cutting and doing all kinds of things. Because like I said, it was very sudden and very devastating for our family. Knocked everybody on their ass for years. So like I said, I was cutting, I wasn’t eating, so I look at those pictures and I just feel bad for that kid. Because she was really in a world of hurt at that point. (Leona, 49)

Several mothers found particular family photos difficult to look at, for the photos provided evidence of family pain rather than family cohesion:

My oldest went through a very hard time from 14 until, well, basically from 14 until she got pregnant with my grandson, to varying degrees. She’s had issues with depression and anxiety, too. Had some drug issues in her late teens and very early twenties... And while I know a lot of what she was going through, I certainly didn’t know all of it. And when I look at pictures I can see now that she wasn’t happy and that she was struggling...looking back at those pictures now, it gives me pain to see what she had

gone through. And she still struggles. ...So those pictures, to look back at those and see... that's hard. (Leona, 49)

It's harder to look at Jake when he was younger, because he had so much going for him. The magic shows that he'd put on for us, and the entertainer. He would make us laugh. He was such a happy child. Lots of friends, more than his other brothers. But then all of a sudden he kind of gets caught up in different things, and slowly you find out about his addictions and... You want to forget that and just look at the pictures, but you can't. (Mary, 55)

Another participant described how family memory becomes complicated as families grow and change:

There's this table cloth that comes out every Christmas and we decided to autograph it every Christmas, who was there. So it was interesting, but then it got awkward because people were getting divorced and you try to put the cranberries on top of the person that just left the family and you have all these side dishes that you're trying to arrange strategically... (Kay, 50)

Several participants discussed omissions in family memory, memories deliberately not kept or preserved in particular ways for the purpose of omitting family pain:

You know, I look back on those photos, there's this one photo in particular, it's a Christmas photo and we're at my aunts, and my face is like this (makes a strained face). Me and my parents had the worst fight that day and we're trying to smile for this camera at Christmas, and... I wonder if it's a parental protectiveness thing. ...I think my parents were probably trying to preserve the positive perhaps for my benefit... But I think the

negative moments that you try not to capture find their way in regardless. Because the story is partly the omission. (Amanda, 29)

One mother describes omitting memories in terms of moments that do not get recorded in a baby book:

There are crappy times as the parent of a newborn. And you don't write, "Oh my god I'm fucking exhausted, you know, I want to throw my child against a wall." I remember Brent, in the middle of the night, Oliver's crying, he hasn't slept, and Brent said the next day that he had this moment of thinking, "If I just throw him against the wall, he'll stop crying." And I was like, do not say that to anyone. Do not repeat that to anyone. (Lara, 35)

Similarly, another mother discusses omissions in photo albums:

This year has been a really difficult year for my family. Like, we got married when I was three months pregnant, we planned the wedding in four weeks, we bought a house the same month we got married, we're completely broke... I can honestly say there are times I didn't think our marriage would make it to the one year mark. The reason I'm saying all this is because if you were to look through my Facebook albums, you would *never* guess any of this. Because of course I'm only capturing the happy moments. And I certainly won't be writing about the bad times in Sadie's baby book either. (Katie, 27)

Another woman described omitted memories of her mother's struggles with mental illness:

We don't have any memories kept during the times when she battled depression, and the lack of memories kept is representative of a time and space of which I don't wish to remember. No, not many things were kept during the times when Mum was experiencing a depressive episode. Like, when she was hospitalized for depression, it's kind of as

though that time period was skipped over in terms of keeping memories alive. That's a time that is rarely talked about, except when I bring it up during times of my own turmoil. And she's never spoken to my sister about the postpartum she felt when my sister was born. She's only confided this to me. (Lindsey, 32)

Another woman described the omission of family memories as a means of self-preservation:

I had a very bad childhood. (chokes up) Which is probably why I try really hard to be a good mum. But I had a very, very physically, emotionally, in every way, very violent upbringing. So it's very hard to look back. I don't have a lot of memories of being a kid, which probably is self-preservation, I'm sure. (Nell, 36)

Another woman recalled her mother protecting her children's memory of their father who was in his late thirties dying of Early Alzheimer's Disease:

He was about 60 or 70 lbs when he died, 6 foot 3. ...And when people say that people with Alzheimer's don't understand and don't know, I think that's so erroneous. I always think that there's still these people inside of them just struggling so hard sometimes. And we would leave sometimes but he would hold my hand really tight. And he couldn't talk anymore and he couldn't feed himself or anything like that. And I'd have to say, "Dad, I have to go." And he'd hold tighter. ...And then we didn't go see him after that, because Mum thought it might be too hard for us, and those would be the memories we'd have. (Elsa, 45)

These omissions in family memory are often a coping mechanism for dealing with family pain.

For some participants, certain family memories are meaningful insofar as they provide evidence of family pain. Participants described the existence of family memories, artefacts, and photographs, as reminders of painful moments and relationships they might rather have

forgotten. Others noted that in some instances, a lack of family memories was evidence of an omission of painful moments in family history. Some participants described this omission as a way of posturing, only providing evidence of a “happy” family, while others described the omission as a necessary coping or defense mechanism in the face of significant pain or loss. Thus, while family memory keeping creates evidence of love, pride, and care within a family, participants suggested family memory provides evidence of pain, turmoil, and omission within a family as well. Regardless of the combination of love and pain evidenced by family memory, these artefacts define a family in terms of identity.

5.3.3 Identity

Family memory is incredibly meaningful in terms of identity. Interviews revealed the significance of family memory in creating and maintaining identity for participants. Not only were family memory artefacts produced to demonstrate continuity of individual identity, to prove the consistency of an individual’s character from past until present, but these artefacts were also drawn upon to define and redefine family identity, and to confirm and reaffirm cultural identity as well. Thus three subthemes emerged surrounding family memory and identity: *individual identity*, *family identity*, and *cultural identity*.

5.3.3.1 *Individual identity*

Often participants spoke of the importance of family memory in terms of defining and maintaining individual identity:

I found an old autobiography that I did, I think I was in grade four or something like that. And so I called upon it when I was writing about my values and the role that values play

in my work now, and who I am now is almost exactly the same person I was then. Like I said, I hate it when things aren't fair, and I hate it when people are mean to other people. Same thing I'm doing now! (Amanda, 29)

Like those Ninja Turtles... They're a defining feature of my early childhood. Like, you'd be amazed at how much of my personality comes from Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles 2: Secret of the Ooze. The movie. (Matt, 20)

Mothers often brought out particular memory artefacts as evidence of their children's enduring identities:

Some [artefacts] are quite telling. But it's neat, though, looking at that award that my son won. It says "asks interesting questions". And he still asks interesting questions. So that's kind of telling. (Kay, 50)

Participants often seemed comforted by the consistency the memory artefacts offered in terms of reaffirming their identity:

And then these are my "I wasn't so athletically inclined" badges. Gymfest '84!
Participant! I'm not very athletic. (Amanda, 29)

I have my own baby book that my mother did for me... And I used to *love* looking through both of them when I was a kid... And look, see? I was a happy kid. (Kay, 50)

In fact, participants were even comforted by the artefacts that identified them as imperfect:

I'll save report cards even if they're bad. I have some pretty not-promising report cards that my mother saved from grade one or two, that I talked too much and was disruptive. And now they're hilarious to see, right? (Lara, 35)

I still have this skirt I wore as a kid. It was my depression skirt. Every time I felt down I would put my depression skirt on and I would go around and I would feel better. I could wear it a lot now! (Mary, 55)

These reminders of imperfections, rather than being truly sinister or disturbing to one's identity, are ultimately humorous and humanizing:

I do have a box of things, like Alexandra's report cards and little things. That will someday you know, probably when... maybe if she ever has kids... You know, you need to be reminded sometimes, as I do, that you weren't that perfect either. So I can be like, "Do you want to see your Mum's C? She had them, too!" (Elsa, 45)

I do have one set of photos that documented my first day of grade one and we had moved to a new place. I'm shown in one photo waving, smiling, happily heading to the bus stop. Then there's this other photo with me screaming in terror running down the steps of the bus. I refused to go to school for a week after that. And I always thought those photos were hilarious because they really captured how terrified I was of school! (Katie, 27)

Participants often described these artefacts as incredibly meaningful in terms of identity:

It built my confidence, grounded me through difficult times in elementary and high school, and made me feel a greater sense of who I was, rather than the person that everyone else thought I might be, like, oh, she's the teacher's pet, the nerd, or the bookworm. No, it made me feel as though I had a rich past, rooted in a sense of security and closeness. (Lindsey, 32)

For one mother of four foster children, saving memory artefacts was a vital yet complicated process in terms of individual identity:

Every little thing that has come with them, the few pictures I have. I have Jonah with his birth mum, who is also Hannah and Alea's birth mum, because he was two when he came to us and the others were babies. So I have pictures of him, but I have no baby pictures of him. His birth mum had no baby pictures of him, so I have nothing before he came to us at two years old. And that bothers me. It does. (Leona, 49)

In one case, this mother describes a birth mother making a conscious effort to provide her child with these memories despite being unable to parent her:

Alexa, a little girl who lived with us for nearly two years before she went to be adopted, there were only three or four pictures that her birth mum had sent along to me to pass along to her... Her birth mum managed to scrape together three or four pictures of Alexa. And her birth mother, she fought her own battles with addictions and she could be very selfish and self-centred. And yet, in the end she made the effort to go through this stuff and find those pictures for her. And one day when she was with her new family, they were looking through some of the things and she was going through these pictures, and she found these ones of herself as an infant. And her adopted mum said her whole demeanour just lit up like a Christmas tree and she said, "Look, see! I knew I was a baby one time!" Because these things are anchors. To have those things meant something to them. And without them they felt that they were missing something. It just meant the world to Alexa to know that. (Leona, 49)

For a mother of a transgender daughter, family memory is also complicated by issues of identity:

I know as you look around the house there are not a lot of pictures. Part of that is a lot to do with Evie. ...It takes a little while to come to being ok with Evan and Evie being two different people. It's a very big deal to her, I'm not supposed to use that name. But I have trouble sometimes...So we don't have a whole lot of pictures up around. It's something that would bother her. But there are older pictures of younger Evan and I'm just not willing to part with them. (Nell, 36)

This mother is attempting to provide continuity of identity for her daughter and younger children, while simultaneously recognizing a significant shift in her daughter's identity:

Well, we were putting the Christmas tree up and Evie wasn't there because she was probably working or whatever, and one of the things I do every year is the kids get an ornament so we'd have their name on it. And it's not always something super special or expensive... But my ten year old son said, "This is really going to bother Evie because all these say 'Evan'." And it was a little hard for me. I can remember standing in the drugstore and I'm looking at ornaments, and to say that I've gained a daughter isn't sad, but to say that I've lost a son... (chokes up) So to look at them and think that first year that I'm buying only one son an ornament... Anyway, we toll painted over all the ornaments and put "Evie" on them. Because really, essentially, as far as Evie's concerned, she's always been there. And she's not a different person to us. (Nell, 36)

For this mother, family memory artefacts are altered in recognition of an identity transition. Ironically, these alterations are done in an attempt to provide her daughter and family with a sense of continuity of identity.

Participants experienced family memory as a comforting means of reaffirming and maintaining a continuity of individual identity. Many participants used memory artefacts to

demonstrate the similarities between past and present selves. Even when discussing family memory artefacts that imbued their identity with imperfection, participants drew upon these artefacts as a means of humanizing themselves rather than demonizing themselves. Mothers often used memory artefacts as a way of illustrating the continuity of their children's character; several mothers added nuance to this process by sharing experiences with parenting foster children and transgender children. However, even in these more complicated circumstances, the meaning of family memory was clear: family memory is significant in terms of creating and maintaining individual identity. In a similar sense, family memory was also significant in terms of the collective identity of the entire family.

5.3.3.2 *Family identity*

Participants spoke frequently about family memory in terms of defining family identity. Memory between family members helped produce a cohesive family unit:

When I look at pictures, family identity is wrapped up in that. ...It's reinforcing that identity story. Feeling like a unit, a family unit. What makes us special, what makes us different. (Kay, 50)

Family memories were often gathered in the context of family leisure time::

Birthday parties, apple picking... my grandpa's for ice cream... Camping... The Olympics. Trip out East which I just hated, I was drugged on Gravol the whole time. There's my parents, many, many years ago... Great bathing suit, 1949, 1950. That's my grandpa's boat. And my dad and my brother, I guess they'd gone rafting or something... (Kay, 50)

These family memories often imbues the family with a sense of pride:

Even without Mum and Dad, we've retained a collective memory that we share, and is significant in terms of our story and our identity. Who we are. My sisters, they speak of our family with a certain amount of pride, even though we didn't do anything. But those family memories... It's like the image of Hansel and Gretel. That's the bread. Those are the little crumbs and, if you follow them, they take you home.

(Jack, 64)

Many mothers spoke about saving particular memory artefacts because of their connection to family history:

You have to keep the ones with meaning, with connection. We have two quilts that were made by Brent's grandmother. She passed away, but she got to meet Oliver when he was six months. And we have a video of her sitting with him at the kitchen table and she's singing Hungarian lullabies to him. So we have those two quilts that I will never part with. So those things, those are keepsakes that I'll keep for him. That I'll give to him and hopefully he'll use them with his children. (Lara, 35)

When I was younger, stuff like that didn't seem important to me, but now it does more. Because it kind of ties you to your roots. (Mary, 55)

Family is a complicated notion in itself, and several participants described defining and redefining the boundaries of their family through family memory. One woman discussed putting up photos of her ex-husband:

There's pictures on the side of the fridge of Brian, too, Brian and the kids, because that's their dad, right? Even though it's my house, that's their dad, right? Because, this is their anchor, this is their home. (Nell, 36)

Another woman described keeping memories from a couple she considered second parents:

It was just amazing that I happened to move to a house that was next to this couple. Because they were so accepting of me, because I was pregnant, but I wasn't married, and they were ok with that... And they would say, you're like a daughter to us. He would say, you are my daughter. And there's a little thing that I have in the kitchen from them, and that's my one thing that I have from them. I think they paid like 59 cents for it. But the weight that it holds is... immeasurable. Those anchors... (Elsa, 45)

Several participants had experience with adopted or foster children. In these cases, family memory was a complicated and incredibly meaningful process:

The clothes that the kids came in are put away. It was the first of May when Carrie came to us and it was just a really ratty sleeper with the feet cut out of it and she had nothing else. But she came with that, so that's put away. They're in a box. And her birth mum sent a pair of overalls home for Lilly for her first birthday and those are put away. Just anything like that that came from them. (Leona, 49)

Family photo albums were one way of confirming important family relationships and demonstrating pride as an adoptive family:

That's my brother who was adopted, Darryl...this is a little boy whose mum was a drug addict. And Mum took him and raised him for about two years. ...This was Julissa, whose mother was also addicted to drugs, so she came to live with Mum. She couldn't walk or anything... This was a friend of the family's. His family never really... they never really associated with Billy at all. So he became part of our family. (Elsa, 45)

One foster mother describes the complexity of keeping family memory for her three biological children versus her four now-adopted children:

I don't have a tonne of stuff from my first three kids. Like I have their baby books and pictures and that kind of thing. But because we're their family of origin, like you know, I didn't feel that need as much. But because of these kids losing their family of origin, it just seemed more important to hang onto the actual physical stuff that they came with. Because I was their foster mother first, I know a lot more about their families of origin than a lot of adoptive parents would know. So I have an obligation to them to hold onto all that as much as I can. (Leona, 46)

Another mother confirms these obligations to build and maintain multiple family histories as an adoptive mother:

I am doubly responsible for that memory sharing. I haven't quite figured that one out yet – a beautiful blend of Two Peoples. I do have the means of seeking out her family to talk with and I keep touch with her aunts and uncles, and of course, her birth parents. I know they would be more than willing to tell me about their personal and family histories to pass down to her... I think it's important for her to know her history and especially learn of her cultural identity between both families. It's so hard because that line for me is blurred. Is she theirs? Is she ours? (Lindsey, 32)

Both adoptive mothers struggled with how to preserve their children's family history when that family history was often less than positive:

I have newspaper clippings that I have kept that someday she will need to see. And you can put a spin on things. But she's going to have to know. And I don't have a totally negative view of their birth mother anyway. She's a victim as much as anyone else. She's Fetal Alcohol Affected herself. But you do have to put a positive spin on things. Because that's where these children are from. (Leona, 46)

I want Olivia to have a balanced perspective of the birth parents, you know, like, they gave her to us because they wanted her to have more in life than they could give her, and that, yes, it was the hardest choice imaginable. On the other hand, they kept their first son, so it is a delicate balance of explanation. There will be many “whys?” and that’s a major reason for me to keep conversations that I saved from Facebook that the birth mother had about how hard it was for her to choose adoption. I just would rather Liv see her birth parents as protagonists for *her* sake, you know? (Lindsey, 32)

In these cases, family memory was used as a means of defining and often redefining family for the purpose of family unity and cohesion of family identity. However, some participants described instances where family memory was contested and created divisions and conflict among family members. Many times, this contested family memory was between siblings:

For better or for worse, my sister has told herself a certain story for a length of time. I’m not sure about the details of how that happened, I’m not sure if there were specific circumstance or not, or sometimes you find comfort in a story that makes sense of your view. And not only makes sense, but supports it. And that’s the story she tells in terms of our family. And that’s her story, and that’s her drama that she’s working and that she’s sorting out. (Jack, 64)

I remember having conversations with my sister, a lot of them are about bad things associated with my dad, mainly. And I got to the point where I didn’t want to talk about this anymore. Because I thought, I don’t need to be reminded how dysfunctional we were and what a jerk he was and how inadequate he was as a father. ...I just thought, I

don't want to talk about this stuff anymore. I'm through with that, and I have my own family and I don't feel like revisiting that anymore. For me it's not a good place to go.

(Kay, 50)

Several participants expressed concern that their family memory was being misrepresented by other family members:

I'm concerned with the stories that my sister's passing on to her kids about my childhood. ...My sister was kind of mean to me growing up, and she'd make me do really bad things or would do bad things to me. And the kids will tell them like funny stories. ...This is my childhood being relived and carried on by other people in a way that I don't want it retold. ...And so I don't know what to really do with that, because that's my personal story, but it's also her story, so whose story is it and who has the right to share it, and with who. (Amanda, 29)

One woman who grew up in an abusive household, is the only member of her family who acknowledges the abuse:

One of my probably only early memories is when I would have to have been about four, and my sister would have been two, and us being out, we lived in a little trailer park, it was a very little place, and us getting ready for church in the morning, and us being on the back steps. And my sister fell down the stairs. And just getting like, you know, my first real beating that I remember because it was assumed that I had pushed her. And some of what made it more difficult is that my sister did not share the same experiences. And we have very different views on our whole past in general. And it's made it very difficult on our relationship now. ...Mum and Margaret are very close and very connected still. ...They won't acknowledge any of it. (Nell, 36)

This participant struggles with the fact that the family memory her family upholds is not the family memory to which she subscribes:

My parents absolutely act like it never happened. I was, probably until the time I was pregnant, but the last time I had a bare-assed across the knee spanking from my father, I would have been 15 or 16. Like, that's not even... that's other levels of stuff. That's other layers of wrongness, right? ...My sister and I have been able to agree... except we both know how the other really feels. What everybody remembers or chooses to remember, is not necessarily what happened. (Nell, 36)

While for some families, family memory is a symbol of unity and cohesion, for others, family memory is the site of division and conflict.

Many participants noted family memory was meaningful insofar as the memories provided their family a unique identity. Family memory, often gathered during moments of family leisure, was described as a unifying means of setting a family apart and identifying what made a particular family special. Families, including adoptive families and foster families, used family memory to define and redefine the boundaries of their particular family. In this sense, memory was a way of claiming and assigning membership as well as identity. However, participants also discussed family memories that were contested among family members. In some instances, family memory drove a family apart rather than bringing the family together; a reminder of past and present denials, tensions and conflicts within a family. In these cases, family memory serves to obscure and trouble family identity, or perhaps define a family's identity as conflicted. Just as family memory can serve to define individual and family identity, these memories also work to situate a family within a particular cultural context.

5.3.3.3 *Cultural identity*

Family memory offers the individuals in that family a cultural identity, insofar as family memory helps instill family members with the cultural markers of that particular family.

Interviews revealed family memory situates an individual or family within a generation, a time period, a geographical region, a social class, a religion, an ethnicity, and indeed, a culture. Many of the items preserved in a baby book situate that individual culturally:

Ok, here's Karen's baptismal thing... And then we saved top names of 1991, these were the top names: Michael, Matthew, Stephanie... Here's her "First Art", creative play class at the Y 1989. And then I get to tell the weather that day. What the world was like. Cars we had. Dad had a '76 Corvette... (Kay, 50)

Well, I got a little book for Will and I wrote down some things, chronologically in some ways, a little bit of the story of where we were when he was born, just trying to give him a historical locator kind of thing. (Erin, 33)

Photo albums provided families with similar cultural details:

And I mean, we go through those photo albums once in a while, we do. Especially when we get relatives from the Netherlands coming over, we go through them. Or when I have kids from Japan, or I just had a lady, I was her conversation partner, from Kenya.

Because we ask about different things about family, like, how did your family do that in Kenya? How does your family do that here? (Elsa, 45)

Participants often explored family memories that provided a generational context:

Each year they do a special service a year after, at the nursing home, for the people who've died the previous year. And the year that they did it when Mum had died we

went, my sisters and myself. And I spoke about Mum's experiences and Dad's experiences during the war, and suggested how interesting it was looking at the audience who were almost all of my generation. And we were burying this generation. This collective memory of wartime experiences. And even though I'd never met most of those people, they all nodded their heads at my references, they all had obviously been part of that story, too, in their households. And understood the significance of the passing of this generation. (Jack, 64)

This man spoke about family memories situated within the context of an historical time period:

And there are historical periods that make a difference. If you went through the war, or the depression, when you got together with people who shared that history, that's what you reminisce about. It's like when I get together with my sisters and brothers-in-law, we reminisce about High School. We shared the same teachers, we shared the same church, we shared the same TV shows. (Jack, 64)

Many participants drew upon family memories that situated their families geographically:

There we are in Grand Bend, Windsor, Toronto... Marine Land, Niagara Falls... And here's the big move from Edmonton... And that's where our family would spend our summers, and have for generations, literally. So my mother grew up going to the beach. And that's what we did. Pictures of Windsor, pictures of Detroit, pictures of Arizona where my grandparents were for several years... (Kay, 50)

And here Mum came to visit us in the Northwest Territories. I worked in a place called Igloolik, so I paid for a ticket for her to come up. So here are the pictures of when she came to the North. (Elsa, 45)

Social class and religion were often identifiable cultural contexts within family memories:

We used to live in a basement apartment ... Mum made all of our clothing... And all from the same material... we really didn't have much money. ...So this is our basement apartment. And that's us in all our dresses that Mum made us for Christmas... So that's my first communion. Mum crocheted me that white dress, and then she crocheted me that cape. And then I had socks and shoes, which was a big deal for us. You can tell we're just simple country folk. (Elsa, 45)

Oh, look at this picture. Of course my kids looked at that and said, typical WASP Christmas. (Kay, 50)

And family memories often revolved around ethnic identity as well:

We started the photo album with Mum and Dad and how they came across the sea. That's how it all began. And they arrived in Montreal. (Elsa, 45)

And the songs that we'd sing, a lot of our family memories are bound up in the songs that we'd sing. Because, particularly St. Patrick's Day, if we didn't end up singing, I don't know what we did, because we always did. (Jack, 64)

Many of these cultural cues embedded in family memory act to situate the individual and the family within a particular ethnicity.

Family memory provides members of the family with a cultural identity. Family memories serve to situate family members within a particular generation, time period, geographical region, social class, religion, and ethnicity. These cultural cues are embedded in family memory and are meaningful insofar as they provide family members a consistent,

unifying cultural identity. Thus, not does family memory provide individuals with a unique identity, and families with a unifying, though at times contentious, identity, family memory also provides family members with, as one participant put it, an “historical locater”. As such, family memory is incredibly significant for creating, confirming, and reaffirming individual, family, and cultural identity.

The meaning of family memory keeping lies in three areas. Family memory keeping is significant in terms of documentation, providing evidence, and maintaining identity.

Documenting family life – whether that documentation was for mother, child, or the entire family – was revealed to be significant simply because the act of preserving a family record protected against the inevitability of forgetting. Many mothers and children were adamant that this record was incredibly meaningful as a reminder of significant family moments. This family record was also significant insofar as the memories offered evidence to family members that there was love between family members, and that there was pain as well. At times, the family memory artefacts acted as evidence of this love and pain, yet in other instances the omission of particular family memories acted as evidence of defense in the face of pain. Family memory was also discovered to be meaningful in terms of identity. Artefacts were drawn upon to demonstrate continuity of character, to corroborate and at times challenge the unity of family, and to situate that family within a cultural context. Family memory was revealed to be a significant force in creating, contesting, and confirming individual, family, and cultural identity. As such, interviews demonstrated that family memory is meaningful in that the memories document the evidence that provides identity for families. And the keeper of that memory, hence, is providing a powerful service, one that is deeply felt when the memory keeper is lost.

5.4 The Loss

Eight participants interviewed described losing a mother's memory in a variety of different ways. I have termed this "the loss of a mother's memory", because for some participants a mother has died, while for others the loss is a "living loss", wherein a mother has dementia or is estranged. Specifically, two participants lost their mothers suddenly while they were teenagers. Two participants were in their twenties; one lost a mother through estrangement due to her mother's mental illness, another lost his mother to breast cancer. Two participants are in their thirties losing their mother's memory to dementia. Another participant lost his mother in his sixties to Alzheimer's, and is currently caring for his wife, who also suffers from dementia. Finally, one participant lost a father and six brothers and sisters to Early Alzheimer's Disease. This participant's perspective was significant for illustrating the use of family memory to cope with loss, and because upon this incredible loss, this woman became the memory keeper for her brothers' and sisters' families. It is important to note that the loss of a mother is unbelievably difficult, but here I will discuss specifically the impact of the loss of a mother's memory on family members and the ways in which that memory collected by a mother can be used to help family members cope with the loss. As such, two themes will be explored here, each with their own subsequent subthemes: loss of a mother's memory (loss of connection, loss of knowledge, loss of a role) and coping with loss through memory (this is who you were, this is who we were, this is how we're going to get through).

5.4.1 Loss of a mother's memory

A significant shift occurs for family members upon the loss of a mother's memory. Participants who had experienced the loss of a mother's memory described this loss as deeply

significant. With the loss of their mother's memory, participants discussed losing connections to their unique sense of self and sense of family cohesion, losing their source for maternal knowledge and guidance, and losing their sense of security in who fulfilled the role of family memory keeper. These three themes will be discussed in greater detail below: *loss of connection, loss of knowledge, and loss of a role.*

5.4.1.1 *Loss of connection*

The loss of a mother's memory means the loss of connection, both in terms of connection to one's identity and connection to one's family. The loss of a mother's memory often left participants feeling less connected to their individual identity:

I find it sad when I call on my sister's birthday and Mum doesn't really, she knows it's her birthday, but there's no... You know, Mum was so into all that stuff and into making us all feel so special and all that kind of stuff. So it's sad when she wouldn't think to get a card or anything. (Erin, 33)

I think having Mum die when I was fifteen, and knowing what those keepsakes meant to me, I think that that brought it home to me more and more that my children need those things from their childhood, from their past. (Leona, 49)

Interestingly, many participants used the remembrance of specific individual food preferences to express how they missed the connections they had with their mother:

It's those kinds of things, those kinds of defining memories she had, like "Erin likes frozen corn" even if I don't, but I do, that I find I miss with my mum. She thought I was special. (Erin, 33)

She just, she understood that I don't like onions, you know? (Alex, 27)

There were rituals. Mum had rituals. If she knew I was coming, she would buy beer.

And in the later years, particularly around celebrations, Christmas time or whatever, she would get somebody to get beer. So we didn't often have beer in our home, except on very special occasions, so it was always a treat for me to come and have a beer. And then one Christmas there was no beer. And it was an indication for me that something had slipped, that something was fading. (Jack, 64)

Participants also noted the significant loss in terms of connection to family identity:

That memory is comforting, as long as the relationship isn't dysfunctional, it's comforting. But when you lose that, it throws you into a bit of an identity crisis. Not only individually, but as a family, too. All those things my mother has saved tells you about who we are as a family, too. And as she starts to lose her memory, it starts to make you less sure of who we are as a family. (Erin, 33)

I think that the missing of my mother was significant emotionally particularly for my sisters. I know that the loss of my mum was significant in terms of their sense of identity, their sense of cohesiveness, their sense of unity as a family. (Jack, 64)

When a mother is lost, connections to family traditions are often lost as well:

When Mum died it was almost Christmas. And that Christmas, without Mum bugging us to go, no one wanted to go to church. But we had been going to this church for so long, it was where my mum grew up. But then this Christmas everybody's like, "oh, we're not

going to go to church.” And I was like, “No, we’re going.” And I don’t know why, but I was like, “we have to go.” I’ve never made a decision like that for people, like, ok, this is what the family was going to do. And I’ve never wanted to go to church in my life. But that was something, a tradition. (Alex, 27)

Everything really changed. All our family traditions. I still feel a little lost today. (Nell, 36)

Losing these family connections a mother’s memory provided also resulted in a loss of family cohesion and communication:

My cousin, Alison, she just had a baby last week. And it was two days after the baby was born, and I met another cousin on the street and she said “what do you think of Alison’s new baby?” And I said, “What baby?” First of all, I didn’t remember that Alison was pregnant. And second of all, I didn’t know that she had her baby, because no one told me, and no one reminded me the whole way through. I wasn’t involved in it at all. See, if Mum had been alive, she probably would have told me three hundred times, and then when the baby was born she would’ve called me. ...there’s a void. Because a lot of things that you would know, you would’ve known about, I just don’t hear it. I would’ve known about it if my Mum were alive, but now I just don’t know. (Alex, 27)

I forget to tell my brother things. My brother was like, “I didn’t know you were moving!” Because, see, Mum would’ve told him. (Erin, 33)

A mother’s memory helped build family connections through transmitting family news and constantly reminding family members of family events:

We don't get as much information anymore on that side of the family. Maybe the best example is when a close friend of the family passed away. We didn't know. I see my father quite regularly, so he tells me some of the news. But most of it's work related. 95% of the time, it was Mum. (Nicole, 27)

I learned that my grandma died because my cousin put it on Facebook. (Nell, 36)

The loss of a mother's memory often means a loss of important family connections.

Losing a mother's memory impacts significantly upon feelings of connection.

Participants spoke about the loss of connection to individual identity; the loss of the knowledge that their mother remembered the ways they were special or unique. Participants also described the importance of their mother's memory in terms of connecting them to family identity. The loss of a mother's memory often meant the loss of family connections, a sense of cohesion, tradition, and the communication of important family news and reminders. These changes resulted in family members feeling less connected, or as one participant articulated, simply "lost". And just as the loss of a mother's memory left participants feeling lost in terms of connectedness, participants also described feeling lost without their mothers' memories of maternal knowledge.

5.4.1.2 Loss of knowledge

Participants, namely the mothers interviewed for this study, described the deep significance of losing a mother's memory and thus her specific knowledge about motherhood:

That was a very difficult time when I had my first child. Because I didn't have my mum. Those things aren't important when you're fifteen. When you're twenty-three and having

your first child they become very important. So you know, I would ask my older sister those things, and she would try to remember, but she was busy with her own stuff.

(Leona, 49)

When Evie was little... I felt a bit ripped off. Because I couldn't call my mum and say, "oh my god, this two year old, what should I do? What can I do?" (Nell, 36)

Many mothers reiterated this need for a mother's memory when having their own children.

Well and especially now that you're starting to have children and you want to be able to compare. ...It's a shame that she died that early. I would have liked to, you know, I used to cry a lot when I had Marc, and she wasn't there to see him (choking up). You know, that was my first born and that had meant a lot, so I thought that was pretty awful. But that was so raw because she had only died about six months before that. (Colleen, 62)

And one new mother, whose own mother was losing her memory to dementia, described the complexity of losing a mother's memory despite still having a living mother:

With my mum not remembering stuff I notice random things that you wonder about yourself, or about what it was like for her. And my mother-in-law's good to tell me lots of stuff, too, but you want your own mum's side of it. I just want to call and be like, "Mum, I'm making this thing... "How do I make...?" or "How did you used to do that...?" or "How did you raise five children?"...Sometimes I miss what Mum's wisdom on parenting would have been. So I'm, I find it sad to turn to my mother-in-law. 'Cause Mum is still mothering (voice wavering) but it's just a different kind of mothering.

(Erin, 33)

This mother wants to reach out to her mother to receive advice, knowledge, and guidance about motherhood. And though her mother is still physically present, those memories are not.

The loss of a mother's memory created a void in terms of knowledge. Participants specifically spoke about the loss of maternal knowledge. Mothers described yearning for their own mother's memories of raising children to provide guidance, clarity, and advice during their transition to motherhood. The loss of their mother's memories meant the loss of this vital maternal knowledge, and many women still recalled the significant pain that created forty years after their mothers' deaths. For one new mother, the loss of her mother's memory to dementia meant that though she could still reach out physically to her mother, her mother's memories were no longer accessible. She mourned the fact that she now turned to her mother-in-law for this maternal knowledge. And just as this woman's mother-in-law took over the role of maternal memory keeper in this instance, many families struggled to negotiate the loss of the role of memory keeper.

5.4.1.3 *Loss of a role*

Participants described the shifts within a family upon the loss of a mother as memory keeper. In some instances, another female family member swiftly assumed the role:

After my sister Janie died, the year after Janie died, we went through her pictures, my daughter and I. Because I made a photo album, like a family scrapbook for each family. So that like, when my brother died, so that his children would have an album of his side of the family. And my other sister who died, her children would have an album for her side of the family. (Elsa, 45)

When my mother was alive, she always sent the kids something at Christmas. And then she died, and there was no more. My father didn't think of sending anything. But my sister-in-law took over for him. (Pat, 75)

As one participant's mother began losing her memory to Alzheimer's, his sisters stepped in, to the family's appreciation:

My sister started signing birthday cards, or she bought birthday cards and made sure my mother signed it then sent it off to the kids or the grandkids. I would have felt it if there hadn't been a birthday card. Or an anniversary card. Or if there hadn't been gifts underneath the tree. (Jack, 64)

Yet in other families, the inheritance of the role was not as immediately resolved:

My mum died when I was fifteen. And my dad worked in the woods twelve hours in a day, and he certainly didn't have time to remember when I got my first tooth, when I walked, those kinds of things. And my sister's fifteen years older than myself, but at seventeen she was pregnant and having her first baby. So she sure as heck didn't have time to remember all that for me either... (Leona, 49)

In other families, the father struggled to undertake the role after the loss of his spouse's memory:

I feel it in terms of an inheritance of a responsibility that isn't natural to me. And a disappointment when I don't either have the innate ability, or the patterns of conversation, to identify gifts, or remember birthdays, remember anniversaries, acknowledge things that come more readily to my wife as being part of what you do each day. And for me, it would have to be, hit me over the head, mark it on the calendar. And even then, hit me over the head to notice the calendar. (Jack, 64)

My mum really took care of my dad. She made his meals, she washed his clothes, she laid his clothes out, and all of that. And then the day of her funeral he's wandering around upstairs and he looks at my sister and I and he said, your mother always said if anything ever happened to her, I wouldn't be able to find my clothes, and I can't. Even with Christmases after mum died. I would write a list and I would get exactly what was on that list. Because he'd give the list to my sister, because he certainly wouldn't shop. But with mum, she knew what I was interested in, what I wanted to do, what kinds of books I was reading, and so she would, you know, flesh that out a little differently than he did. (Leona, 49)

But many families found that with some adjustments, their fathers managed to fill the role of memory keeper as best they could:

There's a real sense of loss for me, because of how it impinges upon the kids...you know, my birthdays and Christmases used to be big things. She used to buy me clothes. She doesn't, there's not even a consideration of buying a gift. There's no consideration of our anniversary. But as significant as that is, or could be for some people, that doesn't even come into the picture as much as it does in terms of the kids, and the grandchildren. That is a concern for me. I want to at least buy some gifts because, say what you want, it's still important that, at some level, for there to be a gift there from their mum. Even if Dad's the one who bought it. (Jack, 64)

Dad did take on that role more as he got well himself. He became the central point between my sister and my brother and myself. He would start to tell me stories. From mum's side of the family, because I'm from a very tiny community here in Nova Scotia.

But I would start to ask, because Mum wasn't there to ask, and they grew up in the same community, so he knew Mum's history. (Leona, 49)

One woman described her brother learning the memory keeping "ropes" from his wife as she died of cancer:

My brother lost his wife, and I've noticed he's picked it up and he does the Christmas cards now. He did a nice job with them. The year before she died, I think she was kind of showing him where the addresses were and actually, they both sent them out that year. He thought he was going to do them, and she thought she was going to do them. So we got double that year, the year before she died. Because I think she must have told him that it's important to send cards out. (Mary, 55)

Another participant recalled his father similarly attempting to learn the role in the months after his mother died:

I sat at the table, maybe January, February, and my Dad was writing down a list of like twenty people's birthdays, he was writing it down. Because he figures that he needs to keep track of it now, because he didn't have to bother with that before. He wrote it all down. Because it's like, "Oh my god, all this stuff. Why do I have to know this all of a sudden?" If you never do it, you'd never think to do it. He probably knew from 30 years that you have to give a card to someone when it's their birthday. So he knew that, he understood that. But then he was like, "Wait a minute. *I* have to do that?" So he knew that, he was fully aware of that, but the fact that he had to focus on it and sit down and write everybody's name down and say, ok, this is a responsibility, I have to take it seriously, I have to think about it. (Alex, 27)

Though the task of assuming the role of memory keeper was daunting, these men understood the role to be an important one.

The loss of the role of memory keeper created a shift in family patterns and positions. In some families, the role of memory keeper was immediately assumed by a family member, a sister or a daughter, in the wake of a mother's death. In other families, the role was left unfilled for some time. However, many families described the role as being taken on by men in the family, particularly the spouse of the mother whose memory was lost. Though men often struggled in this role, feeling the role to be unnatural to them, participants often indicated men committed to this new set of responsibilities. Many participants noted that though the role appeared daunting to men, these men still recognized the role as a meaningful part of family life and assumed the responsibilities as best they could.

Findings demonstrated the loss of a mother's memory – to death, dementia, or estrangement – creates a significant shift for families in terms of connection, knowledge, and the memory keeping role. Family members described feeling a loss of connection to identity, family tradition, and family communication due to the loss of their mother's memory. Mothers interviewed noted they felt the loss of their mother's memory deeply when they began having children; the maternal knowledge their mother's memory would have provided was no longer accessible to them for guidance and support. Just as some mothers had to look elsewhere for this maternal knowledge, participants also described turning to different family members to adopt the role of memory keeper once their mother's memory was gone. The role of memory keeper was negotiated within families, often assumed by a female family member. However, at times men in the family became the memory keeper, despite the role feeling unnatural to them. For, what interviews revealed is that the loss of a mother's memory is deeply felt in terms of a loss of

connection and knowledge, and thus family members, including men, understood the role to be deeply significant. Indeed, in the face of these losses, many family members described turning to family memory to cope with the loss.

5.4.2 Coping with loss through memory

A mother's memory is lost when a mother dies or her memory fades due to illness. However, the memories she collected for her family often remain, and in turn can help families cope with their grief. In this sense, a mother's memory still acts to connect families and provide knowledge, a unifying and comforting inheritance that exists even while the mother might not. This memory acts to reaffirm individual identity, family identity, and to help individuals and families cope with loss. Three themes will thus be explored here: this is who you were, this is who we were, and this is how we are going to get through.

5.4.2.1 *This is who you were*

Participants described the importance of family memory in reminding them of individual identity. Several participants expressed relief in revisiting memories of their mothers as reminders of who they were:

I actually have my mum's baby book that her mother kept. I do. That's very amazing because my grandmother had Alzheimer's and my mother died when I was fifteen. So the fact that I found this... I have a few pictures of my mum when she was little, very few. And there's one picture that I know of in existence of herself and all her siblings, she had one sister and two brothers. So these are special. (Leona, 49)

I have one or two things. They were say, a Mother's Day card that was Xeroxed or mimeographed, with a little message on it. I do have one or two things, but not much... It's been 40 years since she died, you know...there are certainly times that I've missed her. And I think about her still... You hear music or... you never forget. You never do. Where's the Kleenex?? (Colleen, 62)

Often these participants cited these experiences as their reason for keeping memory for their own children:

Sometimes I don't remember Mum when she didn't have dementia, but the memories help remind me who she was. And then I think, god, is that what my kids are going to be saying about me someday? They don't remember me when I was... me? So I think I save things and I write things down for the same reason. To be like, "I love you. This is who I am." (Erin, 33)

The sad part of it is that I think what Mum thought about was, "When I'm gone, what is Shannon going to know about me?" And you always hear about people searching for things they wished they knew when they lost their mums. That's what you want to know. That's probably the most important reason I can think about for doing it now for my kids. (Shannon, 35)

One woman, who has lost many family members in their thirties to Early Alzheimer's disease, describes saving memories of her siblings who died so that their children might better remember their parents:

I mean for me it was a way for Eric's kids and Janie's kids to say, remember these things about your parents. They're good things. (chokes up) That person isn't just who that

person is now. That person is a culmination of so many things...This person is so much. And you're just seeing such a small, small area. And really, that's not that person. So really, I think it's important to have those things, like you say, for, "You remember this about your Dad? Well, there was all this about your Dad, too." (Elsa, 45)

Not only did these memories remind her nephews and nieces who their parents were, the memories also served to remind this participant of her lost brothers and sisters:

That's why so many people find Christmas such a melancholy time. Because you're taking out all of these things that, like those candle holders, Margie gave me years ago. And the carollers behind you, Brenda gave me. The last year she was alive. And the little "Joy and Peace", Wendy did ceramics, and she gave me those. And like, one's Dennis's and one's mine, and one's hers. And so you put those things up. And you have a stocking for them, and all these sorts of things. ... But all of those things, that to me, well, that's more important to me than a lot of other things that a lot of other people might consider important. Because they're part of who they were. (Elsa, 45)

This woman had become the family memory keeper in part as a way to keep the memories of her siblings alive for the entire family, so no one would forget who they were.

Revisiting family memory helped family members cope with their grief by reaffirming the identities of those they had lost. Participants described returning to memories of their mothers to remember who their mothers were. For those losing their mothers memory to dementia, participants noted the importance of remembering not only who their mothers are now, but who their mothers were before the dementia struck. Often these women maintained they were keeping memory for their children in case their children one day similarly wondered who their mothers were. For one woman, becoming the family memory keeper after losing six

siblings and a father to Early Alzheimer's Disease meant providing reminders for the family and for herself of who these lost family members were. These family memories added complexity and nuance to lost family members' identities, helped protect against forgetting, and perhaps above all, helped surviving family members cope with the loss. And just as the memories played a significant role in reaffirming who the individual was, these memories also reminded family members who they were as a family.

5.4.2.2 *This is who we were*

Participants often spoke about the power of family memory in reminding them of their relationship to the lost family member. Not only did the memory reaffirm who the individual was, the memory also served to confirm who they were to each other:

When Dad was sick, like I said, he got a little bit abusive. And the thing with early onset Alzheimer's, and late onset also, but with early onset it's far more aggressive. And they tend to select one person it seems to take out their anger and frustration. And even, you know, once as a kid he locked me in a closet and I didn't know why he would lock me in a closet and he wouldn't let me out and he put the table in front of it. But I mean, I had enough good things happen with my Dad, you know, that I knew that there was love between my father and myself. Like my Dad would go down the back road and there was an apple tree there, and he'd pick apple blossoms and put them in my hair for me. He always called me, he'd say, "You're my little princess." And then, you know, there was another time that my Dad and I were blueberry picking. Because my Dad did all those things with us, and at that time that wasn't so typical for fathers to do those things. He was very involved. And I remember stepping in an ants' nest and they started to bite me.

All I remember is him seeing them on me, and scooping me up and he ran all the way home and threw me in the bathtub and I said, “Dad! All our blueberries!” And he said, “Let’s not worry about the blueberries.” And he walked all the way back and got our stuff. So I have enough things of him, those memories, those good memories, I have those to remind me that despite the bad times that we shared together, there was plenty good about our relationship, plenty good. (Elsa, 45)

One woman who was diagnosed with an inoperable brain tumour described the process of preserving memories so her sons would remember their relationships with her:

First of all I wrote a letter to my boys. Oh! I’m going to start crying already. So I wrote a letter, and then I went (choking up) and I separated the stuff that was Marc’s and I separated the stuff that was Mitchell’s. And there were things like Mitch’s first blanket that I had made for him. And there were little things that I had saved from when they were kids that they had made, and I put those things in a box. Yeah, so there’s a box there for each of them, which they do not know about, and they don’t know about the letter... And I keep thinking I should update it, and then don’t even want to go there, because it’s not an easy thing to do. (Colleen, 62)

This woman coped with the pain of her diagnosis by attempting to provide evidence to her sons of their importance to one another. One man described the importance of having such evidence after his mother died:

It’s hard to look at pictures from before. Sometimes I don’t want to, just because it’s too much. But other times it’s nice to like, remember that, oh, that existed. Because sometimes you think that because it’s not there now, it never existed. But at least there’s some sort of evidence that that was there. It seems silly to say that, but it is important to

have that. Because you can almost forget in your own head that all of that happened, because it's not there now. Because if a person is gone, and with that goes all those memories, you tend to think that the relationship is gone. (Alex, 27)

For this son, the memories his mother preserved are at times all he has to remind him that his relationship with his mother was real.

Family memory can provide family members with evidence of the kind of relationship they shared with a lost family member. In this sense, these memories preserved by mothers enabled family members to cope with their grief. One woman coped with the loss of her father through revisiting those memories of their relationship that were positive in an attempt to balance out the more shocking and negative memories that might be more prominent in her mind.

Another woman used family memory as a way to cope with a terminal diagnosis; the realization that she would be separated from her children prompted her to return to family memory as a means of providing her sons evidence of the richness of their relationship. Another participant similarly used family memory artefacts to remind him of his relationship with his mother after her death. In these cases, family memory was a significant means of providing evidence of an important family relationship, allowing participants to cope with the loss of that relationship. In some cases, participants spoke freely about using family memory as way to get through the loss.

5.4.2.3 *This is how we're going to get through*

Some participants noted the importance of family memory in getting them through a loss. Often, participants described the very process of collecting or returning to family memory as therapeutic:

They all have an album, all of my sisters' and brothers' children. The ones who did have children. And that was significant for memories. In that, remember who these people are in your life, eh? (choking up). But also it was rather therapeutic to do that. Yeah, for me. And that was one of the reasons I did that. Because to me, material things aren't important, but what you carry with you about them is important. And a photo album does have a way of reminding you what you carry about them. (Elsa, 45)

Another participant described his entire family and extended family gathering after his mother died to go back through photo albums:

I remember going back through the photo albums all the time. I'd sit beside them and go back through them and talk about them. We definitely did that this time last year.

Everyone. Even extended family. (Alex, 27)

One woman, an Alzheimer's nurse who also lost a father to Alzheimer's, was adamant that photo albums can be key to the coping process for family members and those losing their memories as well:

A lot of families make albums. Like, Mum did an album for Dad so he could look back on old pictures, and that's how they cope. It's good for both the families and the person with the disease. (Mary, 55)

Participants were often upfront about using family memories to cope:

And that's the way I cope with the memories of my father. I mean, I remember when my Mum used to work the night shift. And he would stay home with us of course when he wasn't on ship. And I remember once taking all of us, and my father had one person on each shoulder, one person in each arm, and the other ones would each have a hand (laughter), and we walked down to the store, and it was the first time in my life we had a

can of pop. There was no pop in our house, and there was nothing that was not homemade. And we all sat in a circle, none of us moved, and we just ate our vachon cake, which we had never eaten in our lives, and drank our can of pop, and we just thought we were in heaven. (laughter) We had died and gone to heaven. And really I'm sure that's what we'll be doing in heaven. Sharing that moment with him. (Elsa, 45)

Having assumed the role of family memory keeper, this woman made photo albums for each of her nine siblings and their families, including the five who had died:

That's my family. That's Louise, that's Mum, Janie, Margie, Wendy, she's passed away, she's passed away, she's passed away, that's me, he's passed away, he's passed away, That's Brenda when she was sick. She probably lived for about eight months after that. She couldn't walk anymore. She was the youngest when she passed away. Janie was 39, Eric was 39, Wendy was 40, Brenda was 37, and Dennis was 13 when he passed away. And that's the purpose of the photo album and I know that was the purpose of them for Mum. We must have like, two dozen photo albums at home filled with all these things. And mostly it was through photo albums. And it was my Mum who would put those together. And we would take them out every once in a while and look at them and be reminded of all these things that we did. And that gets you through. (Elsa, 45)

In this case, these memories of everyday life greatly helped a woman and her mother cope with the loss of six immediate family members.

These memories, collected and preserved by the mothers in the family, are essential for helping families get through the loss of a family member. One woman found collecting and revisiting family memory to be therapeutic when facing the loss of family members. Upon the death of his mother, another participant recalled looking back through the photo albums she

compiled as a way to cope with his loss. Extended family and friends also sought solace in these albums. An Alzheimer's nurse who had also lost a father to the disease described the importance of memory artefacts to help patients and families cope through the process. Interviews clearly revealed collecting and revisiting family memory to be an effective coping strategy in the face of loss.

Family memory is significant in terms of loss. The loss of a mother as memory keeper creates a powerful shift for families in terms of family connection, maternal knowledge, and the fulfilment of family roles. These losses are gendered; men described feeling unnatural in the role of memory keeper and other participants noted a woman in the family usually takes over the role. Additionally, it was only daughters who noted the significance of losing their mother's maternal memory and knowledge. Overall, however, all participants recounted experiences with family memory and loss that clearly depicted family memory as a recognizably important part of family life. Family memory is also significant insofar as it can help a family to cope with the loss of a family member, including the loss of the very mother who collected and preserved that memory. These memories served to remind participants of who the lost family member really was, what their relationship to this family member really meant, and ultimately, these memories served as a therapeutic means of coping with the loss of these family members.

The findings presented in the four major themes surrounding family memory keeping (the process, the role, the meaning, and the loss) reveal that memory keeping is a seemingly innocuous gendered process and role that is, in fact, deeply significant for families during both everyday life and times of grief and loss as well. Indeed, findings demonstrating the very high importance of memories during and after loss serves only to reinforce the significance of women's memory keeping in general. Family memory, collected and preserved primarily by

women but often with support from men, provides families with documentation, evidence, identity, connection, and knowledge, while also providing families with a coping mechanism during times of loss. When a mother's memory is lost, female family members often step in to fulfil the role; however, interviews also demonstrated that men struggle to undertake the role in these circumstances, as well. For, just as many participants stressed the importance of this role for the preservation of individual and family well-being, one man noted the role was so significant to his family that he would take it on, despite feeling the role an unnatural fit. Each of these themes, and subsequent subthemes, will be demonstrated in the following section, wherein an autoethnographic performance text will hopefully present the complexity of memory, family, gender, and loss, in all its tensions and nuance. As previously stated, at times the performance text diverges thematically from the traditional qualitative sections that preceded it. However, the piece also contributes considerably to a better understanding of the process, the role, the meaning, and the loss of women's family memory keeping.

5.5 The autoethnographic performance text

Shaking up the Family Tree: An autoethnographic performance text in three acts

Act I

(The stage is dark, save one low spotlight downstage right. There is an old, beaten up wooden desk with a stained glass lamp lit beside a laptop, illuminating a complete and utter mess of books, papers, post-it notes and coffee cups. Sitting in a swivel chair typing furiously is a young woman in her late-twenties. Her brow is furrowed as she types. She stops and presses a key on the keyboard, listening with brow still furrowed. A tape plays a man's voice.)

Man's recorded voice: *"Mum was the housekeeper. The homekeeper, better word than housekeeper. Throughout your lives. She, by nature or by my vacancy, assumed responsibility for all of the homekeeping rituals. And now, to bring it to contemporary situations, now that much of that is disappearing..."*

(The young woman presses a key on the keyboard and the tape stops. She begins to type, then slowly stops and stares into space for some time.)

Caitlin: My dad had this dream. (she stares into the distance again)

(low lights come on upstage, revealing a man in his early 60s sitting in a snug, wall-papered room, reading in a worn, glider rocking chair, eating an apple. An empty matching glider sits to his left. Behind the gliders, hung from the wall, are six homemade Christmas stockings. To his right is an electric fireplace that glows and flickers. To the right of the fireplace is a sideboard cupboard, upon which many photographs, plaques, awards and child-crafted Christmas ornaments are displayed. Above the cupboard hang a myriad of unmatching, framed photographs. Several children's drawings are taped to the wall next to the photographs. A flowered couch is positioned across from the two rocking chairs, and a large, flat, dented wooden chest serves as a coffee table between the seats. A lopsided, over-decorated Christmas tree fills the top right corner of the room.)

Caitlin: (gets up from seat and wanders absentmindedly around the desk, arms crossed) Dad dreamed he was in this pub. And there was this party going on. Everyone was laughing and talking and carrying on. Anyway, he left the pub to go outside and when he did, he saw my mother across the way (points indistinctly), on the top of a hill. She was perched on a well, staring at the ocean. He went to her and sat down beside her. (leans back against the desk) When he looked down below, he saw a long, narrow, winding path lay before them. A wearisome path that dipped into low points before escaping his sight. And when he turned to his right, there was the pub. All lit up. Boisterous, frivolous noise coming from it. People celebrating, laughing, carrying on. And then he looked down. And he saw that there was a deep, impassable ravine between the pub and the hill where he sat with my Mum. And so he took Mum's hand, and he started down that path. (turns and presses a key on the keyboard. The voice starts playing again, and she moves and sits back in her swivel chair, and begins to type. The spotlight dims and goes out on both the woman and the man in the rocking glider. The man's voice echoes in the darkness.)

Man's recorded voice: *"Mum was the housekeeper. The homekeeper, better word than housekeeper. Throughout your lives. She, by nature or by my vacancy, assumed responsibility for all of the homekeeping rituals.*

(The light rises on the man in the rocking glider. Caitlin is now sitting across from him on the flowered couch, feet curled beneath her, notebook on lap, pencil in one hand, coffee in the other, digital recorder positioned on the flat chest between them. The man has rested his book on his lap and picked up the speech, with his eyes to the ceiling.)

Dad: And now, to bring it to contemporary situations, now that much of that is disappearing... From the very basic making of meals, to the purchasing of clothes, to the buying of furniture, to the repairs to the house, maintenance of the property, acknowledgement of the celebrations, you know, birthdays, Christmas, anniversaries eventually – she did it all. (shakes his head) Mum did that. And she was a very physical presence, in terms of the hugs, and the kisses, and the rubbing of feet and the holding of

hands. As characteristically non-loquacious as Mum is, (chuckles) reserved and withdrawn, she was never hesitant to praise you people. And me. (he rocks back in his chair and examines the ceiling)

Caitlin: Dad?

Dad: (looks up, broken out of his thoughts) Hm?

Caitlin: (scratches head with pencil) Can we back up a bit? I got a bit distracted.

Dad: Sure dear. (leans over and repositions an old, home-made ornament on the sideboard)

Caitlin: So. (looks at notes.) What I wanted to talk about today, more specifically, is Mum's memory. The importance of Mum's memory. And the impact, I guess, as she starts to lose her memory. You know what I mean? (taps pencil on notebook)

Dad: (gets up and adjusts the rest of the ornaments on the sideboard) I think I do.

Caitlin: Well, like, (points with her pencil at a drawing taped to the wall behind her father) like that right there, that drawing.

Dad: (peers at the drawing and reads) "Snowy Day, by Clare, aged 4 ½". Mum would've written that. (he sat back down) Yeah, she absolutely delighted, as she does now with the grandkids, in all the drawings and this and that.

Caitlin: And she kept all of that? (gestures at the drawing)

Dad: (taking a bite out of his apple) Hm? (swallows, looks back at the drawing) Oh yeah. And she might not have filed things and stuff like that, she would have shoved things, Mum's a shover, but she would've shoved everything that came across her lap away. And as you know, she loves pictures and would look at pictures forever. (leans over and rests apple on electric fireplace) But no, she was definitely the core, and is definitely the hub of the family. As the most significant presence. And not just for you guys, but for everybody. For your friends, for your cousins, for her friends. She much, much, much more than myself- What was that? (sits up, eyes fixed on the ceiling.)

Caitlin: What? (tilts her eyes upwards, followed his gaze.)

Dad: I heard something. (eyes still fixed on the ceiling)

Caitlin: I didn't.

(strong thump from offstage)

Caitlin: Is she ok? (moves to get up)

Dad: (listens carefully for a few more moments as three more uneven thumps come from offstage. Waves Caitlin back down.) It's ok. She's just going to the bathroom.

Caitlin: (settles back down into the couch) What's Mum doing, anyway?

Dad: (leans back into the glider and puts his hands behind his head) They're in the living room. Clare's wrapping the presents, then she's directing Mum to sign the cards.

Caitlin: (looks down at notes) Where were we?

Dad: (scratches at his cheek again and rocks for a few beats, peering at the Christmas tree.) Well, we were saying that Mum was the core, the hub. But I'm now the person who is inviting people to supper. (He gets up still looking at the Christmas tree) It was always Mum who was inviting people to supper. It was always Mum who initiated that with my friends, who became her friends. (He moves to the tree and taps at a burned out Christmas light) She was never remiss in knowing when Sue's birthday was, Margaret's birthday was, or Nicole's birthday, Nanny's birthday, my sisters' birthday, always made Christmas gifts and bought them. Always recognized them that way. (He traces the cord back and finds a series of unlit Christmas lights and begins to fiddle with them.) That whole web of relationships which was dependent upon someone maintaining our little base in that web was under her management, her motivation. (At his touch, the last Christmas light in the line lights up, and the others in the row follow). She cultivated the friendships. I would groan and moan about not seeing anybody, but Mum would be the one inviting people to supper and making the supper. (He draped the cord back around the tree and moved back to his chair.)

Caitlin: (takes a swig of coffee, wipes her mouth with the back of her hand) And our friends, too.

Dad: (looks at Caitlin) Hm? Oh, absolutely, absolutely. No, she was the cultivator and maintainer of all of that. Which allowed me the freedom to be preoccupied with teaching. (He rocks back in his chair.)

Caitlin: So... (taps pencil against her notepad) gender, right?

Dad: What's that, dear? (he strains an ear in her direction)

Caitlin: (speaks up and leans toward him) GENDER. I was thinking this was GENDERED.

Dad: (looks at the ceiling thoughtfully) Yeah...

Caitlin: You know, because of... gender. (shrinks back into couch)

Dad: Yeah, I think that Mum really enjoyed kids and the home and the sense of family, and was thrilled with living with you. (nods slowly) Excited by you people. And she's still like that. Whereas for myself, it was different. (he shrugs, stares into the distance)

Caitlin: (points at him) You were the breadwinner.

Dad: (still stares into the distance and taps a finger to his lips.) But it's not quite that simple, you know, it never is.

Caitlin: Sometimes it is. (points at notebook with pencil) It's gender.

Dad: (continues staring into space) See, for me, see, I was lucky enough to be involved in a career that involved you people, those were my opportunities. I could see you at school. I could cast you in the plays. I could give you some sense of status in school, in the community.

Caitlin: (scribbles in her notebook) That's kind of a masculine thing. (looks up) You know, like, wanting to contribute to our achievements and success in the public sphere or whatever. (continues writing, looking pleased with herself)

Dad: (squinting, head to one side) Yeah, but I mean, it was a great opportunity to be involved together. Actually going to work and seeing your kid in the corridors, is a luxury. Perhaps some people don't enjoy it, but I used to love it. And as I said, in this town, I didn't play hockey, I didn't play golf, so this is what I did. And I used to always think, this is where I'm doing my part.

Caitlin: Yup, gender! (stops scribbling and looks thoughtful) I did enjoy a decent amount of popularity after my role as Juror #8. And remember Clare's epic and unfortunately, rather underappreciated one-line turn as "Friend"? (gestures to the framed photos on the wall)

Dad: (carries on looking into space) Nevertheless, I spent an enormous amount of time correcting and marking as you know, and not being part of the family. I'd come back in time to tell you a story and turn out the lights. (He taps his finger on the electric fireplace) But Mum would go to bed thinking about what we were going to have for supper, Caitlin needs new glasses, Meghan mentioned something she liked the other day, better pick that up for Christmas (he begins tracing his finger through the dust on the fireplace) Sometimes we'd have conversations about if she's enough of a wife for me. I don't talk about politics and I don't talk about this kind of stuff. I don't contribute, and I'd list off all the things she did in the house, huge contributions. (He flicked the dust off his fingers)

Caitlin: (eyebrows raised) God yes. Remember when she had to get this carpet replaced? (pointing to the floor) Remember the Great Toilet Explosion of '98?

Dad: (scratching at his cheek) And as I said, now much of that is disappearing with Mum. A lot of those contributions that she made... (rocks back in his chair and stretches his hands behind his head) See, it's different when the loss is a living loss, when the person is still

alive in front of you. And relatively normal, all things aside. You know, Mum's not yet in an institution. She knows who you are, she laughs, she giggles, she gets excited about things, but nevertheless, all that stuff is gone. (shakes his head) As opposed to somebody who's dead. When the person's dead, you can imagine they would have retained the same kind of relationship with you. You don't imagine things like this. (scratches his cheek then lays it in his hand) Or that she would be so changed. And you miss it. But at the same time you understand it. So the feeling is one of sadness, as opposed to irritation or whatever. It's a grief that can never be resolved. This is an ache that goes a long way. And she doesn't know it. That's what's very hard about it. And there's constant readjustments that have to be made to what's not there anymore. (both turn their eyes to the ceiling as they hear uneven thumps from offstage. The thumps cease.) She's back with Clare now. (continues rocking again)

Caitlin: Good. (leaning forward, pointing with pencil) That's interesting from a gendered perspective on caregiving because-

Dad: But- (points a finger and squints into space.) It's not just a function of culturally defined roles of the mother or the woman, it's also a function of personality.

Caitlin: (slumps back down) No, no, no. Don't say that. (waves hands) That's not what I- That's psychology. (taps at notebook) That doesn't really fit with what I-

Dad: Because it's hard to sort it all out as to what is causing all these things. (taps a finger to his lips)

Caitlin: (points emphatically to her notebook) Gender. It's gender.

Dad: And my role (continues thoughtfully), even though it is not the role of memory keeper, or whatever, still serves its purpose.

Caitlin: (looks up from notebook) Oh? How so? What role?

Dad: For instance, yes, when I take you to Emergency and they ask me when one of you kids was born, I don't know. (He shakes his head and extends his hands in defence). I don't! I don't remember your birthdays. But I took you to Emergency. (points in the air) Mum didn't. And I sat there with you with people coughing and you coughing and then I'd go and get your prescription filled. That is what I do. (taps pointedly on the arm of his chair) You remember their birthdays, you know? This is what I do.

Caitlin: (sullenly scratches head with pencil) I guess so. I guess that's kind of important. (looks over at the presents piled beneath the tree) But now, now you do remember the birthdays and give the presents and send the cards. When did you start taking over with all that?

Dad: (sighs, leans into his hand) I think it was probably last year particularly. This year she didn't come out and get a tree with me. And that's the first year in 35, 40 years. I think last

year was the first year that I almost felt like I could do without the whole business. (gestures at the room, the stockings, the presents under the tree) Because on top of the care, the day-to-day routines that are involved in Mum's care, there's just the effort that's involved in planning for Christmas. And far too often it's exhausting. And what we want most of all is some tranquility. Some time to enjoy each other. For Mum to delight in the company of people. So I almost didn't do Christmas this year. I almost just let it go. And then Liz and Yvonne came over one night and actually, unbeknownst to me, brought over sets of lights and decorated the bushes outside.

Caitlin: (triumphant, pointing to notebook) See? Gender. Female friends taking over as memory keeper...

Dad: (rubbing his eyes) And I didn't know they were going to do it, they said goodbye. Then I found them outside. Liz said, "Well, we knew you weren't going to do it." And that kind of kicked me into gear. And then as you know, I got kind of crazy. (rocks back in chair and gestures widely at room)

Caitlin: (Looks around at the room, trails of white lights permanently bolted to the perimeter of the ceiling, sleigh bells hanging from random freshly hammered nails, Christmas quilts secured to walls with a staple-gun.) You know, I've spent every Christmas morning of my life in this basement. Remember how Mum would sit over there (points to empty, matching glider) in her glasses and nightgown with one of us curled on her lap? Geez, I mean... (stares off) I can so clearly remember the feel of that nightgown. Her chin my head. Her hand reaching to pass around presents and then coming back to rest on my leg... (taps pencil on notebook and looks down)

Dad: (still staring at the tree). You know, (shakes his head) I have no support for this. But you wonder if at a certain level there is a deep memory in each of us that is elementally, inherently, fundamentally associated with the mother, as a consequence of the birth process, and being carried by the mother, and in many cases being nursed by the mother, but it's that elemental, fundamental relationship that the father doesn't share, that we don't carry with us consciously, but subconsciously probably do. And the loss of a mother then, in a certain sense, is so a gigantic because of that. But it's profound, if you think of it, profound that you share that intimacy. And in a certain sense, I think, the intimacy of that relationship doesn't end.

Caitlin: (stares at her father) Woah. That's wicked complex, Dad.

Dad: (turns his head and looks at her) It usually is, Cait, you know? (smiles wryly)

Caitlin: Yeah, (shakes her head, smiling at him) what do you know.

(Two uneven thumps come from offstage. They sit tensely, eyes glued to the ceiling. A loud crash is followed by a heavy thud. They start out of their seats and the stage goes dark.)

Act II

(The low spotlight, downstage right, rises, revealing Caitlin sitting back at her desk typing, forehead once again furrowed. She stops and presses a key on the keyboard. A woman's voice can be heard. The voice is at times slurred and disjointed.)

Recorded voice: You don't remember much from your childhood, though, do you, Mum?

Woman's recorded voice: No. I don't, no. But I have memories that... Um, I remember I asked my Mum if I was pretty, and she said no. So that's one that I do remember.

Caitlin: (Reaches for her water canister and twists off the top). My mum had this dream. (takes a drink of water)

(Low lights come on upstage again, but this time two women sit in the wall-papered room, each preoccupied with their own stack of old, crumpled, disarrayed papers. The younger woman is in her mid-twenties, tall and lean with thick black hair. She sits on the carpeted floor, eating out of a large bag of chips and drinking a small can of Pepsi. The older woman is 60, thin and frail, perched on the edge of the flowered couch. She moves involuntarily and constantly, body parts twitching and curling at random as she peers over the old papers in her lap. Her left arm is bruised and her glasses are bandaged.)

Caitlin: (replaced the cap and twists it back on) Mum woke up one night in the middle of this terrible nightmare. (she pauses, remembers) My mother is a really good sleeper, so it was strange that she woke up the way she did. But she did, and she was terrified (leans over and puts canister back. Begins to gather some of the empty coffee cups.) She was trapped in the dream. You know when you get trapped in the dream like that? You're awake but you're not? (gets up and moves around desk to the garbage bin, tosses coffee cups inside) So anyway, my dad tried to shake her out of it and when that didn't work, he tried to get her to tell him what she was dreaming about. (wanders absentmindedly to the centre of her spotlight) My mum told him that she was seeing her mother. Her mother had died suddenly years before when Mum was only seventeen. Now, in her dream, Mum's dead mother was lying, as if at a wake, beside her, but her body had turned completely to stone. Mum was vaguely aware of other stone figures in the room stretched out in similar positions. Within the dream, Mum began to realize that now she too was turning slowly into stone. The sense of becoming rigidly paralysed terrified her as the process moved steadily up her body towards her head, but there was nothing she could do to stop its advance. Eventually it seemed to Dad as if he was talking to someone who was lost, entombed. He sensed Mum still wanted to communicate, but was having difficulty doing so. Mom lay rigid on the bed transfixed by the waking dream. She no longer spoke. Concerned, Dad whispered to Mom to try and find a way out of her stone tomb. Finally, Mum spoke and told Dad that she had found a way out of her stone body. Mom saw herself emerging as a small butterfly from the stone canal of her right ear. Escaping from the coffin of her own body, she was joyous and flew away and disappeared. At that point the terror of the dream evaporated for Mum. Exhausted and relieved, she fell back into a deep sleep.

Mum has long since forgotten that nightmare, but not Dad. At the time, he wrote the details down in a journal he kept. It was only in the last few years that the dream's traumatic, and prophetic significance impressed itself upon him.

You know, (taps thoughtfully at notepad with pencil), thirty-five years later, my mother still wakes up in the middle of the night. My dad can tell she's awake, because her body starts moving. Those constant involuntary movements caused by this disease, which for Mum is in its final stages. The movements have become so bad that my dad has had to push their beds apart. He still wakes up with her, curled with his back against the wall, watching her. Her body, which in all my memories, had always been lean and strong, is now thin, her bones are protruding. (gestures at the books on the desk) Scientific literature calls these movements "chorea", which means dance-like. (stares into the distance) An unstoppable, horrific dance that takes hold and never lets go. So my father wakes when she wakes, and watches her, trapped in her uncontrollable body that gets worse and worse as the months and years go by. Like that night so many years ago, she is now often unaware of what is happening to her. She relies on my father to coax her through, until she eventually meets her resolution. (Looks up at audience) Until she eventually finds her escape. (She presses a key on the keyboard and the woman's voice is heard again. She begins typing and the stage goes dark, the voice echoing in the darkness.)

Woman's recorded voice: Um, I remember I asked my Mum if I was pretty, and she said no.

(the lights come on full upstage, and now Caitlin sits on the floor across from her sister, sharing the bag of chips and sorting through her own pile of papers, coffee cup in hand. The papers come from an old white garbage bag sitting on the rocking gliding chair to Caitlin's left.)

Mum: So that's one that I do remember.

Caitlin: (looks at her mother, wide-eyed) She said that, Mum?

Clare: (through a mouthful of chips) Oh my god!

Caitlin: But... but you were so pretty! (reaches for chips)

Mum: (nodding involuntarily, fingers flexing over the photo album she holds in her lap) Uh huh. Yeah. (feet flexing up and down)

Clare: Why would she say something like that?

Mum: Well. She was kind of strict. Sort of like I am a lot of the time.

Caitlin: (wiping her hands on her jeans) Yeah, but if we had ever asked that you never would have said "no"!

Clare: Yeah, when we brought our class pictures back – remember, Cait? – you would always say (soft, high pitched voice) “Oh, dear! You look just like a model! You could be a model!”

Mum: (giggles) That’s so funny.

Caitlin: And we’d be like, “Yeah I could, Mum!”

Clare: And we could not.

Caitlin: Oh no. Buck teeth and glasses.

Clare: Big hair and scrunchies.

Mum: (giggles) Yeah. (nods) You’re right about that.

Caitlin: Geez Louise. (shakes head, goes back to looking at papers in pile)

Mum: Yeah. (rocks forward) I guess as a kid, (nods) you do remember things like that. (fingers flex and she looks back to the photo album.)

Clare: (holding up a crumpled piece of looseleaf) Listen to this (reads) “Dear Mum, I opened some Pepsi for my friends without asking, but I thought it’d be alright! It’s in the fridge. Love Clare.”

Mum: (looks up from the photo album) That’s funny. (grins) That’s so funny.

Clare: (crunches on chips) Everything revolves around food... (sets the paper on top of the pile on the coffee table, moves across to the garbage bag and pulls out a new stack. Makes a disgusted face and pulls out a long string of some kind of dried, discoloured pasta) Yours? (swings it in Caitlin’s face) Definitely yours. What *is* this?

Caitlin: Gross, get that out of my face. (takes a drink of coffee)

Mum: (looks up and nods) Hm. (rocks forward, peering) Hard to say.

Caitlin: (looks down at paper in hand and snorts) Oh man, oh Clare, check this out. (wipes mouth)

Clare: You’re disgusting. (wiping her arm) You snorted that all over me.

Caitlin: You loved it.

Clare: (leans over and looks at paper) What is that supposed to be?

Mum: (pushes glasses up and leans towards the paper) Isn't that funny? (grins) That's so funny.

Caitlin: That's how you used to draw. (laughs) That's how you drew women. Those are your boobs. That's what you used to draw all the time.

Clare: (crunches chips and looks impressed with herself) Nice.

Caitlin: Modeled after Mum, obviously.

Mum: (giggles) That's so funny. (nods and takes drawing from Caitlin) I love that. Isn't that funny? (looks closer and reads) Clare. Age 5. Just so cute. (with some difficulty, places the piece of paper on the stack beside her and, after several tries, picks up another item.)

Caitlin: So Mum. (swigs coffee and leafs through a packet of old report cards) I just wanted to talk today about the fact that mothers seem to do this sort of thing. (gestures at the memory bag and the mess of papers piled around the room) You know, the way mothers collect memories for their families.

Mum: (Rocks forward on her chair, toes flexing) Mmhm.

Caitlin: (Moves toward the memory bag and pulls a new stack of items out) And we could also dig out, I'm not sure where it is though, the baby book you made for Meghan and talk about why you made one for her and not us, and why you love her so much more than us. (sits back down)

Mum: (giggles) That's funny. That's so funny.

Caitlin: And also I wanted to talk a little bit about if you remember, because you lost your Mum, you lost all the memories that she had.

Mum: (nods, making eye contact when her head movements permit it) You're right about that.

Caitlin: (prompting) So when you had kids, you couldn't ask your Mum's advice...

Mum: (toes tapping) No, you're right about that.

Caitlin: (pressing) Did you find that hard?

Mum: (nods emphatically) Oh yeah, I did, yeah for sure. It was very difficult, yeah it was.

Caitlin: You couldn't ask her stuff about your childhood...

Mum: (fingers flexing) No, no, that's right.

Caitlin: Yeah... (drawing out the pause)

Mum: (goes back to the album, setting it aside and picking up an old workbook of Brendan's.)

Caitlin: (picks up an old, falling apart album) Did you spend a lot of time as a family, Mum, reminiscing about things?

Mum: Mmhm. We did. (looks up) We took a trip to England. That must have been the first year after my Mum died. So, yeah, we ended up travelling that year. We flew to England. (Her feet kicks and she nods).

Caitlin: (looking over) And did you sort of visit your Mum's family?

Mum: Um, we did, yeah. We did. (hands flicked) She had an older brother, he was married and he had one child, Jane. So yeah, I think he just had one child. (nods firmly and goes back to Brendan's workbook)

Caitlin: I wonder if anyone over there has the disease.

Clare: (looking up) I hadn't thought of that.

Mum: Yeah, I'm not sure about that either. (after several patient attempts, her hands turn a page of the workbook)

Clare: Look at this. (holds up a series of stapled together pages) I'm telling this story from the perspective of Sarah Mulcahy.

Caitlin: (peers over) What do you mean?

Clare: (reading aloud) "One day when I, Sarah Mulcahy, was climbing up my treehouse..."

Caitlin: (laughs) Sarah Mulcahy is your lead character?

Mum: (grins) Isn't that funny? That's so funny.

Clare: Yeah, it's only a page long. (leafs through the empty pages) The suspense! What happens to Sarah Mulcahy?? (clutches at the pages) Why was she climbing up the treehouse???

Caitlin: (sifts through the pile to her left) Wait, didn't we come across another story about Sarah Mulcahy? One that I had written?

Clare: Yeah! (checks her pile) We did. Yours was more complex.

Caitlin: Naturally. (digging through her pile)

Clare: Characters were better developed, stick figures had more proportional body types...

Mum: (giggles) That's so funny.

Caitlin: (holds up an old school notebook) Here it is. (reading aloud) "Sarah woke up one morning and sighed. She put her hair into a side ponytail with a purple scrunchie and pulled on her tie-dye stir-up pants." Woah.

Clare: (crunches on chips) So the heroine is always Sarah. (reaches for another handful) We're always writing a story about Mum. (wipes hands on jeans)

Caitlin: There are no other stories worth telling. (moves to memory bag, takes out another few items) Mum was our world.

Mum: You were *my* world. (goes back to workbook, fingers flexing around the pages.)

Caitlin: (watches her mother for some time. Then turns to Clare) Remember the feel of sitting on Mum's lap in this chair on Christmas morning? (gestures to the rocker, now covered in memories)

Clare: Yeah.

Caitlin: Yeah. Remember that nightgown she used to wear?

Clare: Yeah. So silky.

Caitlin: Yeah, exactly.

Mum: (still absorbed in workbook) You're right about that. Mmhm.

Clare: Yeah. She'd be wearing her big glasses and her hair would be all messy. And she'd pat your leg. (looks over at her mother) Mum, how's your arm?

Mum: Mmhm (looks up, nodding) It's ok. Yeah, I'm good.

Caitlin: That was a big fall.

Mum: Yeah. (hands flexing) I guess I kind of lost my balance.

Caitlin: We'll get your glasses in to be fixed as soon as they open after Christmas.

Mum: (pushes glasses up on her nose and taps her feet) Yeah, Dad's going to do that. Thursday.

Caitlin: (looks back at the memory bag on the chair) Mum?

Mum: (looks up, nodding) Mmhm? (feet flexing up then down again)

Caitlin: Can you tell me what all this means? (gestures at the various piles)

Mum: (looks around at the piles of memories) Yeah, yeah I can. (pauses) Pretty amazing, I guess. (fingers flex around the workbook still in her hands) That's the only thing I can think about at the moment. (watches her fingers as they flex) An amazing life. I just love you guys to death. These things, the little notes, just so cute. I just love that. (head nods and she taps her feet) I just sort of dreaded going to work because I just enjoyed you guys so much. I ended up going to work for a long time after, but for some reason I was the kind of Mum who wanted to be home with the kids. I found each kid, I just really loved you so much from the moment I saw you. Well, it might have taken a little while after you go through the labour. (Hands flick and come back to rest around workbook) Yeah, each one of you was so different. You were all so beautiful when you were born. It's exciting, you're all so different. Your little personalities. I liked that part of it, the babyhood. It's very exciting for each one, you know, starting to walk, you know, this fat little baby. (grins). I worried the way any mother does, but I really enjoyed a lot of it, most of it. So, I love you guys a lot. I'm very proud of you guys. (fixes her eyes on Caitlin, then as her head nods to the right, on Clare) You're all so special. So yeah, I love you guys a lot, all of you. (She nods and her fingers flex at the workbook again)

Clare: (eyes wide, hand frozen in bag of chips) Wow Mum – you made a speech!

Mum: (giggles) That's funny. That's so funny.

Caitlin: So Mum, you keep all these things because you loved being a Mum?

Mum: Yeah. I guess I'm a collector of memories. (giggles)

Caitlin: But (leans in) you love me, most?

Mum: (feet tapping) Yeah, uh huh, that's hysterical. (giggles)

Clare: (pulling an envelope out of the pile) Mum, look at these. Look how similar your handwriting is to your Mum's.

Caitlin: What are they?

Clare: Postcards.

Mum: (reaches over and after a few attempts grabs a postcard) I know, I find her writing a lot like mine, too.

Clare: This one's to you and Auntie Helen from your Mum. (reading aloud) "Dear HM and SE. It's been a might foggy on the mainland since we came. Hope you are enjoying my absence. Love Ma." (passes the card to Caitlin) She was so... British!

Caitlin: (examines the card then passes it to her mother) Do things like these help remind you of her, Mum? I mean, she died when you were so young. And then all you remember is her saying you weren't pretty. (gives a half-smile)

Mum: Yeah. (Stares at the postcards in her lap. Feet flex. Fingers grip the edges of the card) I think she loved me a lot. Yeah. We had sort of our own things to do, things to talk about, but yeah, I think she loved me a lot.

(From offstage, a door opens)

Dad: Sarah! It's 11 o'clock, dear!

Mum: (strains toward offstage) Thank you, dear! (Moves to get up out of her chair, Caitlin and Clare jump up to help her. Hands the postcard to Caitlin.) I think I'll just go have my smoothie and my muffin now.

Caitlin: Ok, thanks Mum, thanks for this. (stands and gives her Mum a hug)

Mum: (grips Caitlin tightly, fingers flexing on her back) I just love you so much.

Caitlin: I love you, too, Mum. (steadies her mother as she moves away)

Clare: Love you, Mum. (watches as her mother slowly and unsteadily moves toward the stairs offstage. Turns to Caitlin, who is blowing her nose.) What happened? Spray coffee out your nose again?

Caitlin: (throws the Kleenex at Clare) That's enough out of you.

Clare: (bats it away) Look at this, I wanted to show you this.

Caitlin: (sits down beside her pile and grabs another handful of chips) Another story about the infamous Sarah Mulcahy?

Clare: (swigs her Pepsi) It's from you to Mum. (picks up small piece of pink construction paper beside her.) "To Mum. I love Mum very much. I'm sorry that you don't care. I'm sorry that you don't care that I love you. Lots of love, Caitlin. PS) I wish I could stay up. I SURE wish I could stay up." "Sure" is in all capitals for some reason.

Caitlin: (crunches chips, wipes hands on jeans) I was unloved. (turns to listen as her mother creaks slowly up the stairs)

Clare: Obviously.

(lights go out)

Act III

(low spotlight rises, downstage right, Caitlin is back at her desk typing, lips tight, brow furrowed. She stops and presses a key on the keyboard. Several female voices are heard, often talking over each other, finishing each other's sentences, relatively indiscernible from each other in tone and character. One male voice comes in at the end.)

Recorded voices: The first time Clare went to the Movement Clinic, she mistook the Neurologist for the Psychologist. (laughter)

And then I made this poor doctor uncomfortable because she was talking about how someday I'd wind up with some nice guy who would take care of me. And I was like, "Well, you know, probably girl." (laughter) And she blushed and got really embarrassed.

Wait, is this a symptom?

"Extreme lesbianism."

"Subject thinks she should be attracted to women."

Hey Cait, is this leading to a question, or what?

Caitlin: (Leans back). I used to have this dream. (smooths hair with hands)

(Low lights come on upstage again, but this time the wall-papered room is full. Three tall, lanky adults are each stretched out in the seats around the heavy wooden chest, crowded with left-over Christmas chocolates, crackers, water canisters, coffee cups, and feet. The two women sit slumped on the flowered couch, the man has sunk deeply into the rocking glider. They slowly read through forms and take turns yawning and stretching.)

Caitlin: When I was a kid, I had this recurring nightmare. I dreamed I was in this room. A crowded room with people who appeared to be from all walks of life. There was a quiet hum as everyone chatted and mingled, but for me there was this chilling sense of apprehension as I wove through the crowd. (stretches arms back behind her head) At one point, a door opened, and someone entered the front of the room and was joined by several men with shotguns. The crowd grew quiet and turned to face the front of the room, where a large screen stood flashing numbers. One of the men with a shotgun came to stand in front of the screen. He lowered his gun (points) and fired. The screen froze on a number. My blood turned cold – that was my number. The man at the front of the room turned and found me in the crowd. He came toward me and, with one of his armed men on either side of me, we moved toward the open door.

I would wake up with a jolt and sit up in bed. My tossing and turning did nothing to wake my bunkmate and little sister Clare. She would be wrapped in about eight blankets, always cold, always in fear of the elements, always in need of bundling, cocooning, protecting. I would hop out of bed and creep into the hall where it was light. My older brother Brendan's door was always closed. He was asleep, or at the very least, quiet, removed, and unreadable in the room across from ours. Meghan, my oldest sister, was separate from us, downstairs, but probably awake at the sound of my footsteps, easily woken up, sensitive and keenly attuned to the movements of the house. I would step into the bathroom, close the door gently, and turn the light on. I would sit in the bright light on the toilet seat cover, pull my knees up under my nightgown, and try to forget that, if my nightmares indicated anything, (taps the pencil on the notepad) my number was up. (Turns and presses a key on the keyboard and the women's voices are heard again. She begins typing and the stage goes dark, the voices echoing in the darkness.)

Women's recorded voices: The first time Clare went to the Movement Clinic, she mistook the Neurologist for the Psychologist. (laughter)

And then I made this poor doctor uncomfortable because she was talking about how someday I'd wind up with some nice guy who would take care of me. And I was like, "Well, you know, probably girl." (laughter) And she blushed and got really embarrassed.

Wait, is this a symptom?

"Extreme lesbianism."

"Subject thinks she should be attracted to women."

(the lights come on full upstage, and Caitlin now sits in the second rocking glider chair with her siblings. They've put down the forms and are talking, laughing, and gesturing with hands holding cups of water, tea, and coffee.)

Brendan: Hey Cait, is this leading to a question, or what?

Caitlin: Oh yeah, sorry Brend. (puts down coffee cup and reaches down, pulling up her notebook and pencil) Well, ok. (flipping through notebook) Where was I...?

Brendan: So why *do* you want to talk to us?

Caitlin: There you go, thank you Brend.

Clare: Yeah, why **DO** you? (chiming in)

Meghan: (echoing) Why **DO** you, Cait, huh?

Brendan: It's 'cause I forgot (laughter).

Caitlin: Well, me too. (rubs eyes) I need some coffee. I got no sleep last night.

Clare: I should have gotten a coffee.

Caitlin: (offers her extra large cup) You can have some of mine if you want to. Go on up and get yourself a mug and I'll pour you some.

Clare: Woohoo! (gets up and walks offstage)

Brendan: (leans forward) Good, now that she's gone... (laughter)

Caitlin: Yeah, I've brought us all here to talk about Clare. (laughter)

Meghan: (nods) Good coffee ploy.

Caitlin: It's an intervention. (shakes her head) Ok, no, seriously. I have to do this. So, ok, broadly, what I'm most interested in is what happens to a family when their mother begins to lose their memory. And tied into that is how important a mother's memory is to a family. (Clare comes back and Caitlin hands her the coffee cup, Clare pours herself some and passes it back.) So I'm interested in that – in what Mum's memory has meant to us – and then I'm interested in talking about what happens when it starts to fade. (sits back in her chair, taps her notepad with her pencil) And then I'd also like to talk about watching Mum be sick with something that the three of us are worried we might develop (all nod) and then Meg as the person who might be watching all that happening. (looks to each of her siblings for approval)

Brendan: (shakes his head and sighs) Well. Merry Christmas. (laughter)

Caitlin: It's a Mulcahy Christmas, everyone!

Brendan: Well, ok. (scratches beard) I've run into that just recently when you're talking about memory. Jill and I, in our application for adoption, our social worker screwed up over and over again. And we ended up needing really detailed information, a really detailed history of Mum's family and birth dates. And I found that really difficult having to write Dad and then having Auntie Helen to get the specifics as opposed to Mum knowing it off by heart.

Caitlin: And that was something she remembered. She was really good with dates.

Brendan: (nods) Really good with dates.

Meghan: (interjects) And I don't know if you find this, Brend, but since becoming a parent, there are things I want to know from Mum. Like, "Hey, I was awake all night. I wonder if Mum remembered *those* days." You know? And I do kind of find that, since the process has been so long, that in some ways I do feel like, you forget a little bit of what it was like

before. (scratches at a sticker on her water canister) I was thinking the other day about Mum driving me to school.

Clare: Well, and I think it was Cait and I that were talking about how Mum used to go for runs every day and walk home from work, which is one thing that I don't think about all that often. Mum was really physically strong and really active.

Meghan: It's like grieving what she was, and also grieving the losses that are coming. (puts the water on the table) Remember the Christmas when the doctor called and said that Mum couldn't drive anymore?

Caitlin: (shakes head) That was a horrible day.

Clare: And that terrible year, that crazy year when Mum wouldn't come out of her room?

Meghan: Horrible.

Clare: When she started to say things like, "I can't wash my hands. Oh my god, I can't wash my hands."

Meghan: "I can't stop moving my tongue, I can't stop moving my tongue."

Brendan: Did you guys notice that she's really starting to speak involuntarily a lot? When the kids are around she just sort of has a continual conversation. (smiles)

Clare: Dad was saying that the other day, "Mum says I love you to everyone now. Mum says, 'I love you so much' to the pizza man." (laughter) Hey, it's a nice weird affect to have, right?

Caitlin: But she said that all the time normally, too. "I love you so much." We heard it all the time. (others nod) Do you guys remember at Christmas when she'd sit here and you could cuddle up in her lap?

Brend: Didn't she sit over there? (points at the couch)

Meg: Yeah (smiles) her hair would be all over the place. And she had that velvet nightgown, remember that?

Caitlin: Velvet? No, silk. It was silky.

Clare: Oh yeah, it was velvet.

Caitlin: You said silk, yesterday.

Clare: (shrugs and takes a swig from her mug)

Meg: (wistfully) Purple.

Cait: What-? (leans forward) Purple??

B: (interjects) So, Cait, let's get back to this.

Caitlin: (shakes head and turns to Brendan) Sorry, what, Brend?

Brendan: So (slowly) it's physical memories you want to know about?

Caitlin: Uhhh... yes. Exactly. Physical memories.

Brendan: And (trying to clarify)... what about them? (laughter)

Clare: (rolls her eyes) This is like hanging out with both of our parents.

Brendan: (laughs) Well, ok, I don't have any memories that don't come from that stuff. You know, that picture over there (gestures) of me and Aileen playing, if it wasn't for that picture of Aileen, I would have long since forgotten that I ever went over to their house. Or like, trips to like, Loch Harbour.

Caitlin: (looks over at the picture hanging on the tree) Oh that wonderful... slide. (laughter)

Meghan: Or when Dad would take us to the poop pond – the sanitation place over by the train tracks. (laughter)

Caitlin: Every weekend. He must've been like "What am I gonna do with four kids??" Oh god. Clare and I found this piece of paper and we can't figure it out. It must be that Dad was either left alone with all of us or it was a Saturday, but it did seem to be a weekend that Mum was gone or something. And he had written out ideas for things to do. And it was just rambling. At some points he had drawn little arrows and said "Clare's thoughts", because Clare had obviously, like, drawn little things on the side of the paper. But it said like, "Group sleepover??"

Brendan: (laughs) Question mark, question mark.

Caitlin: "Nintendo??" And at the bottom it was like, "Nintendo. Cait's turn first. Meghan's turn second. Brendan's turn third. Clare's turn fourth." (laughter) Just obviously this guy who's like, "oh my god, I have to spend this much time with this many children." (laughter)

Meghan: Those are some of my favourite things that Mum's kept are those ridiculous notes because they captured a different tone of the family than just this cute drawing. It's also like, "Where are my pickles?? Who ate my pickles?????" (laughter)

Clare: There's repeated ones between you and Cait about like, her borrowing your new Levi jeans. (laughter)

Caitlin: Yeah, your new Levis! And one of them that we read yesterday was like, “Meghan, you know what would go really well with my new haircut that’s like that girl on Friends?” (laughter) “Your new Levis!” (laughter)

Clare: I am a child of the 90s! (laughter)

Meghan: No, I mean, for me, I’m the same way as Brendan. My memories are very informed by those things and they capture a sense of what it was like when we were all around here doing stuff. And it’s cute to think... you know, I think they shine some light on Mum, too. On this mother who was like, “Aww.” Stuff stuff (imitating her mother finding something and putting it in the memory bag). (laughter) That’s, I really, I always felt bad for Mum because she never knew her mum. And then on some level, and as I get older and become more conscious of your parents as human beings and all that stuff, that I... there’s more I would have liked to have known about her.

Brendan: I always feel that way.

Caitlin: (turns) Do you, Brend?

Brendan: (shakes head) Because my memory’s so bad, and if it were repeated more often I’d have those facts about her parents in my head. The facts about where and when and who and... but when it’s just mentioned so sporadically it’s not something that stays in my mind.

Meghan: And Mum was secretive. We had a Mum who also had memories that she did not tell us. And then every now and then she’d just burst open with something.

Caitlin: It’s like how she used to yell that thing at me during fights as a teenager. She’d say, “I’m just gonna take the car and go drive off a cliff!”

Clare: Really?? See, that’s a Mum I never knew.

Caitlin: And then Auntie Helen told me that her Mum used to say almost exactly the same thing when they were having fights.

Brendan: Are you gonna break the chain? (laughter)

Caitlin: Pfft. (leans back) God no.

Clare: That chain is... intact.

Caitlin: I probably *will* drive off the cliff. (laughter)

Brendan: Clare will just do it by accident. (laughter)

Caitlin: This isn’t Mcdonald’s?

Clare: That's totally how I'm gonna die.

Meghan: "At least I'll be able to sleep!"

Caitlin: "Ah, the eternal rest."

(laughter)

Clare: Wait, what were we talking about?

Caitlin: Oh yeah. Well, ok. (looks at notebook) I thought another reason why this might be an interesting interview is because there's not much out there on genetic disease, or people like us, because this testing thing is fairly new. So not many people know whether or not they're going to have the disease before they become symptomatic.

Clare: That's why the people at the Movement Clinic are always excited about us.
(laughter) Oooh! We can do tests on them!

Caitlin: (beckons) Come into our room!

Clare: Do this with your hands. (makes elaborate gestures)

Caitlin: They're always like, "Clare, walk a straight line." (laughter).

Clare: (whining) But it's really hard!

Brendan: Ok, is this leading to a question?

Caitlin: No.

(laughter)

Brendan: I'm just trying to get the context for all of this.

Clare: Just give him a yes or no question. Do you like Huntington's Disease?

(laughter)

Brendan: How many Huntington's Diseases would you like?

Caitlin: Ahhh... that's more like it.

(laughter)

Meghan: Is the question, do you internalize all this, because of Mum?

Brendan: Because I'm so far away, I go for long stretches where I don't really think about it. Except for maybe when I talk to Mum on the phone, when she picks up and we do the five minutes with Mum and the twenty minutes Dad.

Mum: (points) Which is a reverse of the way it used to be.

Brendan: Yeah, that's true. (scratches beard) And then when we come back it's more in my face, so it does put it in the back of my mind again. And Jill and I have always been very open about things and talking about the future. We're planning for the worst and hoping for the best and trying to get our finances in order and put into place, especially with Abby around now.

Clare: Yeah, it's easier not to think about it when you're not here. I found when I was living here it was much harder. But especially with a new partner and trying to talk to him about all of this kind of stuff, trying to introduce someone else to this whole situation... (taps fingers on mug) And I know Dad always says he gets a lot of comfort out of the idea that he's sure this won't affect us because of scientific breakthroughs, but I don't find that all that comforting. It definitely feels like, I'm gonna get this and I'm gonna look like that. (stares at her fingers, tapping) And it's scary in terms of lots of things. Especially, what is this going to do to my ability to read and analyze? That's always been such a huge part of my life. Yeah, the not being able to read really scares me. That your words dry up, as Mum says.

Caitlin: Yeah, (nodding) that phrase has always stuck in my head. The talking, the not being able to communicate.

Clare: (nods) That's what I'm most scared of. I think I could almost handle the physical stuff, but the brain stuff really scares me.

Brendan: (furrows brow) Even though it's pretty far down the road?

Caitlin: I think it's personalities, too. Brendan's sort of an in-the-moment sort of person-

Clare: And I tend to plan forever ahead.

Clare: What about you, Meg, do you worry about it or think about it?

Meghan: Yeah, I worry about it. You know, not always or anything. But certainly I feel like, it's no fun to watch it with Mum, who wants to do it again? And I worry about you guys. I mean, I feel grateful that you all seem to have people that love you that'll take care of you. But I'm here. I'll always take care of you. If anything ever happens. (choking up) I'm serious. If you ever get scared, I'll always be here as long as I'm here, you know? So (tearing up) yeah, I find it scary.

(long pause)

Caitlin: Meghan will have one of those lists. "Group sleepover???"

Brendan: "Nintendo???" (laughter)

Meghan: (rubs eyes and giggles) "Ok. Caitlin's turn."

Caitlin: And sometimes I worry, like, if I find it hard to remember what Mum was like before Huntington's, are James and Emmy not going to remember me?

Meghan: (nods) I can see now, too, being an aunt now to both of your kids, it would be very important to me to continue James and Emmy's knowledge of you. I see that too, as a role, as wanting to be a memory-keeper there, too. To be like, "Oh, that's just like your Mum would've done." (sighs) But it's such a whittling down of this person, you know? Mum was a private, independent woman that I would have liked to have known more about. Of that person.

Brendan: Yeah, I used to call when I was in university or when I was in the States, and Mum would just pepper me with questions, because I wouldn't talk to her otherwise.

Meghan: I remember, Mum would work really hard at learning how to communicate with you. I can remember car rides with her, with both of us even, we'd be like, "Ok Brendan, we've got you for two hours!" (laughter)

Caitlin: Lock the doors!

Meghan: Say something meaningful! (laughter) No, she was very good at being a Mum. I feel like, in some ways, if you have to do the cheesy "look on the bright side" (laughter), maybe we just got a really concentrated awesomeness. Maybe we have to think "This is the Mum we were meant to have." Because otherwise I'm just spending so much time... I just feel like it just doesn't stop for me, the sadness around it. (leans forward and grabs water canister) The constantly missing my Mum. Or being jealous of people who have a different kind of Mum. And then feeling bad because I have a mum and I don't want to deny her personhood, you know? (twists off top and takes a sip)

Caitlin: That's what strange. What's strange about it is that Mum is still here. It's not like our Mum died and we're looking to be mothered, and we miss that and we're looking to an empty space. She's still there. So you still look to her for those things but you don't get them.

Meghan: (puts water canister back on the table) You don't get what you expect.

Brendan: Yeah it's sad. 'Cause Jill's Mum has really been a surrogate Mum for Abby and she's so great with her. But it's hard at the same time because you always think Mum would have done that so well.

Clare: Oh exactly, and enjoyed it, too.

Meghan: I need to go pee. (gets up and leaves)

Caitlin: So, (scratches head with pencil) another thing I wanted to touch on was the process of finding out that Mum had something that was genetic and us finding out we had it and Meghan finding out that she didn't have it. And listen, I know this sounds horrible, but I have to say that I take real comfort in the fact that you two have the gene, too.

Brendan: It's certainly less isolating. If it were just me, you'd kind of be backed into a corner with your feelings.

Clare: It'd be pretty horrible to be the only one.

Caitlin: Definitely. And you'd have a much more "why me?" feeling. I have less of that self-pity because you guys have it, too.

Clare: No that's true.

Meghan: (comes back and sits down) What did I miss?

Caitlin: Huntington's.

Meghan: Ah.

Caitlin: Well, Brendan got tested first, so maybe we should start with him.

B: Well, I found out really quickly. Once Mum found out, I think I booked my appointment literally either that day or the next day.

Clare: Was there any question whether or not you wanted to do it?

Brendan: I wouldn't say, not at all. I was... 25, 26. I was pretty carefree at that time. I was living down in the States and I didn't have a lot of responsibilities and I had all kinds of options out in front of me. And, I don't know, I don't think it was in my personality to ever not get tested. And I wanted to know right away. Why I wanted to know, I'm not sure. I'm not sure whether it was morbid curiosity, or just sort of part of my personality where I needed to know. Because I like to deal with things then move on with them, rather than have them build up or be in the back of my mind or... I was preparing myself for the worst, so it was good, because I wasn't surprised. When the results came back I wasn't surprised at all. And it was just... it was hard, because I basically found out in the back of a parking lot of a hospital.

Caitlin: They called you?

Brendan: No, I went to the hospital to get the results on paper, but I walked out of the hospital and I opened it up in the card.

Meghan: You were alone?

Brendan: Yeah.

Caitlin: That's horrible!

Brendan: It hit home pretty hard, but I think the fact that I had convinced myself that I was going to be positive kind of softened the blow a little bit. And I think I called you guys probably ten minutes later, when I got back from the hospital to my apartment.

Clare: I was really surprised about you, I didn't think you'd have it.

Caitlin: I was, too.

Meghan: Me too.

Caitlin: Yeah, for some reason Brendan's results were really, really hard to hear.

Clare: I found that really upsetting.

Caitlin: Because you were the first one, and it made it real all of a sudden.

Brendan: That was the hardest part, calling back home. I was upset but I was pretty composed up until that point. But I think calling back was the toughest part of that. Talking to Mum, talking to you guys. That's when it really set in. (pause) But then the next day I woke up and it was life as usual. And it still is. For me, anyway.

Caitlin: Does it come in, like for me sometimes it comes in, waves. Like I won't think about it for a long time and it won't upset me.

Brendan: Yeah, it does. I think I've become more cognizant of my faculties and things that I used to be able to do really well. I was even thinking in the car the other day that I used to be really good at eating in the car. I could drive a standard and do everything at once

Clare: Impressive.

Brendan: And I don't think I can do it as well anymore. Again, I had lots of times like that where I thought that my basketball skills had diminished in university because of it, and just a whole whack of things that went through my mind.

Caitlin: And who knows? Since we're the first generation of people they can really watch go through it, they don't know.

Meghan: Maybe it's sort of just a spectrum.

Clare: (to Caitlin) Do you remember where we were when we told Mum and Dad about us?

Caitlin: Yeah, we came back-

Clare: Were we in their bedroom?

Caitlin: In the living room. Yeah. We went to the hospital, and then we went-

Clare: For a drive. And we got McDonald's.

Meghan: Yeah, I always remember that part of your story (laughter).

Clare: Yeah, it's pretty typical. It's how we deal with most things.

Meghan: Did you feel mad when I didn't have it?

Clare: Nope. I felt worried about you.

Caitlin: I was mad. I have a little document on my old ancient computer downstairs. I didn't cry or get upset after we got tested. But then when I found out that you weren't, I was so... I just burst into tears afterwards. I was so jealous. I was just like, imagine hearing *that* news.

Brendan: I was really happy for you.

Meghan: Yeah?

Brendan: At the time. (laughter)

Clare: And now?

Caitlin: Dot dot dot... I would like to steal your genes! (laughter)

Brendan: Your *Levi* jeans!

(groans and laughter)

Caitlin: Oh! Full circle!

Clare: Nice!

Meghan: That should be the last line.

Caitlin: (taps notepad) I'll see what I can do.

(the stage goes dark)

Epilogue

(A low spotlight comes up, downstage right, on Caitlin's desk. Piles of books have moved to the floor, and new books have been added to the chaos of the desktop. Post-it notes stick out wildly from every heap of papers. More empty coffee cups have accumulated and some old plates and banana peels peek out from underneath them. Caitlin is tapping her pencil on her notepad, lips pursed, fingers scratching at head. She leans back and drags her fingers through her hair.)

Caitlin: What do I do with all this (gestures widely)? What does this all even mean? All these dreams, these family stories, these notes and drawings saved and revisited? They tell us a story. The same story. Again and again. Until we feel safe. But sometimes, sometimes that story is deeply shaken.

My grandmother killed herself. It was a family secret only my grandfather and his second wife knew. My grandmother had this disease that was making her feel crazy, only the doctors told her it was menopause and to go home and deal with it. It wasn't menopause. It was Huntington's Disease. She killed herself before she could know this. Nobody knew this until my mother began exhibiting the same symptoms at the age of 47 and suddenly the symmetry of her mother's experience became significant. Eight years later she got the diagnosis her mother never did. And one by one, Clare, Brendan and I got the same diagnosis. We're bound by genetics, yes, in our family we know that better than anyone. My mother is bound to watch herself slowly turn to stone just as her mother did. Just as we watch now. Just as we are bound to watch it happen to ourselves and to each other. But we're bound even more deeply by memory.

The diagnosis of genetic disease in our family caused our family history to become shaken, broken. But the memories we share, the memories our mother preserved and our father now collects on her behalf, those memories bind us together still. They bind my mother to her mother. They bind us to our mother as she slips away.

Clare: (enters the spotlight from darkness, carrying an open bag of chips. Takes a handful, eats them, swallows and speaks) I don't think that's right.

Caitlin: (looks up, surprised) What? Where did you come from?

Clare: (wipes hand on jeans) I don't think you're right about that.

Caitlin: (throws hands up in the air) Oh for god's sake, I was almost done.

Clare: (sits on the edge of the desk, contemplative) I don't think all these memories, these dreams, these stories, I don't think they *do* tell the same story. I think the play up until now

has all these points where you're rediscovering things in the memory bag, or someone else is shedding new light on an old object. (looks down at Caitlin) So don't we sort of revisit these memories which have different significance to us in different periods of our lives? Like you guys thinking about parenting more now that you're parents, or us wanting to know more about Mum's parents through the memory bag because she can't offer us those stories herself anymore...

Caitlin: (thinks, furrows brows, sticks hand in bag of chips and takes out a handful. Realizes Clare's making sense.) Crap. Go on.

Clare: (gestures with her chip-free hand) So, all these memories, they don't really tell the same story over and over again. There are tensions and contradictions and contestations. The memories mean different things at different times.

Caitlin: Yes, (points) but they symbolize a sense of family unity, togetherness, reason. That's why family memory's comforting.

Clare: Yes, (points back) but that unity, that sense of safety, comes from each retelling, each revisiting, a constant reconstruction of the past to suit our present needs. Those memories Mum collected, those are the tools for that reconstruction, you know?

Caitlin: (takes a long pause and thinks) Can you write that down for me?

Clare: Do I have to do everything for you? (sighs) Sure. (pulls the laptop toward her and begins typing)

Dad: (enters from the opposite side of the spotlight) Cait, I have a few notes on the dreams. You got some nuances wrong.

Caitlin: (covers her head) Ok, everybody out. (Dad and Clare shrug, Clare offers chip bag to Dad and he reaches in. They leave the spotlight.)

Caitlin: (looks up to see that they're gone, sighs and rubs her eyes) So again: what do I do with all this (gestures at the desk)? As Clare would say, these fragmented pieces of memory with their tensions and complications and contestations? What do I do with this broken story? (pauses and watches fingers tap on desk) (looks up) I suppose I tell it. I take all these disparate parts and I weave them into something that makes sense out of what often feels senseless. I reconstruct these parts to suit my present needs. And then I tell it again and again until maybe, someday, I'll feel safe again. (turns back to computer, fingers poised to type, stage goes dark)

The end

6.0 Discussion

The findings of this study, including insights gained from the thematic analysis and the performance text, offered four main points for discussion. These points of discussion address my original research questions (What is the meaning of family memory keeping for women and their families? How do dominant ideologies of gender and the family shape family memory? What happens when mothers challenge this role, or do not fulfill this role, due to absence, illness, or death?) and expand upon and enrich these questions as well. The first two discussion points were consistent with the perspectives presented in the literature review which framed family memory keeping within the context of gendered work and gendered leisure. However, the final two findings were more unexpected, resulting in new frames of analysis and the exploration of new bodies of literature. All four points of analysis provide a complex, nuanced understanding of women's family memory keeping that both recognizes the value of the work women do and questions the ways this work reproduces dominant gender ideologies. These four points of analysis will be explored here with their accompanying subthemes, concluding with the contributions to the literature made by each point of analysis and suggestions for future research. The four points are as follows: family memory keeping as gendered work, family memory keeping as gendered leisure, family memory keeping as gendered social construction, and family memory keeping as gendered loss.

6.1. Family memory keeping as gendered work

This research strongly supports the conceptualization of family memory keeping as gendered work. Participants overwhelmingly described memory keeping as being done by the women (and most often mothers) in their families. And the descriptions of the activities

demonstrated the laborious nature of memory keeping for these women (“exhausting”, “a lot of emotional labour”). Participants described anywhere from five months to 55 years of physical labour (e.g. crafting, storing, collecting, moving, preserving, and passing down memories), mental labour (e.g. remembering special dates, birthdays, anniversaries, milestones, and planning appropriate celebrations around these events), and emotional labour (e.g. deciding what to keep and what to leave behind, remembering the specific emotional significance attached to each artifact, presenting the memories in a compelling fashion, and so forth). However, existing literature has dismissed or ignored the significance of this work (Christensen, 2011; Hof, 2006). The family memory literature, though indicating that women do seem to play a unique role in family memory, has neglected to deem family memory keeping gendered work, thereby failing to attribute the contributions of family memory work to women’s labour (cf Bohanek et al, 2008; Halbwachs, 1941; Hirsch, 1999). The gendered work literature, though recognizing the value of women’s contributions in the home, neglects to name family memory keeping as one such example of gendered work, thereby failing to acknowledge women’s family memory keeping as contributing to the work of social reproduction (cf Hochschild, 2003; Luxton, 1980; Oakley, 1974). Indeed, domestic activities such as scrapbooking and album making tend to be dismissed in academic literature in general as “trivial”, “limited”, and “superficial” (Christensen, 2011, p. 182). This research, however, demonstrates that not only is family memory keeping an example of gendered work, but that this work makes significant and valuable contributions through the work of social reproduction (Lorber, 1994). Here I will demonstrate the ways in which family memory keeping represents social reproduction, then I will outline the contributions this gendered work makes in terms of the following interconnected aspects of social reproduction:

individuation, love work, kin work, and cultural transmission. Finally, I will explore the implications of these findings and suggest directions for future research.

6.1.1. *Family memory keeping as social reproduction*

As noted in the literature review, Lorber (1994) identifies two main facets of women's work in the private sphere. First, women provide 'subsistence production', which includes housework and childcare, and ensuring the family is fed, clothed, and clean. Second, women's work involves what Lorber deems 'social reproduction', which includes responsibility for the emotional, social, moral, and spiritual well-being of the family members (though the language is similar, this use of the term "social reproduction" differs from the social constructionist use of the term, which will be explored in section 6.3). Lorber (1994) states:

...women's main responsibility in modern society is not just to keep the house clean; it is to create psychological well-being for family members on a daily basis, a sense of kinship among extended family members... maintaining family members not just physically and emotionally but also socially. Part of social reproduction is preserving and passing on the family's cultural capital to children – style of life, religious and ethnic rituals, and social position. (p. 168-175).

Thus, women's social reproduction work contributes on an individual level, a familial level, and a social and cultural level.

The findings from this study strongly support the notion of family memory keeping as social reproduction. Participants confirmed the contributions family memory work made to their individual identities; a process of social reproduction Young (2005) refers to as "individuation". Memory keeping was also discussed by participants as evidence they were loved and cared for;

an aspect of social reproduction Lynch (2007) deems “love work”. Participants also stressed the importance of family memory in providing a sense of family identity, family cohesion, and facilitating and maintaining relationships between family members and close friends; di Leonardo (1987) describes this social reproduction work as “kin work”. Finally, the social reproduction of cultural norms and values was evident in this study in terms of memory keeping providing cultural identity for participants; Vasquez (2010) analyzes this form of social reproduction as “cultural transmission”. I will now explore these forms of social reproduction in greater depth to demonstrate the contributions women’s family memory keeping makes to social reproduction in terms of individuation, love work, kin work, and cultural transmission.

6.1.1.1 *Individuation*

Scholars have suggested family memory work helps provide individuals with identity (Middleton & Edwards, 1990; Radley, 1990). Young (2005) argues that this work of “individuation”, the encouragement and facilitation of personal identity, is a major component of the gendered work of social reproduction: “Preservation of the history that supports a person’s identity by means of caring for and arranging things in space is the activity of homemaking still carried out primarily by women” (p. 136). She suggests women’s homemaking is in part the encouragement and facilitation of her family members’ personal identities. This process involves constant care and preservation of the material objects of meaning that provide individuals with identity, as well as the process of revisiting the artefacts and reiterating their meaning. Young (2005) argues these artefacts act to construct and reconstruct past and present identity, for “the materialization of identity does not fix identity, but anchors it in physical being that makes a continuity between past and present. Without such anchoring of ourselves in

things, we are, literally, lost” (Young, 2005, p. 132). Women’s social reproduction work then contributes a sense of continuity of identity, despite the ebbs and flows of our life experiences.

Indeed, this research found women’s family memory keeping provided individual family members with an individuated narrative that enabled them to feel a sense of continuity and consistency in their personal identity. As my mother described in the performance text presented here, she kept memory to preserve the feeling that “each of you was so different... your little personalities... all so special”. For instance, the “participant” badge proved an enduring and endearing lack of athleticism for one woman, while another woman looked to her old report cards to proudly confirm that she had always been the “wild” and “disruptive” individual she feels she is now. Throughout interviews, several participants specifically identified family memory artefacts as “anchors”, creating continuity between past and present identities. For the mother of the transgender teenager, painting a new name on an old Christmas ornament was a very tangible way of anchoring her child’s identity through family memory keeping. Interestingly, this act made her child’s gender identity consistent from past to present; the erasure of the old name provided an acknowledgement of a change or transition, but emphasized the continuity of identity. The message of the act was, “this is who she is and always was” (for a critical exploration of this “painting over”, see section 3.c). Similarly, the foster mother interviewed for this study stressed the importance of giving her foster children “anchors” through family memory, more important, in fact, than providing the same anchors for her biological children. In each case, women’s family memory keeping provided their children with comfort, consistency, and safety of identity through difficult transitions. This aspect of social reproduction, supporting and facilitating children’s past and present development of identity, is clearly evident in the findings of this study.

However, Young (2005) argues that women's individuation work is overlooked and undervalued. Like women's work in the home in general, the labour contributed through maintaining and preserving objects of meaning for their children is dismissed as "unproductive" (p. 136). Yet, findings from this study indicate that women's family memory keeping is incredibly significant in terms of providing "anchors" for the personal identities of family members, creating a sense of safety and continuity of self. Although unpaid and underappreciated, this work by women further demonstrates the creative and productive power of labour done in the home. For as Young describes, "Home is the site of the construction and reconstruction of one's self. Crucial to that process is the activity of safeguarding the meaningful things in which one sees the stories of one's self embodied, and rituals of remembrance that reiterate those stories" (p. 144). In collecting, preserving and maintaining family memory, and in revisiting and remembering the emotional significance of those memories, this research found women enable the process of individuation for their families. Many scholars have stressed the importance of a strong sense of self in the development of social citizens with strong coping skills (Pratt & Fiese, 2004), emotional well-being and depth (Stapley & Haviland, 1989), and resilience (Fivush, Bohanek, Robertson, & Duke, 2004). This research contributes to the literature a clear demonstration of the link between these major social contributions and women's family memory work, and suggests this work be valued and appreciated for the contributions made.

6.1.1.2 *Love work*

Researchers have also noted the significance of women's work in the home in terms of providing love and emotional support (Daniels, 1987; Doucet, 2007a; Seery & Crowley, 2000).

Erickson (1995) deemed the work of providing and enhancing the emotional well-being of others as “emotion work”; however, for the purposes of this research, Lynch’s (2007) “love work” more fully describes the nuances of the care work contributed by women’s family memory keeping. Lynch defines “love work” as “*emotionally engaged* work that has as its principal goal the survival, development and/or well being of the other” (original emphasis, p. 557). She argues that the love work contributed in this society is largely overlooked, underpaid, and performed by women, yet “because love, care and solidarity matter for the survival and development of humanity and for the effective functioning of economic, political and cultural systems, their importance cannot be denied” (p. 555). Women’s social reproduction work, in the form of love work, then offers a unique and uniquely important sense of being loved and cared for.

This research demonstrates that family memory keeping was valuable in terms of providing love and care. As my mother articulated in the performance piece, the memories left by her mother reminded her that despite their differences, “she loved me a lot”. One participant described memory artefacts as “a symbol of your mum loving you so much that she loved every drawing you did, loved everything you did so much that she held onto it.” Mothers also noted they consciously conducted their memory keeping in a loving, caring way to communicate to their child how much they were loved, demonstrating the “emotionally engaged” labour described in Lynch’s conceptualization of love work. Participants described the results of this love work in terms of an increased sense of self-worth. As one participant articulated, “You’re paid attention to. You’re special. You’re valued.” By their mother saving their drawings, their school reports, their homemade crafts, and remembering and recalling the specific emotional significance of each artefact, participants described being made to feel a sense of pride in their unique life experiences, skills, and accomplishments. Though this provision of emotionally

engaged love and care through family memory work was found to be significant particularly in terms of receiving the love and care from one's mother, participants also described feeling loved and cared for by wives, fathers, and grandmothers through family memory artefacts. However, it is important to note that in most of these cases, the family memory artefact was collected, preserved, and maintained by the mother in the family; the love work was still performed by the woman in the family for the principle goal of promoting the well-being of her family members. Thus, the findings of this study support the conceptualization of women's family memory keeping as love work.

Traditionally in academic literature, there has been considerable ambivalence in terms of issues of love (hooks, 2000). Lynch (2007) suggests the focus and value placed upon the public sphere has marginalized academic discussion about the importance of work that contributes to love: "Sociological, economic, legal and political thought has focused on the public sphere, the outer spaces of life, indifferent to the fact that none of these can function without the care institutions of society" (p. 551). Indeed, researchers have described love as centrally important to living a minimally decent life (Lynch, 2007), vital for survival not only during childhood and times of illness and vulnerability (Gilligan, 1995), but throughout our entire everyday lives (Nussbaum, 2000). Further, Lynch (2007) argues, on the occasion when love is acknowledged as a valuable facet of social life, the time, energy, and gendered nature of the labour involved in producing, creating, and maintaining this love is overlooked. This research addresses these significant gaps in the literature by demonstrating strongly both the value of love work and the gendered labour of love work, while also exposing the considerable time, energy, and labour of contributing this emotionally engaged work. Thus, this research found family memory keeping goes beyond conceptualizations of "emotion work" (Erickson, 1995) by contributing not only a

sense of emotional support and well-being, but the more complex and perhaps uniquely exhausting provision of love.

6.1.1.3 *Kin work*

Family memory keeping also contributes to kin work. ‘Kin work’ refers to the “conception, maintenance, and ritual celebration of cross-household kin ties” (di Leonardo, 1987, p. 442). This social reproduction work involves such tasks as organizing dinner parties, holiday celebrations, writing ‘thank you’ notes, making weekly phone calls or visiting close friends and family (di Leonardo, 1987). The significance of kin work is twofold: within families, kin work serves to maintain and strengthen a family’s identity and sense of cohesion (Bolea, 2000; Pratt & Fiese, 2004; Stone, 2006), and between families, kin work serves to maintain and strengthen kin ties between extended family and close family friends (Fisher & Tronto, 1990; Gerstel, 1988; Lowndes, 2004). Yet, di Leonardo (1987) posits despite the importance of kin work in strengthening families and social support networks, this work is often overlooked and undervalued, and also performed predominantly by women. Researchers have explored kin work as hidden, gendered work in terms of planning and orchestrating Christmas celebrations (Bella, 1992), sending family letters (Banks, 2000), and telling family stories (Scott & Scott, 2001). This research suggests women’s family memory keeping should be recognized as a form of kin work insofar as family memory keeping is undervalued, gendered work that contributes to maintaining kin ties both within the family and between families.

Within the family, many participants in this study commented on the ability of family memory artefacts to create and maintain family identity and cohesion. Participants noted the importance of women’s family memory work in providing family histories and genealogies (“it

ties you to your roots”), and in creating and maintaining family myth (“we’re a reptile family”), family pride (“we speak of our family with a certain amount of pride, even though we didn’t really do anything”) and relationships within the family (“There’s pictures on the side of the fridge of Brian, too, Brian and the kids, because that’s their dad, right? Even though it’s my house, that’s their dad, right?”). In many cases, participants described family memory as contributing to constructing and reconstructing family identity, often in terms of drawing new boundaries around what exactly constituted family for them; many family identities were reconstructed and made cohesive through family memory to include adopted family members, close family friends, and foster children. Indeed, in these cases, family memory played a vital role in demonstrating and confirming family membership, offering proof of family identity when genetics would not (“They would say, you’re like a daughter to us. And there’s a little thing that I have in the kitchen from them, I think they paid like 59 cents for it. But the weight that it holds is immeasurable”). Women’s family memory work contributed to participants “feeling like a unit, a family unit. What makes us special, what makes us different” (for instances of contestation, lack of cohesion, and conflict in family memory, see section 3.c). Hence, the contributions women’s family memory keeping made within the family to family identity and cohesion was readily apparent in the data.

Further, findings suggested family memory keeping also contributed significantly to maintaining and strengthening ties between families. As my father indicated in the performance piece, the memory keeping my mother performed provided the family a healthy network of extended family and friends (“That whole web of relationships which was dependent upon someone maintaining our little base in that web was under her management, her motivation”). Participants sustained and strengthened ties through the inheritance process; photographs and

other memory artefacts were passed down between mothers and daughters, aunts and nieces, grandmothers and grand-daughters, and quite often, mothers-in-law and daughters-in-law (“Travis’ mum gave me a bunch of photos of his and I put them all in an album.”) Many participants also discussed keeping in touch with extended family and close friends through memory work. Photos, videos, journal entries and albums were shared on blogs and Facebook, intended to connect and make contact with extended family and close friends (“I put a lot of energy into keeping the photos up to date on Facebook because the vast majority of my friends and family live away”). This cyber-kin work is perhaps the 21st century’s answer to sending cards to maintain these ties, an act of memory work many women not in this younger generation described as important to strengthening kin ties (“the card is your communication”). Similarly, women in the older generation often described making and giving physical albums, as opposed to electronic albums, to extended family and family friends as a way of maintaining those ties (“I made a family scrapbook for each family so they all have an album, all of my sisters’ and brothers’ children.”). Women also reported keeping memory between their family and their in-laws, helping to strengthen those ties as well (“When I met Bill I made an album where I put all his siblings from oldest to youngest in the album, and then when they gave me pictures of their kids and that kind of thing I stuck it in each compartment.”) These memory artefacts and the revisiting and sharing of these artefacts work to define and identify kin, unite and bring kin together, remind us of the meaning and importance of these kin ties, and ultimately maintain and strengthen the kin ties as well. This research clearly demonstrates the contributions women’s family memory keeping makes to kin work, both within and between families.

Kin work has traditionally been overlooked and undervalued in academic literature and everyday life. Even when acknowledged, this work is predominantly coded as feminine and

dismissed as “leisurely” and “trivial” (for a critical exploration of the leisurely aspects of family memory keeping, see section 2) (di Leonardo, 1987). This research demonstrates the time, energy, and labour involved in women’s kin work, and affirms the significance of this work. This research also addresses several gaps in the literature surrounding kin work. Family memory scholars have noted the importance of kin work to a family’s identity and sense of cohesion (Bolea, 2000; Pratt & Fiese, 2004; Stone, 2006); yet they have failed to identify this work as gendered or critically explore women’s family memory keeping. The gendered work literature has demonstrated women’s kin work as work vital in terms of creating, maintaining, and strengthening kin ties (Fisher & Tronto, 1990; Gerstel, 1988; Lowndes, 2004); yet women’s family memory work has never been identified as one such example of kin work. This research contributes to the family memory and gendered work literature by establishing women’s family memory keeping as an example of gendered work, contributing substantially to family identity, family cohesion, and family ties through kin work. Researchers have suggested strong family identity, cohesion, and kin ties leads to greater individual emotional well-being (Bolea, 2000), stronger family coping skills (Fivush et al., 2004), and better access to social support and social capital (Lowndes, 2004). Research also suggests that family memory can be incredibly meaningful in navigating the transition when adopting children (Anagnost, 2010) and fostering children (Wozniak, 2004). My research demonstrates the importance of the role that women play as family memory keepers in contributing to these outcomes and suggests women’s kin work, in the form of memory keeping, is anything but “trivial” (di Leonardo, 1987).

6.1.1.4 *Cultural transmission*

Stone (2006) argues “It is the first job of the family, through its stories, to explain to its members where they are positioned socially” (p. 145). Indeed, one aspect of women’s undervalued work in social reproduction is the positioning of family members socially through the transmission of cultural identity (Lorber, 1994; O’Reilly, 2010; Young, 2005). As Vasquez (2010) maintains, “Mothers are teachers, or “carriers” of culture... symbolic bearers of collective identity” (p. 34). The process of cultural transmission involves instilling children with the cultural identities of that particular family, including ethnic identity, religious identity, and generational identity; women are primarily responsible for instilling these cultural identities in their children (Vasquez, 2010). This social reproduction work is significant insofar as cultural transmission helps to both preserve the culture and cultivate children’s cultural identities (for a critical exploration of this reproduction of cultural ideologies, see section 3.c) (Vasquez, 2010). This research demonstrated women’s family memory keeping contributed to cultural identity through cultural transmission.

Participants spoke about family memory situating them culturally. As evidenced in the performance text, family memory can situate and unite a family in terms of the particular culture they share (“Meghan, you know what would go really well with my new haircut that’s like that girl on Friends? Your new Levis!”) Some participants discussed family memories that situated them in a generation (“those collective war time experiences”), in a time period (“we saved top names of 1991, these were the top names: Michael, Matthew, Stephanie...”), in a geographical region (“There we are in Grand Bend, Windsor, Toronto”), in a religion (“Ok, here’s Karen’s baptismal thing”), in an ethnicity (“a lot of our family memories are bound up in the songs that we’d sing, particularly on St. Patrick’s Day”) in a race (“Look at this picture – typical WASP Christmas”), and in a social class (“Look at this one, you can tell we’re just simple country

folk”). At least in part, these memories saved by their mothers offer cultural identity: religious identity, national identity, regional identity, ethnic identity, racial identity, and so forth. When participants revisited those memories, reinterpreted their emotional significances, and retold the stories, their sense of pride in their cultural identities was evident (“We started the photo album with Mum and Dad and how they came across the sea. That’s how it all began.”). I would argue revisiting these memories, even when their mothers were long passed away, enabled their mother to once again reinforce their cultural identities and perform the act of social reproduction through cultural transmission. In transmitting these memories to their children, many mothers commented on the importance of knowing “where you came from”. One mother specifically stated she had started a journal to provide her son with an “historical locator” – a memory keeping strategy designed to impart knowledge to her son about the culture into which he was born. Participants described baby books that detailed if a family had a car, what model, and how many. There were spaces for recording the top newsmakers of the day, the top politicians, the top songs, movies, TV shows and celebrities. Photo albums detailed where families travelled, how often, and how far. These details preserved by their mother situated participants within a social class, a generation, a geographic location, indeed, a culture.

Researchers recognize the importance of cultural transmission in terms of providing a sense of “rootedness” (Stone, 2006), creating an increased sense of security and belonging (Fivush et al., 2004), and enriching a sense of ethnic and familial pride (Bolea, 2000); and yet these researchers do not acknowledge the gendered nature of the work of cultural transmission. Those researchers who do explore cultural transmission as gendered (Lorber, 1994; Vasquez, 2010; Young, 2005) do not identify family memory keeping as one such mode of cultural transmission. This research addresses these gaps in the literature by suggesting women’s family

memory keeping is an example of the gendered work of cultural transmission, and this memory keeping can be attributed with helping to create and sustain ethnic and familial pride, a sense of security and belonging, and a state of “rootedness”. Young argues that through women’s cultural transmission work “the identity of groups and peoples is preserved” (Young, 2005); I would argue women’s memory work, though hidden and undervalued, is one such preserver and perpetuator of cultural identity.

6.1.2 *Family memory keeping as gendered work: Implications*

This research demonstrates women’s family memory keeping is a form of gendered work through contributions made to social reproduction. In particular, findings suggest women’s family memory work contributes to individuation, love work, kin work, and cultural transmission. The social value of these forms of social reproduction is well documented in existing literature; these forms of social reproduction lead to increased well-being (Lynch, 2007; Nussbaum, 2000), stronger and more resilient individuals and families (Fivush et al., 2004; Young, 2005), and the perpetuation and preservation of cultural identity (Lorber, 1994; Stone, 2006; Vasquez, 2010). However, women’s family memory keeping is absent from the gendered work literature. This research suggests women’s family memory keeping be recognized in the literature in three specific ways. First, women’s family memory keeping should be acknowledged in the family memory literature as a form of gendered labour that, like most of women’s work in the home, has been overlooked, hidden, and devalued, dismissed in academic literature in general as “trivial”, “limited”, and “superficial” (Christensen, 2011, p. 182). Second, women’s family memory work should be identified in the gendered work literature as a valuable form of social reproduction, “maintaining family members not just physically and

emotionally but also socially” (Lorber, 1994, p. 175). Third and finally, women’s family memory work should be acknowledged in the social reproduction literature as making significant contributions to individual, familial, and social and cultural life through individuation, love work, kin work, and cultural transmission. Overall, this study demonstrated that despite the absence of this labour from existing literature, women’s family memory keeping is a valuable form of gendered work that provides significant contributions at the individual, familial, and social and cultural level.

However, though this work should be recognized as laborious, significant, and productive, the value of women’s family memory keeping should be acknowledged within a critical context of gendered work. That is, the future direction of studying women’s family memory work should be in terms of valuing women’s work with family memory while also deconstructing the notion of this role as belonging to solely to women. In this sense, O’Reilly’s (2010) feminist care ethic is quite useful for imagining future directions in studying women’s family memory keeping as gendered work. O’Reilly states,

Feminist care ethic designates caring for others as an essential social function. But rather than valorizing maternal sensitivity and altruism as a vital resource, feminist care ethic aims to liberate caregiving from its peripheral status and reposition it as a primary human activity... grounding the agenda in an ethic of care opens up the possibility of developing a gender neutral approach (p. 212).

This feminist care ethic allows us to simultaneously celebrate women’s hidden, undervalued work in the home as “socially indispensable labour” (Luxton & Corman, 2001, p. 29), while also critiquing the notion that this work should be defined solely as women’s responsibility.

Thus, future studies should include exploring masculinity and memory, fatherhood and memory, men's family memory keeping, interviews with couples, including queer couples, as well as investigating those instances where women strongly resist or simply neglect to take on this gendered labour. If memory keeping provides such powerful contributions to the individual, the family, and society, what are the implications for women and their families when women do not perform this labour? Another lingering question revolves around the preponderance of memory keeping done for first born children – findings were clear that these children were the beneficiaries of a disproportionate amount of memory keeping by their mothers. The reason many mothers cited for this imbalance was the greater amount of time they had during first pregnancies and infancies than during these times for additional children. Findings were unclear, however, about the impact of this imbalance. Do subsequent children experience less individuation, love and care, kin work, and cultural transmission? As a third born child, I suspect not, but future research will have to flesh this out. Future research could also explore new contexts for women's family memory keeping in the digital age. How has women's memory keeping changed as systems of communication have gone electronic? Are women performing "cyber kin work", as this study would suggest? Does this extend to cyber love work? Cyber social reproduction? These future studies would enable a feminist care ethic by teasing out the gendered nuances of family memory keeping while simultaneously recognizing the work being performed and the contributions being made. For, though it is true that we tend to fail to see "the world-making meaning in domestic work" (Young, 2005, p. 133), we also tend to uncritically celebrate this "world-making" work as uniquely or naturally feminine.

O'Reilly (2010) suggests three steps involved in the feminist care ethic:

1. Affirm the necessary work of social reproduction.

2. Acknowledge that it is mothers who do this work, often to their own detriment.
3. Insist that the culture, which includes fathers, must likewise assume responsibility for reproductive labour. (p. 212)

This section of the discussion explored the first and second step, and I will now turn to the third; the remainder of this discussion chapter will involve critically investigating the dominant gender ideologies that support the assumption that family memory work is naturally or inevitably gendered. The following sections will also imagine and explore instances where family memory work might become the responsibility of the culture (including fathers), rather than specifically, and solely, women's responsibility. I begin this exploration with the ideologies encountered when conceptualizing women's family memory keeping as gendered leisure.

6.2. Family memory keeping as gendered leisure

The previous section argued for the conceptualization of women's family memory keeping as gendered work. Here I will suggest women's family memory keeping can also be conceptualized as gendered leisure. As suggested in the literature review, feminist leisure researchers have argued that traditional notions of work and leisure as dichotomous are male-centred and unrepresentative of women's leisure lives (Bella, 1992; Kay, 1998; Wearing, 1998). These researchers have advocated for an analysis of women's leisure that recognizes the often complex and contradictory nature of women's leisure experiences, particularly their experiences in the family, taking into account the dominant gender ideologies shaping these experiences (for an exploration of the resistance to these ideologies through memory keeping, see section 3) (Green et al, 1990; Henderson et al., 1996; Shaw, 1992). I will argue for three possible conceptualizations of women's family memory keeping based on existing leisure literature,

taking into consideration the dominant gender ideologies encountered in these conceptualizations as well; women's family memory keeping will be explored as affiliative leisure, purposive leisure, and contaminated leisure. Next, I will argue this study on women's family memory keeping might inspire a new form of leisure I describe as "compliance leisure". But first, I will illustrate how family memory keeping can be conceptualized as gendered leisure.

6.2.1. *Gendered leisure*

In the same manner that scholars have argued women experience labour differently than men in our society (Eichler, 1997; Hochschild, 2003; Luxton, 1980), feminist leisure studies scholars have conducted research that demonstrates women experience leisure differently than men in our society (Freysinger & Flannery, 1992; Parry, 2005; Shaw, 1985). These researchers theorize that leisure is gendered insofar as women's and men's leisure is influenced differently by structural and ideological constraints, which contributes to different leisure experiences (Trussell & Shaw, 2007), the reproduction of dominant gender discourses (Shaw, 2008), and a "leisure gap" between men and women (Wearing, 1998). My research is particularly concerned with the ways women experience leisure differently from men within the context of the family. Research demonstrates that women's leisure in the family tends to be more home-bound, family-oriented, and fragmented (Bittman & Wajcman, 2000; Mattingly & Bianchi, 2003). Ideologies such as familism (in which women are expected to promote togetherness, stability, loyalty, and a focus on the family as a united whole) and the ethic of care (in which women are expected to care for others and maintain relationships before attending to their own needs) position women as selfless caretakers, constraining women's individual leisure, while men tend to feel less constrained and more entitled to individual leisure time (Shaw, 1992; Voorpostel et al., 2009).

Even when partaking in family leisure, women's experiences are often far from leisurely; women tend to perform much of the hidden labour associated with planning, organizing, and facilitating the family's leisure experiences (Bella, 1992; Shaw, 1997). Thus, women's leisure in the family is often contradictory; women are motivated by both intrinsic and extrinsic factors to participate and they experience their leisure as both enjoyable and constrained, relaxing and laborious (Shaw, 1992).

This research found women's memory keeping illustrative of these tensions in women's family lives. Some women reported enjoying the activity, describing memory keeping as simply "fun". Several women commented that they were given to creative-based leisure activities, and the memory artefacts provided them materials for their crafty pursuits (for a discussion of the reproduction of femininity through this "craftiness", see section 3.b). However, the same women who made these declarations often contradicted these statements further in the interview; for example, one woman noted "It's fun... I take that role on because I want to", yet later remarked "I definitely think there's a difference in what's expected of men and women in our family memory keeping. I think the responsibility's on my shoulders with an expectation to do it a certain way that doesn't necessarily agree with what I want to do." Other women described contradictory experiences as well; they suggested though memory keeping is laborious at the time, they deeply enjoyed the results of their labour ("I like going back and looking at what I did. I just hate doing it at the time"). Many participants described the contributions memory keeping made in terms of family leisure; memory keeping was often conducted during vacations, holidays, and recreational events, to preserve these memories of family leisure ("Pictures of birthday parties... apple picking... camping... the Olympics... trip out East which I just hated"). Many participants also noted they found revisiting family memory artefacts a fun and leisurely

family activity (“My sister and I always had so much fun rooting through the boxes looking at photos and laughing”). Several mothers wondered if, in this sense, family memory keeping was both leisure and family work; these women noted they could not partake in a hobby that was not in some way useful for their families, and indicated their memory keeping might be an example of this dilemma (“With memory keeping you’re doing something for your family as well. And I think a lot of the times when I’m doing something that I enjoy as a hobby, it also involves making a contribution to the family. So it’s almost like a useful use of my time”).

These dilemmas and tensions experienced by women in this study are indicative of the contradictory nature of women’s family leisure proposed by leisure researchers. They also further demonstrate that the traditional definition of work and leisure as dichotomous does not adequately describe women’s leisure lives. Hence, this research establishes women’s family memory keeping as gendered leisure. Specifically, this research found women’s family memory keeping can be conceptualized under three related but unique forms of gendered leisure: affiliative leisure (Henderson et al., 1996), purposive leisure (Shaw & Dawson, 2001), and contaminated leisure (Mattingly & Bianchi, 2003). Here I will explore each conceptualization in terms of women’s family memory keeping, drawing attention to both the contradictory experience of women’s family leisure, and the ways the ideologies of familism and the ethic of care shape these experiences. Then I will propose the possibility of another conceptualization of women’s family leisure: the notion of what I deem “compliance leisure”.

6.2.1.1 *Affiliative leisure*

Henderson et al. (1996) define affiliative leisure as leisure that creates and strengthens relationships. Women in particular tend to seek out leisure experiences that can facilitate

togetherness and connection with others, including family members, extended family, neighbours, family friends, community members, and so forth. These leisure activities thus provide women with enjoyment and satisfaction because of the strengthened bonds they have facilitated through the leisure experience. However, Henderson et al. also argue affiliative leisure can be significantly laborious for women insofar as women are often responsible for ensuring the activity, and the outcome of togetherness, is successful. As well, affiliative leisure can reproduce ideologies of familism and the ethic of care, by positioning women as caretakers concerned primarily with facilitating relationships and nurturing the well-being of others. This results in women taking less time for autonomous, self-determined leisure that promotes their own relaxation and self-care.

These characteristics of affiliative leisure were present in my research on women's family memory keeping. Memory keeping was often cited as a family leisure activity, facilitating and strengthening bonds between mother and child, usually daughters and sisters; this was illustrated in the performance text as my sister and I leisurely sat with our mother and sorted through family memories together ("Mum, look at these. Look how similar your handwriting is to your Mum's"). Participants also reported experiencing bonding time through family memory as husband and wife ("Oh, he never put any pictures in an album, no. But he would want to look at them, though. He likes looking at them.") Women facilitated and strengthened family bonds by keeping memory and by creating opportunities to revisit those memories as a family leisure activity. This activity also involved reminiscing with or about extended family, refreshing relationships and re-establishing family ties through family memory; the reminiscing activity was often described as leisurely, and the events remembered were also often family leisure activities ("here are pictures of going to my grandpa's for ice cream... there's us on my

grandpa's boat..."). Connections with family friends were also refreshed and re-established through women's family memory keeping; as my brother noted in the performance text, "That picture of me and Aileen playing, if it wasn't for that picture of Aileen, I would have long since forgotten that I ever went over to their house". And not only did the act of revisiting family memory artefacts facilitate connections with others, the act of collecting and crafting family memory also enabled women to form and maintain relationships ("I think women enjoy making things whether it's crocheting or putting pictures in an album... they get together with other women, so it's a good way to be social.") In sum, this research demonstrated women's family memory keeping is an example of affiliative leisure insofar as the activity, facilitated predominantly by women, produces enjoyment and fosters relationships within the family, extended family, and community as well.

Leisure researchers have recognized the importance of women's leisure activities in establishing meaningful friendships with other women (Green, 1998), maintaining and strengthening family bonds (Trussell & Shaw, 2007), and creating and fostering community (Mulcahy, Parry, & Glover, forthcoming). This research demonstrates that women's family memory keeping contributes on these affiliative levels as well, building stronger relationships between individuals, families, and community members through leisure, and that women receive enjoyment and satisfaction from establishing these bonds. However, leisure researchers have also noted the potential affiliative leisure has to produce contradictory leisure experiences for women, and to reproduce ideologies of familism and the ethic of care (Henderson et al., 1996). Indeed, this research found that though women often described the activity of family memory keeping as enjoyable, they also noted much of the enjoyment came from the outcome rather than the process. Mothers described keeping memory as "exhausting" and a lot of "emotional

labour”, yet these same mothers maintained the memories were “so fun to look back on”. The outcome of the activity in terms of affiliative leisure – the strengthening of bonds and relationships – was considered worthwhile, though the activity itself could be laborious. The pressures reported by women to keep memory for their families (and often extended families and close friends), to pass family memory down, and to inherit family memory from older generations are also indicative of the expectations placed upon women to maintain family togetherness and choose leisure activities that support the care and nurturance of others. In this sense, women’s family memory keeping, as affiliative leisure, reproduces ideologies of familism and the ethic of care. As such, this research confirms existing leisure studies literature surrounding the contradictory nature of women’s family leisure (Shaw, 1992), the benefits of affiliative leisure (Henderson et al., 1996), and the reproduction of dominant gender ideologies through affiliative leisure, as well (Henderson et al., 1996).

6.2.1.2 *Purposive leisure*

This research also draws connections between women’s family memory keeping and purposive leisure. Purposive leisure, specifically in the context of family leisure, is defined as leisure “which is planned, facilitated, and executed by parents in order to achieve particular short- and long-term goals” (Shaw & Dawson, 2001, p. 228). Shaw and Dawson (2001) outlined two intended outcomes for purposive leisure: one involves enhancing family functioning and creating and maintaining family cohesion and unity, while the other involves transmitting family morals and values to their children. Hence, the leisure is purposive rather than simply freely-chosen or intrinsically-motivated, focused on outcome-oriented, healthy, quality family time spent together that reinforces family values. Though Shaw and Dawson (2001) found both

mothers and fathers are similarly invested in providing leisure that promotes these goals, they also note that mothers spent more time in the planning and orchestrating of purposive leisure and these responsibilities reflected dominant gender ideologies surrounding motherhood, such as familism and the ethic of care. This study illustrated family memory keeping could be conceptualized as purposive leisure in that the activity is focused on enhancing family functioning and cohesion and promoting quality family time, while simultaneously reproducing dominant ideologies of familism and the ethic of care for the mothers primarily responsible for facilitating this leisure.

Participants often described using family memory as an enjoyable opportunity to reminisce and feel cohesion and family unity (“When I look at pictures, family identity is wrapped up in that... Feeling like a unit, a family unit”). Mothers often arranged and facilitated the revisiting of family memories, and these activities served to strengthen the family’s specific sense of identity and value (“Looking at this stuff, I just feel like we didn’t make any money and we didn’t make any major achievements, but there was something in our heritage that made us proud to be in our family”). The leisure time represented in these memories often surrounded “quality” family time such as holidays, special events, and vacations, as well as well as health-promoting and recreational family activities (“I saved Oliver’s first swimming report and his little badge... It was kind of like I accomplished this with him. We passed!”). During these times, women would purposefully gather, collect, and capture family memory to document the quality time. Then, at a later date, women would facilitate the revisiting of these memories as further quality family time that facilitated family cohesion and the transmission of family values. At times, women’s family memory keeping simultaneously created opportunities for and preserved memories of quality family time together (“I bought this handprinting stuff at a craft

store, you can buy little kits...And it means he gets to do a craft and gets to have a memory”). These memories preserved by women largely represented the family as happy, and glossed over the times that were negative, again upholding specific family morals and values and promoting family functioning and cohesion (“There’s this table cloth that comes out every Christmas and we decided to autograph it every Christmas, who was there...but then it got awkward because people were getting divorced and you have all these side dishes that you’re trying to arrange strategically”). In this sense, women’s family memory keeping can be conceptualized as purposive leisure: a goal-oriented activity facilitated by the mother focused on promoting quality family time and family values.

Shaw and Dawson (2001) argue that purposive leisure can create pressure for both parents; however, women are more likely to be impacted the ideologies of familism and the ethic of care, which are both promoted and reproduced through purposive leisure. Women are expected to facilitate leisure for their children that focuses on their children and the family as a whole rather than themselves, and to do so at the expense of autonomous leisure focused on self-care. Also, these activities transmit to daughters (and sons) specific gender values to their children in terms of leisure. This research confirms Shannon & Shaw’s (2008) findings surrounding the powerful influence mothers have in modeling leisure behaviour for their daughters; my study found that women model memory keeping activities for their daughters and sons, involving their daughters in this leisure activity far more often than their sons. In this sense, the family values of togetherness and unity are modeled while simultaneously reproducing gendered ideologies of familism and the ethic of care; women’s leisure is modeled to be intrinsically connected to the home and family, occurring simultaneously with family life and manifesting in activities that promote the care for and well-being of others. This research also

confirms Shaw and Dawson's (2003/2004) findings that the idealization of family leisure often stands in stark contrast to the reality of the experience, and Shaw's (2008) suggestion that there is considerable pressure on contemporary parents to be "active" and "involved" parents, to create and produce quality, healthy family time through leisure (p. 699). Despite attempts by memory keepers to create a picture of the "happy family", many participants reported family memories that created or represented conflict, contradiction, and dysfunction, rather than cohesion, unity, and function (for an analysis of the social construction of this "happy family", see section 3.c). This speaks to Shaw's (1997) assertion that there is much contradiction and complexity in family leisure. Thus, while family memory keeping does contribute the benefits of purposive leisure in terms of promoting healthy, cohesive, happy families, there is also a considerable risk of reproducing dominant ideologies surrounding gender, parenthood, and the family through family memory keeping as well.

6.2.1.3 *Contaminated leisure*

Contaminated leisure is defined by Mattingly and Bianchi (2003) as leisure that is tainted by the distraction of secondary, non-leisure activities. This leisure is described as gendered; women – and particularly mothers – are far less likely than men to experience "pure" free time (Bittman & Wajcman, 2000) that is uncontaminated by responsibilities or work. Women's leisure tends to be more fragmented than men's, often interrupted by domestic responsibilities, care work, or thoughts and worries about responsibilities and work needing to be done (Mattingly & Bianchi, 2003). Rojek (2010) describes this as "emotional labour", the mental work we are often engaged in that conflicts with or consumes our leisure time. Women's leisure is often contaminated by these "impure" thoughts, leaving less time for the "pure" leisure men

are more likely to experience. When women do engage in leisure, they are also more likely to choose leisure pursuits that coincide with the activities of their children or husbands, making it possible for women to combine personal leisure with household responsibilities. However, this combination of leisure activities once again contaminates women's leisure with her family labour and care work, reinforcing ideologies of familism and the ethic of care (Mattingly & Bianchi, 2003). As a result of this interrupted, fragmented, and indeed, contaminated leisure, Mattingly and Bianchi (2003) argue, women's experience of free time might not lead to the relaxation, refreshment, and reinvigoration that leisure can offer. My research demonstrates that women's family memory keeping can be conceptualized as contaminated leisure, insofar as the activity is often described as merging household and family responsibilities with an enjoyable activity, rather than creating opportunities for women to experience "pure" leisure.

Women in this study described the ability their husbands had to engage in such "pure" activity, contrasting this observation with their own experiences with memory keeping ("Men I think are better at just relaxing...everything I do as a hobby is creative but it's useful"). These women described memory keeping as a way to combine their interest in crafts with a useful family contribution ("Maybe it's a bracelet or somebody can cover themselves with a quilt. ...You're always filling in every moment you have with something useful"). Several women expressed frustration at their seeming inability to participate in leisure that was simply for themselves, rather than for the health and well-being of the family ("It has to be something that betters your children, or involves your children. No more yoga and no more gym.") Women described feeling unable to be "in the moment" during family leisure activities because they were so concerned with conducting their family memory work by capturing memories ("The way [my husband] likes it is to just enjoy the moment and forget about those pictures. And he's probably

right. Because sometimes you're at a children's concert, and you want to enjoy it. But here you are rooting through your bag looking for your camera."). In contrast, women consistently described their husbands as being able to live "in the moment", unburdened by thoughts of responsibility to family memory, and the men interviewed for this study confirmed this assertion ("As much as I enjoy the past, I'm so present in the present"). Indeed, even grown children were fooled by their mothers' memory keeping, viewing the activity as purely leisurely for their mothers ("Mum toll painted a scene [on a wooden box] from a photo of us as a family. And one was for me and one was for my brother. And she put a whole bunch of stuff in there. Like graduation pamphlets, scribblers, things like that. It didn't take her a lot of work"). This research confirms that women's family memory keeping is often a combination of work and leisure, interrupted and shaped by "impure thoughts" surrounding responsibilities to family and home.

In this sense, women's family memory keeping can be conceptualized as contaminated leisure. Mattingly and Bianchi (2003) posit there are three main factors that contribute to women's leisure being more contaminated than men's. First, men are better able to compartmentalize their leisure and their work due to traditional notions of the work/leisure divide and the gendered notion that men are more entitled to leisure than women. This research confirms that in the case of family memory keeping, women seem more constrained by gendered roles and responsibilities than men, creating a leisure experience that is often contaminated by feelings of guilt, pressure, and responsibilities to home and family. These women reported their husbands did not seem to have the same difficulties compartmentalizing their leisure, adding support to Shaw's (2008) suggestion that fathers have less difficulty protecting some leisure time for themselves and tend to value being with their children in the moment. Second, Mattingly and

Bianchi (2003) argue women are preoccupied with their responsibilities related to the ideology of familism, resulting in women participating in leisure that promotes quality family time and the strengthening of relationships. Women in this study expressed concern about their lack of independent leisure, feeling their leisure must be in some way useful to the health and well-being of the family rather than to their own relaxation. Family memory keeping often enabled the reproduction of the ideology of familism, allowing women to participate in a leisure activity that ultimately contributed to the family in a useful and healthy way. Third, Mattingly and Bianchi suggest because of the nature of women's work in the home, the responsibilities created by the second shift, and the gendered expectations surrounding the ethic of care, women's leisure tends to be scheduled around and between their responsibilities, resulting in fragmented and interrupted leisure. This research demonstrated that women use family memory keeping as a bridge between their responsibilities in the home and their need for leisure time, creating contaminated leisure focused around the care for others rather than purely the care for oneself. Conceptualizing women's family memory keeping as contaminated leisure once again draws attention to the contradictory and complex nature of women's leisure, and the ways the ideologies of familism and the ethic of care impact upon women's leisure as well.

6.2.1.4 *Compliance leisure*

In my reading of the leisure literature for the analysis of women's family memory keeping as gendered leisure, one conceptualization eluded me. In fact, this analytical piece had been eluding me since my studies in feminist leisure research began. I hope you will bear with me as I attempt to present a possible new conceptualization of leisure that might add nuance to the exploration of gendered leisure, provide a tool for the deconstruction of women's and men's

leisure, and establish an understanding of gendered leisure that might better enable resistance and social change. Leisure researchers have suggested women's leisure can be a site for the reproduction of dominant gender ideologies (Parry, 2005; Shaw, 2008; Wearing, 1998). What I have failed to see explored in the leisure literature I have read thus far, however, is an exploration of how much enjoyment women take from reproducing these dominant gender ideologies. In other words, is complying half the fun?

My research on women's family memory keeping indicated that through this leisure activity, women reproduced ideologies of femininity and motherhood (for an analysis of the construction of femininity and motherhood through family memory, see section 3.b). Through family memory keeping, women participated in an activity that brought them pleasure, yet this pleasure often coincided with participation in an activity that was gender appropriate. Crafting, in general, is associated with femininity (Henderson et al., 1996), not to mention the femininity associated with scrapbooking, album-making, and preoccupation with materials that represent domestic and family nostalgia and sentimentality (Young, 2005). The activity takes place in the private sphere and serves to successfully fulfill expectations that women promote familism and abide by the ethic of care. One woman commented that, in sacrificing her own leisure and doing something for her child, maybe she would feel better about herself ("Forget yoga and the gym...let's do something to nurture my child's creativity and education and maybe that'll make me feel better about myself"). This statement, along with the findings that women's family memory keeping reproduces dominant gender ideologies, prompted me to wonder if part of the pleasure women receive from these reproductive leisure activities is in the reproduction itself.

Feminists and sociologists have long noted two main theoretical points related to this analysis. First, men and women are socially rewarded for conforming to dominant gender

ideologies through social acceptance and avoidance of social punishment (Foucault, 1979; Rubin, 1975). Second, sociologists and feminists have noted oppressive systems work, in part, because we contribute to our own oppression (Gramsci, 1971; Kennedy, 1970). Indeed, this process of socially encouraging and punishing particular gender behaviours to perpetuate gender oppression is a key component of the social construction of gender (cf Connell, 1995, Crawford, 1995; Gerson & Peiss, 1985; West & Zimmerman, 1987), which will be explored in section 6.3. Though memory keeping is undervalued and underappreciated, women receive social rewards for conforming to gender norms and expectations. Participating in an appropriately feminine activity and further, appropriately “motherly” activity, results in women, at the very least, avoiding social punishment, and at best, gaining social rewards for complying to and reinforcing dominant gender ideologies. What remains to be explored in leisure literature, in my opinion, is just how much pleasure women might take in having fulfilled these social expectations. How much enjoyment do we receive from choosing leisure activities that affirm our acceptance in dominant society? How refreshing and reinvigorating is it to participate in leisure that proves we fit in? How relaxing is it to know that we have chosen a leisure activity where we can fear no social punishment? How much leisure do we get out of conforming?

There are risks in claiming that not only are people complicit in perpetuating gender ideologies, but that they actually *enjoy* doing so. Yet, as noted, feminists and sociologists have long identified the powerful role we play in perpetuating our own oppression (Gramsci, 1971; Kennedy, 1970). Deemed “internalized oppression”, theorists have explored this concept as the manner in which an oppressed group comes to use against itself the methods of the oppressor (Meyers, 2004). Once oppression has been internalized, little force is needed to keep the oppressed group submissive (Reiser & Mason, 1990). One powerful tool in the creation of

internalized oppression is leisure, though I have yet to see this analysis arise in the internalized oppression or leisure literature. This seems to me an incredible opportunity for feminist leisure researchers to point out and theorize about the power of *enjoying our own oppression*. For, if the oppressor can create circumstances wherein people actually enjoy conforming to dominant gender ideologies, is that not an incredible oppressive tool for us, as feminist leisure researchers, to identify? Leisure researchers have identified the powerful and unique role leisure can play in the resistance of dominant gender ideologies because of the seemingly innocent and apolitical nature of leisure and the perceived sense of leisure as freely chosen and a matter of personal choice (Parry, 2005; Shaw, 2001). Is it not then imaginable that leisure could play a similarly powerful and unique role in perpetuating oppression for these very same reasons? If individuals perceive their leisure activities to be innocent and separate from politics, entirely freely chosen rather than under the sway of their culture, are people not more likely to choose leisure that might be deeply gendered because, after all, it's only a bit of fun? And perhaps more importantly, because being socially acceptable and therefore avoiding social punishment is relaxing and socially rewarding? Because leisure makes oppression fun?

Feminist leisure researchers have already broken new ground with research surrounding “fun” as a liberatory and resistant tool (Cosgriff, Little, & Wilson, 2010; Delamere & Shaw, 2008; Parry, 2009); I propose the concept of “compliance leisure” can enable feminist leisure researchers to explore new theoretical ground again by identifying “fun” as a possible tool of the oppressor. For, dominant gender ideologies have a tight grip on us, in part, because they offer the fun of social acceptance. New studies could examine the motivations and experiences of women and men in terms of the pleasure they receive from conforming to dominant gender ideologies. Is the enjoyment a man receives from going hunting with his friends at least in part

due to the pleasure he receives from behaving in an appropriately masculine way? Does a woman out with her girlfriends for a “shopping spree” and manicure take pleasure in the fact that she will be socially rewarded for her appropriately feminine behaviour? And does a mother experience a sense of relaxation, given the fact that she has complied with dominant ideologies surrounding motherhood by behaving selflessly and facilitating leisure for her children rather than for herself?

Several things are possible here. It is possible that these analyses have already taken place in the leisure literature, and I have failed to uncover them. It is also possible that there are aspects of this analysis in the leisure literature in terms of theories of constraints, reproduction, and resistance, and I have failed to properly acknowledge them. However, I think it is also possible that some very interesting new questions could be explored by leisure researchers through the notion of “compliance leisure”. It is my hope that explorations of “compliance leisure” can add theoretical nuance to our understanding of gender and leisure and indeed, the often hidden workings of oppression. Such nuances could lead to deeper analyses and deconstructions of gendered leisure and the power relations reproduced and resisted within leisure contexts. And finally, in using “compliance leisure” to understand gendered experiences of leisure and unearth the tools of the oppressor, these analyses and deconstructions could contribute better to the dismantling of gender oppression and the creation of social change. At the very least, it is my hope that in engaging with the feminist leisure literature and theorizing about ways forward, that I might have finally formulated questions that have been ruminating for the entirety of my seven years in this department.

6.2.2 *Family memory keeping as gendered leisure: Implications*

This research suggests women's family memory keeping can be conceptualized as gendered leisure. The findings from this study supported existing research suggesting women's and men's leisure is differently constrained and that the work/leisure dichotomy does not adequately represent women's leisure lives (Freysinger & Flannery, 1992; Shaw, 1985; Wearing, 1998), that women's leisure is complex and contradictory, (Shaw, 1992), and that dominant gender ideologies can be reproduced through women's leisure (Parry, 2005; Shaw, 2008). Exploring women's family memory keeping through the lens of affiliative leisure, purposive leisure, and contaminated leisure, as well as the proposed "compliance leisure", illustrates both the contributions women's family memory keeping makes to the individual, the family, and the community, and the ways in which dominant ideologies of familism and the ethic of care are reproduced through this activity, as well. Women's family memory keeping as a leisure activity can reinforce the "leisure gap" between men and women, add to the conflation of women's leisure with women's responsibilities in the home, and result in women having less access to leisure that refreshes, reinvigorates, and contributes to self-care.

However, it is important to note that women in this study did report taking genuine pleasure in their memory keeping activities, despite the associations the activity had with familism and the ethic of care. We would be mistaken to interpret their words as suggesting they received no pleasure, refreshment, or self-care out of memory keeping because the women interviewed for this study simply did not explicitly make such statements. They did, however, often describe the pleasures they received as occurring in conjunction with the benefits they felt memory keeping offered their family members. So in this sense, memory keeping was indeed affiliative, purposive, and contaminated. Yet, I would caution against the uncritical adoption of the term "contaminated" leisure; though the term very effectively describes the uniquely

interrupted and fragmented experience of women's, and specifically mothers', leisure time, the primarily negative connotations of "contamination" leave little room to explore the possibility of this conflation of women's leisure and work as a positive experience. Could the negative connotations be lessened through a term such as "blended leisure", "entangled leisure", or "interwoven leisure"? Perhaps we might investigate the "pure" leisure moments women experience despite, or because of, these interruptions. Or perhaps we might consider the notion that these "pure" leisure experiences are incredibly hard to find or define, given Rojek's (2010) suggestions about the existence of "emotional labour" despite the appearance of a leisurely experience. Perhaps there is room to explore the "contamination" of women's leisure as multi-tasking, or resistant to the male-centric notions of entitlement and compartmentalization. For that matter, we might analyze these highly valued notions of entitlement and compartmentalization as a symptom of the ideology of individualization promoted so heavily in our Western, capitalist, patriarchal society. These are valuable avenues for us to explore as leisure researchers, yet those avenues will remain closed to us unless we remain open to the contradictory and complexity of leisure lives.

Following O'Reilly's (2010) feminist care ethic, I have affirmed the necessary work women do (in this case, through family memory keeping as a leisure activity) that contributes to social reproduction. I have acknowledged that women are primarily responsible for this work/leisure, and have identified the ways this responsibility can work to women's detriment. Finally, I will address O'Reilly's third step, insisting the culture (including men) take on this labour (and leisure) as well. Placing the responsibility of affiliative and purposive leisure on mothers through gendered ideologies of familism and the ethic of care absolves fathers and governing structures of the responsibility of encouraging not only strong individuals and

families, but strong communities as well. We need to investigate the structures and groups in society that benefit from this gendered labour and begin to imagine a society wherein this labour was valued, and the responsibility for producing strong individuals and strong families was on the culture. This also means examining the factors that might be constraining men from taking on these responsibilities. An analysis that investigates the gendered process of constructing these responsibilities as women's work should also include studies with men that explore the construction of these responsibilities as "not men's work". In other words, we need to begin to better understand the ways in which men's lives are constrained structurally and ideologically that lead to the men providing less affiliative and purposive leisure and providing more "fun" leisure with their children. Perhaps this could include exploring notions of "entitlement" and "compartmentalization" as gendered constraints to providing care and family leisure, rather than as goals or inherently positive leisure achievements. Or future studies could conceptualize men's participation in "fun" family leisure as a significant, and significantly laborious, contribution to family life; perhaps just as family leisure is not always leisurely for women, family fun is not always fun for men. Such future studies could lend much nuance and depth to a deconstruction of gendered leisure in our society. To explore the ideologies that shape our gender experiences further, I now turn to an analysis of the social construction of gender through women's family memory keeping.

6.3. Family memory keeping as gendered social construction

Social constructionist analyses of gender contend that gender is "something that one does, and does recurrently, in interaction with others" (West & Zimmerman, 1987). Gender, then, is constructed through dialectical, historically and socially specific, discourses sustained

through social processes and bound up in power relations (Connell, 1995, Crawford, 1995; Gerson & Peiss, 1985). Burr (2003) argues there are four key analytical points made by social constructionists. First, social constructionists seriously question whether taken-for-granted categories, such as “men” and “women”, are naturally occurring, positing that instead these categories are discursively produced and socially constructed. Second, Burr maintains social constructionists are concerned with identifying the historically and socially specific context in which the construction is taking place, for these contexts will enable us to better understand the specific ideologies influencing the social construction at that time and in that place. Third, knowledge is sustained by social processes in that we reproduce and reconstruct knowledge about appropriate behaviour through available discourses and interactions with others. And finally, Burr suggests knowledge is bound up in power relations because particular kinds of knowledge have particular implications for what it is socially acceptable behaviour. This means, for example, that gender is not merely a concept constructed neutrally through social interaction; the discourses through which we come to understand appropriate gender behaviour are linked to powerful social ideologies and institutions. Through this perspective, then, gender can be seen to be an historically and socially specific construction maintained discursively and governed by available gender ideologies that are driven by the interests of a patriarchal culture.

Using this social constructionist framework, I will now explore women’s family keeping in terms of Burr’s (2003) four key points of analysis. More specifically, I will explore the construction of fatherhood, motherhood, and the family, within the context of family memory keeping. Many researchers have used social construction in the context of the family to explore the ideologies reproduced and resisted through family activities (Deinhart, 1998; Phoenix, Woollett, & Lloyd, 1991; Tuffin, Rouch, & Frewin, 2010). I will argue that within the activity

of memory keeping, and within the ways participants spoke about the activity, we can see the construction, the negotiation, and the resistance to dominant and powerful ideologies. Through this analysis, we can also see the ways these ideologies are gendered, and expose the powerful social relations bound up in these ideologies. Three themes specifically will be explored: constructing fatherhood, constructing motherhood, and constructing the family.

6.3.1 *Constructing fatherhood*

Researchers have used a social constructionist approach to understand the construction of fatherhood (Duckworth & Buzzanell, 2009; Lupton & Barclay, 1997; Plantin, Mansson, & Kearney, 2003), though not the construction of fatherhood through family memory. This research has suggested contemporary fathers are parenting under new social expectations while still bound by the gendered ideologies perpetuated by hegemonic masculinity that construct fathers as primarily breadwinners, emotionally removed and secondary to women in terms of parenting (Gill, 2003; Oberndorfer & Rost, 2005; Nentwich, 2008). These new social expectations surround ideologies of the “involved”, “engaged” or “active” father, wherein fathers are expected to be more emotionally and physically present with their children than in previous generations, dividing care work more equally between fathers and mothers (Shaw, 2008). As such, researchers have recognized the complex and sometimes contradictory positions men now occupy in terms of these traditional and contemporary fathering ideologies (Doucet, 2007). This study revealed that in the context of memory keeping, traditional and contemporary ideologies of fatherhood were reproduced and resisted. Here I will explore the ways in which three ideologies of fatherhood were negotiated through discourses surrounding family memory keeping: the father as breadwinner, the unemotional father, and the father as secondary parent.

6.3.1.1 *The father as breadwinner*

Participants in this study reported women and men occupy different roles in terms of memory keeping due to men's traditional role as breadwinner. In the performance piece, I justified my father's lack of memory keeping by explicitly stating "You were the breadwinner", to which my father agreed ("I spent an enormous amount of time correcting and marking as you know, and not being part of the family. I'd come back in time to tell you a story and turn out the lights.") The justification for these differences often surrounded the notion that men and women occupy different "realms" due to men's work outside the home ("It wasn't his job... It's just not in his realm of things that he needed to focus on"). This justification was used by both participants speaking about fathers from older generations and younger generations alike. The suggestion was that because men were fulfilling their roles outside the home as breadwinners, they were less able to participate in memory work at home ("Frank didn't take many pictures... He was in the Navy and he was away a lot"). However, this suggestion fails to acknowledge the work these women were doing in terms of childcare, employment outside the home, the second shift, the third shift of care work typically performed by women, and other domestic responsibilities; these women were doing memory work on top of these numerous everyday work responsibilities. As such, the suggestion that men could not perform memory keeping because of breadwinning work outside the home reinforced the notion that men's lives in the public sphere are more important, hectic, and consuming, and that they need not be expected to contribute to domestic work once they arrive home. This justification also reinforces the notion that women are naturally more inclined to life in the private sphere, and that even when working outside the home, women are primarily responsible for the household labour.

However, there were instances in this study where the ideologies surrounding the private/public divide were negotiated and made more complicated through family memory. One participant suggested her father might experience mixed feelings when looking back through family memory because of the regret he feels having been away from home so frequently (“When Dad sees them he regrets not spending as much time with us as he would’ve liked, while he was out earning a living for the family”). Many participants were sympathetic to and appreciative of the often time-consuming and exhausting work men did outside the home to provide an income for the family, particularly those families who struggled financially (“I think ideally keeping memories should be more of a joint effort but I can respect the fact that my husband works 12-14 hour days, six or seven days a week so I do tend to have the most time to keep the memories”). In this sense, I would argue the ideology of the father as breadwinner might act as a constraint to men’s family memory keeping insofar as the ideology reproduces the notion that men’s time is best and most naturally spent in the public sphere. Thus, while this study does illustrate the ways in which discourses surrounding women’s family memory keeping can reproduce the ideology of the father as breadwinner, privileging men’s work in the public sphere over women’s work in the private sphere and reifying these spheres as dichotomous, this study also contributes some nuance to our understanding of the ways this ideology might constrain men as well.

6.3.1.2 *The unemotional father*

Participants also justified the gender divide in memory keeping work in terms that reproduced ideologies that men are naturally less emotional than women and that men are not as emotionally connected to their children as women (“The pictures would get developed, and he

would say, “but they’re all of the kids!” He would take pictures if he went to see an interesting airplane, or waterfalls”). These assertions reinforce the notion of the unemotional father, and reify the gender binary in terms of women being naturally more emotional and caring towards their children than men (“I think, personally, there is something about the woman, innately, that inclines that person more to that as part of the caregiving”). Many participants spoke about their fathers and husbands as being “unsentimental” and “in the moment” often implying their husbands and fathers felt nostalgia surrounding the family is a sensitive, backward-looking, and feminine activity. Yet, interestingly enough, several participants also made statements that exemplified the shifting expectations men experience; when speaking about their fathers, these participants remarked they wished their fathers had been more emotionally involved (“I crave to hear him talk about how much I meant to him, as Mum does, but Dad is more introverted”). This once again draws attention to the complex ideological position men occupy as fathers; they are at once expected to adhere to traditional notions of hegemonic masculinity wherein men are unemotional and unsentimental, while simultaneously fulfilling contemporary expectations wherein men are more involved and emotionally present for their children.

Indeed, this study offered many interesting opportunities to witness the negotiation of and resistance to dominant ideologies of unemotional fatherhood. Some participants suggested men were not naturally unemotional or uninterested in memory work, but that they simply have different emotional connections and contribute to different memory work than women. Participants spoke about men keeping different kinds of memory than women; several men described collecting and feeling emotional connections to more typically masculine family memory artefacts such as toys, comic books, and even a house. Many women also spoke about sentimentality and memory keeping in ways that resisted the dominant ideology of fathers as

unemotional. One woman suggested her husband was emotional and did remember, but was constrained by social norms surrounding appropriate behaviour for men (“Men of his generation were taught to be strong for their wife”). Another participant maintained her father was the memory keeper in her family, and her mother was the unsentimental one (“My dad is super sensitive and very emotional about family”). Similarly, another woman claimed she was unsentimental and her husband was sentimental; however, the memory work was still seen as her responsibility. These statements both resist dominant ideologies by suggesting men can be emotional, and reproduce dominant ideologies by reaffirming the notion that memory keeping is a woman’s responsibility whether she is inclined to be sentimental or not, and by continuing to position men and women as dichotomous (“I’m unsentimental... he’s the sentimental one”). As such, this study demonstrated once more the ways in which discourses surrounding women’s family memory keeping can reify the gender binary and reproduce dominant gender ideologies, while simultaneously illustrating moments where these ideologies are negotiated and even resisted.

6.3.1.3 *The supporting parent*

Another ideology reproduced through the discourses surrounding women’s family memory work was the ideology of the father as the “supporting parent”. In terms of memory keeping, participants often described fathers as playing a supporting role to the mother’s primary role as memory keeper (“Mum did all the things like that. Dad played the supporting role”). This ideology of fatherhood was further reproduced by linking men’s supporting memory keeping role to technology, as mastering technology is a socially rewarded masculine behaviour (“He set up the blog, he fixes anything that happens. He sets it up, tells me how it works, and I

do it”). And men were reported to be more interested in the technology than the memory collection, or at the very least, motivated by the prospect of using one to capture the other (“Part of the reason why the camera or the computer is interesting for the guy is the technology, not just the memory”). Once again, this supports both the ideology of the removed, secondary father, while also promoting the contemporary ideology of the “engaged” father, digitally recording the child’s soccer game yet leaving the bulk of the behind-the-scenes organizational work to his wife. Indeed, this supporting role men play in memory keeping was often reported to have been encouraged and facilitated by women as memory keepers (“I involved Rob in this process by reading it to him, asking him what to add and whatnot. So he was involved”). Women were pleased to report that, when properly encouraged and directed, men would contribute in some small way to their memory work. This discourse surrounding men as supporting players in women’s memory keeping reaffirmed the ideology of fathers as secondary parents in need of women’s direction and management, while also reproducing notions of the “engaged” father. This discourse also served to reify the gender binary in terms of men’s and women’s dichotomous technological abilities and hierarchical and distinct parenting roles.

However, this study also revealed instances wherein participants complicated these dominant ideologies of men as supporting parents. As evidenced in this study, at least one man has resisted traditional constructions of memory keeping as women’s work by taking on the role himself. The technological work men do was appreciated by many women in the study and demonstrated signs that memory work could become more of a partnership. Indeed, men in this study were participating in the activity despite having had no invitation to participate as a child by either their mother or their father, which created the sense that memory keeping is not a masculine activity. This is once again indicative of the complicated position men occupy,

expected both to model their father's role as removed parent while also reacting against their father's role through becoming an "involved" parent. One man asserted the importance and overlooked nature of his care work in the family, despite not being the memory keeper ("my role, even though it is not the role of memory keeper, still serves its purpose. Yes, when I take you to Emergency and they ask me when one of you kids was born, I don't know. But I took you to Emergency. Mum didn't. You remember their birthdays, you know? This is what I do.") In this sense, we must be careful on three levels: we must be careful to critically deconstruct the kinds of work men contribute in terms of memory keeping (support work, technological work), while also paying careful attention to the complex ideological position men occupy as contemporary fathers, while also being careful not to overlook the significance of the work men contribute in other areas of domestic life. In drawing attention to these areas, this study added complexity and nuance to the construction of men as supporting parents.

This research revealed ideologies of fatherhood – specifically the ideologies of the father as breadwinner, the father as unemotional, and the father as supporting parent – were reproduced, and at times, resisted through family memory keeping. Using Burr's (2003) four points of analysis in social constructionist work, I illustrated the ways in which the categories of man and woman, father and mother, were constructed and reified as natural and dichotomous through memory keeping; I grounded the analysis in the historically and socially specific ideologies shaping fatherhood in this study, including both the ideologies of the traditional breadwinning father and the new "engaged" father; I revealed the discursive social processes that reproduce these dominant ideologies through modeled behaviour and talk about family memory keeping; and I have suggested these constructions of fatherhood are bound up in power relations

that both privilege men's role in the public sphere and limit and constrain men's role in the private sphere.

This research makes several contributions to the literature on social constructions of fatherhood. This study confirmed research that suggests men are caught in a complex ideological position between traditional notions of fatherhood and newer ideologies of the emotionally present "engaged" father (Gill, 2003; Oberndorfer & Rost, 2005; Shaw, 2008). At the same time, this study also confirms research that maintains despite men's new role as "engaged father", women are still doing the bulk of the undervalued and care work and domestic work in the home (Nentwich, 2008). This research confirms existing literature that maintains men's mastery over technology is a sign of both social power and adherence to masculine hegemony (Lorber, 1994). It is important to note that this study drew predominantly upon women talking about men's participation in memory keeping; thus, this study confirmed Doucet's (2007) suggestion that women can contribute to the reproduction of dominant ideologies of fatherhood and the reification of the gender binary through "maternal gatekeeping", which in turn reaffirms women's position as the primary and natural parent. Yet, though dominant ideologies of fatherhood were largely reproduced in this study through talk about family memory keeping, this research adds nuance and complexity by revealing moments where these dominant ideologies were negotiated and at times even resisted.

I would argue that this study prompts us to examine the possible ideological and structural constraints men experience that might prevent them from participating in memory keeping. Dominant ideologies of masculinity and fatherhood do not support participation in activities surrounding domestic nostalgia, sentimentality, and craft-making, and these ideologies should be explored as constraints to men's participation. Such an exploration would include a

better understanding of men's experiences with memory keeping; for instance, do men experience pressure to provide technological support for memory keeping as a means of demonstrating their masculinity? Are there expectations on fathers to be "in the moment" rather than "dwelling" in the past? I would also suggest we examine more deeply the contributions men do make to memory keeping work; we might find we have been examining fathering and family memory through what Doucet (2007a) refers to as a "maternal lens", ignoring or obscuring ways men might contribute to family memory because of a focus on the ways women have traditionally performed the task.

6.3.2 *Constructing motherhood*

And yet, despite the finding that men do contribute in some ways to memory keeping, this study found memory keeping has been constructed largely as women's work. In particular, memory keeping has come to be associated with motherhood. Many researchers have explored the social construction of motherhood (Brady, 2011; McGowan, 2011; Rose, 2005), though researchers have yet to explore the social construction of motherhood through memory keeping. These researchers have examined the social processes and discourses that construct the ideology of the "the good mother" (Marotta, 2005; O'Reilly, 2010; Tucker, 2010). Traditionally, the good mother has been constructed in North America as a self-sacrificing woman who cares for her home, husband, and family above all else (McMahon, 1995). More recently, the culturally idealized "good mother" has become more arguably more intense and less attainable; in addition to the traditional qualities of a good mother, the new good mother must be a "doting", "totally involved", "do-it-all" mother (O'Reilly, 2010, p. 374). This mother should have an emotionally intense relationship with her child, viewing her child's well-being as ultimately and solely

dependent on her ability to provide the required love and care (Douglas & Michaels, 2004). These ideologies also serve to construct an image of motherhood that is culturally privileged, White, middle-class, heterosexual, able-bodied, and married (McMahon, 1995). This study confirms the prevalence and intensely-felt pressure to adhere to today's standards of "the good mother". However, this study contributes to existing literature the requirement that the good mother *remembers*. First, I will explore the ways this study demonstrated the good mother is constructed as a remembering mother, and I will also reveal the ways women in this study negotiated and resisted that construction. Second, I will examine the ways women's family memory keeping reproduces and resists the dominant ideology of the good mother through notions of the mother as a crafty, natural, "supermom". Finally, I will explore the contributions this study has made to the construction of motherhood literature through Burr's (2003) four points of analysis for social constructionist work.

6.3.2.1 *The remembering mother*

This study demonstrated that the good mother remembers. In fact, many participants specifically described other mothers who were successful memory keepers as "good" ("Christine MacDonald down the road was so good, when her pictures came in from the store, she had her album right there" "Angela is very good at that. And I'm always like, I wish I could be that mother, you know?"). Indeed, participants often discussed their own mothers' "good" memory keeping as the model through which they compared their own memory keeping ("I want to be good at that, because our mother was very, very good, she kept all kinds of stuff"). Likewise, when participants described feeling inadequate as memory keepers, they specifically described themselves as "bad" ("I feel like I haven't really done a lot for Oliver... I'm a bad mother" "Are

you a bad person if you throw this out?”). Even those mothers who felt they were keeping memory as best they could, lamented they were not doing “enough” (“I haven’t done enough”). The anxiety surrounding performing as a good enough mother was evident in the pressure mothers reported feeling (“Should I be doing that? Should I be doing that?”). Several participants reported feeling pressured by their husbands and fathers to collect memory (“he’s constantly bugging me to pick up ink”); however, women more often described being encouraged to keep memory by other women in their lives, including mothers, mothers-in-law, sisters, grandmothers, and midwives. Often this encouragement came through all-woman baby showers where gifts of baby books, albums and other memory keeping products were given to the expectant mother. At times, the encouragement was less formal; many women described inheriting memories from mothers and mothers-in-law with the expectation these family memories would be well kept. Several women also noted the social pressure they were under to remember, and suggested their husbands did not feel this pressure. Further, this study found not only were women expected to be good mothers through memory keeping, but they were also supposed to experience this role as natural. Many participants drew upon constructions of women as natural mothers to explain women’s family memory keeping (“I think, personally, there is something about the woman, innately, that inclines that person more to that as part of the caregiving”). Women often described their memory keeping as naturally extending from the memory keeping their mothers modeled for them (“my mother modeled that role for me, and so it was natural for me to assume the role in my own life”).

And yet, women in this study also negotiated and resisted expectations to keep memory and to keep memory naturally. Women in this study reported they did not enjoy reminiscing, nor was memory keeping an organic experience for them (“I enjoy doing Sadie’s baby book to an

extent, but I admit it doesn't exactly come naturally to me. I have to work at it"). Others reported they kept very few items for their children because they simply did not feel emotionally connected to most items ("It's just stuff!"). And some women were very clear in feeling little natural inclination toward saving many of the memory artefacts they were expected to save, such as handprints, birthday cards, and locks of hair ("The hell with that, I'm not doing that"). One participant resisted the notion that women are naturally disposed toward sentimentality and memory keeping by suggesting, "well, you can't take it with you". However, these women who reported resisting the notion of women as natural memory keepers also simultaneously revealed the pressure they felt to be a natural memory keeper ("To be honest, I don't pick up ink because I just don't care if we have her hand and foot prints. Sometimes I'm scared that makes me weird"). Often, just as they were denouncing saving birthday cards, they also indicated they felt guilty for not keeping more ("I just have so much guilt about so many things... It's tough, and I feel selfish sometimes ... they don't have stuff that's been kept, really"). Thus, this research revealed women struggle with negotiating expectations to keep memory for their families, and to appear natural in assuming this role.

These discourses surrounding family memory keeping demonstrate the ways the "good mother" is constructed as a remembering mother. This construction is sustained through social interactions and discourses that work to pressure women to be "good mothers" by being successful memory keepers. Participants reported feeling this pressure mainly from the women in their lives, yet they also identified experiencing social pressure to keep memory that they suggested men did not experience in the same way. Indeed, women in this study were quick to defend their husbands when describing how little memory keeping they did ("He was still a good man"); however, this study demonstrated that when women fail to remember, they risk the

denigration of their character both as a woman and more specifically, as a mother. Women who do not keep memory well, risk being considered a “bad mother”, a mother who is not “good enough”, or an “unnatural mother”. Women who resisted constructions of the good mother as a remembering mother also reported feeling increased guilt, pressure, and fear of being judged or socially ostracized. This study thus contributes a new facet to the ideology of the good mother – the good mother as a remembering mother. Moreover, this study suggests women both reproduce and resist the notion of a good mother as a remembering mother through memory keeping (or a lack thereof). However, this study adds further depth to this new conceptualization by indicating that not only does the good mother remember, the good mother remembers in very specific ways. These ways are tied into the expectations that mothers should be crafty, natural, supermoms.

6.3.2.2 *The “crafty” mother*

Participants in this study discussed memory keeping in ways that reproduced the notion of mothers as naturally “crafty”. Women suggested they keep memory because they enjoy crafts (“I like stamps and stickers and colours”), and one woman suggested memory keeping was a good match between women’s natural inclination toward both being crafty and being social. Participants described creating and decorating sometimes elaborate baby books and albums (“I had a typewriter and I would put little scripts beside all the pictures and put them in the sticky pages”). Indeed, the work of memory keeping was often described by these women in terms of the craft materials they used; women described accessing blogs and craft sites, buying kits from Chapters, and stamps, stickers, and scrapbooking materials from Michael’s. This work, and the materials used for this work, was also often described in feminine terms with an emphasis on

delicacy and attractiveness (“I have made a very big effort to keep a baby book for Sadie and I put a lot of effort into keeping it pretty and decorated”). Thus the work of memory keeping both reified women’s craft-making as natural and reproduced the notion of memory keeping as an inherently – and appropriately – feminine activity.

However, this study also demonstrated a rather vehement reaction among women to the construction of mothers as naturally crafty. Many women described themselves as decidedly “uncreative” or simply not particularly enamoured with crafts (“I can’t stand stamps and stickers”). The vehemence in itself was interesting – women seemed to be reacting emphatically against the stereotypically feminine and perhaps matronly association between crafts and motherhood (“It would never be something I would do”). Scrapbooking in particular produced emphatic reactions from women (“I think the scrapbooking industry is evil”, “Don’t do it! Do anything but scrapbooking!”). The identity of being a “scrapbooker” was strongly resisted (“Oh I’m not a scrapbooker”) and several women were deeply critical about the pressure the scrapbooking industry created for mothers (“It’s all about the presentation.”) These women expressed suspicions that scrapbooking was another way to pressure mothers into both being crafty and being a “good mother”, while simultaneously reaping profits from the materials these women were pressured into buying.

Participants in this study both reproduced and resisted what Hof (2006) deems “the invisible... affixation of ‘crafts’ to ‘women’” (p. 364). Researchers have argued that craft-making is an appropriately feminine activity (Henderson et al, 1996; Hof, 2006) and this study revealed women’s family memory keeping reproduces this appropriately feminine behaviour and constructs the activity of memory keeping as feminine. However, this study also demonstrated a resistance among women to the association of motherhood and memory to craft-making.

Particularly strong was the reaction to scrapbooking. Researchers argue scrapbooking is dominated by heterosexual, middle class, white mothers, and strongly associated with a particular “type” of woman (Christensen, 2011); the culturally constructed image of the scrapbooker is a suburban stay-at-home mother “cooped up” in the home (Hof, 2006). Through this association, Hof (2006) argues, not only is memory keeping linked to women and domesticity, but the activities involved in memory keeping are also associated with frivolity and lack of significance. Douglas and Michaels (2004) also draw attention to the commercially constructed nature of memory keeping, arguing craft-based memory keeping is an attempt to promote capitalist consumption while simultaneously redomesticating contemporary working mothers. Thus, participants in this study might have been drawing upon these culturally associations with craft-based memory keeping (particularly scrapbooking) to distance themselves from both the domesticating image of the “scrapbooker” and the commercialization associated with some forms of memory keeping. However, it is important to remain critical of the denigration of scrapbooking as frivolous and unproductive, given its association with motherhood and domestic life. The conflation of the home with unproductive, insignificant activity has been used in the past to trivialize women and the work women contribute, and the disparagement of scrapbooking seems precariously close to reproducing that conflation. Indeed, researchers have explored scrapbooking as an underappreciated form of folk culture (Christensen, 2011) and cultural citizenship (Hof, 2006), and other researchers have underscored the important role material objects can play in establishing maternal identity (Clarke, 2004) and communicating love (Taylor, Layne & Wozniak, 2004); however, these studies on craft-based memory keeping and scrapbooking are few and far between. More research is needed to understand both the significance of the activity and the intensity of the reaction to the activity.

What this study contributes is that through memory keeping, women both reproduce and resist constructions of the mother as naturally “crafty”.

6.3.2.3 *The natural mother*

Not only did this study illustrate women negotiating notions of memory keeping as natural for mothers, but this study also found women were struggling with ideologies surrounding motherhood itself as a natural experience. Many women described feeling their baby books expected a particular – and particularly natural – reaction from them surrounding their experiences as mothers. Some women reported reproducing these notions of the maternal instinct through memory keeping (“I was terrified of Will, actually, for like days. So when it comes to those places, where it’s like, “Tell the story of when I was born!” I’m like, “Umm... I loved you so much!”), but many women were quite critical of what they felt was an unrealistic representation of their experiences as new mothers. From the baby book’s presumptions about their reactions to pregnancy (““About dreams of your future, I imagined...” I don’t know! I don’t think about that! And they want you to say, “You being happy! Your well-being!”) to their reactions immediately following childbirth (“someone even said, “Do you want your baby back? And I was like, “No.” It took me three days before I felt connected to her...So what’s my first reaction...?”), women in this study illustrated both the pressure they experienced through memory keeping to be naturally maternal, and a resistance to this pressure to feel instinctive as a mother. Other women struggled with this notion of the “natural” mother during experiences with adoption. In these cases, women used memory keeping to prove themselves as mothers, negotiating feelings that they were not natural mothers because they did not experience pregnancy or birth (“I see them as proof of my motherhood... I have no physical or mental scars

of actual labour or even pregnancy and in that regard I've had moments of not feeling like a real mum").

In this sense, women revealed the ways their memory keeping resisted, reproduced, and negotiated the pressure they experienced to feel instinctively maternal, and the anxiety they felt surrounding failing to live up to the expectation that motherhood is a natural experience. As Brown (2010) notes, "feelings of love and instant attachment are part of a "good mother" image prevalent in our society" (p. 128). Memory keeping activities, particularly those surrounding baby books, strongly reproduce the notion of maternal love, instinct, and instant attachment as natural; this study revealed many women did not experience the expected emotions their baby books associated with pregnancy, childbirth, and mothering and were critical and resistant to these constructions of motherhood. Moreover, these experiences are tied into pronatalist ideologies wherein a woman's value is deeply connected to her ability to become pregnant and give birth (Miller, 2005; Parry, 2005); this study found memory keeping can promote and privilege women's worth as a "natural" mother, leaving adoptive or mothers feeling they must be even more diligent in their memory keeping to make up for the fact that they are not biological mothers.

However, these mothers' experiences direct us to explore both the presence of the oppressive ideologies such as pronatalism in these women's lives, and the opportunities made possible through memory keeping to negotiate these ideologies. In this study, adoptive mothers found memory keeping did help facilitate the development of a maternal identity through meaningful material artefacts. Indeed, studies have demonstrated materiality can help cultivate and negotiate maternal identity (Layne, 2004), establish and maintain material connections between foster and adoptive mothers and their children (Wozniak, 2004), and facilitate bonding

between mother and child (Rose, 2005). Further, Miller (2005) suggests that “by silencing ourselves and only retrospectively voicing accounts of normal difficulties and uncertainties, we help to perpetuate and reproduce the myth that mothering is instinctive and natural” (p. 26). Through this study, participants voiced alternative experiences of pregnancy, childbirth, and initial bonding with their child, providing accounts of motherhood that challenged the myth that mothering is instinctive and natural. Thus, while this study demonstrated strongly the reproduction of the “natural mother” through memory keeping, this study also indicates women’s memory keeping might be a possible context through which to resist these notions, helping to construct complex maternal identities that might ease the often unnatural experience of transitioning to motherhood.

6.3.2.4 *The supermom*

With the transition to motherhood comes the expectation to be a “supermom”. This concept involves multi-layered expectations for mothers revolving around the notion that mothers should be able to “do it all”, including balancing work inside and outside the home, and be deeply gratified by the process. Douglas and Michaels (2004) posit the notion of the “supermom” suggests “that motherhood is eternally fulfilling and rewarding, that it is always the best and most important thing you do... and that if you don’t love each and every second of it there’s something really wrong with you” (p. 4). Other researchers stipulate the supermom is selfless, happy, and unconditionally loving, valuing her child’s well-being above all (Layne, 2004; O’Reilly, 2010). This study demonstrated memory keeping can reproduce notions of the supermom. Women in this study reported pressure to balance memory keeping with their other work, both paid and unpaid (“I know once I go back to work, it’ll all go out the window because

I'll be marking other kids' drawings and scribbles"). Women also consistently described feeling anxious that they were not "doing it all" in terms of memory keeping, and feeling "guilty" and "selfish" when they could not make or find the time for their memory keeping responsibilities ("You mean to do something better, and you never get there because you're so busy"). These mothers also constantly compared themselves to other mothers, mothers who appeared to be meeting the standards of the supermom ("I'll be looking at blogs or people's craft sites and I'll think, how do they have time? And I think, I could do that. But I don't"). Interestingly, though, when participants spoke about their mothers' memory keeping these images of a time-stressed, guilt-ridden woman did not come through; instead, participants constructed an image of their mother as memory keeper as leisurely ("it didn't take her much work"), happy ("it was just she and her baby in the whole world...Everyone and everything just melted away."), gratified ("When she looks through this stuff, Mum bursts with pride"), unconditionally loving ("My mother put a lot of heart into those baby books") and valuing her children above all else ("these memories represent the love that my mother felt for me... how no one compared to me"). Thus, this study strongly demonstrates both the hidden pressures experienced by women to conform to supermom standards, and the reproduction of the memory keeper as a deeply fulfilled supermom.

However, women in this study were also critical of the pressure they felt to demonstrate their supermom abilities through memory keeping ("I think a lot of that is just social pressure. Like feeling like you need to be everything to everyone all the time. And that's probably why mums burn out and have mental break downs and take Valium or their kid's Ritalin. Because they feel like they have to be the perfect, manufactured mother"). Women also negotiated the pressure they felt by acknowledging the expectation to keep memory but forgiving themselves for being unable to achieve supermom standards ("I'm doing everything I can...It's balance").

Some women were openly critical of the expectations placed upon them to “do it all”, including keep memory (“Where the fuck would I find the time to do that? ...I don’t feel like, in the long run, he’s going to miss out because I didn’t do a blog”). Another woman suggested the blank pages in her baby book told an alternative – and more truthful – story of her motherhood (“It reminds you of how little time you had. You can be like, “Awww. Look at this. I didn’t fill out any of it.” That’s meaningful!”) This study also complicated expectations of selflessness for women; for many mothers, keeping memory also meant providing themselves evidence that they were loved and cared for, which resists “supermom” notions that women resist self-care (“I have a little heart my daughter made, it says... “I love you. I hope you had a good sleep tonight”). And women in this study also complicated “supermom” expectations by reporting experiences of motherhood that were not entirely happy, fulfilling or gratifying (“How do people say this is the best day of their life? This is not the best day of my life”). However, incorporating negative or mixed emotions about their children into their memory keeping was rarely reported in this study; maternal ambivalence was almost never discussed, and women spoke largely about memory keeping as a means of communicating their unconditional love for their children.

Thus, this study demonstrated memory keeping can reproduce notions of the “supermom”, often adding pressure to women’s already overburdened lives while at the same time creating further anxiety surrounding appearing constantly fulfilled and happy about motherhood. Indeed, participants described their mothers as embodying this appearance of the “supermom” in their memory keeping, though they themselves reported feeling time-stressed and guilty as a result of their responsibilities to keep memory. As such, this study confirms existing literature that suggests contemporary mothers are under consider pressure to conform to “supermom” standards, despite the fact that these standards are arguably unattainable (Douglas

& Michaels, 2004). However, this research also contributes instances wherein women were openly critical of the expectation to perform the role of supermom through memory keeping, and instances wherein women negotiated the pressures associated with supermom standards through alternate forms of memory keeping, as well. Rose (2005) posits that through family photographs and albums, women can find a suitably complex space to explore their ambivalence about motherhood. Photographs, Rose argues, can allow women distance from their children, providing them space to experience deep, corporeal attachment and love for their children, but at a distance from the difficulties and exhaustions of everyday mothering life. In this study, women reported some maternal ambivalence when looking back on their baby books; the maternal ambivalence cannot necessarily be found on the pages of the baby book, but there was some indication – through conversation, through blank, unfilled pages – that perhaps memory keeping could be a safe space for women to negotiate mixed feelings about motherhood. Future research could explore possible safe spaces for women to express maternal ambivalence, thus combatting the ideology of the supermom. As such, this research demonstrates a reproduction of the construction of the supermom through memory keeping, a resistance to this construction, and the possibility of negotiating the dominant ideologies surrounding motherhood through memory keeping, as well.

Using Burr's (2003) four points of analysis for social constructionist work, this research found that through women's family memory keeping we can see the social construction of the good mother as a remembering mother. This category is constructed as naturally occurring and essentially feminine. Through the social processes of family memory keeping, particular kinds of knowledge is constructed and reproduced surrounding the good mother as a remembering mother, and that knowledge draws upon dominant contemporary ideologies of motherhood.

Specifically, this research found that notions of the remembering mother as a crafty, natural, supermom are reproduced through women's family memory keeping, thus intensifying the construction of motherhood as consumptive and frivolous, instinctive and biological, gratifying and fulfilling. These notions are tied to systems of power including consumption and capitalism, male dominance and patriarchy. For, if we can convince women to believe that the socially valuable work they perform in the private sphere is in fact frivolous and insignificant, that a woman's worth is bound to her natural and inevitable ability to produce children, and that she must raise these children and perform these domestic duties without complaint and with the appearance of ease, the capitalist, patriarchal system clearly wins.

Thus, this study found that women's memory keeping, though a significant source of social reproduction work, also strongly reproduces dominant gender ideologies and constructions of the "good mother". As such, this research contributes to the literature on constructions of motherhood the notion that the good mother is also a remembering mother. Moreover, the good, remembering mother must remember in specific ways – she must be appropriately feminine and crafty, naturally maternal and instinctive, and an unconditionally loving supermom. However, this research also contributes instances wherein women produced strong resistance to these constructions of motherhood and offered considerable cultural critique of the pressures and expectations placed upon women mothering today. These instances indicated the possibility of negotiating and resisting dominant ideologies of motherhood through family memory keeping. This resistance also confirmed existing research that rather than motherhood being instinctive and natural, motherhood is a "discipline" (Doucet, 2007a), a "concentrated effort" (Kinser, 2010; Ruddick, 1980); despite the appearance of a crafty, natural, supermom, the women in this study demonstrated there is stress, pressure, and ambivalence beneath the surface. Future studies

should explore the discipline of motherhood through family memory keeping, the taxing and depleting outcomes of this pressure to be a “good mother” through constant remembrance, and the possibilities of negotiating the pressures of motherhood, including ambivalence about the very experience of mothering, through memory keeping, as well.

6.3.3 *Constructing the family*

This research demonstrated that memory keeping constructs fatherhood and motherhood, and now we will explore the ways the family is constructed through women’s family memory keeping. Researchers have explored the ways the family is constructed through family myth and stories (Stone, 2006), family photographs (Gallop & Blau, 1999), and family secrets (Kuhn, 2002). While this research has noted gender differences in the construction of family through these stories, photographs, and secrets (cf Rose, 2005), this literature has neglected to explore the construction of the family through family memory as a gendered process. As discussed in the literature review, the oral history literature (cf Heilbrun, 1988; Leydesdorff et al, 1996; Miller, 1988) does provide an analysis of these family stories, photographs, and secrets as a gendered process, yet this literature fails to critically explore this process as serving to construct particular forms of family. Indeed, much existing literature conceptualizes women’s role in transmitting family history and identity as though women were neutral channels for the transmission of knowledge (Hochberg, 2003). Here I will demonstrate the construction of family through women’s memory keeping is far from neutral. I have already explored the ways women’s family memory contributes to family cohesion through a gendered work framework, and through a leisure studies framework. These two analyses have demonstrated that family memory keeping is a gendered activity, informed by dominant gender ideologies such as the ethic of care and

familism, that creates family unity, cohesion, and togetherness. In other words, I have established what women's family memory keeping does *for* the family; here I will demonstrate what women's family memory work does *to* the family. How are families made through women's family memory keeping? Here, I will explore this gendered construction of family under two themes of analysis: the happy family, and the hidden family.

6.3.3.1 *The happy family*

As I have demonstrated in previous sections, women are primarily responsible for creating and maintaining the happiness of their families through family memory keeping. What I have yet to explore, however, is how women are responsible for creating and maintaining the *presentation* of their families as happy through family memory keeping. Research demonstrates that part of the ideology of contemporary motherhood is to present happy families (Brown, 2010; Layne, 2004; Rose, 2005). Indeed, this study indicated women's family memory keeping can work to construct and present this "happy family"; the display of particular kinds of photographs, the preservation of particular kinds of artefacts, the recollection of particular kinds of memories, all creates an image, not of the family, but of a particular kind of family. In this study, that family was often described as "happy".

Participants almost exclusively described the memories kept by their mothers as happy memories ("See? I was a happy kid" "No pain, no bad memories"). Only one mother discussed actively collecting and preserving memory that resisted the pressure to preserve only happy memories; she took photographs of her infant screaming ("because that's what I remember about the first three months. Her screaming and screaming. Non-stop screaming. And I thought, "well, I'm not going to take pictures of her only when she's happy, because, this isn't our

reality”). However, my sister also alluded to some resistance in terms of my mother’s preservation of notes that depicted family arguments (“Those are some of my favourite things that Mum’s kept are those ridiculous notes because they captured a different tone of the family than just this cute drawing. It’s also like, “Where are my pickles?? Who ate my pickles????”). Some participants did describe memories kept that portrayed family members’ flaws, the flaws were ultimately humorous and humanizing, depicting memories that turned out alright in the end, constructing the image of a family that is good-natured and functional despite its flaws (“I have some pretty not-promising report cards that my mother saved from grade one or two, that I talked too much and was disruptive. And now they’re hilarious to see”). Women described saving the “cute things”, the memories from days when their children were “fresh and new”, moments that encouraged their children to feel they “belonged and were so loved”. Serious bouts of mental illness, family conflicts, or dysfunction did not often to find their way into the women’s family memory keeping. And because many participants noted they only remembered certain family memories because of their mother’s memory keeping (“I only retain certain memories because of certain photos she kept”), this study demonstrates mothers are uniquely powerful in creating and maintaining that happy façade.

Thus, this research confirms findings from the oral history literature that suggests women are in a powerful position as narrators of family history, providing identity, documentation and evidence for their families (cf (Personal Narratives Group, 1989; Smith & Watson, 1998; Stone, 2006). However, this study contributes nuance to that conceptualization by arguing women are in a powerful position to provide their families *particular kinds* of identity, documentation and evidence. Family memories were not neutrally chosen, preserved, and recollected, rather women tended to select those memories that presented the family as happy. In this sense, this study both

confirms the literature that celebrates women's powerful position as author of her family's intimate history, and is critical of that celebration as well. The oral history literature suggests women can provide and transmit a unique history of domestic, everyday life; indeed, this study found that women regarded their family memory as "my diary of being a mother", which offers an alternate narrative to the male-dominated history of the public sphere. Yet, this study also revealed that in their position as family memory keepers, women are also incredibly powerful in their ability to smooth over family dysfunction and reproduce notions of the "happy family". And as argued previously, women's family memory keeping also constructs the family in terms of cultural identity (gender, class, race, religion, etc.). As such, the narratives women construct through family memory often reproduce dominant social structures and power relations. Thus, at the very least, women's narration of family memory is powerful yet far from socially neutral, offering constructions of the happy family that obscure the hidden family beneath.

6.3.3.2 *The hidden family*

This study offered interesting insight into not only the process of constructing the happy family through family memory, but the process of hiding particular family memories, as well. Participants discussed the omission of family memories involving postpartum depression, addiction, transitions, divorce and separation, family conflict, violence and abuse. These memories were often deliberately excluded or altered by the mothers in charge of their keeping. For instance, the mother of the transgender daughter deliberately did not hang photos that reminded her daughter of her past life as a boy, and the mother painted her daughter's new name over her previous one on all the family Christmas ornaments. Similarly, another mother described only posting particularly happy photos on Facebook to share with family and friends,

despite struggling through a year plagued with an unplanned pregnancy, an unstable marriage, and financial difficulties (“if you were to look through my Facebook albums, you would never guess any of this. Because of course I’m only capturing the happy moments. And I certainly won’t be writing about the bad times in Sadie’s baby book either”). Another mother described a memory that was decidedly not recorded in the baby book as well; her husband expressed thoughts about their baby she felt were best kept hidden (“there are crappy times as the parent of a newborn. And you don’t write, “Oh my god I’m fucking exhausted, you know, I want to throw my child against a wall”). Foster and adoptive mothers described hiding memories from their children that revealed particularly negative details about their birth parents. Several mothers deliberately chose not to revisit certain family photographs because they reminded them not of a happy family, but of their children’s addictions and mental health difficulties (“You want to forget that and just look at the pictures, but you can’t”). These mothers hid particular memories because they were grappling with family memory on several different levels: they grappled with the desire to present a happy family, to smooth over memories that might be traumatic to their sense of family cohesion, but also to protect themselves and their children from pain.

Yet, in some instances, painful family memory was hidden by some family members, only to have the memories brought forward by others. Participants spoke about contested, conflicting, and competing family memories that troubled the construction of the happy family. One woman described memories of abuse her mother refused to remember as part of the family history. Though her mother attempted repeatedly to hide these memories and present a happy family, her daughter refused to allow her memories to remain hidden (“What everybody remembers or chooses to remember, is not necessarily what happened”). Several participants discussed contested family memories among siblings. In these cases, siblings complicated the

image of the cohesive, happy family by telling conflicting stories about a family they had both experienced (“that’s my personal story, but it’s also her story, so whose story is it and who has the right to share it, and with who?”) Often, there were also conflicts in terms of reminiscence – several participants discussed siblings bringing back painful memories they did not wish to remember (“I don’t need to be reminded how dysfunctional we were and what a jerk he was and how inadequate he was as a father... For me it’s not a good place to go”). And not all mothers attempted to protect their children from pain through family memory keeping; in one instance, a mother used her memory to “give” her adult daughter an unwanted memory of a painful childhood (“My mother gave me this memory recently. She said, “When you were little and I would lay you down at night, you would say I love you and you would try to hug me. And I would say don’t be foolish, and I would push you off until you stopped doing it”). Thus, while this study demonstrated mothers actively constructing the happy family through memory keeping, this study also revealed the ways in which family memory can challenge the construction of family cohesion and togetherness, as well, creating conflict, tension, and dysfunction. This research suggests that, as one participant articulated, “the story is partly the omission”.

Examining the construction of the family through Burr’s (2003) four points of analysis reveals that the “happy family” can be constructed through women’s family memory keeping. This construction, though appearing natural, is demonstrated in this study through social processes that involve women’s often deliberate work to “smooth over” and hide family memories that reveal tensions, transitions, or trauma. The expectation for women to construct this happy family is part of the historically and socially specific ideology of contemporary, middle-class motherhood (Brown, 2010), and is sustained by ideologies of motherhood that

suggest women are responsible not only for their family's happiness, but for *presenting* their families as happy (Layne, 2004). This study demonstrated that memory keeping is one such social process, bound up in gendered ideologies and power relations, that enables the construction of the happy family. However, this study also illustrated instances wherein those tensions, transitions and trauma refused to stay hidden; the happy family is indeed constructed through family memory, but this façade is troubled through family memory as well. Mothers were illustrated that both used family memory to protect their children, and used family memory to hurt their children. Siblings described both being bound in happiness through memories of childhood and bound in disagreement over memories of childhood, as well. Thus, this research found women's family memory keeping constructs the family by providing documentation, evidence, and identity, and encouraging family cohesion, unity, and togetherness; however, this research also found women's family memory keeping constructs a particular kind of family, and hides a particular kind of family, as well.

Family therapists argue family myths deeply affect how we see ourselves, our family, and the world; these myths significantly impact the way we live our lives and relate to one another (Harold, 2000; Pratt & Fiese, 2004; Stone, 2006). However, this literature has neglected to explore the construction of the family through family memory as a gendered process. This study reveals that women occupy a uniquely powerful position as memory keepers in shaping and constructing that family myth. And yet, much of the oral history literature proclaims women's role in creating family myth as a seemingly neutral channel for the documentation of everyday life in the private sphere (cf Heilbrun, 1988; Leydesdorff et al, 1996; Miller, 1988). This research contributes to that literature the demonstration that women's family memory keeping is far from neutral; through this study, we saw women often deliberately presenting and hiding

particular kinds of memory to contribute to the construction of a particular kind of family.

Further, this research contributes complexity to this notion of women's construction of the happy family through family memory; through this study, we saw family members, including mothers, negotiating and resisting the construction of the happy family through contested, conflicting, and competing memories. We also saw complicated portrayals of mothers both attempting to protect their children through family memory, and hurt their children through family memory. In sum, this study demonstrates both the gendered construction of the happy family through women's family memory keeping, and the troubling of that construction through family memory, as well.

6.3.4 *Family memory keeping as gendered social construction: Implications*

To summarize this section, I return once more to Burr's (2003) four key analytical points made by social constructionists. First, this study suggested women's family memory keeping can work to reify the gender binary, reproducing constructions of men and women, fathers and mothers, as essentially and naturally dichotomous. Specifically, I found women's family memory keeping reproduced notions of the father as an unemotional breadwinner and secondary parent, and the mother as a crafty, natural, supermom, responsible for presenting the family as a "happy family". Second, this study identified the historically and culturally specific gender ideologies (such as the "involved father" and the "good mother") that influence the construction of fatherhood, motherhood, and the family through family memory keeping. Third, I demonstrated the particular social processes through which these constructions are sustained, including the way participants spoke about memory keeping (such as the characterisations of "scrapbookers"), the memory keeping products sold to memory keepers (such as the "biased" baby books), and the social rituals that promote memory keeping (such as the "all woman" baby

showers). Finally, I suggested that these gendered constructions through women's family memory keeping are driven by the interests of a patriarchal culture. For, women's memory keeping contributes to the reification of the gender binary, the essentialization of fathers and mothers as dichotomous, the privileging of men's work in the public sphere, the trivializing of women's work in the private sphere, the naturalizing of women's value as affixed to motherhood, and the legitimization of society's reliance on the significantly valuable unpaid labour women perform. And because memory keeping also reproduces the ideology of the "good mother" and the expectation she will be gratified and fulfilled in producing and presenting a "happy family", women's family memory keeping also pre-emptively relegates women to a position wherein they can offer no complaint. At least, not without legitimate fear of being branded a "bad mother". However, this study also demonstrated moments wherein women and men complicated, negotiated, and resisted traditional constructions of fatherhood, motherhood, and the happy family. In many instances, participants offered strong social critique and even used memory keeping as a way of negotiating these traditional constructions and resisting dominant ideologies. Thus, overall, this study demonstrated that women's family memory keeping reproduced gendered constructions of fatherhood, motherhood, and the family, yet this study also suggested women's memory keeping can trouble and resist these constructions as well.

As such, this study makes several important contributions to the literature on gendered constructions of fatherhood, motherhood, and the family. This study confirms research that argues today's fathers occupy complex ideological positions (Duckworth & Buzzanell, 2009; Lupton & Barclay, 1997; Shaw, 2008); however this research also confirms research suggesting men's work outside the home is still constructed as more valuable while women's household

work, including work with memory and crafts, is constructed as trivial (Christensen, 2011). Further, this research suggests through memory keeping, women reproduce dominant notions of fatherhood which can function as a means of reinforcing their position as primary parent through “maternal gatekeeping” (Doucet, 2007). An important contribution comes from the finding that women’s memory keeping not only reproduces the ideology of the good mother, but also offers the conceptualization of the good mother as a remembering mother. This study provided a nuanced understanding of the remembering mother by suggesting the concept of the remembering mother also reproduces notions of women as crafty, natural, supermoms. However, findings demonstrated some strong resistance to the ideology of the “good mother”, thus, this study contributes insight into the negotiation of the “good mother” through memory keeping, as well. Researchers have argued ideologies of motherhood suggest women are responsible for presenting a “happy family” (Brown, 2010; Layne, 2004; Rose, 2005). This study adds to that literature by revealing women perform this presentation through family memory keeping. In agreement with the oral history literature (Heilbrun, 1988; Leydesdorff et al, 1996; Miller, 1988), this study confirms that women occupy a powerful position as narrator of family myth. However, this study also critiques this literature by suggesting women’s family memory keeping is neither neutral nor uncontested by other family members. Finally, to my knowledge, there are no existing studies of the social construction of fatherhood, motherhood, or the “happy family” through women’s family memory keeping. Thus, a major contribution of this study is the very framework of this section itself.

These contributions also point toward future studies in memory keeping and the social construction of gender. As previously mentioned, I would be interested to see an analysis of the possible ideological and structural constraints men experience that might prevent them from

participating in memory keeping, or might relegate men to particular memory keeping tasks such as technological support. In such a study, I would suggest attempting to understand the alternate ways men might keep memory, remaining open to removing the “maternal lens” through which we might be exploring family memory keeping in general (Doucet, 2007a). I would also advocate future studies in the “discipline” of fatherhood and motherhood through memory keeping. Studies could focus on men who do remember and women who do not, in order to better understand the social rewards and punishments involved in memory keeping. What are the ramifications of truly rejecting dominant, gendered constructions of the role of family memory keeper? This analysis could also extend to studies focusing on family memory keeping that more overtly resists the construction of the happy family, exploring memory keepers that might specifically preserve sad, painful, conflicting, or traumatic family memories.

Connectedly, I would be interested in exploring in more depth the ways that memory keeping might become a political act, a resistant space for the negotiation of dominant ideologies and constructions of fatherhood, motherhood, and the family. And finally, while this study demonstrated the construction of gender through family memory keeping, there was very little analysis of memory keeping in terms of the construction of race, class, sexuality, ability, and other layers of intersectionality. Ironically, given my focus on social construction, I failed to deconstruct these taken-for-granted categories in this study. However, as we move into the final section of this discussion, one last taken-for-granted role will be explored; what happens when we lose the women who keep our memories?

6.4. Family memory keeping as gendered loss

For something thought to be so trivial (Christensen, 2011), this study demonstrated the loss of a mother's memory keeping is incredibly deeply felt. This study indicated the experience of the loss of a mother's memory keeping is also deeply gendered: the contributions lost were gendered, the knowledge lost was gendered, and the role transition was gendered. But this study also found the families using the memories left behind by their mothers to cope with the loss. Indeed this study indicated the women's memory keeping continues to contribute to identity, family cohesion, and family togetherness long after the loss of the mother's memory. Women's family memory keeping has not specifically been explored in the literature, and it follows that the impact of the loss of women's family memory keeping has yet to be explored as well. However, drawing upon existing research from the gendered work, "mother loss", caregiving, and grief and trauma literature, I will now demonstrate the contributions this study makes to a variety of areas of inquiry through better understanding the loss of women's memory keeping. I will explore these contributions under four themes: the loss of gendered contributions, the loss of gendered knowledge, the gendered role transition, and the use of gendered family memory to cope.

6.4.1 *The loss of gendered contributions*

This study demonstrated in earlier sections the contributions women's family memory keeping makes in terms of the gendered work of social reproduction. Specifically, findings suggested women's memory keeping made significant contributions in terms of individuation (Young, 2005), love work (Lynch, 2007), kin work (di Leonardo, 1987), and cultural transmission (Vasquez, 2010). These unpaid social reproduction contributions are neither socially recognized nor socially valued; however, this study demonstrated that when a mother's

memory is lost, these contributions and their importance suddenly become starkly apparent. These contributions can be conceptualized as gendered, insofar as this study demonstrated memory keeping is largely provided by the mother, and the losses were gendered as well, insofar as participants described grieving for contributions their mother specifically provided.

As my father noted in the performance text regarding the loss of my mother's memory to dementia, the often hidden contributions women make to the household through both social reproduction work and memory work are rendered visible as women's memory fades ("From the very basic making of meals, to the purchasing of clothes, to the buying of furniture, to the repairs to the house, maintenance of the property, acknowledgement of the celebrations, you know, birthdays, Christmas, anniversaries eventually – she did it all...now that much of that is disappearing"). Participants discussed losing their sense of individuation, their sense of being made special through a mother's memory; indeed, one participant specifically described the loss of a mother's memory as throwing her into an "identity crisis" ("It's those kinds of things, those kinds of defining memories she had, like "Erin likes frozen corn" that I find I miss with my mum. She thought I was special"). The loss of a mother's memory also left participants feeling less loved and cared for ("With Mum, she remembered what I was interested in, what I wanted to do, what kinds of books I was reading, and so she would, you know, give gifts that flesh that out a little differently than he did"). Participants also stressed a disruption in family identity following the loss of a mother's memory ("All those things my mother has saved tells you about who we are as a family, too. And as she starts to lose her memory, it starts to make you less sure of who we are as a family"). Without a mother's memory to facilitate family relationships and kin ties, participants also described a loss of connection and cohesion between family members and extended kin; as my father described in the performance text, "she was definitely the core of

the family...And not just for you guys, but for everybody. For your friends, for your cousins, for her friends”. Many participants noted the loss of their mother’s memory led directly to the breakdown of communication between family members and kin ties, and subsequently the loss of the transmission of family news (“I didn’t remember that my cousin was pregnant... and I didn’t know that she had her baby, because no one told me, and no one reminded me the whole way through... See, if Mum had been alive, she probably would have told me three hundred times”). And while it was only mentioned in passing by one participant, this study indicated the loss of a mother’s cultural transmission was felt as well. One man described the Christmas after his mother died having no one to remind the family to go to church (“without Mum bugging us to go, no one went to church”). Participants described these losses in terms of a loss of personal identity, love and care, family tradition and cohesion, and cultural connections, as well, indicating the unnoticed contributions made by women’s family memory keeping are felt deeply when a mother’s memory is lost.

In the literature on social reproduction work as contributing to individuation (Young, 2005), love work (Lynch, 2007), kin ties (di Leonardo, 1987), and cultural transmission (Vasquez, 2010), researchers suggest this hidden, undervalued gendered work provides increased well-being (Lynch, 2007; Nussbaum, 2000), stronger and more resilient individuals and families (Fivush et al., 2004; Young, 2005), and the perpetuation and preservation of cultural identity (Lorber, 1994; Stone, 2006; Vasquez, 2010). Not only does this study demonstrate the significance of memory work in contributing at the individual, familial, and social level, but this study also demonstrates the contributions of this hidden labour are deeply felt and recognized following the loss of a mother’s memory. The loss of a mother’s memory can lead to breakdowns in individual identity, family identity, cohesion, and communication, and cultural

identity, as well. The hidden, undervalued, gendered labour becomes less hidden and more valued upon the loss, sadly indicating the truth of the maxim “you don’t know what you’ve got ‘til it’s gone.” Future studies should differentiate between losses of a mother’s memory: how does the loss of a mother’s memory due to dementia differ from the loss of a mother’s memory due to death? Further, how does the loss of a mother’s memory due to absence, neglect, or simply a lack of interest in memory keeping impact upon the family? Unfortunately, this study did not provide an in-depth understanding of the nuances of different contexts for memory loss; however, this study did provide some direction for theoretically interesting future projects.

6.4.2 *The loss of gendered knowledge*

Another contribution made by this research is the impact the loss of a mother’s memory has on daughters’ access to valuable gendered knowledge. Specifically, this valuable knowledge lost was noted to be maternal knowledge; knowledge about the experience of motherhood was lost with the loss of a mother’s memory. Interestingly, all women interviewed who had experienced the loss of a mother’s memory specifically identified the transition to motherhood as a time when they missed their mother’s memory significantly. As my sister noted in the performance text, “since becoming a parent, there are things I want to know from Mum. Like, “Hey, I was awake all night. I wonder if Mum remembered those days.” You know?” This was true for women who had experienced this loss at ages ranging from fifteen to thirty-five; it was also true for women looking back after forty years without their mothers, and for women for whom their mother’s memory was only recently lost. Women described feeling they had missed out on valuable advice, guidance, and knowledge regarding motherhood (“I felt a bit ripped off. Because I couldn’t call my mum and say, “oh my god, this two year old, what should I do?

What can I do?"). Many women described looking for that maternal memory elsewhere, asking mothers-in-law or sisters, but ultimately still missing what they felt was invaluable maternal knowledge from their mother ("I would ask my older sister those things, and she would try to remember, but she was busy with her own stuff"). Many women also noted they were more fastidious in their own memory keeping as mothers, because they now understood the importance of this knowledge ("I think having Mum die when I was fifteen, and knowing what those keepsakes meant to me, I think that that brought it home to me more and more that my children need those things"). Whether this maternal knowledge would have, in actuality, been helpful or valuable, the loss of the imagined or assumed knowledge their mothers' memory would provide haunted the women in this study, making the transition to motherhood arguably far more difficult.

To my knowledge, there has yet to be a study of the impact of a mother's memory loss on the provision of maternal knowledge to her daughters. Thus, this study contributes the finding that women experience the loss of their mothers' memory significantly and painfully as they themselves become mothers. Like the other sections of this chapter, this section also contributes to existing literature an analysis of the loss of a memory keeper as significant for being a *gendered* loss. Findings suggested not only did participants lose knowledge that was gendered, insofar as this knowledge was specifically "maternal" knowledge, but that the loss was felt in a gendered way, as well. Women who had lost mothers in this study consistently described feeling a deep loss in terms of the maternal knowledge their mothers would have passed down; they often described feeling this loss most intensely when becoming mothers themselves. Men, however, did not express mourning their mother's maternal knowledge when transitioning to fatherhood, though my brother noted he missed my mother's knowledge of family details when

applying for adoption (“And we ended up needing really detailed information, a really detailed history of Mum’s family and birth dates. And I found that really difficult having to write Dad and then having Auntie Helen to get the specifics as opposed to Mum knowing it off by heart”). However, it is important to note that only three men interviewed were fathers who had lost their mother’s memory, so there is certainly room for future research on the impact of a mother’s memory loss on transitions to fatherhood.

This research thus adds to the “mother loss” literature by exploring specifically the gendered loss of a mother’s memory, and also confirms several important findings from the mother loss literature, as well. This study corroborated existing mother loss literature that suggests the loss of a mother (not specifically, however, her memory) is particularly significant for women when they transition to motherhood (Edelman, 2006). And this study also confirmed findings that assert “motherless mothers” yearn for maternal guidance and advice, feel they are missing much needed maternal knowledge, and seek mothering knowledge from alternate but ultimately unsatisfying sources such as mothers-in-law, sisters, and friends (Dietrich, McWilliam, Ralyea, & Schweitzer, 1999; Edelman, 2006; Mireault, Thomas, & Bearor, 2002). This study also confirmed findings that motherless mothers parent differently in an attempt to prepare for their own possible death (Edelman, 2006); the mothers in this study were more diligent about saving memory for their children because they were also more cognizant of the very real possibility of losing a mother’s memory. Future studies could add nuance to the experience of losing maternal knowledge by examining different contexts of mother loss. For instance, though all women interviewed who had lost their mothers’ memory identified the transition to motherhood as especially painful, there was an indication that the loss of a mother’s maternal knowledge is complicated when the mother is still alive (“I find it sad to turn to my

mother-in-law, because Mum is still mothering, but it's just a different kind of mothering"). Thus, future studies could explore the experiences of mother loss when the loss of memory is due to a "living loss" such as dementia, wherein women continue to turn to their mothers for memory they simply cannot provide. As I noted in the performance text, "What's strange about it is that Mum is still here. It's not like our Mum died and we're looking to be mothered, and we miss that and we're looking to an empty space. She's still there. So you still look to her for those things but you don't get them". Research indicates that motherless mothers who feel unresolved grief surrounding the loss of their mothers are far more at risk for difficulties transitioning to motherhood (Edelman, 2006). The experience of losing a mother's memory as a living loss would certainly complicate the grieving process. Such studies, as well as the current study, could contribute to easing the transition to motherhood for "motherless mothers", improving and adding complexity to postpartum care, support, services, therapies, and interventions through a better understanding of the significant (and significantly gendered) impact of the loss of a mother's memory.

6.4.3 *The gendered role transition*

The loss of a mother's memory is also significant, and gendered, in terms of the role transition that occurs in the wake of the memory loss. Participants who had experienced the loss of a mother as memory keeper described this role being taken on by a female family member. Often this was a sister ("I made a photo album when my sister died so her children would have an album of her side of the family"), or a daughter ("My sister started signing birthday cards, or she bought birthday cards and made sure my mother signed it then sent it off to the kids or the grandkids"), or a daughter-in-law ("My father didn't think of sending anything. But my sister-

in-law took over for him”). In the performance text, my sister described being ready to take on that role if anything should happen to her siblings (“I see that too, as a role, as wanting to be a memory-keeper...To be like, “Oh, that’s just like your Mum would’ve done”). Very few studies reveal who takes on the labour of memory work when a woman does or cannot; di Leonardo (1987) briefly indicates that kin work is taken over by other female family members when the mother dies or is absent. Thus this research confirms the gendered work literature that suggests female relatives (including sisters, aunts, daughters, and daughters-in-law) tend to take on the role after the loss of a family memory keeper, reproducing the expectation that memory keeping is in fact women’s responsibility. However, in contrast to the gendered work literature, this study found that men are sometimes taking on this role, as well.

In many cases participants described men struggling to take on the role of memory keeper after the loss of their wives’ memory. This role transition was often part of men’s overall introduction to the responsibilities of the social reproduction work traditionally performed by their wives; as my father remarked in the performance text, “Now *I’m* the person who is inviting people to supper”. In one instance, a woman dying of cancer recognized the importance of her role as memory keeper and began training her husband to send Christmas cards before her death (“she was showing him where the addresses were...she told him that it’s important to send cards out”). Some participants noted the new role as memory keeper conflicted with the expectations for men to be unemotional secondary parents whose primarily responsibilities were to breadwinning and the public sphere; as my father articulated, “she was the cultivator and maintainer of all of that. Which allowed me the freedom to be preoccupied with teaching”. One man reported struggling with this transition, and worried he was disappointing his family for failing to fill the position of memory keeper as his wife did (“I feel it in terms of an inheritance

of a responsibility that isn't natural to me. And a disappointment when I don't either have the innate ability to remember birthdays, remember anniversaries"). Some men described experiencing this shift in responsibilities – including the memory work involved in planning holidays – as exhausting, particularly when combined with caregiving. My father described in the performance text, "Because on top of the care, the day-to-day routines that are involved in Mum's care, there's just the effort that's involved in planning for Christmas. And far too often it's exhausting". In many instances, the learning curve associated with taking on these new roles made the transition even more challenging ("Wait a minute. *I* have to do that? Oh my god, all this stuff. Why do I have to know this all of a sudden? If you never do it, you'd never think to do it"). And yet participants reported men successfully taking on the role of memory keeper, facilitating individuation and love work ("it's still important, at some level, for there to be a gift there from their mum. Even if Dad's the one who bought it"), as well as the maintenance of family identity and family relationships ("Dad did take on that role more as he got well himself. He became the central point between my sister and my brother and myself. He would start to tell me stories"). Thus, this study demonstrated men struggle with the transition to the traditionally feminine role of memory keeper due to bulk of the labour, the lack of familiarity with the skills involved, and the (possibly gendered) feeling that the role simply was not "natural" to them; however, this study also demonstrated men taking on the role of memory keeping with considerable success.

This research confirms gender and caregiving literature that suggests men struggle with dominant ideologies of masculinity when transitioning to the role of caregiver (Harris, 2002). Existing research demonstrates men might feel anxiety and doubt when taking on the domestic work typically performed by their wives, particularly the care work their wives provided for the

family, due to dominant expectations for men to be unemotional, detached “doers” rather than nurturers (Kramer, 2002; Thompson, 1997). This research adds to the gender and caregiving literature the contribution that men, specifically in the wake of their wives’ memory loss, are similarly ideologically constrained. The desire to fulfill the role of memory keeper for their families combined with the expectation that they remain traditionally masculine sets men in a difficult bind. Researchers have argued this “ideological bind” men experience is understudied in caregiving literature, and this research speaks to that gap (Kramer, 2002; Thompson, 1997). This research also contributes the assertion that men lose their memory keepers as well when they lose their wives and mothers, which results in the loss of the contributions this memory keeping made in terms of individuation, love and care, family cohesion and social connections. Thus, in the wake of the loss of a wife as memory keeper, the husband is left in a very vulnerable position – he is expected to take on new and unfamiliar household labour that simultaneously threatens his masculinity while at the same time experiencing a decline in the love, care, and family and social support cultivated by his wife’s family memory keeping. No existing literature explores the experience of men transitioning into the role of memory keeper, hence this research offers a major contribution here, as well.

Finally, this study stands in contrast to existing caregiving literature that asserts men do not experience gender role conflict when caring for their spouses (Baker, Robertson, & Connolly, 2010; Bowers, 1999). Some researchers have suggested the methodologies employed in these studies have made it difficult for men to be open about their caregiving experiences, and have called for qualitative research on men’s caregiving and their experiences of gender role conflict (Kirsi, Hervonen, & Jylha, 2004). This study offers a qualitative exploration of men’s experiences transitioning into the gendered role of memory keeper, and as such indicates the

possibility that men do, in fact, experience difficulty transitioning into the traditionally feminine role. Future research could expand upon this study by focusing more specifically on men's transition to memory keeper and the impact of dominant gender ideologies on men's experiences of this transition. Such studies would add significantly to Doucet's (2007a) call for the investigation of instances of fatherhood where masculinity is "on the line" and could provide better understanding, care, and services for male caregivers and men coping with the loss of a wife's memory.

6.4.4 *The use of gendered family memory to cope*

Yet, in the face of all the loss that comes with the decline or disappearance of a mother's memory, this study also demonstrated the memory collected by women can be used by families to cope with their grief. Interestingly, many of the very contributions made by women's memory keeping still carry on once the mother's memory is gone, due to the artefacts the mother preserved while she could still perform the role. For instance, participants spoke about the individuation still offered through their mother's memory once that memory was lost. In particular, participants described these memory artefacts as reminding them of who their mother was; as my sister noted in the performance text, "I think they shine some light on Mum, too". Several participants discussed the importance of remembering their mother through the family memory she collected, and reported saving memory so their children could experience the same thing ("Sometimes I don't remember Mum when she didn't have dementia, but the memories help remind me who she was... So I think I save things and I write things down for the same reason. To be like, "I love you. This is who I am.") As evidenced by the previous quote, the memories left behind also continue to contribute to women's love work (Lynch, 2007), long after the mother's own memory is gone. One participant performed this memory work for her nieces

and nephews to help them cope with the loss of their parents, and remind the children who their parents were (“for me it was a way to say, remember these things about your parents. They’re good things”). In a similar sense, participants described women’s memory keeping continuing to facilitate family relationships, even relationships with their lost mother (“at least there’s some sort of evidence that the relationship was there. Because if my mother is gone, and with that goes all those memories, you tend to think that the relationship is gone”). As my sister described in the performance text, the memories our mothers keep can help reconstruct family cohesion after the loss of a mother’s memory (“Those memories Mum collected, those are the tools for that reconstruction, you know?”) Several women found memory keeping therapeutic when dealing with the loss of family members. One mother even used memory keeping activities to deal with her own diagnosis of an inoperable brain tumour. Memory keeping seemed to allow this mother some semblance of control over her illness, and gave her some way of managing the inevitable but traumatic reality that she would be separated from her children. Again, this mother demonstrated the use of memory keeping as a means of continuing women’s social reproduction work (including love work) after the mother herself is gone.

The trauma literature does not include studies of the loss of a mother as family memory keeper; however, this literature does suggest that families cope with loss through memory, and that physical objects can provide especially evocative tools for facilitating coping through memory (Bolea, 2000; Layne, 2005; Radley, 1990). In particular, these researchers argue memory can assist a family in reconstructing both individual and family identity, a reconstruction that is essential in the wake of loss or trauma. Such reconstruction helps repair “biographical interruptions” (Bolea, 2000) and restore family cohesion and unity (Fivush et al., 2004). This study contributes to existing trauma literature the assertion that women as member

keepers play a particularly important role in enabling families to cope after a loss, including, interestingly enough, the loss of the mother herself. Memory keeping can help families reconnect with their lost mothers and rebuild family identity; indeed, this study demonstrated the therapeutic nature of family memory on families facing traumas such as a mother's death, a mother's dementia, and genetic disease. This study also found the activities of memory keeping can prove therapeutic for mothers who are anticipating the loss of family members, or indeed, their own death. Thus, this research makes several important contributions to the trauma literature that might create more nuanced understandings of the role women's memory keeping plays in managing family trauma and loss. In this sense, this study could provide useful information for researchers and professionals working in family therapy, extended care, and palliative care.

Researchers also suggest women feel an important sense of materiality and corporeality in their relationship to their child (Young, 2005). Rose (2005) argues women keep particular photographs because they remind mothers of the "extraordinary corporeality" of their children (p. 232); indeed, this study confirmed Rose's findings by suggesting this corporeality is captured in women's preservation of the "textures" of motherhood – the child's teeth, hair clippings, and umbilical cord all represent this corporeality. Studies have shown the material artefacts gathered by mothers can help parents cope with the loss of a child due to miscarriage or stillbirth (Layne, 2004), or due to adoption or foster parenting (Wozniak, 2004). I would argue this study makes a case for the importance of a mother's corporeality to her child, as well. Though only reported by my own family members in the performance text ("I can so clearly remember the feel of that nightgown. Her chin my head. Her hand reaching to pass around presents and then coming back to rest on my leg"), this study suggests the memories we have of our mothers are deeply tied to

materiality and her distinct and “extraordinary corporeality”. In this sense, my research both confirms existing literature surrounding family memory as therapeutic and offers a suggestion for future directions in studying the therapeutic possibilities of women’s family memory keeping. Future studies could explore the importance of material objects for children grieving a mother, and the possibilities memory keeping provides in enabling children to cope with that loss.

6.4.5 *Family memory as gendered loss: Implications*

This research makes several notable contributions to a number of different bodies of literature. Perhaps most importantly, this study explores the impact of the loss of women’s family memory keeping, which has yet to be explored in the literature. But more specifically, this research addresses gaps in the gendered work literature by revealing the loss of a mother’s memory keeping involves the loss of significant contributions to family life, including individuation, love work, kin work, and cultural transmission, resulting in identity crises and the breakdown of family cohesion and communication. Findings from this study also contribute to the “mother loss” literature by suggesting the loss of a mother’s memory is felt particularly intensely during a daughter’s transition to motherhood. This research confirmed existing literature that suggested female relatives are likely to take over memory work if a mother is unable to perform the task herself; however, this research also added to both the gendered work and caregiving literature by demonstrating men are taking on this role as well, with varying degrees of success and difficulty. Finally, this research adds to the trauma literature by contributing the notion that women’s memory keeping plays an important role in facilitating therapeutic coping mechanisms for women, children, and families in the face of loss – even the

loss of the mother herself. This study suggests women's memory keeping keeps on giving, making significant contributions at the individual, familial, and societal level, despite the loss of the mother's memory. As such, this research makes contributions that benefit a variety of areas of research and public service; findings could help improve services in terms of postpartum care, individual and family therapy, caregiving, extended care, and palliative care.

This research also contributed inspiration for future research. Future studies in women's memory keeping as gendered loss could differentiate between different contexts of mother loss (i.e. is the loss due to absence? Neglect? A lack of interest? A "living loss", such as dementia? Death? And even then, death in what context?). I would also be interested in exploring other facets of the experiences of "motherless mothers"; for instance, aside from the maternal knowledge and advice lost when a mother's memory is lost, how else is the experience of motherhood affected when one's own mother is not there to witness her daughter as a mother? Studies could also explore the different impact the loss of a mother's memory has on daughters versus sons. Men's transition to the role of memory keeping should be studied further, with attention paid specifically to the impact of dominant gender ideologies on the transition. Studies have explored the significance of material objects in helping a mother cope with the loss of a child (Layne, 2005; Wozniak, 2004); future studies could involve an exploration of the importance of memory artefacts in representing a mother's corporeality for children coping with their mother's loss. Finally, this study lays the groundwork for a future project on the importance of family memory, and women's family memory keeping, in the wake of a diagnosis of genetic disease. The autoethnographic chapter presented suggests the diagnosis of genetic disease disrupts family identity and cohesion, despite research that suggests no such disruptions occur (Geelan, 2011). Given what this study has demonstrated regarding the importance of

family memory in helping reconstruct family identity and family cohesion, and given the recent development of genetic testing and the increasing enthusiasm for applying this testing (Finkler, 2005), future research on family memory and genetic disease is deeply warranted. In sum, in providing a better understanding of women's family memory keeping as gendered loss, this research offered valuable contributions to both existing literature and literature that is yet to come.

7.0 Conclusion

The purpose of this feminist, autoethnographic research was to better understand the meaning of family memory-keeping for women and their families, paying particular attention to the ways that dominant gender ideologies shape family memory and the act of preserving family memory. Interviews with twenty-three participants revealed invaluable data regarding the process, the role, the meaning, and the loss of women's family memory keeping. The performance text I created out of portions of this data reflected these themes and added depth, nuance, and complexity to our understanding of women's family memory keeping. The performance text also challenged traditional methods of presenting social science research, provoked questions about representation, and offered new directions for future research. In these ways, my use of a performance text makes a strong contribution to the literature on both methodological and theoretical levels. However, the autoethnographic research design that enabled the creation of this performance text also created complications. I encountered advantages and disadvantages to conducting autoethnographic "insider interviews" that are not currently documented in the autoethnographic literature. These complications suggested though autoethnographic methodologies can result in strong, analytical, evocative pieces (as hopefully demonstrated in the performance text presented here), we still have a long way to go in terms of understanding and critiquing the applications and implications of autoethnographic research.

This study demonstrated despite its absence from the literature, women's family memory keeping is a valuable form of gendered labour (and leisure) that makes significant individual, familial, and social contributions, while simultaneously reproducing dominant gender ideologies and gendered constructions of fatherhood, motherhood, and the family. Through an exploration of the loss of a mother's memory due to illness, death, or absence, I also found the loss of a

mother's memory is both deeply felt, and deeply gendered. However, this study illustrated participants challenging these dominant gender ideologies, as well, and using family memory keeping as a way to resist, critique, and cope. As such, this study speaks to the absence of women's family memory keeping from the gendered work, leisure studies, social construction, and loss literature, contributing a better understanding of both the activity itself and the gendered ideologies that shape the activity, as well. Not only does this study speak to gaps in existing literature, this study makes fresh theoretical contributions to this literature through two new concepts: the notion of the good mother as the "remembering mother", and "compliance leisure". And with these contributions to the literature, this research also provides valuable insight for professionals working to improve policy and services surrounding postpartum care, individual and family therapy, caregiving, extended care, and palliative care.

Understanding women's family memory keeping as gendered work, gendered leisure, gendered social constructions, and gendered loss thus enables us to truly dismiss the notion that women's family memory keeping is "trivial", "limited", and "superficial" (Christensen, 2011, p. 182). Indeed, this research revealed women's memory keeping contributes individuation, love work, kin work, cultural transmission, affiliation, family bonding, and oral history. Existing research links these contributions to many benefits on such as a strong sense of self (Young, 2005), improved coping skills (Pratt & Fiese, 2004), emotional well-being and depth (Stapley & Haviland, 1989), individual and family resilience (Fivush, Bohanek, Robertson, & Duke, 2004), stronger family relationships and kin ties (di Leonardo, 1987; Henderson et al., 1996), better access to social support and social capital (Lowndes, 2004), and improved capacity to navigate difficult family transitions (Anagnost, 2010) and traumas (Layne, 2004). Recognizing and valuing these contributions women make is the first step in O'Reilly's (2010) feminist care ethic,

and this study accomplished this task. Yet, in accordance with O'Reilly's (2010) feminist care ethic, in celebrating and valuing the contributions this hidden, unpaid gendered labour provides, we cannot overlook the dominant gender ideologies that are reproduced through this activity, reifying the labour as essentially feminine. As such, this study contributes findings that women's family memory keeping can reproduce the ideologies of familism and the ethic of care, the naturalization of the father as breadwinner, as unemotional, and as secondary parent, the ideology of the "good mother" as the "remembering mother" (including the notion of women as craft, natural, supermoms), and the construction of the family as the "happy family". Finally, O'Reilly suggests the last step in the feminist care ethic is to imagine through our research alternate ways of being that might place the responsibility for gendered labour on the culture rather than the woman. In this sense, this study offered many fascinating examples of participants, both men and women, resisting and negotiating dominant gender ideologies through memory keeping. Many women offered searing critiques of family memory keeping and identified dominant ideologies of motherhood that were constraining their experiences of mothering. We saw women scorn the role of memory keeper, and we saw men struggle to take the role on. This study thus rose to O'Reilly's challenge to adopt a feminist care ethic, and in doing so, produced an understanding of women's memory keeping that is both celebratory and critical, seeking social value and social change.

In this sense, I propose a major contribution of this project is the recognition of women's family memory keeping as contributing to "the homing of the home". Heidegger (1927) introduced the notion of the "worlding" of the world as the way we give meaning to our world, the way we connect ourselves to the world, the way we experience the world as familiar; the "worlding" we do defines what is possible and then marginalizes elements that might threaten

that definition. Many feminists have critiqued Heidegger's "worlding" as male-centric, focused on men's work in dominating the public sphere (Irigaray, 1984; Young, 2005) and lacking a postcolonial analysis (Spivak, 1985). Yet, to my knowledge, feminists have yet to use Heidegger's "worlding" of the world to propose a critical exploration of women's "homing of the home". Conceptualizing women's family memory work as "the homing of the home" both plays upon Heidegger's male-centric notions of "worlding" and politicizes women's family memory keeping by tying the activity to the postcolonial feminist critique of the "worlding of the world" (Spivak, 1985). What this conceptualization also connotes, however, is the ability to see women's family memory keeping as both the way women make significant and vital contributions to meaning-making in the home, and the way women construct and reproduce a particular kind of home through memory keeping, as well. Women's "homing of the home" through memory keeping gives meaning to the family, connects the family to itself and others, defines what is possible for individual and family identity, yet also marginalizes elements that might threaten that definition by reproducing dominant ideologies of gender and the family. As such, I propose the notion of women's memory keeping as "the homing of the home" and invite future studies to use this conceptualization to better understand both the contributions of women's work in the home and the powerful cultural ideologies shaping that work, as well.

This research offered many potential directions for such future studies proposed in each section and subsection of the discussion. For the purposes of clarity, I will group these proposed future studies here under four main themes: memory and motherhood, memory and masculinity, gender and leisure, and memory and loss. In terms of memory and motherhood, future studies could explore memory keeping in the digital age, examining the generational changes in women's family memory keeping as we move from Canada Post to "e-cards". This could

involve studies on women's social reproduction work via new technologies, for instance, future projects could include exploring cyber kin work, photosharing, performances of motherhood through memory keeping on Facebook, Twitter, or personal blogs. Memory and motherhood studies should also develop the concept of the good mother as a remembering mother by focusing on specific subthemes of memory keeping. For instance, studies should explore dominant ideologies of motherhood in specific memory keeping contexts such as scrapbooking, baby books, or photo albums, adding theoretical depth and breadth to this new concept. These studies should also expose the "discipline" (Doucet, 2007a) or "concentrated effort" (Kinser, 2010) of motherhood, and investigate those instances wherein memory keeping might provide women the space to resist the discipline of motherhood and negotiate mixed feelings about mothering. Indeed, future studies should examine this "discipline" of motherhood further. This study did not, unfortunately, reveal instances wherein women completely renounced memory keeping and refused to perform the work. Studies that explore these rejections of the role of memory keeper, and the subsequent social discipline that accompanies this deviance, would do much to better our understanding of women's memory keeping. Finally, this project inspired much thought surrounding women's leisure. Future studies should both celebrate women's family leisure as contributing to affiliative and purposive family goals, yet critically explore the very notion of having "pure" leisure time, instead theorizing about so-called "contaminated" leisure as possibly resistant to the male-centric notions of entitlement and compartmentalization. I would also be interesting in continuing to develop my concept of "compliance leisure" as an exciting new direction for studies both in femininity and masculinity.

Indeed, this research inspired many ideas surrounding masculinity. In keeping with Doucet's (2007a) deliberately provocative title *Do men mother?*, I propose two future studies on

masculinity and memory: *Do men remember?* And *Do men care?* Future projects should explore the ways in which men contribute to family memory. These studies should keep in mind Doucet's (2007a) caution to remove our "maternal lens" when exploring men's activities and attempt to truly understand not only the contributions men make to memory keeping, but the ways in which men are ideologically constrained by dominant gender ideologies that shape what is acceptable remembering behaviour for men (e.g. relegating men to the role of technological support). Similarly, studies should also investigate the ways in which men contribute to care work in the home via memory keeping. This study revealed a number of instances wherein men took on the role of memory keeper and contributed significantly to providing care work for their families. As more and more men become caregivers in our society (Kramer, 2002), taking on roles typically associated with women, studies that explore the nuances of transition could be deeply beneficial. Finally, in terms of future studies of men's leisure, I would be interested in pursuing projects that speak to the questions raised by this study surrounding men's participation in family leisure possibly being constrained by hegemonic masculinity. Such a study would explore the conceptualization of notions of entitlement and compartmentalization as gendered constraints rather than inherently positive leisure achievements. And such studies would also ask whether men's participation in primarily "fun" family leisure is in fact an example of men's hidden and undervalued family work. In this sense, just as women's family leisure is not always leisurely, perhaps men's family fun is not always fun.

My dissertation research, unfortunately, was not as focused as I would have liked on specific contexts of memory and loss. In the future, I would be interested in exploring women's family memory keeping with specific focuses on different contexts of loss. For instance, different contexts of a mother's memory loss could provoke very different experiences for the

family (i.e. is the loss due to absence? Neglect? A lack of interest? A “living loss”, such as dementia? Death? And even then, death in what context?) I would also be interested in investigating more thoroughly the different impact the loss of a mother’s memory has on daughters versus sons. I think existing studies have revealed fascinating findings regarding the significance of material objects in helping a mother cope with the loss of a child (Layne, 2005; Wozniak, 2004); future studies could involve an exploration of the importance of memory artefacts in representing a mother’s corporeality for children coping with their mother’s loss. Finally, another area of this study that demands further (and more thorough) investigation is the analysis of family memory and genetic disease. Findings from my own family demonstrated the importance of family memory in reconstructing family narrative following the trauma of the diagnosis of genetic disease; future projects could expand upon these findings by developing a study that focuses specifically, and with more depth, on this experience.

One final future direction that spans each of the three themes of motherhood and memory, masculinity and memory, and memory and loss, is the need for further studies on women’s memory keeping that explore intersectionality. To my regret, this study did not develop an intersectional analysis in regards to women’s family memory keeping. Though the analysis I provided was rigorous in attention paid to gender, the study also could have been conceptualized as an investigation into, for example, the construction of Whiteness through family memory keeping. Indeed, despite the range of socio-economic statuses represented, I conclude this dissertation feeling a bit dissatisfied in my abilities to properly interrogate what could have also been an interesting class analysis. Overall, I feel there is much potential for studies surrounding women’s family memory keeping and intersectionality. For instance, how does women’s family memory keeping construct class, race, sexuality, and ability? What are the

different pressures and ideologies impacting memory keeping for women who are single mothers, low-income mothers, wealthy mothers, queer mothers, or mothers with disabilities? This study was overwhelmingly White; are there different social and cultural expectations and practices in terms of memory keeping for mothers depending on race? Intersectionality, in the context of motherhood and memory, masculinity and memory, and memory and loss, would lend future studies of family memory a complexity that was perhaps lacking from this dissertation research.

Despite these limitations, I am confident this dissertation offers significant theoretical contributions to the literature, as well as many practical applications to policy and service delivery. Women's family memory keeping has, to this point, been overlooked by the literature. Through the analysis of interview transcripts with twenty-three interview participants from my own life, this research has demonstrated not only the deep significance of women's family memory keeping but also the deeply gendered nature of the work, itself. Following O'Reilly's feminist care ethic and using bodies of literature from gendered work, gendered leisure, social construction, and trauma and loss, I argued women's family memory keeping is part of women's contributions to "the homing of the home". As such, this dissertation provides both a celebration and critique of women's family memory keeping, and will hopefully inspire many important celebrations and critiques to come.

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Appendices

Appendix A – Individual interview informed consent form

Today's Date

Dear _____:

This study is being conducted by Caitlin Mulcahy under the supervision of Dr. Diana Parry and Dr. Sue Shaw of the Department of Recreation and Leisure Studies at the University of Waterloo. This research will hopefully contribute to a better understanding of mothering and family memory keeping. It will also explore the implications of *not* fulfilling the role of family memory keeping for women and their families.

As a participant in this study, you will be engaging in an interview, discussing your experiences with motherhood and family memory. For instance, we will discuss the following themes and questions: How were your family memories kept? (e.g. photo albums, baby books, home videos, websites) Who was in charge of keeping this memory in your family? What does this family memory mean to you? And so on. You may leave unanswered any question you prefer not to answer.

Participation in this interview process is expected to take approximately one to two hours of your time. Following our discussion, I will send you a copy of your interview transcript via email. There will also be a period several months after our interview where I would touch base to discuss my findings with you. At this point I would hope to receive your feedback on my analysis so as to ensure that your interpretation, if different from mine, is heard. Though no monetary compensation will be allocated, I certainly hope that you will feel that you have benefited from sharing your experiences with me and subsequently the larger academic community.

With your permission the interview will be audio-taped, and with your permission anonymous quotations will be used in the final report. Also with your permission, I will photograph your family memory artefact to use anonymously in the final project. All information collected from participants in this study will be presented and stored anonymously, though you may choose to use your real name. If you choose to remain anonymous, your name will not appear in any report, publication or presentation resulting from this study. You may choose your own pseudonym that will appear in the research. The data will be kept indefinitely and will be securely stored in a locked filing cabinet in the researcher's home. The audiotapes, transcripts, and photographs will be labelled with your pseudonym or a code.

It is important to note that this interview will be confidential and I will make every attempt to protect your anonymity. However, this is an autoethnographic study, and therefore many of the participants are well known to each other and complete anonymity might not always be realistic. If you become uncomfortable with this level of anonymity at any point before, during, or after the interview you can always withdraw yourself and your interview transcript from the study by letting me know how you feel.

If you have any questions about participation in this study, please feel free to ask myself or my supervisors. Our contact information is below. This project has been reviewed by, and received ethics clearance through, the Office of Research Ethics at the University of Waterloo. In the event you have any comments or concerns resulting from your participation in this study, please contact Dr. Susan Sykes at 519-888-4567, Ext. 6005.

Thank you so much for your time.

Caitlin Mulcahy
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CONSENT FORM

I have read the information presented in the information letter about a study being conducted by Caitlin Mulcahy of the Department of Recreation and Leisure Studies at the University of Waterloo. I have had the opportunity to ask any questions related to this study, to receive satisfactory answers to my questions, and any additional details I wanted.

I am aware that I have the option of allowing my interview to be tape recorded to ensure an accurate recording of my responses.

I am also aware that excerpts from the interview may be included in the thesis and/or publications to come from this research, with the understanding that the quotations will be anonymous.

I was informed that I may withdraw my consent at any time without penalty by advising the researcher.

This project has been reviewed by, and received ethics clearance through, the Office of Research Ethics at the University of Waterloo. I was informed that if I have any comments or concerns resulting from my participation in this study, I may contact the Director, Office of Research Ethics at (519) 888-4567 ext. 6005.

With full knowledge of all foregoing, I agree, of my own free will, to participate in this study.

YES NO

I agree to have my interview tape recorded.

YES NO

I agree to the use of anonymous quotations in any course paper that comes of this research.

YES NO

Participant Name: _____ (Please print)

Participant Signature: _____

Witness Name: _____ (Please print)

Witness Signature: _____

Date: _____

Appendix B – Group interview informed consent form

Date

Title of Project: Women's family memory-keeping as gendered work:

A feminist autoethnographic excavation of the memories our mothers keep for us

Organizers: Caitlin Mulcahy, Dr. Diana Parry, and Dr. Sue Shaw, University of Waterloo,
Department of Recreation and Leisure Studies, (902) 463-2796

This session focuses on motherhood and family memory and will be facilitated by Caitlin Mulcahy.

Participation in this session is voluntary and involves a one to two hour discussion of the issues associated with motherhood and family memory keeping. There are no known or anticipated risks to your participation in this session. You may decline answering any questions you feel you do not wish to answer and may decline contributing to the session in other ways if you so wish. All information you provide will be considered confidential and grouped with responses from other participants. You will not be identified by name in the report that the facilitator produces for this session unless you wish to use your real name and forego the use of a pseudonym. The information collected from this session will be kept for a period of seven years in a locked filing cabinet.

Given the group format of this session we will ask you to keep in confidence information that identifies or could potentially identify a participant and/or his/her comments. If you have any questions about participation in this session, please feel free to discuss these with the facilitator, or later, by contacting me at (902) 463-2796. You will receive a copy of the interview transcript in the months that follow via email.

I would like to assure you that this study has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through the Office of Research Ethics at the University of Waterloo. However, the final decision about participation is yours. Should you have comments or concerns resulting from your participation in this study, please contact Dr. Susan Sykes in the Office of Research Ethics at 519-888-4567, Ext. 36005 or ssykes@uwaterloo.ca.

Thank you for your assistance with this project.

Yours sincerely,

Caitlin Mulcahy

Agreement to Participate

I have read the information presented in the information letter about the session being facilitated by Caitlin Mulcahy. I have had the opportunity to ask the facilitator any questions related to this session, to receive satisfactory answers to my questions, and any additional details I wanted. I am aware that I may withdraw from the session without penalty at any time by advising the facilitator of this decision.

This project has been reviewed by, and received ethics clearance through, the Office of Research Ethics at the University of Waterloo. I understand that if I have any comments or concerns resulting from my participation in this study, I may contact the Director, Office of Research Ethics at 519-888-4567 ext. 36005 or ssykes@uwaterloo.ca.

With full knowledge of all foregoing, I agree, of my own free will, to participate in this session and to keep in confidence information that could identify specific participants and/or the information they provided.

Print Name

Signature

Date

Witness

Appendix C – Digital images informed consent form

Consent to Digital Images in Teaching, Presentations, and Publications

Sometimes a certain image clearly shows a particular feature or detail that would be helpful in teaching or when presenting the study results at a scientific presentation or in a publication.

I agree to allow digital images of items belonging to me to be used in teaching, scientific presentations and/or publications with the understanding that I will not be personally photographed or identified by name. I am aware that I may withdraw this consent at any time without penalty.

I was informed that if I have any comments or concerns resulting from my participation in this study, I may contact the Director, Office of Research Ethics, at 519-888-4567 ext. 36005 or ssykes@uwaterloo.ca.

Print Name: _____

Signature of Participant _____

Dated: _____

Witnessed _____

Appendix D –Interview guide (used for individual and group interviews)

1. If you have brought a family memory artefact, let's begin by talking about it.

Prompts:

- *What is it?*
- *Where does it come from?*
- *Who kept it?*
- *Why do you think it was kept?*
- *What does it mean to you? Your family?*
- *How important is this artefact to you? Your family?*

2. Let's get into your experiences with family memory in your family of origin.

Prompts:

- *How were your family memories kept? (e.g. photo albums, baby books, home videos, websites)*
- *Do these memories represent good times for you or bad times? Both?*
- *Where were they kept?*
- *Were they often revisited?*
- *Who were they shown to?*
- *How will these family memories be passed down? Or, how were they passed down?*
- *What does this memory mean to you?*
- *What do you think it means to your family?*
- *What did you get out of having this family memory?*

3. Now let's talk about the keeper of this memory.

Prompts:

- *Who was in charge of keeping this memory in your family?*
- *How would you characterize this person(s)'s methods of memory-keeping? Were they very organized? Very disorganized? Was it an art-form? A mess?*
- *What kinds of memories did they tend to include?*
- *Did they leave anything out?*
- *Do you wish they had done anything differently?*

4. Now we'll turn to present day family memory keeping.

Prompts:

- *Who keeps the family memory now?*
- *What kind of family memory do they keep?*
- *When did that role begin for them?*
- *Why did they start keeping the family memory?*
- *How do you feel about their role?*
- *Do you see this role as work? Leisure? Both?*

4.a. If the participant indicates that *they* are the family memory keeper...

- *How do you keep your memories (e.g. photo albums, baby books, home videos, websites)*
- *Where are they kept?*
- *Are they often revisited?*

- *Who do you show them to?*
- *When did this role begin for you?*
- *How did you come to take on this role?*
- *What kind of training, skill, or talents are needed for this role?*
- *Why you? Why not another family member?*
- *How much time do you think you spend on memory keeping?*
- *How will these family memories be passed down?*
- *How would you characterize your methods of memory-keeping? Are you very organized? Very disorganized? Is it an art-form? A mess?*
- *What kinds of memories do you tend to include?*
- *Do leave anything out?*
- *Do you wish they had done anything differently?*
- *How do you feel about this role?*
- *What does this memory mean to you?*
- *What do you think it means to your family?*
- *Are you doing a good job?*
- *When do you think this job will end?*

5. Now we'll talk a bit about what kinds of memories are kept.

Prompts:

- *Are these memories mostly of happy times?*
- *What do these happy times mean for you as a family?*
- *Are any bad memories represented?*
- *Are any bad memories not represented?*
- *What do these bad times mean for you as a family?*
- *Why do you think certain kinds of memories are kept, and others are forgotten?*

6. Here we're going to start talking about the differences between men and women.

Prompts:

- *In your family, is there a difference between what is expected of men and what is expected of women in terms of family memory? If so, what are those differences?*
- *What about specifically archiving family memory – are there different expectations for men than for women?*
- *How does family memory play into your role in your family, if at all?*
- *Have you ever kept a diary, baby-book, photo album, scrapbook, website, blog, and so on, that has preserved family memory?*
- *Do you think that being a mother changes your responsibilities in terms of family memory? If yes, how so?*
- *Do you think that being a father changes your responsibilities in terms of family memory? If yes, how so?*

7. Finally, I'd like to talk about what happens when we lose our family memory keepers.

Prompts:

- *If you have experienced it, describe the experience of losing a family memory keeper.*
- *What is lost with the loss of a family memory keeper?*
- *Who takes over the position?*