Great Expectations: Teenage Pregnancy and Intergenerational Transmission

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Abstract

Thirteen women composed the life stories that form the basis of this thesis. The women, each with experience of pregnancy before the age of twenty, are connected as mothers and daughters across generations in six white, working class families in a setting in North East England. Their accounts are a medium for exploring intergenerational transmission of values, beliefs and practices relating to young women's sexual relationships and pregnancies. Current UK policy defines teenage pregnancy as a social problem and a ten-year plan aims to halve the rate of under-eighteen conceptions in England by 2010. Despite a substantial body of teenage pregnancy literature, relatively little attention has been given to women's representations of how they learnt about sex and relationships, began sexual relationships with men, became pregnant and decided what to do next. The research addresses this gap in one UK area.

The women's accounts, produced in biographical narrative interviews, show how professional anecdotes about a cycle of teenage pregnancy ignore historically changing definition of some pregnancies (and by implication, some sexual relationships) as 'out of order'. This is reflected in a vocabulary shift from 'illegitimacy' to 'single parenthood' to 'teenage pregnancy', with changing stigma and consequences for individual women. Interview data suggest no intergenerational transmission of a message promoting teenage pregnancy, rather the degree to which pregnancy is contingent on circumstance and linked with reproduction of gender and social class positions. Women expressed mixed feelings about becoming a mother, grandmother and great-grandmother "too young", as well as investment in these social identities.

Transmission of information about sexuality and sex has improved across the generations. However, younger women's accounts indicate that they are still not equipped to discuss and negotiate pleasurable and safer sex within heterosexual relationships. The women were generally positive about relationships with men, and a significant minority referred to the impact of male violence. The women's accounts illustrate intergenerational exchange of practical (eg childcare) and emotional

support, as well as transmission of aspiration for a "good job", although no transfer of financial wealth.

Acknowledgements

Special thanks to the thirteen women who took a risk in producing a life story in interviews with me, someone they had not met before.

Many other people have helped me produce this thesis, some without knowing how important their contribution has been. I want to thank:

I want to say a big "thank you" to my sister Hilary. She watched over the PhD and with great tact pulled me through the times when I was close to giving up. Shortly after the start of the studentship, our father Ron died suddenly. We inherited files of family-tree materials that he had been working on, including photographs, letters and other documents that I had not seen before. They were an amazing gift and they set off many memories of our mother Marjorie who died in 1991, and grandparents Dora, Ron, Isabella and Jack. I dedicate the thesis to Hilary and, in the spirit of intergenerational transmission, to my daughters and son in memory of their grandparents and great-grandparents, with love.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

This thesis presents an exploratory study of intergenerational transmission of values, beliefs and practices relating to teenage women's pregnancies in Wansbeck[1], North East England. Thirteen women connected as mothers and daughters, each with experience of pregnancy under the age of twenty, composed versions of their life stories in individual interviews[2]. The women are white[3] and working class[4] by background, and have lived all or most of their lives in the research area. Their age range at the time of the fieldwork was seventeen to sixty-nine years. Their accounts of life events and experiences cover the period from the 1930s to the beginning of the 2000s, and are the medium for exploration of intergenerational transmission.

Framed by late twentieth century teenage pregnancy discourse (Social Exclusion Unit 1999) that constructs some young women's pregnancies, births and ways of mothering as problems to be tackled (Blair 1999), the women's pregnancies are defined as having happened when they were 'too young', a definition questioned, for example, by Phoenix (1991). The teenage label that

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[1] Wansbeck is in South East Northumberland on the coast of North East England. It is an area challenged by what MacDonald and Marsh (2001:373) describe as 'all the objective problems of 'social exclusion' in extreme form'. The impact of the decline of heavy industry includes high rates of unemployment, and economic recovery is slow (Beatty *et al.* 2005).

[2] Use of 'version' does not question the veracity of the women's accounts, rather acknowledges the range of ways of representing experiences (Darlington and Scott 2002, Allende 2003). A biographical narrative interview method (Chamberlayne *et al.* 2000, Wengraf 2005) invited each participant to compose a life story version across two interviews, as discussed in Chapter 3.

[3] Whiteness is often unremarked as a demographic feature (Bhavnani and Phoenix 1994, Nayak 1999). The term refers to the majority UK population. 98.1% of the Northumberland population describe themselves as White British, compared with 87% of the English population (Northumberland Information Network 2004). 99% of people in Wansbeck identified as white in the 2001 census (National Statistics Online 2001).

[4] Thompson (1980 [1963]:939) suggests that class is not a fixable concept, rather a 'happening' of social relationships. There is diversity of experience within class positions at given historical points (Bertaux and Bertaux-Wiame 1997), and the meaning of being in a particular class position changes generationally. There is potential for social mobility in family groups within and across generations, although this can be limited by historically specific factors. For example, Humphrys (2007) discusses why UK social mobility is presently at its lowest point for decades (Blanden *et al.* 2005). Stenning (2005) refers to the importance of working class studies at this time of growing social polarisation.

retrospectively defines the older women's pregnancies as part of a cycle of deviance is not relevant to their experiences, as marital status rather than age was the primary marker of convention at the historical points at which they gave birth. The pregnancy of one of the women, who was not married when she had a baby under twenty in the 1930s, was branded by the adjective 'illegitimate'. A shift of vocabulary from 'illegitimacy' to 'single motherhood' to 'teenage pregnancy' has reproduced stigma in contemporary forms across generations, with different consequences for the women concerned, as I shall discuss further in Chapter 2.

At the beginning of the twenty-first century, teenage pregnancy is high on the New Labour[5] government's political agenda as a public health policy issue (Botting and Dunnell 2000, Tripp and Viner 2005, Bonell *et al.* 2007), having been identified as a focus for targeted intervention by the previous Conservative government (Department of Health 1992). This was in response to the UK not matching other Western European countries where rates of teenage births[6] declined from the 1970s[7] (United Nations Children's Fund 2001). New Labour, in power from 1997, linked teenage pregnancy with the risk of social exclusion[8] (Department of Health 1998, Department of Social Security 1998, Home Office Ministerial Group on the Family 1998) and in 1998 commissioned the Social Exclusion Unit to review evidence for prevention of teenage pregnancy (Swann *et al.* 2003). In 2001 a Teenage Pregnancy Strategy (Social Exclusion Unit 1999) introduced an agenda for research and service development, together with a target of a fifty per cent reduction in

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[5] Hills (1998) outlines key themes of the New Labour approach to policy making, including the promotion of paid work as a way of ensuring social inclusion, commitment to reducing inequalities, and Treasury contribution to welfare and social policy formation.
[6] Arai (2003a) and Lawlor and Shaw (2004) highlight a misleading lack of precision in differentiating between rates of conceptions and births.
[7] Although teenage pregnancy rates in the UK remain the highest in Western Europe, reduction has been achieved in England against the Teenage Pregnancy Strategy baseline year of 1998. In contrast, the current trend in the European countries that are used as comparison areas for the UK is towards unchanging or increasing rates (Wellings *et al.* 2005).
[8] The government's social policy centres on the concepts of social inclusion and exclusion. The idea of social exclusion originated in France during the 1970s, with reference to groups of people disconnected from paid employment. The European Union adopted the term in its social policy, and the New Labour government set up a Social Excusion Unit in the Cabinet Office for a joined-up approach across departments (Pierson 2002).

under-eighteen rates of pregnancy between 2001 and 2010 in England[9]. There was an interim target to reduce rates by fifteen per cent by 2004, from an average rate of 46.6 per 1000 young women aged fifteen to seventeen in the baseline year 1998 (Office for National Statistics 2006). The Teenage Pregnancy Strategy shares the aims of the NHS Plan (Department of Health 2000a) to reduce socio-economic and health inequalities. It links with other government initiatives with similarly challenging targets to improve health and increase social inclusion through investment in housing, education and jobs in the most disadvantaged areas in England, for example, the Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy[10] (Social Exclusion Unit 2001), Sure Start and Sure Start Plus[11], and Connexions[12]. The strategy is a key policy instrument contributing to achieving the five outcomes[13] of *Every Child Matters* (Department for Education and Skills 2004), as required by the Children Act 2004. The Public Health White Paper *Choosing Health* (Department of Health 2004b) also includes a focus on improving young people's sexual health.

The Teenage Pregnancy Unit, with joint funding from the Department of Health, Department for Education and Skills, Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, Department of Work and Pensions and Home Office, managed strategy implementation and moved forward an agenda for research and practice development in England. The strategy was translated into local action plans, championed by multi-agency Partnership Boards with a remit to encourage best practice across organisational and professional boundaries, and supported by

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[9] The Scottish, Welsh and Northern Ireland offices have adapted the strategy. In Scotland the target is a twenty per cent reduction in conceptions in the thirteen to fifteen age group by 2010, with 1995 as the baseline year (The Scottish Office 1999). In Wales the aim is to reduce the teenage pregnancy rate as part of an overall sexual health strategy, with no specific target (National Assembly for Wales 2000). An action plan in Northern Ireland has a target of a twenty per cent reduction in births to all teenage mothers, and a forty per cent reduction in births to young women under seventeen by 2007 (Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety 2002).

[10] The strategy is outlined in *A New Commitment to Neighbourhood Renewal: National Strategy Action Plan* (Social Exclusion Unit 2001).

[11] The Sure Start programme was introduced to support parents of children under the age of four in selected geographical areas. Sure Start Plus was set up as a separate programme supporting teenage parents.

[12] Connexions is a national initiative that offers all young people, 13 to 19, access to a Personal Adviser. Support is targeted to those young people who need it most.

[13] The five outcomes are: being healthy, staying safe, enjoying and achieving, making a positive contribution and enjoying economic wellbeing.

Teenage Pregnancy Coordinators[14]. Progress against the target reduction in under-eighteen conception rates has been regularly reviewed at regional level (Teenage Pregnancy Unit 2005) and nationally by an Independent Advisory Group on Teenage Pregnancy established in 2002. There was just over an eleven per cent drop (to 41.5 per 1000 young women aged fifteen to seventeen) in the under-eighteen conception rate in England between the 2001 implementation of the strategy and 2004 (Office for National Statistics 2006[15]), missing the interim target of a fifteen per cent reduction[16].

For young women who become mothers, local action plans include coordinated support for their participation in education, training and employment (Dawson *et al.* 2005). The balance of strategy action appears to have shifted recently from support for younger mothers and their partners to prevention of conception (Department for Education and Skills 2006). This may relate to the approach of the 2010 deadline for the target reduction in conception rates, as progress towards meeting this target is an NHS Primary Care Trust Performance Indicator and a cross-cutting indicator in the Local Government Best Value Performance Indicator Set (Teenage Pregnancy Unit 2004a).

In the beginning …

The research focus linked with the objective outlined in the Northumberland Teenage Pregnancy Strategy document (Northumberland NHS Health Authority 2001) to halve the rate of unintended under-eighteen pregnancies across the county by 2010. The baseline rate for Northumberland in 1998 was 41.1 conceptions per 1000 young women aged fifteen to seventeen, and the target rate for 2010 is 20.6 (Selman 2002, Stonebridge 2002). The research area is in a socio-economically disadvantaged corner of Northumberland with a high rate of teenage pregnancy relative to the rest of the county and country (Turner 1999). In a profile of teenage parenthood prepared for Northumberland NHS

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[14] Coordinators were appointed in each top-tier local authority area in England.

[15] The conception and birth data are published with a two year time delay.

[16] On 24 February 2006, the 2004 teenage pregnancy rates were reported in UK national newspapers. *The Daily Telegraph*'s front page headline announced that the £150 million plan had failed to cut pregnancies. *The Times* reported a fall in teenage pregnancy rates on page 28, and acknowledged that although the government had missed the target reduction of fifteen per cent it was by a small margin.

Health Authority, Selman *et al.* (2000) identified Wansbeck as having the second highest rate of teenage conceptions in England. For the three year period 1998 to 2000, immediately before the launch of the Teenage Pregnancy Strategy, the average conception rate in Wansbeck was 65.6 per 1000 young women aged fifteen to seventeen, compared with an average rate for England of 44.9, and the percentage of teenage conceptions in Wansbeck leading to abortion was thirty-eight per cent, compared with thirty-nine per cent in Northumberland and forty-four per cent in England (Selman 2002). The Wansbeck conception rate fell by over eleven per cent between the periods 1998-2000 and 2001-2003 (Northumberland Teenage Pregnancy Team 2005) and Northumberland was awarded amber/green status in relation to the ten year strategy reduction target, based on progress up to 2004 (Office for National Statistics 2004). The Government News Network[17] announced in 2005 that the rate of teenage pregnancy in Wansbeck had fallen by fifteen per cent.

Culture and intergenerational transmission

The idea for the study developed in response to local professional anecdotes about an intergenerational cycle of teenage pregnancy produced by, and perpetuating, a particular set of cultural values, beliefs and practices in the research area. Judith Stonebridge, Coordinator for Teenage Pregnancy and Sexual Health Strategies for Northumberland NHS Care Trust, reproduced this view in an article in a local newspaper (Houldcraft 2003:11): "At the moment we are seeing second and third generation teenage mums and what we want to do is try and break that cycle". Her statement reflected assumptions about the undesirability of pregnancy under the age of twenty, caused by and causing social disadvantage across generations, as expressed for example by Hudson and Ineichen (1991), Kane and Wellings (1999) and Blears (2002). A sense of inevitability was expressed locally: "You'll never stop young people round here getting pregnant" was one comment overheard in a work setting and shared in group discussion by a participant at a Northumberland Teenage Pregnancy Action Planning Day during 2003. Similar expressions have appeared nationally (Blair 1999) and internationally (UNICEF 2001). Blair (1999:4-5) refers to

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[17] http://www.gnn.gov.uk/content/detail, accessed 1 August 2007.

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'blighted futures' that follow teenage pregnancy, and the introduction to the UNICEF report suggests that:

> (T)he child of a teenage mother is more likely to live in poverty, to grow up without a father, to become a victim of neglect or abuse, to do less well at school, to become involved in crime, to abuse drugs and alcohol, and eventually to become a teenage parent and begin the cycle all over again. (UNICEF 2001:3).

Reference to a cycle of teenage pregnancy and deviance (Heald 2007) is suggestive of repetition of 'the same thing'. The various meanings of women's pregnancies under the age of twenty, shaped by historical time and geographical place, will be explored in the thesis through the medium of the women's life story versions. The significance of symbolic 'space' in relation to in or out of marriage, and in or out of expected chronological order of life events, linked with changing, culturally sanctioned ideas of respectability and social order, will also be examined.

The correlation of young women's pregnancies with lists of serious social problems as well as criminal activity is problematic. The suggestion of an almost inevitable relationship supports the idea of transmission of cultural deficits that predispose towards deviant behaviour and disorder. This theory has been questioned by Bonell (2004) and by MacDonald and March (2005) on the grounds of their empirical evidence of the significant contribution of economic marginalisation to social instability. Politicians comment on, and authors of policy documents refer to, a 'low' level of aspiration, motivation to pursue higher education, and ambition for 'good' jobs in some communities (Blair 1999, Connexions Service[18] *et al.* 2001, Blears 2002, Patten 2004, Department for Education and Skills 2006), often without adequate acknowledgement of the socio-economic factors that constitute backdrops to women's learning and employment opportunities. By contrast, Kane and Wellings (1999) are careful to suggest that people who are already disadvantaged <u>may</u> lack aspiration, linking this possibility with a gap in terms of knowing people who have professional careers.

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[18] The Connexions Service provides integrated information, advice, guidance and personal development opportunities for all 13 – 19 year olds in England.

Wansbeck is an almost exclusively white, working class area with a current high unemployment rate. Contrary to the idea of intergenerational transmission of acute social disadvantage in the research area, the current high rate of male unemployment is a consequence of the restructuring of the British economy, in particular the closure of the mines across the Northumberland coalfield. Heavy industries were until recently a source of relatively well-paid jobs for men, as were manufacturing companies (producing garments for UK retail stores, for example) for women. Twenty-first century employment opportunities for men and women without higher qualifications who want to work locally are generally restricted to low paid, insecure jobs in the service sector.

While the conceptions of culture that underpin anecdotes about a generational cycle of teenage pregnancy in the research area are problematic, it is important to consider cultural aspects of explanation of teenage pregnancy. The intergenerational feature of the study provides an opportunity to think differently about the relationship between culture and changing social and material conditions. The thesis aims to explore the complex concept of culture (Williams 1983, Hall 1997) that covers intricate inter-connections between values, beliefs, practices, emotional attachments, expectations and opportunities in various social settings. People are shaped by socio-economic backgrounds which map ways in which lives should be lived at particular times in particular places (Williamson 1982). For example, ways of relating to others are 'hung' on sets of norms (Simpson 2003:660) which, though linked to historical and geographical points and social class positions (Phoenix 1988, Phoenix 1991, Skeggs 1997, Lawler 2000, Skeggs 2004), are never static.

Phoenix (1988:154) proposes a dynamic definition of culture that includes 'analyses of material factors', arguing that a focus on cultural differences has tended to obscure similarities between the late twentieth century socio-economic contexts within which black women and white women have become pregnant under the age of twenty. Economic practices are implicated in processes of gendered inequality (Devine and Savage 2000, Phoenix 2001) that produce circumstances within which unintended teenage pregnancies occur. Skeggs (1997), in her exposition of ways in which a group of white

working-class women in the North West of England[19] negotiated cultural discourses of femininity, caring and motherhood, joins Phoenix (1988) in highlighting how working class women are classed as failures in relation to contemporary ideas about respectable mothers.

Curious about the familiar (Okely 1996) local anecdote of a cycle of teenage pregnancy, Judith Stonebridge and Patrick Price (Lead Manager for Health Improvement with Northumberland NHS Care Trust) approached social scientists at Newcastle University to discuss the possibility of researching teenage pregnancy from the angle of intergenerational transmission. Professor Diane Richardson and Dr Robin Humphrey, in the then Department of Sociology and Social Policy, prepared a research proposal with them, and they secured Economic and Social Research Council CASE[20] award funding. The submission of the proposal was timely, coinciding with the launch of the Teenage Pregnancy Strategy for England. Northumberland NHS Care Trust co-funded the CASE studentship which was advertised nationally. I applied and was successful at interview in May 2002, and left employment as a North East Teenage Pregnancy Coordinator with knowledge of the policy context and some useful contacts. I discuss the implications of my approach to the study in Chapter 3.

The research sample

A strength and limitation of the study is the focus on women's accounts, and I discuss the process of deciding to interview women in Chapter 3. I did not research the women's experiences in isolation, as they positioned themselves intergenerationally in relation to men (their fathers, grandfathers, sons, brothers and uncles) as well as to women, as significant others in their lives. I made no assumption about the sexual identity of the women who took part in interviews, and all of them talked about sex and relationships with men[21]. Their versions of

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[19] Skeggs conducted a longitudinal ethnographic study with eighty-three white working-class women over eleven years, from the point at which they began caring courses at a local college of further education.
[20] CASE studentships are funded through a Collaborative Award for Science and Engineering (http://www.esrcsocietytoday.ac.uk/ESRCInfoCentre), accessed 1 July 2007.
[21] This may reflect the teenage pregnancy focus of the study.

life stories include a significant amount of detail about their relationships with men as sexual partners, husbands and fathers of their children. Eight of the fifteen[22] men with whom the women had had babies as teenagers were under twenty when they became fathers, most being one or two years older than their partners. Five were in their twenties and two were significantly older. The majority of identified fathers of babies born to women under the age of twenty are not teenagers (Bury 1984, Hardy *et al.* 1990, Cheesbrough *et al.* 1999, Hirst 2003). Ferris' (1993:291) reference to the pregnancies of 'careless teenagers' does not acknowledge the involvement of older men in the conceptions of some young women, and is an example of the conflation of teenage pregnancy with teenage sexuality (as for example in Arai 2003b). This can be misleading and highlights the importance of gender and age specificity and focus (Gelder[23] 2002).

This study does not include analysis of data produced by women who have been in social care, who are statistically more likely to become pregnant as a teenager than other young women (Social Exclusion Unit 1999). Barn and Mantovani (2006) highlight the paucity of information about the experiences of young women who become pregnant as teenagers while in or leaving care. However the intergenerational aspect of the research mitigated against the participation of women with experiences of social care, as provision of care by the state is often needed at the point of disruption of relationships with primary caregivers, including mothers. During the recruitment phase of the research a local housing project was considered a potential route to participants, but their work with pregnant teenagers was mostly with young homeless women with little or no contact with their families. As it happened, women in three family groups gave accounts of their involvement with Social Services because of male partner violence and abuse, illustrating the level of family disruption that can lead to social care, that is also linked with some teenage pregnancies (see for example Wiggins *et al.* 2005).

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[22] Two women had had two children as teenagers, each with a different father.
[23] Gelder (2002) produced a literature review *Boys and Young Men: 'Half of the Solution' to the Issue of Teenage Pregnancy*, for an evaluation of (Teenage Pregnancy) Boys and Young Men's Worker posts in North East England.

The three generation sampling criterion produced a small, tightly defined sample that is not representative of all women who have had a pregnancy and birth under the age of twenty. The women's accounts can however contribute to understanding of the phenomenon of teenage pregnancy (Plummer 1995, Buxton *et al.* 2005, Rustin 2006), providing an opportunity to explore what it is 'all about' in terms of 'relationships, processes, causal links, contradictions, shifts in meaning' (Bertaux and Bertaux-Wiame 1997:95). There is no intention to make comparison with other areas of the county, region or UK, although the findings may inform strategic discussion and policy and practice development in areas that have a similar socio-economic profile. This would be in line with the moderate generalisation encouraged by Williams (2002).

Introduction to the women who participated in the research

The thirteen women who took part in the study are introduced at this point, and a more detailed overview of the contexts of the women's pregnancies follows in Chapter 2. This sequence is a response to the dominance of current impersonal teenage pregnancy discourses, which are however implicitly gendered (Griffin 1997). They focus on young women while employing gender neutral terms such as 'young people' and 'parents'. For example, a gender sensitivity test of the Teenage Pregnancy Strategy document (Social Exclusion Unit 1999) identified one hundred and sixty-six uses of the term 'young people', five of 'young women' and one of 'young men' (Alldred 2005)[24]. Corlyon and McGuire (1999) and Tabberer (2000) similarly interchange 'young parents' with 'young women'. An example of inconsistent rather than imprecise terms is in Letherby *et al.*'s (2005) report of the findings of a research project involving pregnant teenage women and young parents. They use 'young people' throughout until the final paragraph when, in discussing research dilemmas, they switch to 'children' and transmit the idea of 'children' having children. This

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[24] Alldred gave a presentation at a seminar organised by the Gender Statistics Users' Group on gender statistics and the Teenage Pregnancy Strategy, in November 2005.

might suggest ambivalence about young people's sexuality and capacity to parent.

The women's life story versions provide an opportunity to examine similarities and differences in young women's experiences of sexuality, sex with men, pregnancy and becoming a mother, within and between generational groups in one geographical area. They are a medium for exploration of the situated meanings and complexities that are collapsed into the term 'teenage pregnancy' (Aggleton *et al.* 1998), as suggested by the Chief Executive of Salford Primary Care Trust in her reference to 'simple statistics and complex causes' during her presentation at the third anniversary of the launch of the Teenage Pregnancy Strategy (Robinson 2002). Pregnancy is not a discrete experience in the lives of the women who participated in the research, and their interpretations of interconnected life experiences (Coles 1995, Pile and Thrift 1995, Antze and Lambek 1996, Erben 1998) complement the body of literature addressing girls' experiences of growing up (see for example Walkerdine *et al.* 2001), young women's sexual encounters and relationships with men (see for example Holland *et al.* 1998, Richardson 2000, Hockey *et al.* 2007), and teenage pregnancy (see for example Phoenix 1991).

The aim of the research was to explore intergenerational transmission of values, beliefs and practices relating to teenage pregnancy in the research area. Accordingly, the criterion for recruitment to the study was women in at least three consecutive generations, connected as mothers and daughters, having had a child under the age of twenty and prepared to take part in two interviews within a six-month period. The women who participated span generations in six discrete family groups. Each woman was invited to construct a version of her life story using the biographical narrative interview method (Chamberlayne *et al.* 2000, Wengraf 2005) that I describe in Chapter 3. The women's life story versions, produced in individual interviews, collectively cover the period from the 1930s to the 2000s. In the box on the following page the

women are grouped in their generational[25] positions at the time of fieldwork, some having moved into them well ahead of the majority of women in their respective age cohorts. Throughout the thesis these markers of status, together with women's ages at time of interview, are in brackets following quotes from transcripts, to situate their experiences. The decades refer to the broad historical points at which they gave birth under the age of twenty. The names[26] of the women who took part in interviews are in bold font. The women whose names are in regular font did not participate in interviews for various reasons. During the course of fieldwork two women decided not to take part, one because she did not want to "go over the past", and another because of intergenerational conflict. Three women had died and one was seriously ill at time of interview during 2003 and 2004. The women appear in their daughters' and granddaughters' accounts.

'Great-great grandmothers' (1930s): Hannah and Isabella

'Great-grandmothers' (1950/60s): Iris, Brenda, Norma, Dorothy, **Barbara**, **Mary**

'Grandmothers' (1970/80s): **Susan, Joan, Carole, Emma, Dawn and Linda**

'Mothers' (2000s): **Natalie, Sara, Laura, Joanne, Hayley**

I use inverted commas to problematise the generational groupings. For example, Emma in the 'grandmother' group is not a grandmother, as the three generation experience of pregnancy under twenty involves herself, her mother and her grandmother, spanning the 1930s to the 1980s. Her analysis of why she is not (yet) a grandmother is discussed in Chapter 5.

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[25] This relates to the women's 'biological' rather than 'social' generational position (as discussed in Pilcher's (2005) review of *Mannheim's Sociology of Generations*). Biological generation refers to reproductive connections, whereas social generation locates people in socio-historical structure, an example being the emotional involvement in the events of the Vietnam War of American young people, who can be defined as the Vietnam War generation (O'Donnell 1985). Kertzer (2005) highlights the difference between biological generation and birth/age cohort, and the importance of using the terms appropriately.
[26] To protect the women's confidentiality, the names used in the thesis are pseudonyms and some biographical details have been changed.

At the time of the study eleven of the thirteen women lived in small towns in Wansbeck within a relatively short distance of each other. A mother and daughter living in an area adjacent to Wansbeck and socio-economically similar[27], took part in pilot interviews[28]. This was at the point at which it became apparent that fewer Wansbeck families than local professionals had expected met the three generation criterion. Because of the possibility of the method not producing adequate data, it would have been a risk to pilot it with women from the small sample in Wansbeck. A connection with this area did in fact emerge during fieldwork, as one of the women recruited in Wansbeck had been born and spent her early childhood there before moving to Wansbeck (where, as she said, her parents had been "born and bred") in her early teenage years.

Four women had always lived in the research area, and five more had never lived outside of North East England[29]. Women's movement in and out of Wansbeck and the North-East had followed male (father or partner) employment opportunities within the UK and abroad. Persistent male unemployment in the region was highlighted as early as the 1960s, for example by Thomson (1969) who explained it as a consequence of reliance on declining heavy industries. One of the women's fathers relocated from the research area to another part of North East England following what Hudson (1989:357) describes as 'alternative male-employing manufacturing activities away from the coalfields'. An exception to men's journeys for work was Mary's daily travel from Wansbeck to her job in Newcastle upon Tyne in the 1950s.

The women are introduced over the next five pages with some of their biographical detail produced in interviews. They are presented in generational rather than family groups, to provide the maximum degree of anonymity.

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[27] It is described as one of the poorest areas in England, excluded from the benefits of UK economic prosperity (Newcastle Teenage Pregnancy Team 2002).
[28] I used pilot interviews to assess the fit of the biographical narrative interview method (Wengraf 2005) to the exploratory aim of the research, and included data from them in analysis, because of their value in relation to the theme of intergenerational transmission.
[29] The greatest distance between the North East towns in which women have lived is approximately twenty miles.

The 'mothers' (2000s)

The five youngest participants gave birth in the early 2000s aged sixteen to eighteen, and were one or two years older when fieldwork began.

Partners and children

- Each of the five women had one child at time of interview.

- Each of four (of the five) had been in a relationship with the man who was the father of her baby for one to three years prior to taking part.

- One of these four had been engaged to be married when she became pregnant. The engagement had been broken off by the time of her participation in the study, and although she represented the relationship as ongoing at the time of first interview, it had ended at the point at which fieldwork was complete. Regular contact was however being maintained because of their child.

- The other three of these four women became engaged to be married after they became pregnant, and were engaged at the time of interview.

- The fifth woman found out she was pregnant after she had ended a short-term relationship because of physical violence, and she continued with the pregnancy. At the time of interview she had been in a relationship with another man for a year and was engaged to be married.

- The fathers of the babies already born to these five women were eighteen and nineteen years of age at the time of the births.

- By the end of fieldwork one woman was intentionally pregnant with her fiancé (not the father of her first child) who was over ten years older than her. Two women were about to have another 'unplanned'[30] child with the same men. One of these three expectant women was still a teenager.

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[30] 'Family planning' is a misnomer in the sense that nobody can plan to have a baby, only create an opportunity for conception, such as not use contraception on occasions of heterosexual vaginal intercourse, or make use of donor semen. I use 'unplanned' here in relation to pregnancies that are not hoped for, and discuss the concept further in Chapter 5.

Homes

- Four of the five women were living in social housing at the time of their interviews, three with their baby, and one with both her partner and baby.

- One was living, with partner and child, in privately rented accommodation.

Income

- All five women were reliant on state financial support at the time of their interviews.

- Three, who became pregnant after either leaving or disengaging from school, had had periods of employment in relatively low-paid and insecure factory, administrative and food retail outlet jobs. One had had both a day and an evening job. Another lost her job when she informed her employer of her pregnancy.

- The two with no experience of employment had become pregnant while at school.

- Each of the five youngest women had a plan to move into paid employment at a point appropriate to her sense of responsibility as a mother.

- Two of the fathers were respectively unemployed and claiming incapacity benefit at time of interview. Another two were in employment, one working in a small business and one in a skilled manual job, with both making some financial contribution to the support of their children. The remaining man was unemployed at the time of his partner's first interview, and was in a temporary job with a minimum wage when she took part in her second interview.

The 'grandmothers' (1970/80s)

The six women who gave birth between the ages of sixteen to nineteen in the 1970s and 1980s were aged thirty-six to forty-three years old when they took part in interviews (their daughters whom I interviewed were not necessarily their first children).

Partners and children

- One woman had one child when she took part in the study.

- Two had two children, one with the same partner, whom she married shortly after the birth of their first child, and one with two husbands.

- Two had three children, one with the same long term partner, from whom she was separated at time of interview, and one with two partners, the second of whom she married.

- One woman had five children with three men, two of whom were her first and second husbands.

- All six women conceived their first child outside of marriage.

- The first child of one of the women was conceived during a rape and was adopted. This woman had another child as a teenager with a different man.

- She was one of three women who became pregnant while engaged to be married. Of these three women, one was already married by the time she realised she was pregnant, one married during the pregnancy, and one married shortly after the birth.

- One lived for over ten years with the man who was the father of the baby, until he left the relationship. She was engaged to be married to another man at the time of interview.

- Each of two other women made an assessment of a future with the father of her baby and decided not to live with or marry him. Both are now married to other men.

- Four of the seven fathers of the babies born to these six women when they were teenagers were two to three years older, two were seven years older, and one was over ten years older. They were all over the age of twenty when the babies were born.

Homes

- Five of the six women were living in social housing at the time of interview.

- Two of these five had previously lived in privately owned houses, when they were co-habiting with or married to men with professional jobs.

- At the time of this study, one woman was living with her husband and youngest children in a house that they jointly owned.

- One, living in social housing, was planning to buy a house at time of interview, having achieved a university degree and a well-paid job.

Income

- Each of the six women had experience of full-time paid employment and five were in employment at the time of interview. The other of the six was planning to return to work, having been on sick leave following experience of domestic violence[31].

- Of the seven men who were the fathers of the babies born to these women when they were under twenty, six (for whom biographical information was produced in the women's interview accounts[32]) had had experience of full-time employment, two in unskilled jobs, one self-employed, one in a skilled manual job, one as a health professional and one in the armed services.

The 'great-grandmothers' (1950/60s)

The two women in this generational group who were able to take part in interviews, were seventeen and nineteen when they gave birth, and were in their sixties at the time of the study. Of the other four, one woman had died in her forties, one was seriously ill during fieldwork, and two decided not to take part. There were details of these women's lives in their daughters' and granddaughter's interview accounts.

Partners and children

- Five of the six women were married when they became pregnant.

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[31] Depression was the reason for her sick leave. Hegarty *et al.* (2004) report their finding of a strong association between experience of physical, emotional and sexual abuse and depression in women, recorded at attendance in general practice consultations in Australia.
[32] The woman who spoke about her experience of rape did not give any information about the perpetrator, other than his age at the time and his subsequent conviction and prison sentence.

- All were married at the point of giving birth, as one brought forward a wedding that was already in the planning.

- Each of the two women who took part in interviews had been married for over forty years to a husband of similar age.

- Three of the other four stayed in married relationships until they were widowed, and one of these three (whose husband was killed in a mining accident) remarried. The fourth woman left her husband following over ten years of domestic violence, and did not marry again.

- Of the six women, one had one child, two had two children, one had five and two had six.

Homes

- Of the five surviving women, two (whose husbands had had managerial jobs) were home-owners at time of interview.

- Three women were living in social housing.

Income

- The two women who took part in interviews had recently retired from full-time paid employment, one in the public service sector and one in the service industry. They were both involved in voluntary work locally.

- The husbands of these two women were also retired, one from a managerial position and one from a job in the construction industry, following work as a miner which ended with pit closure.

The 'great-great-grandmothers' (1930s)

The women who gave birth in the 1930s, both of whom had died before fieldwork, appeared in the life stories of their daughters and granddaughters.

Partners and children

- One was married when she became pregnant. The other was seventeen and unmarried, and gave birth to an illegitimate child in the 1930s. She later married a man who was not the father of her first child.

- One of the women had six children and the other had over ten.

These brief biographical outlines show diversity of experience *within* small generational groups of women, as shown in previous research (see for example Heron[33] 1985, Phoenix[34] 1991), and *between* generations, reflecting changing socio-economic circumstances. There are also areas of commonality. This introduction to the women went through many drafts[35], in an attempt to produce a satisfactory representation of their individually nuanced experiences of the 'same' biographical events, such as births. This contrasts with the current one-dimensional story of teenage pregnancy and supports the suggestion made by Chamberlayne and Rustin (1999:14), on the basis of the findings of research into social strategies in risk societies conducted across seven European countries, that social problems are frequently 'not what they seem'. Greenhalgh (1999:324) highlights the importance of the detail of situated 'single dots' of individual accounts, complementary to whole sample data in large-scale research projects, to avoid the interpretation of summary statistics as 'hard realities'. Heath (1999:652) similarly refers to the importance of working with an 'oscillating view' that moves between the particular and the general. These methodological issues are discussed further in Chapter 3.

Outline of the remainder of the thesis

Chapter 2 *Putting 'Teenage Pregnancy' in its Place* begins with a vignette of the research area. The second section gives an overview of UK social changes during the historical period covered by the interview data, and a review of theoretical debate on gender, class and sexuality in relation to the structuring of the experiences of the women who took part in the study. This is followed by

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[33] Liz Heron (1985) presents the biographical accounts of women who grew up in the 1950s, commenting that each woman's account fits (in a particular way, and never quite perfectly) the public image of family life.
[34] Phoenix (1991) presents the findings of a longitudinal study of women who gave birth to their first child between the ages of sixteen and nineteen in 1984 and 1985. Fifity women took part in in-depth interviews during pregnancy, at six months following birth, and at between eighteen and twenty-four months after birth.
[35] To avoid significantly altering biographical detail that was relevant to the research aim, and to protect the women's privacy, I decided to aggregate information in generational groups and present it as shown.

discussion of constructions of social, moral and economic 'disorder' linked to women's sexuality, from 'illegitimacy' to 'single parenthood' to 'teenage pregnancy'. The chapter concludes with an examination of the current Teenage Pregnancy Strategy as a recent form of public discourse connecting some pregnancies with deviance from an assumed norm.

Chapter 3 *Methodology Matters* outlines the approach to the research and the process of co-producing life stories in biographical narrative interviews. I reflect on epistemological, methodological and ethical issues that emerged during the course of the research, including consideration given to ways of taking care of the women who took part in the study and myself.

Chapter 4 *Growing Up Girl*[36], Chapter 5 *Straight Ahead, Sex and Relationships with Men*, and Chapter 6 *Managing Motherhood*, present the empirical findings. Each of the three chapters discusses themes that emerged in data analysis in relation to different periods in the women's lives, from growing up as girls, starting to have relationships and sex with men and having a pregnancy confirmed, to becoming mothers. While each chapter has a particular focus, there is considerable overlap and various themes are threaded through the chapters, for example that of intergenerational transmission.

In Chapter 7 *Next Steps* I reflect on the contribution of this study to the body of knowledge relating to teenage pregnancy. There is discussion of what the study adds methodologically to the research literature, and reference to connections, both potential and already made, between the findings and the development of local policy, practice and services. I also reflect on further research possibilities.

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[36] The title of Chapter 5 is taken from the book by Valerie Walkerdine *et al.* (2001) about social class in relation to gender in contemporary Britain.

Chapter 2

Putting 'Teenage Pregnancy' in its Place

Introduction

People's actions are, as Greenhalgh (1999:324) suggests, 'irremediably contextual'. This chapter aims to re-place the experiences of the women who took part in the study in the historically and geographically specific sets of circumstances that shaped their moves[37] (Bertaux and Thompson 1997, Alibhai-Brown 2004, Hayat 2004, Shakespeare 2004[38]) as they grew up, negotiated sexual encounters with men and became pregnant under the age of twenty.

The chapter is divided into four sections, the first of which *Research Setting* is a vignette of the research area in North East England. Section two *Social Settings* gives a brief overview of changing contexts during the 1930s to 2000s period[39], together with a review of sociological theories of the power relations of gender, class and heterosexuality, contingent on temporal and spatial location. Section three *Conceptions of Deviance*[40] examines shifting moral panics (Duncan and Edwards 1997:74) linked to deviation from gendered, classed, heterosexual norms. Discussion of the historical specificity of vocabulary that singles out and stigmatises the pregnancies of some women, from 'illegitimacy' to 'single motherhood' to 'teenage pregnancy', leads into the final section *A New Arrival (Teenage Pregnancy)*. This section examines the ways in which recent teenage pregnancy discourses construct young women's pregnancies, for example as chronologically 'out of order'.

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[37] I use 'moves' rather than 'choices', as some moves may be made without conscious choice or active decision-making. The constraints of local social, environmental and economic factors can also compromise the notion of 'choice'.

[38] Yasmin Alibhai-Brown, Sid Hayat and Tom Shakespeare each performed a dramatised personal testimony, incorporating ideas and events that have shaped their lives, as part of the Royal Shakespeare Company's New Work Festival at Live Theatre, Newcastle upon Tyne.

[39] For example, Peplar (2002:19) discusses changing 'matters to do with fertility, marriage and the family' in the UK over the period covered by the women's life story versions.

[40] The definition of 'deviance' in the New Oxford Dictionary of English (2001 [1998]:505) is: 'The fact or state of diverging from usual or accepted standards, especially in social or sexual behaviour.'

Section One: Research Setting

This section introduces Wansbeck where eleven of the thirteen women had lived for most or all of their lives. At the point of interview they were living within a short distance of each other. Two women who took part in pilot interviews were living in an area adjacent to Wansbeck, one having lived there all of her life, and one for most of her life. This introduction is important in relation to ideas about how people's aspirations and opportunities are shaped by place (Women and Geography Study Group 1997), expressed by Bainbridge[41] (2003) as 'the landscape we were born into, that's us'.

Four women had lived exclusively in the research area. Another five had lived for most of their lives in Wansbeck and the rest within a twenty mile radius, in areas similar to Wansbeck in terms of the socio-economic disadvantage associated with the decline of heavy industry (Snowdon 1979). All of these areas are in that part of North East England that follows the North Sea coastline from Sunderland in the South to Newbiggin-by-the-Sea in the North. Four women had moved in and out of Wansbeck and North East England, following male employment opportunities within the UK and abroad. The women shared a working-class background[42], however the level of movement of some women before pregnancy could be said to challenge the idea of the predominant influence of local 'culture' on teenage pregnancy rates.

"They need to know where we come from …[43]"

Interrogation of longitudinal data shows links between teenage pregnancy and demographic and socio-economic factors, a key finding being that women from

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[41] Beryl Bainbridge said this during an interview in the British Library for the BBC Radio 4 programme *Book Club*. She was talking about her novel *An Awfully Big Adventure*, based on her brief acting career which reached a peak when she played Kenneth Barlow's girlfriend in an episode of *Coronation Street*, a long-running soap opera representing people's lives in a working class area of North West England.

[42] Martin (2004) refers to Amber Films' documentation of the working class culture of North East communities that grew around heavy industry (see footnote 51 on page 24).

[43] Kathleen Buxton is quoted in a commentary *Teenage Pregnancy: More than meets the eye* (Buxton *et al.* 2005). She and other women with experience of pregnancy under twenty have designed and regularly facilitate a workshop for Newcastle University medical students. They use 'teenage pregnancy' as a way in to discussion of health inequalities. In the commentary Kathleen suggests that people "need to know where we come from, and not just point the finger".

areas with high unemployment and low levels of income are more likely than their peers to become mothers under the age of twenty[44] (Diamond *et al.* 1998, Hobcraft and Kiernan 1999[45], Berthoud *et al.* 2004[46]). The majority of young women who become pregnant under the age of twenty at the beginning of the twenty-first century live in areas where incomes are low, schools are towards the lower end of league tables, and economic aspirations[47] are low because of poor employment opportunities (Bell *et al.* 2004). Their career trajectories are influenced by these factors, and as Bonell (2004:256) suggests can not 'be regarded as a direct and inevitable effect of pregnancy or motherhood'.

North East England is one of nine Government Office regions (Stonebridge 2002). The North East has, together with London, the highest proportion of population living in low-income households[48] (Palmer *et al.* 2003). Persistent male unemployment in the region was highlighted as early as the 1960s, for example by Thomson (1969), who explained it as a consequence of reliance on declining heavy industries such as shipbuilding, coal-mining and engineering. It is well documented that the population of the North East generally experiences a greater level of ill-health than other regions[49], with the lowest levels of wellbeing and the most challenging underlying problems being in the communities that formed around industries such as coal mining (Whitehead

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[44] There is significant geographical variation in under-eighteen conception rates, with highest rates linked to areas of socio-economic disadvantage, including former coalfields (Griffiths and Kirby 2000). Twelve per cent of live teenage births between 1994 and 1996 were in the most deprived local authority areas, compared with two per cent in affluent areas (Smith 1999).

[45] The National Child Development Study (NCDS) provided the data for Hobcraft and Kiernan's (1999) study. The NCDS is a longitudinal study of children who were born in the first week of March 1958, and about whom information was collected at birth and ages 7, 11, 16, 23 and 33.

[46] The main source of data for analysis of the consequences of teenage births for parents and their children was the 1970 British Cohort Study (BCS70). This study followed all children born in a week during April 1970, and information was collected at birth and ages 5, 10, 16, 26 and 30. This study was the first to use information on pregnancies and miscarriages available from British Household Panel Survey data, to reduce the influence of pregnancy selection on the measurement of the consequences of teenage births for mothers. Information about siblings was also used to reduce the influence of selection on the estimation of effects of teenage motherhood.

[47] 'Low' aspiration is frequently mentioned as a factor in rates of teenage pregnancy, and can suggest that young women lack ambition. Bell *et al.*'s (2004) reference to low *economic* aspirations highlights the situation with regard to employment opportunities in areas where teenage pregnancy rates are highest.

[48] The figures are twenty-six per cent in the North East and twenty-seven per cent in London.

[49] For example, death rates in 2005 from all causes were thirteen per cent above the average for England (North East Strategic Health Authority 2007).

1992 [1988], Stonebridge 2002, North East Strategic Health Authority 2007). Townsend *et al.* (1988) refer to the finding presented in the *Black Report*[50] that although cultural explanations for health inequalities had some validity, the predominant explanation was the effects of the concrete material circumstances of people's lives. In their study of health differences between electoral wards in the northern region of England, Phillimore and Beattie (1994) found death rates four times higher in the ten per cent of wards with the greatest levels of poverty than in the wealthiest ten per cent. Social inequalities in the UK and Europe, linked to level of income and class position, appear tto have worsened over the last thirty years (Doran *et al.* 2004, Meyer 2005, Schoon *et al.* 2005, Wheeler *et al.* 2005).

Wansbeck on the map

Wansbeck is in the urban South East of the county of Northumberland in North East England. Northumberland borders on Scotland to the North, North Tyneside and the city of Newcastle upon Tyne to the South, the Pennines and Cheviot Hills to the West, and the North Sea to the East. Almost half of the county's population lives in the South East corner, which represents approximately three per cent of the total land area of Northumberland (Northumberland Information Network 2005).

Ashington, the main town in the research area, was once described as the largest pit village in the world, and Ashington Coal Company was at the forefront of modern mining techniques (Tuck 1993). The mining industry literally shaped the character of the Wansbeck landscape[51], and there were great changes to the miners' surface environment from the 1960s[52] when, following nationalisation of the coal industry in 1947, the National Coal Board began to

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[50] The Black Report, published in 1980, highlights the social and economic factors that produce and perpetuate health inequalities.
[51] The industrial markers that remain in the research area, for example the pit-head wheels at the Woodhorn Mining Museum, are a reminder of the things that are missing, such as the recently demolished power station chimneys at Cambois. Changing lives and landscapes of the North East of England from the 1970s to the present day have been documented by a Tyneside film and photography collective (www.amber-online.com).
[52] Colliery cottages and rows of industrial era terraces are however a reminder of the local heritage.

run down collieries. Northumberland was not included in the 1963 Government White Paper focus on growth in the North East region.

Community constructions

Thrift and Williams (1987) refer to the decline of working class communities built around single industries. Some authors can tend to romanticise the industrial past of the research area and male solidarity in the mining industry, for example Taylor's (1993:70) image of 'a stream of men, morning, noon and night, following a three shift rota, walking to the pit', and Speight's (1993:63) reference to the 'clatter of our hundreds of pit boots (joining) the Ashington men tramping home, sweeping along in a black tide'. Atkinson (1977:96) refers to the community spirit of pit village populations, which has now largely gone 'weakened by pit closures, by new housing, by improved working conditions, by education, by greater spending power and by the mass media', a commentary that ignores structural inequalities, including gendered division of labour, and the advantages of improved circumstances.

An exception to the temptation to idealise mining communities is Williamson's (1982) biographical study of social changes in a mining village in Northumberland, through the life story of the author's grandfather (1872-1965) and his significant relationships with women and men. Written with obvious affection, Williamson's account of changing class, culture and community nevertheless presents an in-depth analysis of the processes of the construction of working class communities (see also Jackson 1968) and identities. Williamson devotes a chapter to *Domestic Work* and describes the physically hard, repetitive and time-consuming nature of women's labour in the home, as well as their emotional work. Humphrey (1992), in his study of social participation among elderly people in an ex-mining town in County Durham in North East England, asked women in his sample (aged sixty to seventy-five at the time of interview in the 1980s): "Have you ever worked?", to which their replies included: "Who me? No, never" (ibid:111), "I'm content in the back kitchen, cleaning up and one thing and another" (ibid:114), "No, no. I didn't work" (ibid:137). The women's responses significantly underestimated their domestic labour as well as the range of their work outside of the home, for

example, the woman who ran the business side of her husband's garage, the woman who worked in Yorkshire woollen mills for five years before marriage and then in school catering for thirty years, and the woman who was a District Nurse. Changing ideas about 'women's work' are examined further in this chapter and are threaded into discussion in chapters 4, 5 and 6.

Ashington is not as Rapport and Dawson (1998:16) suggest 'in the heart of industrial north-east England', rather it is on the northern edge of the area along the North Sea coastline that grew wealthy from heavy industry and was then 'caught in a vicious circle of decline' (Tomaney and Ward 2001:13). During the 1984-85 miners' industrial dispute, striking miners blockaded the then head of the National Coal Board, Ian McGregor, on his arrival at Ellington Collery (Jupp 2006). In Wansbeck 8,500 jobs (mainly male employment opportunities) were lost with the closure of the coal mines[53]. Despite the establishment of the Coalfield Regeneration Trust in 1999 by the then Deputy Prime Minister, John Prescott, in response to economic and social decline, employment opportunities in former mining areas remain much less favourable than in other regions of the UK and rates of pay in new jobs in the service sector are generally less than male earnings in heavy industries (Fothergill 2005).

In the twenty years since Ashington colliery closed, Wansbeck Business Park[54] has attracted some light industry[55]. However, the women's accounts of changing employment opportunities reflect the impact of globalisation and the shift to an economy based on consumption rather than production. On the route to the Teenage Pregnancy Team base during fieldwork, there was a striking visual reminder of the contraction of manufacturing, namely a shuttered factory that was mentioned as a previously reliable source of relatively well-paid

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[53] Ashington colliery closed in 1986. The closure of Ellington colliery in Northumberland, the last pit in the North East, was reported nationally (Hetherington 2005:26).
[54] The Business Park development is on land reclaimed from the former Ashington colliery site (http://www.ashington-ne.co.uk/info, accessed 22 May 2007). Davies (2004) refers to the reshaping and landscaping of colliery waste heaps in his landscape survey of the Durham coalfield to the south of Northumberland and Tyneside.
[55] The County Council website represents Northumberland as an area with a dynamic modern economy based on pharmaceuticals, electronics and modern engineering industries, and advertises an adaptable, available workforce as Northumberland's greatest asset in attracting new investment to the region (Northumberland County Council 2007).

manual work by several women in the 'grandmother' and 'mother' groups. The factory closed when the largest customer, a UK retailer, moved production of goods abroad for cheaper labour costs. There were references in women's accounts to a recent expansion of service industries. They also commented on the lack of apprenticeships and training placements[56] (Northumberland Connexions 2004) for younger members of their family groups.

Wansbeck illustrates the geographical link between low income, significant levels of deprivation, ill-health and high rates of teenage pregnancy (Nicoll *et al.* 1999, Northern and Yorkshire Public Health Observatory 2001, North East Strategic Health Authority 2007). Townsend and colleagues (1988) present evidence of health inequalities linked to the material deprivation of different communities in the North of England, and highlight Ashington as one of two Northumberland towns with significantly higher rates of premature mortality than others in the county. At the beginning of the twenty-first century Wansbeck ranked fourth out of twenty-three North East districts in relation to general health defined as 'not good', fifth in relation to limiting long-term illness, and eighth in relation to long-term unemployment and people who are permanently sick or disabled (National Statistics Online 2001). Wansbeck had the highest ranking of North East districts (eighteenth out of 384 Local Authorities in England) in the 2000 Index of Local Deprivation, and all Wansbeck wards were among the twenty-five per cent defined as most employment deprived (Wansbeck District Council 2001).

Section Two: Social Settings

The historical period covered by the women's interview accounts runs from the 1930s when the mothers of the two 'great-grandmothers' were pregnant as teenagers, to the beginning of the twenty-first century when the youngest women had their babies in the context of the Teenage Pregnancy Strategy.

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[56] During the course of the research, the Northumberland Teenage Pregnancy and Sexual Health Team hosted an employment trainee, a young woman with experience of teenage pregnancy (Stonebridge 2004) in line with a commitment by Northumberland NHS Care Trust to support teenage mothers to increase their participation in education, training and employment and reduce their chances of becoming socially excluded.

This section highlights some of the main social changes in Britain during the period, as well as sociological theories of changing social institutions and relations relevant to the thesis, namely class, gender and sexuality. For example, changing opportunities for sexual encounters, contingent on historical and cultural constructions of sexualities, are documented by, among others, Gagnon and Simon (1973), Haste (1992), Holland *et al.* (1992), Fox Harding (1996), Richardson (2000), Richardson and Seidman (2002), Weeks *et al.* (2003), and Hockey *et al.* (2007). This overview aims to contextualise the experiences of the women in the different generational groups, and it broadly follows twentieth century decades from the 1930s when the women in the 'great-great-grandmother' group became mothers, to the beginning of the twenty-first century when the youngest women had their babies.

1930s

Stevenson (1984) highlights the 1930s economic recession, the National Government's Means Test[57] and the Hunger Marches[58] as key events that sharpened class divisions in the period preceding the Second World War. In relation to gender divisions, Virginia Woolf (1938) illuminated the connection between gendered experiences in private and public spheres, while the drama of the rise of National Socialism in Germany and the Civil War in Spain overshadowed the 'nuances of cultural change occurring in gender relations' in Britain (Rowbotham 1999 [1997]:173). Marriage for women working in areas such as teaching and the civil service meant having to give up paid employment (Williams 1997 [1993]). Williams (1989:160), in an overview of welfare reforms from the 1880s to the 1930s, refers to policies introduced during the 1920s and 1930s as 'part of the longer-term marginalization of women from paid work and a reinforcement and redefinition of their domestic role'. Women trade unionists nevertheless managed to achieve Trade Union Council backing for council nurseries, and equal pay and insurance rights via the Industrial Women's Charter in 1939 (Rowbotham 1999 [1997]:184).

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[57] The Means Test for state financial support was introduced in 1931 and involved investigation of all members of a household.
[58] For example, unemployed workers marched from Jarrow in South Tyneside to London in 1936.

Heterosexual sex was legitimated by marriage, and from the 1930s some married women gained access to birth control. The following excerpt is taken from a history of Northumberland Council.

> From 1931, married women whose health might be endangered by further pregnancies were helped by the County Council to get advice on contraception. A sum of not more than 7s and 6d (37p) per case was paid by the Council to voluntary clinics which had already been established at Ashington and in Newcastle. (Taylor 1989:69)

The National Birth Control Council was formed on 17 July 1930 to support married couples to space or limit births, a development opposed by many in government, medical and church hierarchies (Dear 2005), illustrating moral and religious aspects of contraception (Johannessen 1980). The reference to 'birth control' was considered too explicit and the Council was renamed the Family Planning Association in 1939. Three years earlier Dora Russell and other birth-control campaigners had formed the Abortion Law Reform Association in response to the number of women dying each year following illegal abortions. Concern about birth rates in relation to population replacement (Peplar 2002), which only subsided following the post-Second World War baby boom, was paralleled by eugenic concerns about socio-economic differentials in family size (Haines 1989), as working class families tended to have more children. Jamieson (1998) and Selman (1998) highlight the linking of social problems with the fertility of working class heterosexual couples. This thread runs through the discourses of 'unmarried', 'single' and 'teenage' motherhood.

1950/60s[59]

During the 1950s public morale was high in the UK, in response to economic growth and a post-war social policy agenda centred on public provision of

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[59] This section moves to the 1950/60s, as only the oldest 'great-grandmother' (aged 69) reconstructed an occasion during the period of the Second World War, when a bomb fell close to an air-raid shelter that she was in with her family. The programme for *A Nightingale Sang in Eldon Square*, a C. P. Taylor play staged in April 2006 at Live Theatre, Newcastle upon Tyne, corroborates her memory: 'It was reported that enemy aircraft were over the North East and several bombs were dropped on 10 August 1940. There were enemy raiders over the North East coast during the night of 12 August, and the *Journal* (local newspaper) reported a mass daylight attack on the North East on 16 August.'

health, education and social services (Pierson 1996). Reforms between 1945 and 1948 included the 1944 Education Act and the introduction of systems of Family Allowances and National Insurance as well as the National Health Service[60] (Williams 1989). The welfare state introduced by William Beveridge in the Labour government was however based on taken-for-granted and sentimentalised ideas about marriage and families (Ferris 1993, Finch and Summerfield 1991, Okely 1996). Official discourse promoted the institution of 'the family' (a concept appearing to require no explanation) as the foundation of post-war socio-economic reconstruction. Women were encouraged to leave the various jobs they had undertaken as part of the war effort, and received a clear message about the importance of their attention to domestic management and childcare in an unpaid capacity as wives (Haste 1992, Turner 2003). Despite the material impediments to employment for women with children, for example the withdrawal of state nursery provision, women did not straightforwardly leave the paid labour market (Gerson 2004). The increase in the number of working married women was a significant social change that followed the Second World War (Crompton 1997), although married women were mainly in part-time employment and working-class women generally worked in the casual labour market (Arnot *et al.* 1999). Girls who failed to pass the eleven plus examination did not benefit from the improved educational opportunities introduced by the Education Act, as secondary modern school education focused heavily on competency in cooking and housework. Domestic ideology was further transmitted, for example, through popular women's magazines that were full of advertisements for products to enhance their appearance and domestic skills[61].

In the period immediately preceding the 1950s, Kinsey *et al.*'s (1948) report on men's sexual behaviour in the USA, based on his analysis of life stories constructed by American men of different social backgrounds and ages, was

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[60] The National Health Service did not provide contraception services until 1973 (Ferris 1993).

[61] For example: 'She thought her washing was fine until …' (advert for Persil washing powder) (*Woman's Weekly*, No 2233, 21 August 1954, inside front cover); 'When a man _notices_ a girl's hair … she's using a Silvikrin Shampoo' (*Woman's Weekly* No 2270, 7 May 1955, p. 1188); 'Prunes with a party look' (*Woman's Weekly*, No 2333, 21 July 1956, p. 25). Copies of this weekly women's magazine that I remember from when I was growing up, were passed on to my sister and I when my mother died in the early 1990s.

published, five years before its counterpart report on women's sexual behaviour[62]. The findings of the two studies suggested a significant level of experience of sex before marriage. The reporting of premarital sexual encounters by half of a sample of six thousand women was however socially unacceptable to the degree that it 'put paid' to Kinsey (Ferris 1993:150). The first British survey of sexual values, beliefs and practices was carried out in 1949 by the Mass Observation organisation. Stanley (1995) reproduces the survey report and comments on how it illustrates significant changes in sexual attitudes and behaviour that occurred during and following the Second World War. Schofield (1972 [1965]) highlights the shifting sexual behaviour of young people into the 1960s.

The fast pace of economic, social and cultural change in the post-war period shaped constructions of femininities and sexualities (Laurie *et al.* 1999, Richardson 2000, Weeks *et al.* 2003). Radical movements during the 1960s initiated debate about material issues related to gender and sexuality and Hall (2000) maps 1960s' legal decisions that shifted the parameters of the social acceptability of contraception[63], abortion[64], divorce[65], and sexual relationships between men[66]. Nevertheless, marriage and the modern nuclear family were seen as ideal forms of social and sexual organisation (Peplar 2002). Hall (2000) gives an account of the 1950s' re-framing of marriage as a place of new opportunity for equality, companionship and sexual pleasure for heterosexual women, parallelled by continuing construction of heterosexual encounters outside of marriage as socially disruptive. Monogamous heterosexual sexual relationships within marriage were perceived as underpinning social stability in the UK and some Family Planning Association clinics asked women for proof of intention to marry, for example a receipt for a wedding dress or a letter from the

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[62] Simon (2003) refers to the reductive level of Kinsey's empiricism, modeled on his previous work on the gall wasp.

[63] The 1967 Family Planning Act introduced contraception as part of the State's health care policy, although Local Authorities had discretion to decide their own policies, and provision was 'patchy' (Peplar 2002:36).

[64] In 1967 the Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act legalised abortion up to 28 weeks of pregnancy, if supported by two doctors on medical or psychological grounds.

[65] The Divorce Act of 1969, implemented in 1971, made divorce possible after two years on the grounds of irretrievable breakdown of marriage.

[66] In 1968 the Sexual Offences Act decriminalised consensual sex between adult men.

vicar before providing them with contraception (Dear 2005). Proof of marital status was not needed to access the contraception service provided by the Brook Advisory Centres that were established in 1964 (Ferris 1993).

In France, De Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* appeared in print in 1949 as the first systematic exposition of the issue of 'sexual difference', and became a reference point for subsequent feminist theorists. De Beauvoir (1976 [1949]:16) asked the question 'qu'est-ce qu'une femme?' ('what is a woman?'), throwing social context into relief, in particular the institutions of marriage and motherhood as co-constitutive of women's marginalised and oppressed position. De Beauvoir's analysis notwithstanding, women in Britain tended to marry earlier and have children younger in the late 1950s and into the 1960s, than in the previous generation (Thomson 1969). In 1962 a fifth of all live births were to young women aged fifteen to nineteen (Haste 1992) and the early 1960s 'baby boom' was a consequence of women beginning to have children at an earlier age, and older women continuing to give birth[67]. There was a general downwards trend in fertility from 1964 (Fox Harding 1996). An oral contraceptive pill for women became available from the mid-1960s, and Halstead and Reiss (2003:17) represent this as a dramatic event in the second half of the twentieth century, interrupting what they describe as 'the natural link' between sexual activity and reproduction. This representation, in an early twentieth century publication discussing sex education in schools, is an example of the enduring quality of heteronormativity. It could be argued that their suggestion that the contraceptive pill offered women a straightforward 'choice'[68] about fertility, ignores the complexity and potential risk of negotiating this form of contraception (as well as others already available) from the 1960s onwards (Hanmer 1997 [1993]). For example, it was 1966 before the Royal College of Obstetrics and Gynaecology made a statement in support of contraception (Ferris 1993).

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[67] The risk of pregnancy for all women at that time was greater than at the present. During the 1950s approximately three thousand women died each year during pregnancy, compared with fifty during 2004 (Parker 2004).
[68] The implication of the discourse of choice is that women who have sex with men are irrational and irresponsible if they do not use this form of contraception, and can be blamed in the event of an unintended pregnancy.

1970/80s

The Women's Liberation Movement emerged at the beginning of the 1970s and the first national demonstration took place in London on International Women's Day in 1971 (Rowbotham 1999 [1997]), mirroring demonstrations against the attempt by Edward Health, Conservative Prime Minister at the time, to restrict workers' rights and welfare support entitlement. The Labour government elected in 1974 created the political environment for the Sex Discrimination Act, Equal Pay and Social Security Pensions Act [69], Employment Protection Act [70], and the Equal Opportunities Commission in 1975 (Marwick 2003 [1982]). As Castle (1988:57) records however, the new importance attached to social services 'set women free from domestic burdens' and delivered working class women into low paid jobs instead, as the providers of home help, day nursery care and school meals.

In relation to class structure, social mobility, wealth and welfare, Rutter and Madge (1977), in their review of literature relating to 'cycles of disadvantage', emphasise the narrowness of a focus on the family, suggesting that continuities in forms of disadvantage[71] are better understood in terms of the interaction of variables in historically specific circumstances, as they involve much more than the influence of an individual's family of origin[72]. For example, Goldthorpe *et al.*'s (1980:251) analysis was that society remained far removed from 'openness', and class inequalities persisted despite increased educational provision and a relatively high rate of economic growth. Goldthorpe's focus in this analysis was men's mobility, and Dex (1990) critiques his perspective as intellectually sexist because of its neglect of women's status in their various places of employment and their experiences of sexual inequalities within marriage. In the same edited volume McRae (1990), writing in defence of Goldthorpe's views on women and class analysis, cites his 1980s contributions

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[69] The Equal Pay and Social Security Pensions Act ensured full pension rights for women.
[70] The Employment Protection Act confirmed women's statutory right to continue in employment during and after pregnancy, and to take paid maternity leave.
[71] The authors state their preference for the use of 'disadvantage' over 'deprivation, which they suggest is one of the most over-used words in the English language.
[72] The idea for their survey was conceived in a meeting (October 1972) of the Joint Working Party on Transmitted Deprivation, convened by Keith Joseph, Secretary of State for the Social Services in the Conservative government of the time.

to the understanding of women's social position. These include documentation of continuing disadvantage for women of gendered segregation within the labour market, and illustration of occupational divisions between women linked to class inequalities, in Britain and five other economically advanced countries.

The Women and Employment Survey undertaken in 1980 highlighted the impact of the construction of women as responsible for childcare, and the divergence of the employment careers of women who had a child[73] from other women who generally remained in full-time paid work (McRae 1990). Influenced by Bott's (1971 [1957]) thesis that individuals actively adapt social norms and values, Young and Willmott (1973) suggested the emergence of symmetrical heterosexual domestic organisation. However, despite the effects of the late 1970s period of recession on male employment and the greater availability of men 'at home', contemporary empirical studies show that women in paid employment and girls and young women in school continued to balance domestic work with their jobs and homework in ways that boys, young men and men did not (Oakley 1974, Sharpe 1976, Gaskell 1983).

Marriage rates peaked in 1970 and then dipped, with rates of marriage for young people under twenty falling from one in ten women and one in forty men in 1970 to one in forty women and one in two hundred men by 1987 (Elliott 1991). During the 1970s and 1980s marriage remained the normative setting for motherhood, although the rate of heterosexual cohabitation was rising[74]. Oakley (1979) refers to marriage as the place of most births at the time of her research project on transition to motherhood in the 1970s, with only nine per cent of births happening outside of marriage. Of the group of women who participated in Oakley's research, eleven per cent were not married at first interview, a proportion that had reduced to seven per cent by the time of the final interview (although Oakley does not say whether the marriages came before or after the births). Birth outside of marriage was the majority experience

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[73] The 1985 General Household Survey data show that thirty per cent of women with children under school age were in paid work, twenty-two per cent of whom worked part-time (McRae 1990).
[74] Between 1976 and 1986 the number of never-married mothers was 'up 77%' (Fox Harding 1996:65).

of women under the age of twenty by 1982, even though single mothers were penalised during the 1980s by public expenditure cuts (Haste 1992). Fox Harding (1996) comments on this delay or rejection of marriage and suggests a link with economic decline, depression of wages and rising unemployment.

By the beginning of the 1980s feminist critique of 'the family' as a place of potential exploitation of women's physical, emotional and reproductive labour was well developed. It was at this point that the newly elected Conservative government expressed concern about the decline in two-parent (implicitly differently-gendered) families and focused on strengthening 'the family'[75] (Fox Harding 1996, Simpson 1998, Hall 2000), illustrating Plummer's (2003:39) claim that 'with every new story, there is a rival old one'. Franklin (1997:5), in her reprise of the history of assisted conception, refers to the historically specific meaning of 'being a family', shaped for example by the political rhetoric of the Conservative government.

Feminist writers have explored the various meanings, pleasures and risks for women of the institutions of heterosexuality, motherhood and 'the family'. Rich (1976) examines how women have been positioned at different times by ideas about their reproductive potential. Chodorow (1978) offers a psychoanalytical explanation for women's apparently straightforward desire for motherhood and a particular feminine identity, although as Segal (1987) later comments, feminists working with psychoanalytical theories can be criticised for not engaging with differences in ways of being a mother that are shaped by class and ethnicity. Responding towards the end of the 1980s to her sense of a mood of pessimism in feminist thought and action, Segal critiques what she saw at the time as a return to an emphasis on essentialised gender difference, away from debate about the social construction of gender positions at intersections with other differences.

During the 1970s there was anticipation of shifts in sexual attitudes and relationships, for example, Plummer (2000) refers to 1970s' studies that

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[75] For example, Section 28 of the 1986 Local Government Act stated that local authorities must not be seen to be promoting same gender couples as families (Lewis and Knijn 2002).

contribute to theorisation of relationships between similarly gendered individuals. Campbell (1987) provides a concise overview of the politicisation of sexuality by feminism. Millett (1993 [1977]) identifies the political aspect of heterosexual relationships, namely their predication on a structural inequality of power. Foucault's (1990 [1976]) analysis of relations and techniques of power[76] makes visible the social construction of sexualities and explicates the legitimisation of sex and reproduction in (married, heterosexual) coupledom. His theory connects the idea of power with action and movement and effectively puts power in its place, grounding people's ability to act within historically specific settings, albeit critiqued by for example Ramazanoğlu (1993) for ignoring constructions of gendered power relations. Samuelsen and Steffen (2004:3) suggest that Bourdieu similarly highlights 'how power can never be seen as a thing in itself, but always as a relational phenomenon working on all levels of social interaction'. Skeggs (2004) points out that Bourdieu has also had little to say on gender. The theories of both Foucault and Bourdieu[77] can nevertheless be viewed as explanatory of the constraints of inhabiting a particular social position, and this includes constraints on what individual women feel able to 'do' in their relationships with men. Rich's (1980) concept of compulsory heterosexuality is descriptive of the ways in which heterosexuality structures social relations in public and private places. The ideology of 'normal' heterosexually organised family life has been challenged by feminist critiques of inequalities inherent in the hegemonic form of heterosexuality (for example Delphy 1984). In turn, black feminists have argued for recognition of the benefits of family groups for women in minority ethnic communities, in terms of protection from, and potential resistance to, the effects of racism (for example hooks 1982).

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[76] The word power is cognate with the French verb pouvoir that translates as 'to be able to'. Pouvoir is always used, explicitly or implicity, with another verb, confirming the subject's ability to act.
[77] Bourdieu's concept of 'habitus' refers to a socially constructed system of dispositions 'providing individuals with class-dependent, predisposed ways of categorizing and relating to familiar and novel situations' (Shilling 2004:475).

Kelly's (1990 [1987]) articulation of the concept of a continuum of sexual violence[78] highlights the exercise of power through violence by some men in relationships with women (see also Dobash and Dobash 1979). At a theoretical level, the concept connects the different experiences of some women of being controlled, coerced and abused in relationships with men, discussed further in Chapters 4 and 5 in relation to the representations of male violence by women who took part in the study. During the 1970s the activism of UK women's groups, in response to women's accounts of violence by known men, produced the first Rape Crisis Centre and two hundred refuges for women leaving violent male partners.

In relation to heterosexual women's control of their fertility, it was not until the 1970s that the National Health Service incorporated contraception services into core provision. Condom use increased over the 1976 to 1998 period reviewed by Botting and Dunnell (2000), although the contraceptive pill remained the most popular form of fertility control. A decrease in the UK birth rate reversed at the end of the 1970s (Fox Harding 1996), followed by slight fluctuations during the 1980s, although there was no significant change in the UK conception and birth rates during the last quarter of the twentieth century (Botting and Dunnell 2000). Teenage women's use of contraception services increased from 1975 to the end of the twentieth century, at the same time as women's overall attendance decreased. The lack of data relating to men's use of services reflects the organisation of contraception services. Under the General Medical Services contract[79] General Practitioners and doctors working in Contraception and Sexual Health Services have received an item of service payment for providing contraception to women, and no payment for consultations with men with the exception of referral for vasectomy. This helps to explain the perception that contraception services exclude men, as well as the construction

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[78] Kelly explains that she uses the term 'sexual violence' because of the impossibility of separating physical and sexual violence, and because it identifies the gendered dimension of violence in heterosexual settings, for example schools, workplaces and relationships.
[79] This contractual arrangement remains, with implications for the contraceptive knowledge and confidence of heterosexual men who have sex with teenage women, as well as for the success of the Teenage Pregnancy Strategy target reduction of the rate of teenage conceptions in England.

of women as having exclusive responsibility for contraception[80]. In the broader arena of sexual health, the reporting of the first case of AIDS (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome) in 1981 appeared not to concern women, an assumption challenged by Richardson's (1989 [1987]) discussion of the findings of research with women with HIV (Human Immuno-deficiency Virus) positive status and AIDS in Britain and America.

1990/2000s

Women's social position in the UK had shifted radically in certain respects by the end of the twentieth century, although in key areas such as economic independence the degree of change remained a controversial issue (Lewis 1992). Class differences began to appear more marked in relation to educational and employment opportunities than in the 1950s (for example Jackson[81] 2003), and Lucey (2001) refers to the gap between the meritocratic rhetoric of the beginning of the twenty-first century and the experiences of some groups of people. She writes that class is still a significant factor in the shaping of educational trajectories, and while working class girls are doing better at school than working class boys, their improved performance is insignificant compared to the achievements of young people who grow up in middle class environments: 'What appear to be tiny specks on an otherwise smooth surface turn out to be towering mountains of hierarchy; hairline cracks become huge fissures of difference' (Lucey 2001:177).

An issue of particular concern in relation to women's employment opportunities is continuing inequality in level of earnings and career progression, despite the 1970 Equal Pay Act (Drew *et al.* 1995), and the level of women's involvement in the labour force[82]. The importance of working towards income equality was reiterated by Harman (2007) in her address at a *Gender Agenda* event organised by the Equal Opportunities Commission. At the beginning of the twenty-first century young women have to negotiate an unregulated labour

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[80] For example, there is no reference to men in an article reporting the findings of a survey of family planning clinics in Newcastle upon Tyne in 1989 (Selman and Calder 1994).

[81] This reference is to Sue Jackson's 2003 publication, not Stevi Jackson's.

[82] In 1996 women represented forty-four per cent of the working age labour force (Office for National Statistics 1997).

market in which job opportunities requiring qualities defined as 'female', such as the service and communications sectors, have expanded significantly (Walkerdine *et al.* 2001). Walkerdine (2004) critiques suggestions that global developments have straightforwardly translated into easier routes into work for them. For women who are in paid employment whose partners are men, there appears to be less change in the division of unpaid domestic labour than might have been expected given the rhetoric of sex equality (see Lewis 1993, Equal Opportunities Commission 2007). Baines and Wheelock (1996) found that when men are unemployed, availability does not translate straightforwardly into doing housework. More recently, Lake *et al.* (2006) found three quarters of female respondents who were living with male partners and children in Northumberland doing most of the food planning, shopping and cooking. This exemplifies how the hegemonic form of heterosexuality shapes daily domestic routines and resource transactions within family groups (Brannen and Wilson 1987, Yelland 1998), as well as extra-domestic lives, to the disadvantage of many women[83]. Feminists have explored the potential of alternative domestic transactions between women and male partners (see for example VanEvery 1996) as a move towards more equitable organisation of day to day living.

During the 1990s and at the beginning of the 2000s, academics writing from a range of disciplinary perspectives and influenced by feminisms and lesbian and gay politics have expanded understanding of the multi-faceted intersections of gender, class and sexuality and the 'doing' of heterosexualities (see Weeks *et al.* 2003, Ingraham 2002a, Ingraham 2002b, Johnson 2002, Johnson 2005[84]). Butler (1990), Jackson (1998, 1999, 2003, 2005), Richardson (1990, 1996, 2000, 2004) and Wilkinson and Kitzinger (1993) have elaborated theories of sexualities as relations of social power (in terms of who can do what), contingent on historically and geographically specific socio-economic and political sets of circumstances (Hubbard *et al.* 2004). The heteronormative

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[83] A shift in the conceptualisation of men as income earners and women as homemakers has not resulted in women carrying less responsibility for housework and childcare (Office for National Statistics 1997).

[84] Johnson presents an empirical study of the ways in which historically specific sets of ideas and practices, called 'love', produce heterosexualities.

constitution of gendered positions and the meanings of growing up to 'be' heterosexual have been empirically studied (see Skeggs 1997, Holland *et al.* 1998, Hockey *et al.* 2007). Richardson (2000) describes the emergence of a 'queer' approach to understanding the nuances of relations of gender and sexuality[85], insistent on the historical and geographical contextualistion of 'sex'. Gender has been unpicked as a descriptive category and the material effects of social and sexual organisation by gender have been theorised. Laurie *et al.* (1999) and Ingraham (2002a, 2002b) emphasise the significance of gender as an historically and geographically mediated concept relating to a complex hierarchy of social status and opportunity, that includes some men's exercise of power over other men and some women's exercise of power over other women.

Skeggs (1997) and Lawler (2000) discuss the legitimacy of sets of values, beliefs and practices associated with different class positions, in relation to the recognition of, respectively, respectable working class female sexuality and motherhood. The term 'working class' has been problematised in order to puncture stereotypical ideas about what marks people as inhabiting particular class positions (see for example Mahoney and Zmroczek[86] 1997). Devine and Savage (2000:196) recommend a form of class analysis which addresses how 'in various settings of social life, processes of inequality are produced and reproduced routinely and how this involves both economic and cultural practices'. The issue of being classed as a failure is pertinent to working class young women's achievements in educational settings, and also to their transitions to motherhood.

Motherhood has been questioned as a 'natural' event and taken-for-granted future for women, with the exception of certain groups, including women with disability, heterosexual women living alone and lesbian women (see Richardson 1993). By the 1990s, having a baby as a teenager was increasingly

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[85] Rich's (1980) idea of compulsory heterosexuality is implict here.
[86] This is an edited volume of working-class women's explorations of aspects of their class positions.

extraordinary[87], while becoming a mother outside of marriage was no longer uncommon. In response, during the 1990s pro-family pressure groups attacked the perceived undermining of fathers by 'single' mothers, and the allegedly consequent social disorder (see Dennis and Erdos 1992), a theoretical position examined in the third section of this chapter.

Sociological commentators at the end of the twentieth century and the beginning of the twenty-first, have highlighted and debated the increasing plurality and diversity of 'family' forms that challenge the taken-for-grantedness of ideas about family structures (Weeks 1991, Finch and Mason 1993, Brannen *et al.* 1994, Ribbens 1994, Howard *et al.* 2001, Pringle 2004). Twenty-two per cent of British households in 2005 comprised married or cohabiting heterosexual couples living with biological- and step-children, and ten per cent of households were occupied by one parent living with a child or children. The proportion of children born in the UK to unmarried women rose from approximately five per cent in the 1950s to eight per cent by the end of the 1960s, and from eleven per cent by the end of the 1970s to twenty-eight per cent in 1990 and almost forty-four per cent in 2006, reflecting the rising trend in parents who cohabit (National Statistics Online 2007). Marriage remains popular despite the high level of approval of sex outside of a contractual arrangement, and consequent weakening of the social compulsion to marry (Burgoyne 1991, Wasoff and Martin 2005). Early findings from the Millennium Cohort Study[88] show both continuity and change in family configuration. Eight out of ten people live in households that they define as 'family', and there is evidence that people generally want formal recognition of their relationships, particularly when they have children. In 2006, at follow-up to initial interviews in 2001-2002, where a 'new' parent had moved in with a 'single' mother, more than half were the biological father of the child. Two-thirds of biological fathers not living with their children had some form of contact.

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[87] The mean age of women at the birth of a first child in England and Wales increased from 24.3 years in 1976 to 26.8 years in 1997 (Population Trends 1998).
[88] Institute of Education website, University of London, http://www.cls.ioe.ac.uk/studies, accessed 6 June 2007.

The political debate about abortion continues to draw on moral discourses and does not engage with the complexities of the sets of circumstances in which women become pregnant (Lattimer 1997). David (1992) refers to changing personal risk for women in terminating a pregnancy, linked to contemporary religious and legal sanctions. Hadley (1996) similarly critiques the way in which abortion is displaced from historical context and contemporary sexual politics. Currently, unplanned pregnancy does not fit with the idea of 'proper', planned and prepared motherhood, and opting for an abortion risks criticism in a society that channels women into mothering (Richardson 1993). Whichever move women make, they risk stigma (Argent[89] 2006). This complexity is discussed further in the next section, which explores constructions of moral and social disorder linked to women's sexuality at different historical points.

Section Three: Conceptions of Deviance[90]

Reference to a cycle of teenage pregnancy (Heald 2007) would appear to suggest repetition of 'the same thing', whereas heterosexual sex, of which pregnancy is one possible consequence, is an encounter that has had different meanings at different times (Stanley 1995, Simon and Gagnon[91] 1999). Interpretations of sexual behaviour are historically specific. Aitkenhead (2006) for example refers to declassified government papers documenting the 'vicious debauchery' of young women in Leicester Square in 1943. Experience of pregnancy is similarly variable in terms of age (in or out of the expected chronological order), place (in or out of marriage or a cohabiting relationship with a man), outcome (dependent for example on access to information about abortion), and emotional impact (for example, feelings of fear and shame linked to social censure and stigma). A comparison by Carabine (2001) of the respective 1930s and 1990s discourses of unmarried and lone motherhood reveals the processes by which social problems are manufactured. She continues discussion by Williams (1989) and Kiernan *et al.* (1998) of the ways

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[89] Argent (2006:67) argues for '(t)aking the stigma out of abortion' and making access simpler, a position supported by the British Medical Association (2007).
[90] The definition of 'deviance' in the New Oxford Dictionary (2001 [1998]:505) is: 'The fact or state of diverging from usual or accepted standards, especially in social or sexual behaviour'.
[91] Simon and Gagnon's (1999) concept of 'sexual scripts' suggests changing constructs of sex.

in which regulatory policy frameworks produce historically specific ideas about 'normal', 'respectable' and 'safe' sexuality, integral to constructions of social and moral order. Women deviating from contemporary norms of female sexuality have risked being categorised, disparaged and stigmatised.

The pregnancies of eleven of the thirteen women who took part in this study were marked out as 'illegitimate', 'single parent' or 'teenage', reflecting deviance from contemporary 'carefully calibrated norms of motherhood' (Smart 1996:47). Three 'grandmothers' talked about their mothers who were married when they became pregnant under twenty in the 1960s, an event which was neither a personal nor a social problem. The time gap between experience of first teenage pregnancy and interview was one to two years for the youngest women, and ranged from twenty to fifty years for the 'grandmothers' and 'great-grandmothers'. To produce accounts of themselves as social and sexual actors, the women were drawing on cultural norms and ideas about which pregnancies might constitute a public health, moral or social problem, at the time of their pregnancy and at time of interview (for example May[92] 2004).

Out of order

Order, as used here, refers to historically specific ideas about what constitutes an expected sequence of life events (Paechter 2001). For example, Hockey and James (1993) discuss processes of categorisation and normalisation by age, based on ideas about who should do what, and when. Order also relates to the concept of social cohesion. At particular historical points, women who have had a child outside of marriage or a cohabiting relationship with a man have been represented as undermining moral and social order through the reproduction of 'troublesome' families (for example Murray 1990, Dennis and Erdos 1992). The underclass theory of transmission of disorder in particular 'cultural landscapes' has been critiqued recently by MacDonald and Marsh (2005:373) on the grounds of their empirical evidence of the significant contribution of economic marginalisation to social instability.

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[92] May (2004) presents her analysis of the written life stories of seventeen women in Finland (the oldest born in the 1910s and the youngest in the 1960s) who at some point in their lives had been 'lone' mothers.

Stigma

Goffman's (1984 [1963]:11) classic early work on stigma begins with reference to the origin of the word in ancient Greece. Stigmas, he explains, were signs violently marked on a person's body to signify something unusual or disgraceful about their moral status. Goffman suggests that the term shifted in the 1960s to apply more to difference and disgrace than to bodily evidence. Smith (2001) argues that the marking of some women as sexual and moral transgressors was a corollary of the UK mid-eighteenth century privatisation of land and simultaneous ownership of women in marriage, to guarantee rightful inheritance of property. She illustrates the indelibility of the mark with a quote from Wollstonecraft's (1792) *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*.

> A woman who has lost her honour, imagines that she cannot fall lower, and as for recovering her former station, it is Impossible (sic); no exertion can wash this stain away.
>
> (Smith 2001:47)

Specific forms of stigma are produced by the social meaning of ways in which pregnancy and transition to motherhood deviate from what is, at any given time, regarded as normal and acceptable. Stigma was recently listed by Westwood and Mullan (2006:160) as 'hand in hand' with a list of marginalised positions, including teenage pregnancy and social exclusion. Stigmatisation can be cumulative, for example in the assumption that teenage women who are already considered too young to be capable mothers, are not in 'stable'[93] relationships. Younger women are also often assumed to be 'single'[94] mothers.

The stigma of illegitimacy

Ideas of morality and respectability have been played out on the bodies of predominantly working class women, for example in their containment as

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[93] The adjective 'stable' is often used to describe a relationship, without definition of the characteristics of the type of relationship that deserves it.

[94] For example, this assumption is regularly expressed by fourth year medical students who take part in Teenage Pregnancy workshops. The workshops are part of Newcastle University Medical School Public Health Junior Rotation, and are facilitated by women with experience of pregnancy under the age of twenty, who also designed them. The women use their personal stories of teenage pregnancy as a way in to discussion of broader health inequalities, and to highlight negative stereotyping (Buxton *et al.* 2005).

unmarried mothers in workhouses under the Poor Law[95]. The following extract from a history of Northumberland County Council shows twentieth century categorisation of women as redeemable and worthy of support or not, depending on their marital status and degree of sexual respectability.

> Unmarried mothers, if without resources, came within the County Council's care. It has to be remembered that in the first half of this century a considerable stigma attached to the birth of a child out of wedlock, and many young women had no alternative but to seek help from the Poor Law or, after 1929, Public Assistance. A distinction was made by the local authority between 'young women of previous good character' having their first child and 'depraved women who make a convenience of the Institution'. Those in the former category were often transferred to voluntary homes (usually run by such organisations as the Salvation Army) and were normally aided for six months after the baby's birth. Sometimes the mother was able to find employment – for example, in domestic service – where her child could live with her; frequently the child remained in the Council's care. (Taylor 1989:98)

The Poor Law was replaced by the Local Government Act that came into effect on 1 April 1930[96]. However, despite the administrative shift (from the Poor Law Unions to Local Authorities via the Poor Law Act) of responsibility for relief of people who were not able to support themselves, hospital and workhouse buildings remained in use and their physical conditions 'often still retained the stigma and austerity of the Poor Law' (Stevenson 1984:301).

Barbara, one of the 'great-grandmothers', talked in her first interview[97] about working as a volunteer in a local mental hospital following early retirement.

> One of the men in there was already old when I got to know him, and he had actually been born in the workhouse, and he never, ever escaped the system. And I said to the staff, when it came to the war, surely he could have joined up, gone to war and then got out. But they said "No" because in actual fact if you

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[95] The Poor Law made public financial support available to people not able to support themselves, for example women who were pregnant outside of marriage (Finch 1989). Bindel (2006:16), in an article on Josephine Butler, refers to Butler supporting 'unmarried mothers' who were in the workhouse 'as punishment for their behaviour'.

[96] Introduced by Neville Chamberlain, Health Minister in the 1925 Conservative government.

[97] Extracts from Barbara's interview are reproduced here because of their relevance to the focus of this chapter. They are included in advance of methodological discussion in Chapter 3, which covers the reason for phonetic transcription of interview tapes. The numbers in brackets represent the length of pauses in seconds.

> look into it, he actually belonged to the workhouse and that was
> it, and that was his life. That was his life from one institution to
> another, all because his mother got pregnant.
>
> **Barbara** (60, 'great-grandmother')

Barbara began telling me about this man even before I had switched on the tape recorder at the beginning of her first interview. This was a prelude to her talking about her own mother, Hannah, who was pregnant and unmarried at seventeen in the 1930s. Barbara realised that her mother could have been one of the women whom she met through her voluntary work, who had been literally shut away because they had become pregnant outside of marriage.

Although Barbara's mother Hannah escaped the asylum and became 'respectable' through subsequent marriage, she always felt marked by illegitimacy, unlike Forster's (2001:287) grandmother who had a sense of being "rescued" from disgrace when she married six years after giving birth to a baby. Hannah's definition of her first child born within marriage as her "first" child, is an illustration of the impact of social sanction. This dis-location of Barbara's older brother, despite her repeated assurances that he was treated the same as her and her sisters, is an example of what Harris (1969:45) refers to as the impossibility of 'placing' illegitimate children socially. The pauses in the interview extract below suggest Barbara's difficulty in narrating her mother's sense of shame and stigma, displayed in the weekly collection of maintenance from the local police station, a public[98] place attending to other forms of 'wrong-doing'.

> I think our Gordon was about four when me mam and dad got
> married (4). You know how Catherine Cookson[99] never got over
> the fact that she was illegitimate, my mother never actually ever
> got over the ermm, the stigma of having an illegitimate child. I
> can remember, oh, she was quite old, and I can remember her
> saying that she always thought that it was silly, but she always
> thought of Cynthia (Hannah's second oldest child) as being the
> oldest one, for all Gordon was. Cynthia was the first that was

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[98] Rose (2003) suggests that shame requires an audience and a sense of exposure.

[99] Catherine Cookson (1906-1998) was an English author whose books were inspired by her experience of growing up in South Shields, North East England. When Catherine was born her mother was unmarried, and she grew up thinking that her grandmother was her mother, and her mother her sister. When she left school her first job was in the workhouse laundry in South Shields.

actually born inside the marriage (4). I can't remember her exact words now but I can remember her saying that (2), that she always thought of Cynthia as the first child. She never, ever got over the stigma of it, it was something that ermm, that was always there, but I didn't realise until a lot, lot later in life because me granma an' granda were no different with Gordon to what they were with the rest of us (7) no different at all. I do remember mind (2) going to the police station with me mam, because that's where the maintenance was paid, four shillings a week. There was a little window, and so in those days the father must have paid the money in an' then they paid it out, whoever this person was behind the window. But I know two or three times over the years, me mam did say something (4), something along the lines, you know, that she sort of ermm (7) not regretted having him, but sort of (6) that she was ostracised because of it (1). It was always there as far as me mam was concerned, but (2) very much the way that when you read a Catherine Cookson book, well, when you read about her life, that she, she actually always felt the stigma of being illegitimate. My mother felt the stigma of having an illegitimate child. She always thought of it as stigma. I mean, I don't know if things were said to her, but she always (8), she always, I dunno, felt like a second class citizen. She always felt looked down on. I mean nowadays it would be a seven day wonder (laughed) and you would just get on with life. Me mam was lucky me grandparents accepted it, because a lot of her generation were put away for the same thing. She was unlucky to become pregnant *but* (emphasis) she was so lucky to still be allowed to have her life ermm compared to others that I know of, who didn't only have the baby taken away, they had their whole life taken away. It doesn't bear thinking about, but it happened. Life has changed over the years, hasn't it. Even when I was visitin' those old ladies, you felt such pity for them, because their lives had been wasted, not because they'd been pregnant but wasted because they had been locked away for it.

Barbara (60, 'great-grandmother')

Another woman[100] remembered learning about a relative's suicide attempt in response to a pregnancy outside of marriage in the 1950s. This woman, like Barbara above, paused often in her telling. This suggested to me that, even though abortion is a story that can be told now (Plummer 1995), it may not be a straightforward one.

Me mam told me about (name of relative) when I was married meself (3). She took an overdose of (sedative drug). That was

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[100] I have not given the pseudonym of the woman who gave this account, to avoid identification.

> her sixth baby (4) and in them days it (abortion) was against the law (3). I mean, let's face it, (name of relative) must have felt that she couldn't go on any longer errr, and in those days, whay (3) you had no option did you (4). Eeeh, we certainly live in a more enlightened time in some ways. It was something that (3) wasn't talked about until errr, well I suppose abortion became (slight pause) legal. Times have changed that much and I think that was perhaps why me mam felt she was able to talk about it.

The consequences for women who continued with pregnancies outside of marriage are represented in academic work, for example Haste (1992). They are portrayed in film, for example *The Magdalene Sisters*, and in novels such as Drabble's (1968) *The Millstone* and Sage's (2000) *Bad Blood*. In an interview broadcast on *Weekend Woman's Hour* (BBC 2006) the mother of the rock musician Phil Lynott[101] described giving birth to him in a home for unmarried mothers in the 1940s, 'I was the only one with a black baby and I was a piece of dirt. I was allowed out once a week for half a day'.

The illegal practice of termination of pregnancy[102], up to the introduction of the Abortion Act in 1967, was set against this background of stigma related to illegitimacy and difficulties experienced by working class women in accessing contraception. Mike Leigh's film *Vera Drake* about a woman with a 'secret sideline of helping out young girls who have got themselves into a spot of bother' (*The Times* 2005) explores the issue of abortion in the 1950s. McDermid (1988:102) reminds her reader of the 1960s, when 'pre-marital sex was unacknowledged' and young women who became pregnant were likely to be thrown out of the family home if they were not able to access abortion services.

Barbara referred to change over time and then, apparently in contradiction, to 'it' being the same, when she compared her own experience of being seventeen, unmarried and pregnant in the 1960s, with her mother's (in the 1930s) and her daughter's (in the 1980s). In doing this, she made visible both a continuing thread of 'deviation' and the degree of social change over the fifty

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[101] The interview marked the twentieth anniversary of Lynott's death.
[102] In 1939 a Government committee reported that the deaths of one in six pregnant women were the result of abortion, the majority of which were criminally induced (Dear 2005).

years from the 1930s to the 1980s. At the same time as referring to the 'pattern' of herself, her mother and her daughter each becoming pregnant at the same age outside of marriage, Barbara acknowledged the different personal and political circumstances framing these life events. She illustrated shifting consequences of deviance, from containment to whispered denigration to disappointed expectations. Barbara married during pregnancy and avoided the stigma of illegitimate birth in the 1960s[103], although she expressed regret at not having felt able to publicly celebrate the pregnancy.

> When I had (first baby), for all you were sort of excited and over the moon about it (laughed), you couldn't show that because it wasn't the done thing to be pregnant an' not married (5) cos I always remember that was the difference between having the first and the second child, that you could be really excited about being pregnant and show it with the second one, where with the first one you had to sort of (3) keep your feelings in check (3) cos you knew you'd, as they said in those days 'done wrong' (laughed), but errr things have definitely altered, haven't they. When me mother had hers, she was lucky me grandparents accepted it, because a lot of her generation were put away for the same thing. Life has changed over the years, hasn't it. You felt such pity for those old ladies (in the mental institution), because their lives had been wasted because they had been locked away for it. And you never actually thought of yourself as being in the same position, but really it's the same, isn't it. When I had (first baby), it happened in a few families and it was covered up and not spoken about. It was something that was sort of whispered about, you know "Oh, so and so's pregnant (whispered) no better than she should be" (laughed). It was ermm definitely, wasn't something that was accepted. When our daughter was goin' to have a baby (4), for all it had happened to me (5), I felt disappointment. I suppose every generation you must have the same initial disappointment.
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> **Barbara** (60, 'great-grandmother')

Natalie (20, 'mother') mentioned how much she had appreciated a local group for mothers under the age of twenty, because it was a place where she did not feel looked down on, which is "what happens when you're young". Barbara said

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[103] Monaghan (2005) refers to her mother 'who in the 60s as a working-class girl was subject to the now well-known brutal treatment to which single teenage mothers were then subject'. Monaghan was one of four respondents to Madeleine Bunting's article 'It isn't babies that blight young lives' in *The Guardian*, 27 May 2005. She wrote: 'I was a teenage mother; my mother was a teenage mother; and my daughter was a teenage mother. I am also a barrister. All three of us have faced the periodic and public vilification of teenage mothers'.

similarly of her mother that "she always felt looked down on", having had a child outside of marriage in the 1930s.

Barbara was one of the cohort of young women to whom Rains (1971) refers, who shared a 1960s 'sexual career' of physical development and first sexual encounters up to the point at which some (who had had sex with a man or men) became pregnant and, if the pregnancy continued, stepped across what appeared to be a chasm dividing moral from immoral communities (Furstenberg *et al.* 1990, Kane and Wellings 1999). Gill (1977) uses the concept of 'career' similarly in his discussion of the experiences of 'illegitimately pregnant women'. He reflects contemporary concern about the apparent weakening of social sanctions against heterosexual intercourse outside of a formal contract of marriage. For example, Mellor[104] is reported (Barton 2006) as saying that 'the day she found out she was pregnant (in the 1960s) and would have to get married, she felt her life was over', reflecting the social consequences for women of unintended pregnancy. Barbara commented that pregnancy meant that "people knew what you had done", resulting in the marking of a woman's reputation. Women who were having sex with men without becoming pregnant, through luck, effective use of contraception or infertility, were able to remain anonymous.

From 'unmarried' to 'single' mothers

Although the use of 'illegitimate' continued in legal documents until 1987[105], the label for mothers who were not married or living with a man changed to 'single' as rates of cohabitation and births outside of marriage rose (Hall 2000). Selman (1998:142) suggests that single and other mothers regarded as unconventional were increasingly demonised during the 1980s by the UK Conservative government, culminating in the orchestration of a chorus of public hostility towards 'young ladies who get pregnant just to jump the housing list[106]'. A stereotypical 'single mother' was created who dared to have 'babies on benefit',

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[104] Kay Mellor has written several television drama series, for example *Band of Gold*.
[105] This usage was ended by the Family Law Reform Act (Fox Harding 1996).
[106] Selman quotes the Social Security Minister, speaking at the 1992 Conservative Party Conference.

who in turn grew into 'delinquent youth' (Millar 1997:108). In addition to being verbally attacked by right-wing politicians and the media (who, frequently had no evidence base for their claims[107]) many young mothers who were living only with their children were financially penalised, together with other mothers, when Child Benefit[108] payment was cut in 1985 and frozen in 1987 and 1988 (Turner 2003:155).

Emma (38), one of the 'grandmothers', was by Duncan and Edwards' (1997:45) definition a 'single' mother (i.e. never-married), as she refused to marry when she became pregnant at seventeen in the 1980s. In cohabiting with the father of the baby, Emma did not threaten the economic order as she was not reliant on welfare payments. On the contrary, her partner was in a well-paid job and they bought a house together. At the point of interview Emma had been separated from her partner and had been living only with her children for ten years, having never expected to be a 'single' mother. Emma's life story version confounds both the Conservative government rhetoric of the threat of 'single' mothers that was contemporary with her becoming one, and Murray's (1990) articulation of an alleged distinction between mothers who live with men (deserving, reputable, able, honest) and mothers who live only with their children (undeserving, disreputable, feckless and manipulative of the welfare system). The suggestion that mothers who live without a male partner are irresponsible and 'not good enough' (critiqued for example by Phoenix 1996, Roseneil and Mann 1996) is in direct contradiction to the societal expectation and reality of women as main childcarers (Graham 1987). Murray's (1994:11) underclass theory nevertheless connects single motherhood with the collapse of social cohesion in 'lower working class communities everywhere.[109]

Murray's (1990, 1994) arguably objectifying ideas about socially ordered ways for men to have sexual access to women are shared by Dennis and Erdos

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[107] It has been documented since 1990 that there is no evidence that young women who have become pregnant have done so in order to obtain welfare support (Coote *et al.* 1990).

[108] Child Benefit is paid directly to the mothers of all children under sixteen, and to those whose children remain in full-time education up to, and not including, the age of nineteen.

[109] Murray refers to 'everywhere' in the UK. Murray, as a USA commentator, applied underclass theory developed in the USA, and linked with single motherhood, to the UK context (Roseneil and Mann 1996, Selman 1998).

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(1992), who in turn decry the reduction of marriage to a contract without special status, and suggest that the dismantling of 'fatherhood' from families (by women[110]) has caused social breakdown. This idea is challenged by sociological exploration of the links between family structure and behaviour defined as anti-social. This shows that most women who live in circumstances that put particular pressure on their mothering, do not have children who behave anti-socially (Macguire 2006) and are not a destabilising force at the margins of society, a polemic perpetuated by the New Labour government (Blair 1997). Macdonald and Marsh (2001) and Miliband (2004) highlight the crudeness of the notion of 'underclass' in relation to the complexity of individual biographies, and to changing circumstances in disadvantaged areas used by underclass theorists as fixed reference points.

Section Four: A New Arrival (Teenage Pregnancy)

Teenage pregnancy first emerged as a concept in USA and UK sociological and medical literature, political discourses and the media during the 1970s and 1980s (Luker 1996), and its appearance as a discrete category in the 1970 Reader's Guide to Periodical Literature represented its debut as an issue of public concern (Furstenberg *et al.* 1987). In the UK the pregnancies of teenage women came to be seen as a particular problem when a general trend began in the 1980s towards having a child at an older age. The proportion of young women becoming pregnant under the age of twenty nevertheless rose throughout the decade after a slight drop in the early 1980s, and peaked in 1990 and 1991[111] (Cheesbrough *et al.* 1999). In response, policies and initiatives of UK Conservative and New Labour governments during the 1990s included successive quantitative targets to reduce unintended pregnancy among young women under eighteen (Department of Health 1992, Department of Health 1998, Department of Social Security 1998, Home Office Ministerial

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[110] Coles (1995) robustly challenges Dennis and Erdos' suggestion that the women's liberation movement caused families to be without 'fatherhood'.

[111] Brook (2003) suggest that the 1980s controversy over the issue of confidential contraception service provision for young people under the age of sixteen was confusing for young people and affected their confidence in services. The figures for young people's attendance at contraception and sexual health services showed a drop during this period. Funding cuts also affected the availability of young people's health services.

Group on the Family 1998, Health Education Authority 1998, Social Exclusion Unit 1999). The publication of *The Health of the Nation* review (Department of Health 1992) by the then Conservative government, introduced a target to halve the rate of conceptions to young women aged thirteen to fifteen by the year 2000, arguably an appropriate focus in relation to potential disruption of a younger woman's life. The target was not reached. New Labour launched a Teenage Pregnancy Strategy (Social Exclusion Unit 1999) for England in 2001, aiming to halve under-eighteen pregnancy rates by 2010.

Hooper and Longworth (2002) refer to a health needs assessment with young people to identify their major health issues, during which the profiled population did not prioritise teenage pregnancy. The authors attribute this to the fact that pregnancy is a minority experience for young women, and even more so for young men as Corlyon and McGuire (1999) point out. Despite this and the regularly publicised reduction in teenage pregnancy rates since the strategy launch, public imagination is caught by the idea that they are on the rise (Arai 2003a), a sign of an uninterrupted cycle of deficit in terms of morally and socio-economically responsible behaviour, of 'getting into trouble' (Frost 2001). In her capacity as Conservative Party Chair, Teresa May (Conservative Party News Website 2005) described a rise in the number of pregnancies of young women under the age of sixteen[112] during 2004 as 'deeply disturbing', and referred to the Teenage Pregnancy Strategy as a failure. The idea of a link between teenage pregnancy and family breakdown has been reinvigorated by the Conservative Party Policy Group (Social Justice Policy Group 2007), notwithstanding the fact that the number of teenage mothers is small relative to other groups in the population.

Tony Blair, Prime Minister at the time, wrote the foreword to the Teenage Pregnancy Report (Social Exclusion Unit 1999:4-5). He positioned the ten year plan within a moral discourse by describing England as having the 'worst record on teenage pregnancies in Europe', that is 'not a record in which we can take

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[112] Numbers are small and caution should be exercised in interpreting rate change in any one year. However, the 2004 teenage pregnancy rates were the lowest since 1995 and misrepresentation of this longer term shift could be viewed as politically motivated.

any pride', in fact 'a shameful record', the consequences of which include 'shattered lives and blighted futures'. Blair's reference to the fact that teenagers[113] living in socio-economically disadvantaged areas are those most likely to become pregnant, could be interpreted as stigmatising the sexuality and motherhood of working class black and white young women, already the primary focus of media attention, moral panic and interventions through the 1980 and 1990s (Griffin 1997, Clarke and Thomson 2001, Skeggs 1997). Phoenix[114] (1990) reviews the scapegoating and moral panics related to teenage 'lone'[115] motherhood, reflecting shifts in social conventions and 'the public moralities which underpin them' (Burgoyne *et al.* 1987:110).

In the UK media[116] teenage pregnancy is generally reported as a problem (discussed for example by Selman 1998 and Dickson 2006), with frequent use of dramatic and inaccurate language such as 'rampant' in relation to teenage pregnancy rates (Google Alert accessed 3 October 2006). Violent imagery is often used, with verbs such as 'smash' and 'slash' (Google Alert accessed 30 September 2006) and 'combat' (Wintour 2006) describing the approach needed to reduce rates. The media have borrowed the word 'hotspot', introduced in policy documents (for example Department for Work and Pensions 2005), to refer to areas with a high level of teenage pregnancy. However, there is evidence of a positive shift in the tenor of regional newspaper coverage since the launch of the Teenage Pregnancy Strategy in 2001, which may reflect the

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[113] This is an example of the gender neutral language used in the report (Alldred 2005).

[114] Phoenix (1988) highlights the shared, dynamic class culture of working class black and white young women, with reference to empirical research involving women who gave birth between 1983 and 1984 aged sixteen to nineteen. Seventy-nine women took part in in-depth interviews and just over a hundered participated in shorter interviews. All were recruited in ante-natal clinics at two London hospitals. One of the research findings was that white and black women gave similar analyses of why they had become teenage mothers, illustrating the influence of the structural factors affecting their lives.

[115] I use inverted commas to problematise the assumption that mothers who are not living with a man are 'on their own'. The women's accounts of becoming mothers represent a range of ways in which men (partners, fathers, brothers and members of extended families) as well as women friends and family members are involved in childcare. Selman and Glendinning (1996) point out that young motherhood does not automatically mean lone motherhood.

[116] Media reporting of teenage pregnancy in countries other than the UK tends to be negative. Young women's pregnancies are often included in lists of serious social and health problems as well as criminal activity, for example, a Google (2005) alert highlighted media reporting in the Philippines of social problems such as 'child exploitation, child prostitution, violence against children, teenage pregnancy'.

engagement of local Teenage Pregnancy Coordinators with the media, and improved information-sharing.

Bonell (2004) has examined the conceptualisation of teenage pregnancy as a social problem from the 1980s in the context of increasing births outside of marriage, through a systematic review of thirty-six quantitative research projects relating to teenage pregnancy[117]. Bonell highlights a USA research focus on individual behaviour, defined in some studies as 'deviant' and assumed to be shaped by intergenerationally transmitted 'cultural deficits' rather than socio-economic factors. Although UK research was more likely to examine economic influences, Bonell identifies a lack of acknowledgement that the financial disadvantage generally experienced by women who have a baby under the age of twenty cannot be assumed to be an inevitable or direct effect of their having become a mother.

> Many studies justified their interest in teenage pregnancy in terms of its effects on the poverty of parents and children. However, although these authors provided numerous examples of how teenage parenting could be accompanied by poverty, none acknowledged that such poverty is not an inevitable consequences (sic) of teenage parenthood, but rather is mediated by the way society responds to the needs (and the potential) of teenagers and their children.   (Bonell 2004: 268)

Women with recent experience of pregnancy under the age of twenty are likely to have grown up in areas of socio-economic deprivation as discussed in the first section of this chapter[118] (Social Exclusion Unit 1999, Northern and Yorkshire Public Health Observatory 2001). Current debates surrounding teenage pregnancy are therefore closely linked with social exclusion discourses and policy responses (Watt 2001). For example, Hilary Armstrong was appointed as the first Labour Cabinet Minister for Social Exclusion during 2006, in a 'renewed drive to address the most socially excluded from our society'

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[117] In his selection Bonell did not apply a criterion of methodological rigour, rather aimed to critically review the conceptual approach of each study. Twenty-four of the research projects were undertaken in the USA and twelve in the UK. Findings were published in the USA and UK between 1981 and 2000. Seventeen USA studies and eight UK studies examined teenage pregnancy, and seven studies in the USA and four in the UK focused on teenage motherhood. No study took women's definition of their pregnancies, as intended or wanted, into account.

[118] Twelve per cent of live teenage births between 1994 and 1996 were in the most deprived local authority areas, compared with two per cent in affluent areas (Smith 1999).

(Brindle 2006), including an ongoing focus on reducing teenage pregnancy rates. Berthoud *et al.* (2004), however, claim that the social and economic consequences of having a baby under twenty are not as wide-ranging or as negative as suggested by research studies which did not have control groups. They compared women who gave birth with women who miscarried[119] and found that having a baby as a teenager had little impact on women's qualifications, employment, earning capacity and probability of cohabiting. The employment and income opportunities of the women in the sample, who *happened* to have had a baby under the age of twenty, were significantly influenced by geographical and socio-economic position together with experience of health and educational inequalities.

A sense of not achieving in conventional academic terms, together with experience of boredom, disconnection from learning opportunities, and being bullied at school by peers and teaching staff, are interconnected circumstances that can lead young women to exclude themselves from school or to attend school infrequently and be excluded. Often young women have disengaged from school before they become pregnant. These factors are highlighted in several studies, for example Wiggins *et al.*'s (2005) multi-method study of experiences of teenage parenthood and social exclusion[120], the report prepared by Selman *et al.* (2001) of their monitoring of the effectiveness of the DfES Standards Fund Teenage Pregnancy Grant in supporting young pregnant

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[119] The 1970 British Cohort Study (BCS70) which followed all children born in a week in April 1970, was the main data source for analysis of the consequences of teenage births. Information was collected at birth, and ages 5, 10, 16, 26 and 30. The study was the first to use information on pregnancies and miscarriages available from British Household Panel Survey data, to reduce the influence of pregnancy selection on the measurement of the consequences of teenage births for mothers. Information about siblings was also used to reduce the influence of selection on the estimation of effects of teenage motherhood.

[120] This study drew on two pre-existing datasets, the Social Support and Pregnancy Outcome Study (Oakley 1992) and the Social Support and Family Health Study (Wiggins *et al.* 2004). Women who took part in these studies during 1986-87 and 1999 respectively, were living in predominantly socially disadvantaged areas. New data were produced in focus group discussions, a questionnaire survey and interviews with women and men. A key theme to emerge in interviews with fifty-four women (who had taken part in the two studies referenced above and had volunteered to give additional information), was the experience of learning in school as irrelevant and boring. For some of the women the social contact that they had with friends in school made the boredom bearable, although this did not mitigate their sense of secondary school as increasingly constraining in respect of subject choices. Several women referred to rebelling against the educational system at this stage.

women and teenage mothers of mandatory school age[121], and Cater and Coleman's (2006) exploration of the motivations of young women in 'planning' pregnancy[122]. It is important to note here that Cater and Coleman's definition of 'planning' includes uninformed and inconsistent use of contraception, an issue discussed further in Chapter 5 of the thesis. Wilson and Huntington[123] (2006) and Duncan (2007) similarly critique the construction of teenage motherhood as a social problem, suggesting respectively that teenage mothers are stigmatised because of their failure to conform to expectations of educational achievement, and that age is not the most significant factor affecting social outcomes for women who become mothers under the age of twenty. Ingham (2002) has also highlighted the importance of recognising the multilayered structural issues that contribute to inequalities in education, health and exclusion from the benefits of living in an economically advanced society.

A teenage mother speaking at a consultation event with Tessa Jowell (Young People's Health Network 1998), then Minister for Public Health in the 'New' Labour government, appeared to distance herself from 'other' young mothers, and morally re-position herself in relation to them (Skeggs 1997), "I'm a young mother but I'm not like the rest. I went to college and now I've got a job". Her

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[121] The Standards Fund, administered by the then Department for Education and Skills, supported programmes aiming to achieve national educational priorities. One initiative, the Teenage Pregnancy Grant, was introduced in 1999 following the Social Exclusion Unit report. The objectives of the grant were to encourage school initiatives to raise young people's self-esteem and confidence, thereby aiming to reduce the rate of teenage conceptions, and to reintegrate young women of school age who had become mothers into school settings. Standards Fund grants for schools have now merged into an expanded School Development Grant (http://www.teachernet.gov.uk, accessed 6 June 2007). Selman et al. (2001) undertook a monitoring exercise of six of the forty-eight authorities receiving 2000-2001 Standards Fund Teenage Pregnancy grant allocations. Northumberland was one of the six areas involved. Findings show improved educational achievement at GCSE level and increased interest in post-16 education by many of the young women supported by initiatives funded by the Teenage Pregnancy grant. The authors highlight the success of specialist educational units in motivating young women who had been the most erratic school attenders prior to their pregnancies.
[122] This research involved in-depth interviews with forty-one young women who were pregnant or had already had a child between the ages of 13 and 21, and ten young men who were fathers or fathers-to-be between the ages of 16 and 22. All participants were white and lived in different locations in England. Almost all of the young women represented their education in school negatively. 'Boredom', a sense of being 'picked on' by teachers, and a rebellious response to the constraints of the school system were common features of their experience in secondary school.
[123] Wilson and Huntington (2006) examined literature on teenage motherhood in the United States, Great Britain and New Zealand, and mapped shifts in normative ideas about motherhood.

reference to achieving qualifications in higher education and finding paid employment might suggest a sense of reparation[124], illustrating the moral aspect of economic independence through educational success and paid employment (Duncan and Edwards 1999, Barlow *et al.* 2002), dependent, of course, on responsible management of fertility in heterosexual relationships. The self- and other reporting of young mothers' achievements in education, training and employment (for example Aitkenhead 2005[125], Tickle 2006[126]) might be interpreted as reflecting New Labour's emphasis on social and moral inclusion through paid work and financial self-sufficiency (Levitas 1998). This focus is evident in Blair's (1999:4) statement that teenage mothers and their partners 'simply fail to understand the price they, their children and society, will pay', and need encouragement to 'complete their education and keep in touch with the jobs market'. The idea that people are able to make the 'right' choices if they have the 'right' information has been criticised for the lack of recognition of the impact of structural, environmental and economic inequalities and the ways in which people's capacity to exercise 'choice' can be compromised (Speller 1999, Fenwick 2004, Walkerdine 2004). The life story versions of the women who participated in interviews for this study illustrate the dearth of local jobs offering a reasonable level of income, security and opportunity for personal development, highlighted in other studies (for example Kidger 2004, Hirst *et al.* 2006).

The representation of teenage pregnancy as a risk to social cohesion can be viewed as a continuation of the scapegoating of women whose pregnancies are

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[124] Kidger (2005) uses 'redemption' to describe the motivation for young mothers, working as sessional educators in school Sex and Relationship Education lessons, to negatively shape their accounts of having a baby as a teenager. Kidger interpreted their withholding of positive aspects of their experiences as teenage mothers as their attempts to redeem themselves as moral citizens, in the context of a national Teenage Pregnancy Strategy. Kidger (2003) researched the impact of the provision of sex education sessions with mixed gender groups in school years 10 (14 and 15 year-olds) and 11 (15 and 16 year-olds) in South West England, by young women with experience of teenage pregnancy.
[125] Aitkenhead (2005:5) interviewed a young woman four months after she had given birth half-way through her GCSE exams, all of which she passed, seven with a grade A. She talked about 'a broken condom, tough decisions, and the stigma of being a teenage mum'.
[126] Tickle (2006:3) interviewed two young women who had had a baby at fifteen, each of whom discussed their motivation for career training in forensic science and nursing respectively. One had been at risk of school exclusion.

perceived to be out of order. Hilary Armstrong, appointed as the New Labour Cabinet Minister for Social Justice in May 2006, linked teenage pregnancy with the discourse of antisocial behaviour in an interview during a visit to a London based childcare project for teenage parents, as did Blair in a BBC interview reported by Glendinning (2006). Most young women do not however produce children whose behaviour can be described as anti-social[127], and those who do should receive appropriate support (Macguire 2006, Veit-Wilson 2006). The idea of a 'cycle' of teenage pregnancy is represented in various media. Phillips (2005:27) for example, writing about his visit to Leeds where he grew up during the 1960s and early 1970s, refers to seeing young people in the city centre and imagining that they 'knew that soon it would be their turn for unemployment and early parenthood'. However, one of the findings of MacDonald and Marsh's (2005) empirical study of young people growing up in Britain's poor neighbourhoods was that almost all of the participants said they wanted to have children at some point in their mid- to late twenties. They were like many other people, the authors suggest, in wanting a job and a conventional family life.

Teenage pregnancy: a public health 'problem'?

Despite the current low incidence of teenage pregnancy in Britain, and the publication of research findings suggesting no increase in morbidity in pregnancy and birth for younger women (Makinson 1990), there is continuing media and inter- and intra-professional transmission of the idea of the undesirability of teenage fertility in itself. Kane and Wellings (1999) begin their review of the international evidence for successful reduction of unintended teenage conceptions by clarifying that pregnancy in the teenage years is not biologically problematic[128], and this is reaffirmed in a guide to the commissioning and delivery of maternity services for young parents (Teenage Pregnancy Unit 2004b). The representation of teenage pregnancy as a public health concern, assumed to be automatically linked to adversity, has been

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[127] This is not to deny that some do experience difficulties in their capacity as mothers.

[128] Hayward's (2003) audit of pregnancy outcomes of teenage women who gave birth at the Royal Victoria Infirmary in Newcastle upon Tyne, demonstrated a low level of intervention and good birth weight. Raatikainen *et al.* (2005) found no evidence of increased risk of pre-term delivery, foetal growth restriction, low birth weight or fetal or perinatal death for teenage women who had access to high quality maternity care.

questioned elsewhere (see for example Phoenix[129] 1991, Lhussier 2001, Hirst 2003). Alternative versions include Acheson's (1998:80) reference to the possibility of pregnancy and motherhood being 'positive and welcomed experiences' for young women, Cheesbrough *et al.*'s (1999) reference to varying outcomes of teenage pregnancy, and the conclusions of Selman *et al.* (2001) and Seamark and Lings (2004) that motherhood can be a turning point for young women who are no longer in education[130], in terms of development of a career.

Conclusion

Berthoud and Robson (2001:52) suggest that teenage motherhood should be viewed as a 'convenient benchmark on which to focus analysis and policy, rather than a clearly delineated boundary between an acceptable and unacceptable social position', following their analysis of the circumstances of women who had had their first child under the age of twenty, using data from the European Community Household Panel Survey. Pregnancy is in many cases not *the* interruptor of life chances, as a significant number of young women have already disengaged from full-time education when they become pregnant (Dawson *et al.* 2005). Lawlor and colleagues (Lawlor *et al.* 2001, Lawlor and Shaw 2004) suggest that teenage pregnancy is a manufactured problem, obscuring social and health inequalities.

> Health professionals should not accept without challenge the myth that teenage pregnancy is an important public health problem. There is no biological reason to suggest that having a baby before the age of twenty is associated with ill health…Women having babies in their thirties and forties are not labeled a public health problem, and neither are women who have infertility treatment, even though their babies have an increased risk of perinatal death…Teenage pregnancy is not a

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[129] Fifty 'young mothers' took part in interviews with Phoenix (1991), during pregnancy, six months after birth and just before their child's second birthday. A further sample of women participated in one or two interviews. The findings of Phoenix' study are still relevant in the 2000s in challenging popular belief about teenage pregnancy and the ways in which it has been socially constructed. The majority of women in her study were coping well as mothers.

[130] Graham and Power (2004) illustrate how the earlier a key transition, such as leaving full-time education, happens, the worse an individual's overall health status is likely to be in the long term. They attribute this to the interruption of opportunities for social mobility (however constrained these might be at any given time).

> public health problem; the cumulative effect of social and economic exclusion on the health of mothers and their babies, whatever their age, is.   (Lawlor *et al.* 2001:1428)

Meanwhile, evidence of women's postponement of pregnancy (Smallwood and Jefferies 2003, Mackarness 2005) and choice not to have a child, is represented in the media as a threat to population replacement in Western European countries (Harding 2006). During the course of the study the increase in pregnancies among women in the thirty-five to forty age range (Gask 2006) has been debated as a public health problem and an irrational choice[131] (Meikle 2005, Bennett 2006). For example, Bewley *et al.* (2005) refer to an epidemic of middle-age pregnancy and bemoan the lack of a policy to address this. Templeton (2006), commenting on the findings of Bewley's research, illustrates the moral, classed divide (see for example Skeggs 1997) constructed between pregnancies at the ends of the age spectrum.

> The two groups could not be more different. One is made up largely of deprived and feckless girls while the other is dominated by highly educated and successful career women.
> (Templeton 2006:2)

The next chapter describes the production of versions of life stories that challenge Templeton's polarisation of mothers perceived as 'too young' and 'too old'.

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[131] Two 'grandmothers' each expressed an opinion about this. Joan (36, 'grandmother') said "There's nae way I could have a kid now. Nah, not at this age, definitely not. I think it's too old, an' there's people just *startin'* families. I think it's far too old (laughed)". Emma (38, 'grandmother') commented "I think it's better to have them when you're young. When you're eighteen, you just take it as it comes. I don't think I could have had a job and a career an' then all of a sudden had that snatched away from me an' had to look after these babies.'

Chapter 3

Methodology Matters[132]

Introduction

This chapter is divided into four sections. The first section *Approaching Qualitative Data Production* presents my methodological approach to exploring intergenerational transmission of values, beliefs and practices in relation to teenage pregnancy. I explain the decision to co-produce qualitative data in individual in-depth interviews, using a version of the biographic-narrative interpretive method[133] described by Wengraf (2005). Section two *Approaching Potential Participants* reviews the series of steps taken to make contact with women in the research area, and ethical considerations in recruiting women connected as mothers and daughters. The third section *Producing and Working with Data* describes the practicalities and processes of data generation, data analysis and interpretation. The chapter concludes with *Reflections* on methodological issues that arose during the research, such as the emotional impact of co-producing versions of women's life stories.

Section One: Approaching Qualitative Data Production

The research aim was to explore intergenerational transmission of values, beliefs and practices relating to teenage pregnancies, and this directed the decision to produce qualitative data with the women who participated. I use the term qualitative data in the sense of a broad ethnographic approach that acknowledges the value of different forms of data and strategies for analysis (Denzin and Lincoln 1998, Oleson 1998, Atkinson 2005). A qualitative method was considered an effective means of exploring complex communication processes in a private and potentially sensitive area of social life (Lee 1993,

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[132] 'Methodology Matters!' is the title of Liz Stanley's chapter in Robinson and Richardson (1997 [1993]). It appeals as a title for this chapter because it holds both the sense of 'matters' (plural noun) pertaining to methodology, and the importance of attention to methodological concerns ('matters' as verb).
[133] In the literature (for example Wengraf 2005) 'biographic-narrative interpretive method' and 'biographical narrative interpretive method' refer to the same method and can be used interchangeably.

Flick 2002, Thornton 2003, Peddie and Van Teijlingen 2005), namely sexual encounters, and their meanings (Bruner 1990, Johnson 2000).

Young women's pregnancies and babies are statistically mapped in relation to areas of socio-economic disadvantage[134]. Although they are significant events in individual biographies, they are not generally 'placed' within family and social networks or examined in relation to what they mean to the people involved. In the context of the generalising discourse of the Teenage Pregnancy Strategy in England, qualitative data provide an opportunity to explore the nuances of values, beliefs and practices within family and generational groups, and the influence of intergenerational transmission on the moves that come before (interpretable as leading up to) life transitions (Erben 1998). The intergenerational aspect of this study provided an opportunity to consider constructed versions of particular experiences and events, such as the births of babies, from different perspectives.

Interviewing women

I began the study hoping to interview women with experience of teenage pregnancy and the men with whom they had conceived. The quality of data produced by young men in Wansbeck during a study of young people, sexuality and relationships (McNulty and Richardson 2002[135]) showed the potential of men's constructed versions of masculinities, heterosexual encounters and fatherhood, complementary to women's accounts of femininities, sex with men and motherhood. Pattman *et al.* (2005) who conducted an interview-based study of the identities of boys in London, aged between eleven and fourteen, comment similarly on the seriousness and maturity with which the boys who took part discussed relationships, in individual interviews.

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[134] The link between teenage pregnancy rates and socio-economic disadvantage is discussed in Chapter 1.

[135] Northumberland Teenage Pregnancy Strategy Group funded this research in order to gain better understanding of the meanings that young people give to sexuality, sex and relationships. Wansbeck was one of two areas in Northumberland in which focus groups and individual interviews were organised with young women and men, aged thirteen to sixteen. The research report, *Young People, Sexuality and Relationships* (McNulty and Richardson 2002) was used to inform Northumberland's strategy to improve young people's sexual health and reduce rates of teenage pregnancy.

Both men and women have been interviewed in recent intergenerational research projects. Meah, as a member of a team researching the making of heterosexuality (Hockey *et al.* 2007), conducted qualitative interviews with women and men across three generations in twenty-two family groups in Humberside and East Yorkshire. Brannen *et al.* (2004) used a biographical narrative interview method to examine change and continuity in working and caring practices over the twentieth century in twelve four-generation families in England[136]. However, after consideration of the resources available to me as an individual PhD student, it was decided that a study across generations was feasible while one across both generational and (feminine and masculine) gender positions was not. As it happened, the women's accounts suggested that it would have been impossible in some cases, and less than straightforward in others, to interview seven of the fifteen 'fathers'. One had been convicted on a charge of rape, one on a charge of sexual abuse, one on a charge of domestic violence[137], and four were estranged from the women with whom they had had a child. Although two of these men still had some contact with their daughters (two of the 'mothers') at time of interview, and might have been approachable through them, this could have compromised my relationship as researcher with the women in those two family groups. I have not however researched women in isolation, as interview data include detailed accounts of relationships with men as sexual partners and husbands, and as fathers, grandfathers and sons.

A feminist framework

Stanley and Wise (1990, 1993) refer to the danger of misrepresentation and creation of a ghetto effect in studying women. There is tension between the political importance of recognising that some experiences are shared through living in similarly gendered bodies at particular historical and cultural moments (Holland 1995, Valentine 2001) and the need to acknowledge differences where gender intersects with class, sexual identity, ethnicity and age (see for

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[136] Forty-six participants lived in London and the Home Counties, twenty in the South, and five in the Midlands or the North.
[137] All of the men had been given prison sentences.

example Reinharz 1992, Yuval-Davis 1993, Anthias 2002, Hesse-Biber *et al.* 2004, Gupta 2005). Henwood *et al.* (1998) combine 'standpoints' and 'differences' in the title of their edited collection to highlight the productive tension of overlapping feminist theoretical activity, and to expand opportunities for debating power relations that are organised and sustained through socially and historically situated discourses. Stanley (1992:242) engages with the risk of generalisation in writing about the value of working with 'the details of particular lives', as a way of stopping 'in their dubious tracks the categorical statements 'women this' and 'women that''. She refers elsewhere (1997) to feminisms as sources of knowledge that counters what is taken for granted and provokes thought. This is relevant to teenage pregnancy discourses that tend to stereotype pregnant women under twenty without attention to difference, for example in age (the teenage years cover a significant developmental period), and in historical, geographical and socio-economic (class) position, closely linked with education and employment opportunities.

Experiencing, knowing[138] and narrating[139] women

Use of the verb 'narrate' rather than the noun 'narrative' emphasises women's active participation as knowers and theorists (see Bruner 1990, Skultans 2004b). Lawler (2002) defines narrating as an interpretive activity by individuals in particular social contexts, and an effective way of finding out about people's lives. Analytical accounts of experiences produced in this way are then suitable for further interpretation by researchers (Maynard and Purvis 1994, Stanley 1994). Feminisms have stimulated epistemological debates concerning who produces knowledge about whom, frequently referred to as the relationship between the 'knower' and 'the known' (Harding 1987, Stanley and Wise 1990). They have questioned the conceptualisation of knowledge production as

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[138] *Knowing Women: Feminism and Knowledge* (Crowley and Himmelweit 1994) is the title of an edited volume engaging with gender, sexuality, language and feminist theories of knowledge production. 'Knowing', used as an adjective, suggests women's capacity to know, and as a gerund, the process of developing a body of knowledge about women's experiences.

[139] The verb 'narrate' holds the idea of 'telling what you know', as the root is the Latin word gnarus, meaning 'knowing'. The noun 'narrative' tends to be over-used, and interchanged with 'story' (as for example in Josselson and Lieblich 1993), thereby losing its specificity and sense of action.

discovery or excavation, and emphasised the experiences of women previously ignored or marginalised in sociological accounts.

> By emphasising the importance of experience in developing theory, questions of 'knowledge' became the legitimate property of all women whose explication of their own experiences laid a foundation for much of the new feminist scholarship.
>
> (Cavanagh and Lewis 1996:90)

Broadly speaking, feminist methodological approaches to research insist on the recognition of the relationship between experiencing and knowing (Kennedy *et al.* 1993), that is, the production of knowledge through accounts of experiences and actions in a geographically and historically located gendered body. Use of 'feminisms' in the plural highlights the different standpoints from which women organise their theorising (Humm 1991, Fonow and Cook 1991, Mirza 1991, Oakley 1993, Henwood *et al.* 1998). The research process is understood to be theoretically underpinned by ideas about the co-production of interview accounts by participant and researcher. For example Avis (2002:192) discusses the complex issue of 'me as part of the process', and Skeggs (2002) similarly emphasises the significance of the age and range of life experiences of the participant who tells what she knows, and of the researcher who listens.

The quality of the relationship between the two depends to a great extent on the capacity of the researcher to be reflexive at all stages of the research process, and to mitigate as far as is possible against an imbalance of power (Ramazanoğlu and Holland 2002, Besio 2005). Delcroix (2004), for example, refers to the importance of not thinking of the people she works with in research projects as 'beneath' her view. As Mason (2002:227) suggests, social phenomena do not have 'a static decontextual and therefore uncoverable existence'. She cites the example of researching moralities of parenting to emphasise the importance of creating interview environments in which meaningful knowledge can be co-produced through the combined efforts of the researcher (who effectively organises 'the asking' and then listens respectfully and carefully) and the participant (who constructs the phenomenon under examination through the act of narrating).

Rosenthal and Bar-On (1992:111) suggest that the act of narrating produces more than meaning at the point of articulation, rather a representation of a 'biographical structure of meaning' that adapts to incorporate new events and experiences. Roberts (2002) similarly expresses the idea of the making and re-making of accounts that, in turn, make sense of our lives. A focus on women's capacity to analyse, explicate and evaluate life events and experiences fits Joyce's (1995:15) observation that the diverse events in people's lives that appear unconnected 'can come together in meaningful patterns, and patterns that confer meanings'. Riessman (2000) refers to participants stitching interview texts and tying significant events and important relationships together in the imaginative act of narrating. The interview accounts are literally what the women made of their life events and experiences.

Fabricating[140] women

Peplar (2002) engages with debates about the fabrication of life stories and the shape of texts produced in oral composition. The women's accounts are 'not necessarily a lie but certainly a highly complex truth' (Stanley 1992:242). The concept of memory has been the focus of recent psychological (Spinney 2003), neurological (Bendall 2003) and biochemical (Rose 2004) research. Maechler (2001) refers to the debate within the historical sciences about whether we can retrieve memories that are stored as objects in our brains or whether memory is always constructed and influenced by the situation of the person who is trying to remember or forget (Rosenthal 1993, Antze and Lambek 1996, Climo and Cattell 2002). I have worked with the idea of biographical narrating as a form of interpretation, influenced by social, political and ideological structures at the time of interview (Faux 2003). The act of narrating does not produce transparent versions of life stories that directly reflect events and experiences, rather forms of biographical, representational and evaluative work (Hollway and Jefferson 2000, Warren and Brewis 2004, Atkinson 2005, Roberts 2005). The integrity of the women who took part in this study is not, however, in question.

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[140] Fabricate is used here in the original sense of the word, which derives from the Latin word 'fabrica' meaning 'something skilfully produced' (Oxford University Press 2001:655).

Jack (2003) in his discussion of the second volume of V S Pritchett's memoirs *Midnight Oil* imagines that Pritchett, in selecting something to narrate from memory, might have said to himself "I think it happened it (sic) like this – now I'll make it real". Jack begins his article by asking whether anyone can remember things from fifty, forty or ten years before with exactness. In a filmed interview[141], Traudl Junge, Adolf Hitler's private secretary from autumn 1942 until the collapse of the National-Socialist regime in Germany, talked about actively forgetting what happened after Hitler died. The idea of memory as a dynamic, constructive activity is expressed by a post-war Mass Observation diarist (Garfield 2004), and similarly by Grass, in relation to his memoirs.

> You remember certain fragments precisely, but as soon as you
> try to join the fragments together, for a story, there is a certain –
> not falsification, but a shifting.   (Grass, in Meek 2007)

Without corroborating evidence[142] the status of what people remember is fiction in the sense of a contrived form of representation. Byatt's (1987, in Branfen 1996:57) knot metaphor, '(T)hese threads are knotted together in this particular time and this particular place', suggests continuity and connectedness as well as the idea of an individual, embodied position shaped by contemporary circumstances. In this way biographical accounts reintroduce a time dimension to sociological inquiry (Ferrarotti 1981, Bertaux and Delcroix 2000). Accounts are therefore not exact versions of what people do or did, rather sources of useful information about the historical, cultural and ideological contexts that influence what is 'possible' (Karpf 2006). I used this approach in analysis of interview accounts.

A biographical narrative turn

The recent re-turn to biographical narrative methods in European sociological research is discussed and illustrated by Chamberlayne *et al.* (2002) and Miller *et al.* (2003). It followed several decades of a general focus on positivism and

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[141] The film *Im Toten Winkel – Hitlers Sekretärin* (*Blind Spot: Hitler's Secretary*) was screened in German at the Tyneside Cinema in Newcastle upon Tyne on 15 February 2004.
[142] I decided not to search public records to check events in the women's lives such as births, marriages and deaths, as this would not have contributed to meeting the aim of the research, which was to explore intergenerational transmission of values, beliefs and practices relating to teenage pregnancy.

objectivity within the social sciences (Apitzsch and Inowlocki 2000), paralleled by feminist attention to the details of biographical accounts and their potential for examining the meanings of the moves[143] people make in their lives. Bertaux and Thompson (1997:7) describe the opportunity that a biographical narrative approach provides for producing accounts of 'experience of relationships with significant others', 'interpretations of turning-points', and 'dreams of lives that might have been'. Plummer (1983) discusses the biographical approach used by Thomas and Znaniecki, members of the Chicago School, when they studied the experiences of people who had emigrated from Polish peasant communities to the urban environment of New York. The value of constructed biographical accounts is in the representation of the tensions between the particularity and complexity of an individual's life experiences, shaped by contemporary social contexts and local structures of opportunity (Bourdieu *et al.* 1999, Holloway 1999, Rustin 2000, Roberts 2002, Riemann 2003), and dynamic local and regional landscapes (Bertaux 1981, Bourdieu 1986, Thrift and Williams 1987, Plummer 1995, Tomaney and Ward 2001, Pierson 2002). The importance of giving weight to the changing structural context of people's lives is highlighted by Roberts and Kyllönen (2006), and, specifically in relation to intergenerational studies, by Brannen (2005).

Approaches to biographical narrative research vary across Europe (Jones 2004, Knoblauch *et al.* 2005). Apitzsch and Inowlocki (2004) give a brief overview of the introduction of the concept of biographical analysis into the social sciences in Germany. Riemann (2003) provides a concise overview of the development of the biographical narrative interview method of data production, from the exploratory work of Schütze (1983) and other members of the Arbeitsgruppe Bielefelder Soziologen[144] in Germany in the early 1970s, to the establishment of the working group *Biographieforschung* (Biographical Research) in 1979, and the methodological innovation of the Berlin

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[143] I use 'moves' rather than 'decisions' or 'choices', as moves may be made without conscious choice or active decision-making, and against preference.
[144] This translates as the Working Group of Sociologists at the University of Bielefeld. Fritz Schütze was then assistant professor in the Department of Sociology.

QUATEXT[145] group (Rosenthal 1995). In France, the publication of Bertaux's (1981) edited collection *Biography and Society* contributed to a reinvigoration of sociological research using biographical narrative techniques of data production. It includes his account of a study of intergenerational transmission of breadmaking skills from master to apprentice, co-produced with Bertaux-Wiame. Rosenthal (1993) and colleagues in Germany developed the idea of a sustained biographical structure, a Gestalt[146], representing the shape of a person's life (Conradson 2003). Rosenthal describes Gestalt as a construct for which participants select relevant events and experiences from their lives as interview material.

> The narrated life story represents the biographer's overall construction of his or her past and anticipated life, in which biographically relevant experiences are linked up in a temporally and thematically consistent pattern.   (Rosenthal 1993:62)

Chamberlayne and Rustin (1999), in discussing the biographical narrative interpretive method that was used in the European Sostris[147] Project, highlight the particularities and coherence of the life stories constructed by the research participants, and how the life story versions made them think about the different European societies from the participants' points of view. The appeal of biographical research is its potential to examine individual life story versions against their backdrop of contemporary cultural, social and moral systems (with both opportunities and constraints) and to highlight gaps between aspirations and achievements (Miller 2000, Roberts 2002, Thomson *et al.* 2002).

The Biographical Narrative Interpretive Method

The first six months of the PhD study coincided with the sixth '*Short Course in Biographic-Narrative Interpretive Method*' facilitated by Chamberlayne and Wengraf, and I was able to attend. The course provided an opportunity to

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[145] QUATEXT, the Institute for Qualitative Social Research, was established in 1982 with the aim of promoting qualitative methods in the Social Sciences.

[146] Gestalt is a German word that translates into English as figure, form, shape, frame or outline. I would not translate Gestalt as pattern or structure as Wengraf (2001:272) does.

[147] Sostris stands for Social Strategies in Risk Society, and is a project in the European Union's Fourth Framework Targeted Socio-Economic Research Programme exploring social integration and exclusion. The project was undertaken between 1996 and 1999.

assess whether a biographical narrative approach to in-depth interviewing, and this method in particular, would fit the aim of the research. I considered that the method would be suitable for the following reasons. The beginning of the first interview with a participant, conducted according to the biographical narrative interpretive method, is a single question designed to elicit a Gestalt. The question takes the form of an invitation from researcher to participant to compose a life story version: "Can you tell me your life story[148], the events and experiences that are important to you? Begin wherever you like. I won't interrupt. I'll just take some notes". The production of a Gestalt is followed by questions about events and experiences in the person's life story version, in the chronological sequence in which they have been introduced in the account. The questions are designed to encourage narrating (Rosenthal and Bar-On 1992, Wengraf 2005) and to elicit as much detail as possible, for example: "Can you tell me how it happened that …" I anticipated that this method would offer each participant an opportunity to take the lead in the construction of her life story version, using her own frame of reference and vocabulary. Each woman could then position her experience of pregnancy under the age of twenty in relation to other life events and experiences, both 'before' and 'after'. This level of control appeared methodologically important in a study of a sensitive topic, namely teenage pregnancy, which at the time of the interviews was constructed as a social problem and focus of a national strategy.

Similarly, in relation to the element of women's control in the composition of initial life story versions, I considered the method appropriate for unpicking taken for granted ideas about the 'unspeakable' spectrum of sexual encounters (Stanley 1995:28), namely what women mean when they say they have had sex, and what the encounter means for them. Sex is an intimate area of social, physical and emotional experience (Smith 2004) and it can therefore difficult to

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[148] In reponse to a presentation on the methodological issue of researching intergenerationally (McNulty 2004), Ann Nilsen, University of Bergen, referred to having used "Can you tell me about yourself" as a starting point in interviews, and she asked if I had thought of using that. I considered that it would have been a possible opening question, likely to produce similar construction of inter- and intragenerational relationships. Asking for a life story version was perhaps more useful in an intergenerational study in introducing the idea of 'time', age and the life course (Hockey and James 1993, Fischer-Rosenthal 2000). It also produced interview accounts in which women positioned their teenage pregnancies in relation to other life events.

talk about. Each woman had an opportunity to represent how she had learned about and 'done' heterosexual relationships and sex (Butler 1993, Holland *et al.* 1998, Richardson 2000, Hockey *et al.* 2007), at her own pace and in her own words. The method facilitated exploration of intergenerational transmission of values, beliefs and practices relating to young women's sex and pregnancies This was possible through the women's representations of growing up, learning about sexuality and sex, and negotiating perceived options (Joyce 1995) at the point of thinking about having sex with a man, having sex, having a pregnancy confirmed under the age of twenty, and having a baby at particular historical times in a particular geographical area.

In retrospect, the biographical narrative interpretive method was particularly effective in providing information about events and experiences that I had not considered significant in relation to the research aim. Women's life story versions included disruptive events other than teenage pregnancy, for example bereavement. There were accounts of experiences that might not have been elicited otherwise. I have tried to think what question and wording (if, indeed, I had thought to ask about this area of intragenerational exchange) would have produced an account such as the following, which is an example of resourcefulness and strategic management of the effects of unemployment within family networks.

> Me and me partner didn't have a job. We didn't have any money when we first got our house. That was dead hard. I can remember his (Natalie's partner) sister used to make our teas, cos she used to live just round the corner, and she used to bring our teas round for us, because I couldn't afford to go shopping. We used to give her ten pounds a week and she used to make our teas every day. Givin' her ten pounds a week was easier than goin' and spendin' ten pounds on shopping, because it wouldn't have fed us for a week.   **Natalie** (20 'mother')

Asking specifically about support during financial hardship could have appeared intrusive, and women might not have defined this sort of sharing as 'support'. During discussion following a paper by Harlow and Jones (2006), in which they suggested that young women who had taken part in research in Salford into experiences of teenage pregnancy, had not produced substantial accounts, the potential of the brief Gestalt (fifteen lines of interview text) produced by one

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young woman was highlighted. In particular, as there was no follow-up question about 'how it happened' that she sat all of her GCSE examinations after having her baby, this achievement was not explored: "But it (baby) was like due on the (date and month), and then I had (name of baby), and then I went on an' did all my GCSEs". Sara, one of the 'mothers' in the Wansbeck study composed a similarly condensed life story version, and through using the technique of asking about events in the order in which she had introduced them (for example "Can you tell me how it happened that you got this house?"), an interview text of forty pages was produced.

> Ann: Can you tell me your life story, the events and experiences that are important to you? Begin wherever you like. I won't interrupt. I'll just take some notes.
>
> Sara: Well, I got this house, an' then I, whay, I fell pregnant. Then I got this house. Then I had (baby), so wi' bein' so young, I didn't really have a chance to get a job. I went back to school and done a bit, a bit more, to add on to me ermm results that I got, me GCSEs. An' then I fell pregnant, so I, I left school, an' then I ermm got this house, an' then I had (baby), but (laughed) that's about it really (laughed).   **Sara** (17, 'mother')

Section Two: Approaching Potential Participants

During the period of the CASE studentship desk space was made available in the office of the Northumberland Teenage Pregnancy Team, in a town in the research area. I met with the team members as soon as possible at the beginning of the study to establish a good working relationship with them[149]. Several people in the team already knew me as a practitioner[150] and this was an enabling factor, for example in effecting introductions to key professionals who were gatekeepers. The good reputation of both the Northumberland Teenage Pregnancy Team and the Young People's Health Project with which I had worked gave the study credibility and helped to establish trust in me as a researcher in a sensitive area.

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[149] During the three year period of the CASE studentship, 2002 to 2005, I maintained regular contact with the Teenage Pregnancy Team, attending team meetings when possible.
[150] I worked as Coordinator of Northumberland Young People's Health Project, 1996-99.

Gorard (2002) highlights the importance of thorough preparation at the point of beginning research, as a study of poor quality wastes the time and effort of participants and disturbs them without good reason. In the preparatory stage of fieldwork I considered my responsibility to avoid, as far as possible, putting the dignity, privacy and well-being of participants at risk (Corrin 1997), from the point of their receiving information about the study to the end of my formal relationship with them in writing a report for the Northumberland CASE partners (McNulty 2005). Lee (1999 [1993]) suggests that a topic can be defined as sensitive when there is substantial threat to those involved as participants and researcher(s). This study covers two of the three broad areas that he outlines, namely research into private areas and studies of forms of 'deviance' and social control. Sieber (1993) cites teenage pregnancy as an example of a sensitive topic, specifically in relation to the interest of politicians and the media, and to how participants might be affected by the uses made of research. I was aware of the sensitivity of the topic, for example as a focus of negative media attention (Dowell *et al.* 1995, Lewis 1996, Dickson 2006), having worked as Teenager Pregnancy Coordinator in a region with high rates and being already implicated in what could be described as a teenage pregnancy 'industry'[151]. There was a fine distinction between exploring the phenomenon and perpetuating the idea that women who become pregnant under the age of twenty *are* a spectacular social problem, further stigmatising the research area and participants (Wilkinson and Kitzinger 1996, Edwards and Ribbens 1998, Barbour 2002). Lee and Renzetti (1993:5) write that as 'the sensitive nature of a particular topic is emergent' in the context of a research project, researchers must anticipate ethical and political issues relating to areas of study, an issue also identified by Bingley (2002) and Rogers and Schwartz (2002). It was therefore important to think in advance about the range of life events and experiences other than pregnancy that women might include in their life story versions.

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[151] This refers to the number of posts, in statutory and voluntary organisations, that are focused on teenage pregnancy, reflecting substantial expenditure. Achievement of the arguably reductive Teenage Pregnancy Strategy target does not necessarily improve any other aspect of young women's experience of sexuality, sex and relationships.

I was aware of looking at the lives of women with experience of teenage pregnancy without having been exposed to a similar level of scrutiny of my own sexual relationships, pregnancies and ways of being a mother[152]. I had my first child as a married woman in my mid-twenties. Edwards and Ribbens (1998:2) discuss the challenges of researching so-called private experiences from a feminist perspective and represent themselves as researchers 'at the edges, between public social knowledge and private lived experiences'. They highlight the importance of being sensitive to experiences we share with research participants and differences between us. Oakley (1981) similarly emphasises the value of researchers considering our own and participants' social locations, as the relationship between us influences the quality of co-produced data.

Approaching the interviews I thought about the balance of power in relation to myself and the women who took part in the research. The intergenerational aspect of the study meant that in age (I had my fiftieth birthday during the fieldwork period) I sat between the 'grandmothers' (aged 36 to 43) and 'great-grandmothers' (aged 60 to 69). My own biological generational position (Pilcher 2005) as a fifty-year old mother contrasted with the group of 'mothers' who were thirty years younger than me, and with the women to whom I was closest in age who were already[153] 'grandmothers'. We were all white women from working class backgrounds, most of us (ten of the thirteen participants and myself) having grown up in the North East of England. I knew that I shared with them the experience of having children in relationships with men, though they were not aware of that and did not ask. Only one other woman had experience of higher education and the potential for income from a professional career, and this was a significant difference.

At the point at which we met in interview settings the women knew, from the written information about the research project (Appendices 1 and 2), my name and my academic position as a researcher based at Newcastle University. I had

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[152] I have four children born between 1980 and 1992. During the course of the study, I have reflected on ways in which my approach to being a mother has changed over this time.
[153] My involvement in this intergenerational research project made me aware of my expectation of becoming a grandmother at some point, while not taking it for granted.

spoken by telephone with at least one of the women in each family group to arrange first interviews and they knew from my accent that I had some connection with the North East of England. In being invited to take part in the research project the women were aware that they were defined in relation to teenage pregnancy, even though this was not a relevant label for older women, some of whom had become pregnant outside of marriage rather than at the 'wrong' age. Awareness of contemporary negative constructions of teenage pregnancy became evident in the course of the interview accounts.

Practical steps towards fieldwork

The first practical step towards fieldwork was to submit a research project declaration form to Northumberland Local Research Ethics Committee. The process of gaining ethical approval is often represented in negative terms, for example as 'a substantial hurdle to be surmounted' (Pope 2005:1181). In contrast I found preparation for submission helpful as it involved thorough review of the research design and made me think about issues of access and recruitment as part of the overall analytic process. To accompany the Research Project form for the Ethics Committee I prepared a flyer (Appendix 1) designed to draw attention[154] to the study, information sheet (Appendix 2) and consent form (Appendix 3). The information sheet aimed to give sufficient detail to potential participants for them to decide whether or not to take part, and if taking part, to give informed consent (Letherby *et al.* 2005). The sheet broadly outlined the areas to be covered in interviews and the right of participants to confidentiality and to withdraw from the research at any time. The consent form outlined the limits of confidentiality in relation to the content of interview accounts. I was aware of the possibility of complex situations arising in interviewing women and asking them about events and experiences in their lives (Cheek 2000), from experience in previous research[155] settings. Although I did not assume that women would make disclosures in interviews with me, it

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[154] The flyers were copied on to bright yellow A4 sheets.
[155] In an interview undertaken during MA research (McNulty 1998), a woman disclosed experience of sexual abuse as a child by a known adult, whom she didn't name. I referred to the possibility of other children being at risk, and gave her information about ways of making contact with Social Services, including anonymously. I also gave information about local agencies offering support to women with experience of child sexual abuse.

was important that the consent form clearly defined limits to confidentiality. I explained that in the event of a child protection concern I would contact a professional who would pursue it appropriately. I included information about data storage as it was important to show that I had given thought to protecting the integrity of the data. I explained that audio-tapes would be labeled with pseudonyms and stored in a lockable filing cabinet in the room where I had desk space in the university. I used pseudonyms throughout theoretical note-taking and analysis, so that women's actual names did not appear anywhere other than on the consent forms and in my logbook of telephone calls during the period of recruitment. On occasions when I transcribed at home[156] I experienced an unexpected and unprecedented level of anxiety until tapes were returned to the security of the university. I understood this as linked to the nature of the data, that is, to the detail in the women's life story versions. An interesting issue relating to the security of data emerged when one of the women mentioned her part-time job in a recycling centre. This prompted me to consider the potential risk of unshredded transcripts being seen by participants, and I purchased a machine to shred all interview transcripts at an appropriate point in the study.

Northumberland Research Ethics Committee requested that I add more detail of the practicalities of the interviews to the information sheet (see Appendix 2), provide more detail of the biographical interpretive method to the committee, and give consideration to the issue of competence in relation to the possibility of young women under the age of sixteen taking part in the study. I made changes and provided information as follows:

- Reformulation of information sheet: 'If it is possible for you, Ann would like to meet with you twice, to have one interview and then a follow-up about a month later. Each interview should last about an hour, although you might want to talk for longer. We can speak by telephone to arrange a suitable time, and the interviews can be in a place where you feel comfortable, and where there is some private space. We can also discuss any childcare you might need to sort out.'

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[156] I transcribed at home on several occasions because of childcare responsibilities.

- Outline of the biographical narrative interpretive method: 'The interview method begins the first interview with an open question: "Tell me your life story". This is to encourage an account that is shaped by the interviewee, using their frame of reference and language. The second stage of the first interview involves interviewer questions based on the events and experiences in the life story version, using the order in which they have been introduced by the interviewee. The follow-up interview explores areas of interest to the interviewer, based on the research aim defined by the commissioning partners, Northumberland NHS Care Trust and the Economic and Social Research Council'

- Consideration of competence: 'Contact with young women will be through professionals who will be able to assess their level of competence in terms of taking part in an interview in this study. As the study involves interviews with women across generations, young women's mothers will be aware that their daughters are taking part.' (In the event, all of the 'mothers' were over sixteen).

I was asked by the Ethics Committee to provide a letter of approval for the study from Northumberland NHS Care Trust. I forwarded a letter provided by the Trust Chief Executive together with the information and changes outlined above, and received approval to begin the process of recruitment. I circulated copies of the flyer, information sheet and consent form to several local workers who had greater awareness of the general level of literacy in the research area than I did. In response to their feedback, I amended the layout, using "Can you help …" at the top of the sheet, and reduced the amount of text.

The research sample was defined by intergenerational relationships, in that the criterion for participating was women connected as mothers and daughters having been pregnant under the age of twenty. Local workers were considered a valuable resource in the process of recruitment, likely to have an idea[157] about which families might meet the three-generation criterion. An added

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[157] One of the research findings is that the idea of intergenerational transmission perpetuating a cycle of teenage pregnancy is anecdote, rather than knowledge based on recorded information. Individual women's medical notes, to which professionals might have access in the course of their work without breaching confidentiality, do not contain information about their mother's or grandmother's obstetric histories.

advantage of contacting women through local workers was the scope for support and information-giving following the end of the interview period and my departure from the field. I contacted teams of Health Visitors, Midwives and Community Development Workers[158] by telephone and asked if they would share information about the research, using the flyer as a prompt, and pass on an information sheet if interest was expressed. I was aware that some women might find it difficult to say that they did not want to take part, particularly if asked by a health professional (Rogers and Schwartz 2002), and included reassurance about there being no pressure to participate, on both the flyer and information sheet. Copies of each were sent to workers and they used them opportunistically in discussion with women with whom they were in professional contact to check whether their families might meet the three generation criterion, and if yes, whether they would be interested in taking part in interviews[159]. This approach to purposive sampling (Mason 1996a, Silverman 2001) was methodologically interesting in that the contact route was via the institution (Northumberland NHS Care Trust) within which the idea of a cycle of teenage pregnancy had been transmitted. I had no way of knowing to what degree the information-giving by workers would be influenced by their assumptions about women who become pregnant as teenagers, and how much women's ideas about the different professional groups would interfere with their reception of the information about taking part in the research. There was a limit to how much I was able to control this. Given that the three-generational sampling criterion reflected local professional anecdote of a cycle of teenage pregnancy, women were inevitably taking a risk in identifying their family as part of the cycle and, by implication, 'deviant'.

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[158] Contact was made with teams across Wansbeck. During the period of recruitment I logged one hundred and seventy telephone calls. This total reflects the number of calls that I made, for initial contact, and then to follow up previous calls etc. The nature of the work of the professionals (all female) with whom I was liaising, namely individual and group work in the community, meant that it often took several calls to catch a particular person in her work base.
[159] Workers' interest and investment of time deserve special mention, as the study coincided with significant organisational change in Northumberland, particularly within the NHS Care Trust, and staff shortage in Health Visitor teams, through whom most of the women were recruited.

Workers who shared information about the study with women whose families they thought might fit the three generation' criterion had no formal evidence for checking out their assumptions. If they had worked in the research area over a substantial period of time, they were likely to know whether a young woman's mother had also had a baby under the age of twenty. They were unlikely to know, however, whether maternal grandmothers had had a child under the age of twenty. Neither did the young women in the sample, with one exception, which meant that the older women were a hidden population. This stage of recruitment was therefore sensitive in terms of women's privacy and dignity, as contact with all but one of the family groups was through the youngest woman. I had anticipated this as they were most likely to be in contact with professionals (for example Health Visitors) at the point at which the research began, since their children were still babies or young children. Recruiting via the youngest women where possible[160] was an important issue in relation to their control of access to their family group, to avoid them feeling pressured to take part in the research by women 'above' them in the family generational hierarchy. However, it placed some of them under a different sort of pressure as almost all had to ask their grandmother, and some had to ask their mother, if they had had a baby under twenty, potentially disturbing family secrets. One woman[161] talked in an interview about how she had found out that her maternal grandmother's first child was illegitimate when she had to research her 'family tree' for a homework task at school. Her grandmother transmitted a 'story' of success in managing to keep her baby and subsequently marry.

> I was doing English at school and we did a family tree thing, and I found out a lot about my granma's life, because I was doing something on her. She gave me a lot of stories and showed me photos of before she was married, with my uncle (her son born out of marriage), so we sort of discussed it then, and she said she considered it lucky that, you know, somebody had taken her on with the child. At that time, most people who got pregnant

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[160] Contact was made through the youngest woman in five of the family groups. In the other, it was via the woman in 'grandmother' position. This was coincidental, as the Health Visitor who had worked with both the 'grandmother' (aged 36) and her daughter (aged 17), gave me telephone contact numbers for both of them, and the 'grandmother' was the first to answer the telephone.
[161] I am not using her pseudonym so as not to link this excerpt with information in other quotes, to protect confidentiality.

> then, their babies were taken off them and put up for adoption,
> so to actually keep the baby was quite an achievement.

Although this situation had a positive outcome, with the grandmother prepared to share a version of a sensitive life event, it was a reminder of the risk of exposure of family secrets in intergenerational work. There *were* events marked by social stigma in the life story versions of some women, as discussed in the previous chapter, however they were not secret within their families.

An initial finding was that, contrary to professional transmission of the idea of a cycle of teenage pregnancy in the research area, it was more difficult than local professionals had anticipated identifying families that met the three generation criterion. The following quotes are from telephone conversations with health professionals.

> I had a feeling that there might be a lot, and then I could hardly think of any. I initially thought "Oh, she'll have had her baby young", and then you found that she was twenty-two or twenty-three, still a young woman but not a teenager. It was interesting for us (reference to the woman's team) to see there were fewer three generation families than we thought there would be.

> A lot who we thought were three generations weren't. There was one who had her daughters young, whose daughters had children young, and we really thought that she was born when her mam was young, and she was the child of an older mam, so we learnt something from it. It just shows you how you assume things.

During one telephone conversation with a health professional, I heard one of her colleagues in the background saying, in relation to our (overheard) topic of conversation: "Teenage pregnancy's a cultural thing", to which the person with whom I was speaking replied: "I think it's more just a feeling than fact". Another practitioner working with young women said (when I asked her about three generation families): "I think there probably will be loads. That's the culture round here. But that's an assumption, 'cos I haven't asked them about their grandmothers".

Ten family groups were identified as meeting the three generation criterion over a period of several months from the point of my first making contact with local

professionals. Several professionals said they were surprised that "there aren't more". Women in one family group were recruited through a practitioner identifying herself, her mother and her grandmother as having had a baby under the age of twenty and having lived for most of their lives in the research area. She[162] was a member of one of the local teams with whom I made contact[163] by telephone, and during the conversation she talked about her own family meeting the three generation criterion. The potential recruitment of women in this family was discussed in supervision, and it was decided that their life story versions would produce valuable data. I made contact with her again to ask if they would consider taking part in interviews. The recruitment of a family group involving a service provider was significant in challenging both the idea of cultural 'otherness' involving a lack of aspiration and ambition, and the assumption of a boundary between personal and professional experience of teenage pregnancy.

After initially expressing interest, women from four family groups decided not to take part for various reasons. In one family a 'great-grandmother' died just as fieldwork was beginning. A 'grandmother' (40) got in touch to cancel interviews because there was "too much going on" for her and her daughter. A health professional identified two other family groups within which the mothers of the youngest women (who had just had babies) did not want to take part, putting as she described it "the spanner in the works". The reason both women (aged in their late thirties) gave was that they felt "too young to be a granny" and were uncomfortable at the thought of being interviewed about being grandmothers. It is possible that their discomfort was a product of the time at which the fieldwork took place, that is in the early stages of a national Teenage Pregnancy Strategy with generally negative media attention to the pregnancies of young women.

A mother and daughter, each with experience of pregnancy under the age of twenty and living at the time of the study in an area adjacent to Wansbeck and

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[162] I am not using her pseudonym, to avoid potential identification from the content of quotes used in the data chapters.
[163] I contacted teams of Health Visitors, Midwives and Community Development Workers to ask if they would pass information about the research to women with whom they were working.

socio-economically similar[164], took part in pilot interviews[165]. This was at the point at which it became apparent that fewer families in Wansbeck appeared to meet the three generation criterion than anticipated, and recruitment was slow. Because of the possibility of the biographical narrative interpretive method not producing adequate data for the research aim, it would have been a risk to pilot it with women in a family group from the emerging, and smaller than expected, sample in Wansbeck.

My first contact with a woman in each of the recruited family groups was by telephone. In each of the family groups I arranged first interviews with the youngest woman. I wanted to hear her account first, since she was already much talked-about publicly as the focus of twenty-first century teenage pregnancy discourse. As with the decision to make contact with families through the youngest women where possible, this was in relation to anticipated power dynamics within family groups. Consideration of the potential of being drawn into family dynamics in interviewing at least two women from family groups, was an important methodological issue. There was an occasion when three women in a family group took part in first interviews, one after another, in the home of the youngest woman, for practical (childcare) reasons. The three women were all in the house when I arrived and the 'great-grandmother' asked me to choose who should "go first". I explained that I was "working back from the baby" in each family group and beginning with interviews with the youngest women. There was also the likelihood of hearing some information in each first interview about other participants in the woman's family group, and I was aware of the importance of holding a clear boundary of confidentiality between the women. I considered the option of inviting women in family groups to take part in joint as well as individual interviews. It was decided however that this might throw areas of intergenerational tension and antagonism into relief in a way that was harmful to participants, as Arksey (1996) discusses. In respect of these

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[164] It is described as one of the poorest areas in England, excluded from the benefits of UK economic prosperity (Newcastle Teenage Pregnancy Team 2002).
[165] I used pilot interviews to assess the fit of the biographic-narrative interview method (Wengraf, 2005) to the exploratory aim of the research, and included data from them in analysis, because of their value in relation to the theme of intergenerational transmission.

issues, the study contributes to discussion of the fit of particular methods to qualitative research within family groups (Seymour and Bagguley 1999).

Interview space

Negotiating private space for interviews was not straightforward. With the exception of a mother and daughter whom I interviewed in a private room in the workplace of one of them, women chose to take part in interviews in home settings. Meah (2003) discussed her discomfort on some occasions in interviews in home settings, asking people to talk about their relationships and sexual experiences. She described a situation that was familiar to me, of an interview participant discussing the quality of a relationship, while their partner was sitting on the other side of a door between two living room areas. There were several times during interviews when I was anxious about participants' confidentiality, given the small rooms in several houses and the proximity of people in other rooms. On one occasion, a young woman discussed her future plans, which did not include continuation of her relationship with her baby's father. He was sitting in the next room, and as I could at times pick up snatches of conversation from the room that he was in, I was concerned that he could hear that he did not feature in his partner's imagined future.

In arranging almost all of the interviews in women's homes, I assessed risk in relation to my personal security, as suggested by Lee and Renzetti (1993) and Bloor and Fincham (2006). I began each journey to an interview venue from the Teenage Pregnancy Team office, apart from the pilot interviews to which I set off from the postgraduate room in Newcastle University where I was based. For each interview a sealed envelope containing the address of the venue was left in whichever base I was setting off from, with instructions to colleagues to telephone my home number if I did not return by an agreed time. This was to check that I had not inadvertently gone straight home following an interview. If I was not at home, they were to alert the police and pass on the address in the envelope. A practical issue related to this safety system was the need to arrange interviews within working hours. This was not a problem as the older women in employment worked shifts and the younger women preferred daytime interviews as their evenings were occupied by children's bedtimes followed by

some free time for them. I was pleased to have this system in place on one particular occasion when a woman gave an account of her husband's sustained violence, directed at her and their children. She was estranged from him at the time of interview, however he had recently been released from prison and had threatened to petrol bomb her house. It went through my mind that I could be caught up in the violence. At the same time as I experienced some anxiety at this thought, it struck me that she lived continually with this threat.

Section Three: Producing and Working with Data

At the beginning of interview sessions I read through the consent form with each woman, emphasising the voluntary nature of participation and option to withdraw at any point without having to give an explanation, and the limits of confidentiality, for example in relation to a child protection issue. The interviews were audio tape recorded with the consent of each woman (see Appendix 3) in order to keep an accurate record of the content and sequence of the life story versions. Each woman took part in two interviews and the length of combined interview sessions for individual women was between three and six hours. Some women produced significant data in what I initially thought of as 'pre-interview' time, when I was testing the volume of the tape-recorder. For example, Linda's (43, 'grandmother') reference to the work she had already done by the time I met with her in her first interview was important in relation to problematising the stereotype of 'workless' teenage pregnancy.

> Ann: Just to check the volume, if you can say a bit about what you've done this morning …
>
> Linda: I've been to work, ermm worked hard sort of (laughed) ermm gone shoppin' after I've been to work, an' then just come straight home an' sorted everythin' out. That's about it really this mornin'. I spend most of my time goin' back an' forward to work. I work at a place called (manufacturing company) durin' the day, an' I come home (1), do me bit work here, an' then go back to work at quarter past seven till eleven at another place (food retail outlet), that's all week.
>
> Ann: sympathetic "oooh" sound
>
> Linda: An' then I work (1) at the swimming baths on the weekend cos I'm on the committee, so I work Friday, Saturday

and Sunday as well, I enjoy doin' that. I enjoy workin'[166] as well like. It's just as well (said in a laughing way).

Each woman held the tape-recorder[167] to control the audio-taping and to ensure best quality recording of her voice. The machine was turned off by several women on occasions when another person wanted to come in to the room. For example, during one interview in an open plan kitchen and dining room area, a work colleague and friend of the participant (Joan) knocked on the back door. Joan switched off the tape recorder and answered the door to her friend, who had called round to introduce her new baby granddaughter. The baby's pram was wheeled into the kitchen and we (Joan, her friend and I) admired the baby. When Joan's friend left after about ten minutes, Joan switched the tape recorder back on and the interview continued. Some women did not switch off the machine when people came in to the room where an interview was taking place. Examples of this kind of interruption included an adult son coming in to get his packet of cigarettes, a partner passing through the room to get to the kitchen to make a cup of tea, and a mother coming in to retrieve the dog's bone from under the settee where I was sitting.

Producing a Gestalt

I structured the formal part of each interview situation in the stages outlined by Chamberlayne (1999) and Wengraf (2001). The beginning of the first interview with each woman was an invitation to compose a version of her life story, starting wherever she wanted, choosing the events and experiences important to her and taking as long as she wanted to talk without interruption: "Can you tell me your life story, the events and experiences that are important to you? Begin wherever you like. I won't interrupt. I'll just take some notes". This technique aims to facilitate the production of an uninterrupted Gestalt with a beginning and end defined by the participant. It was, however, difficult on occasions to know when women had completed their initial accounts. In some

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[166] The interview data show transmission of a work ethic against a background of industrial decline and loss of opportunity for secure employment. All of the women, apart from the two youngest who became pregnant while at school, had been in paid employment, several with more than one job like Linda, as well as doing unpaid domestic work.
[167] A hand-held tape recording machine with an integral microphone was used.

interviews I waited for up to twenty seconds before checking if there was anything more a woman wanted to say, and on several occasions women continued after a protracted pause.

It was impossible not to interrupt in interviews with three of the women. Two disclosed child sexual abuse and gave the identity of the abuser (a father and step-father respectively) before I had time to interrupt. In accordance with the child protection procedure outlined in the interview consent form, I asked each woman whether a disclosure had been made to a professional. In both cases this had happened and the perpetrator had been charged and convicted. A third woman referred to "incidence of abuse" when she was a girl, without giving any detail of the nature of the abuse or the identity of the perpetrator. I reminded her that if she gave these details I would have to make contact with the local Child Protection Team and pass the information on, because of possible risk of harm to other children (again in line with the child protection procedure described in the consent form). She did not give any further detail. At the end of her second interview, I gave information about ways of contacting the Child Protection Team in case she decided that she wanted to make contact herself at some future point.

The above is a neat, abbreviated version of what I experienced as a complex situation. The reference to "incidence of abuse" towards the end of the woman's Gestalt was the first mention of experience of abuse in an interview. While trying to focus on asking questions about events mentioned before the abuse, in line with the method, I was thinking about how to acknowledge the woman's experience without appearing to encourage her to talk more about it, and how to reiterate the limits of confidentiality. The exchange was as follows:

Ann: You mentioned abuse

Participant[168]: Yes.
Ann: It's important that you don't tell me any details about what happened or the person's name because that would fall under

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[168] I am not using the woman's pseudonym, to avoid identifying her through other details in her interview excerpts.

the exception to confidentiality, because of possible risk to other children.

Participant: Mmm mmm.

Ann: You know there's the option of anonymously getting in touch with the Child Protection Team.

Participant: Oh yeh, an' I have looked into that, I have looked into it anonymously.

I found it difficult to interrupt when I had said I would not. The woman's reference to "incidence of abuse" interrupted the production of her Gestalt in the sense that, from that point on, my attention was divided between listening to what she said next and thinking about how to manage the interview in relation to the disclosure. I was aware of the importance of not talking about the interview outside of supervision and it was difficult to hold on to difficult emotions until the next session, where I felt that I could use them analytically as Riessman (2004) suggests.

Following the Gestalt

In the first interview with each woman the production of a Gestalt was followed by questions about events and experiences in her life story version, in the chronological sequence in which she introduced them in her account. The questions were designed to encourage narrating (Rosenthal and Bar-On 1992), to elicit as much detail as possible, for example: "Can you tell me how it happened that …", and "Can you remember an occasion when …". An unexpected outcome of this form of questioning was the production of reported speech of exchanges, some 'performed' in the voices of people involved, illustrating the emotional content of situations. On the few occasions when women replied with "I can't really remember very much", I understood this as their exercise of control and decision not to speak about something when they did not want to.

In second interviews that took place on average a month after first interview, I asked questions covering areas relevant to the aim of the research (see the interview schedule in Appendix 4) that the women had not introduced. None of

the women, in producing an initial life story version (Gestalt), included her first period or first sex as an important life event, which is significant though not necessarily surprising. Several older women, for instance, said that they had never been asked questions about relationships and sex before. A sensitive methodological issue concerned how to ask women who had disclosed abuse in first interviews about their sexual experiences. The interview schedule for second interviews included: 'Can you tell me how it happened that you had sex for the first time', and 'When you first had sex was it how you expected it would be?' It was inappropriate to use these questions with a woman who had disclosed experience of child sexual abuse[169]. A solution was to ask specifically about first sex within a relationship with a partner.

There was an advantage in asking about sexuality, sex and sexual relationships in second interviews when I was no longer a complete stranger to the women, and after they had exercised a particular level of control in first interviews in the composition of their life story versions. One woman gave feedback, at the end of her second interview, about feeling anxious before the first interview and more comfortable in anticipation of the second: "When I knew you were comin' this time, it was "Oh right, nae (no) bother"." In advance of fieldwork, I was aware of the possibility of a negative experience in a first interview putting a second interview at risk. All of the women were happy to meet more than once, and this suggested that they found the interview space valuable in some respect.

Transcribing and translating

I fully transcribed the interview tapes during the period of data production (Letherby *et al.* 2005), showing the length of pauses[170] and emotional expression, for example instances of laughter and distress. This work was part of the preliminary analysis (Riessman 1993). Transcription of the pilot

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[169] Child protection training and guidelines are clear about the importance of not asking for any details of sexual abuse, so as not to prejudice subsequent legal action. Although in two of the three instances of disclosure within an interview, the abuse had been reported, investigated by the police and Social Services, and the perpetrators convicted, I was still aware of the inappropriateness of asking for details relating to an abusive sexual encounter

[170] The length of pauses was expressed in transcription by number of seconds in brackets. I have included these in quoting from interview transcripts in this thesis.

interviews and critical reflection on the interview texts in supervision acted as a check on the method and confirmed it as suited to the aim of the research. No changes were made to the format of the first interview. Several questions were added to the schedule for the second intervew, for example, "As you were growing up, did you have an idea about having children?", based on preliminary analysis of the data from the pilot interviews.

I considered how to represent the women's accents and decided to transcribe phonetically so as not to change verb forms and vowel sounds, although this was inevitably a partial form of translation that could not reproduce the cadences and qualities of the women's speaking voices[171] (Karpf 2006). I did not however want to translate the women out of the ways in which they spoke, which represented a particular form of intergenerational transmission. Bourdieu (1992) discusses accent as a literal expression of an individual's relation to the social world, and suggests that the speech of people whose background is working class can be perceived to be of limited worth. Phonetic transcription provided a way to acknowledge the value of the women's voices.

Several life story versions included accounts of difficult events and experiences, for example the severe depressive illness of the partner of one of the women. Some women cried at times during interviews and chose not to switch off the tape recorder. This had implications for transcription. During interviews I was able to maintain an attentive, non-intrusive[172] position when women became distressed. Out of interviewer role, I was emotionally affected to a much greater degree by the women's accounts and their distress, and at times I cried while typing. The risk of experiencing strong emotions was ongoing during analysis, which involved listening to the tapes several times.

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[171] The two women who took part in pilot interviews had a Tyneside accent. Another who moved to Wansbeck as an adult (from a socio-economically similar area, following her husband's job) had a Wearside accent, and the others spoke with the accent of South-East Northumberland.

[172] That is, in the sense of not immediately trying to stop expressions of distress, and not 'joining in' the woman's distress by crying myself. Taking this position did not exclude asking a woman if there was anything she needed, and paper tissues were an integral part of the interview kit, along with the recording machine, spare batteries and spare cassette tapes.

Data analysis[173]

In supervision there was discussion of the advantages and disadvantages of potential units of analysis, namely individual women, women in family groups, or women in age cohorts. It was decided that analysis of individual cases would be more appropriate than family case studies, for the following reasons. As the research findings were to be made available to local professionals[174], it was important that the process of analysis and writing did not compromise the privacy of families and individuals within them. While families can be seen as a neat unit for analysis, the risk of identifying women through amalgamating the personal details of at least two members of the same family was considered to be too great. The level of omission or change of personal information that would have been necessary to make family case studies safe enough for open access to the thesis, would have been likely to affect the quality and relevance of case discussion. Analytic focus on family groups might also have reduced the scope to explore 'motherhood' as a social and cultural construction, grounded in geographical, historical and socio-economic settings. Analysis by age cohort, on the other hand, would have risked the displacement of women's experiences from family settings and the loss of detailed description of intergenerational relationships and women's relationships with men. It was decided that case studies of individual women would provide the most valuable level of detail with the greatest degree of confidentiality.

I listened to each tape and read each interview transcript several times following completion of the transcription of all interview tapes at the end of fieldwork. This was to re-familiarise myself with the women's life story versions, as by this time almost a year had elapsed since the recording and transcription of the pilot interviews.

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[173] This section relates to the substantive period of analysis following the end of fieldwork. The process of analysis was not a discrete episode, as discussed for example by Mauthner and Doucet (1998).
[174] The report of the research findings (McNulty 2005) has been circulated to professionals in Northumberland, and presentations have been given to professional groups: Midwives, School Nurses and members of Sure Start teams.

Recognising and developing emerging themes

During periods of listening and reading, ideas about emerging themes were recorded in the margins of the interview transcripts. Fieldnotes were reviewed in the same way during this stage, which Ritchie and Spencer (1994) define as the beginning of identifying a thematic framework.

Themes were identified by working systematically through the notation of transcripts and fieldnotes. The actual drawing of theme maps was a productive part of working with the data. For example, work emerged as a theme in the sense of activity involving effort and 'done in order to achieve a purpose or result' (Oxford University Press 2001:2126). Mapping (Appendix 5) illustrated layers of 'hard work':

- paid employment, which for some women involved more than one low-income, insecure job at a time
- voluntary work in the local community
- physical work at home, for example preparing meals, cleaning, house decoration and maintenance
- surveillance and regulation, of self and (by older women) of daughters, in relation to becoming a 'good girl', 'respectable woman', 'good mother'
- rebellion, for some of the women, against expectations
- emotional and physical investment in intimate relationships with male partners
- pregnancy and labour
- child care
- for some of the women, physical and emotional survival during and following experience of violence and abuse in relationships with men as fathers, stepfather and husbands
- maintenance of intergenerational connections
- sexual health protection in relation to daughters' and sons' sexualities, for example 'safe sex work' and 'contraception work'
- mediation, for example telling a husband/partner about a daughter's unintended pregnancy

- self-help in the sense of drawing on personal resources and the support of immediate family members.

Transcripts were reviewed and data coded according to the themes that emerged. This was done by highlighting transcript sections with pens of different colours. The sections were cut[175] and pasted by hand into themed files where they were arranged generationally rather than by family. This facilitated comparison between the accounts of women in the respective 'mother', 'grandmother' and 'great-grandmother' groups, and between the versions of women in the same generational groups.

I then worked with the data using the procedure outlined by Wengraf (2005), which begins with chronological organisation of the biographical events in each woman's life story version, to show the timeline of a 'lived life', followed by analysis of the improvised life story version. Thomson *et al.* (2003) acknowledge the value of a mode of analysis that includes examination of the chronological sequence of life events, that is, a life lived, and the way in which the life is told. The interview texts represented complete records of the women's decision-making about what to narrate, indicating their systems of relevancy current at time of interview. Rosenthal (1993:63) captures the process of producing a Gestalt as 'biographical structure of meaning' which is 'constantly reaffirmed and transformed', a 'coagulate' involving the narrator's experiences of things past, aspirations for things to come and view of the present. This attention to the construction of interview accounts was also useful in confirming key themes.

A case summary was produced for each participant from comparison of her 'lived' and 'told' life, and the summaries were used for case comparison to identify commonalities, differences and contradictions (Barbour 2001). During the writing of the thesis, at points at which I selected interview extracts to

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[175] Each section was labelled with the respective woman's pseudonym, date of the interview, and transcript page number.

illustrate themes, the case summaries were a reminder of the integrity of the women's versions of their lived experiences[176].

Data analysis was an interesting and enjoyable process for the most part, although it took longer than I had anticipated as at several points I either felt overwhelmed by the material I was working with[177] and had to spend some time away from it, or felt stuck in my attempts to develop ideas. The process of constructing an academic account of the interpretive processes undertaken by the women and myself was similarly complex.

Conclusion: Reflections

In this section I reflect on several methodological issues that I found challenging and interesting.

Biographical objects[178]

During fieldwork I came to recognise the potential of biographical objects such as photographs to encourage accounts of events and experiences (see for example Plummer 1995, Harrison 2005). Ten of the thirteen women referred to photographs, most of which were on display in the rooms where the interviews took place. The photographs became field data in terms of what they 'said' about the women, their identities, relationships and important moments in their lives (Berger and Mohr 1982). Most of the photographs were of babies. At the end of her second interview, Linda (43, 'grandmother') showed me a photograph of herself and her adult daughters dressed for a night out together. I interpreted her use of this particular photograph, of which she was obviously proud, as a counterbalance to events that had critically disrupted her nuclear family unit, represented in her interviews. The photograph appeared to display connectedness and closeness, and an aspect of success in motherhood. On the wall of another 'grandmother's' living room there was a studio photograph of

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[176] Riessman (1993) discusses her resistance to fragmenting long coherent accounts into thematic categories.
[177] A quote from one of the women's interviews: "It doesn't bear thinking about" kept coming to mind.
[178] This is part of the title of a book by Hoskins (1998), *Biographical Objects: How things tell the stories of people's lives*, New York: Routledge.

herself with her mother and daughter, another intergenerational study of glamorous femininity, as well as of mother and daughter connections. One of the 'great-grandmothers' showed me a photograph of her grandson, and I was shocked to hear that he had died only a few months before her first interview. His death was a key reference point for her analysis of her family relationships in her first interview, and her expression of bereavement and loss, through reference to the photograph, emphasised the significance of intergenerational connections for her sense of self.

Biographical boundaries

I wrote fieldnotes relating to the context of data production, including details of the journeys to interview venues, my immediate thoughts and feelings about the interviews, and decriptions of rooms where interviews took place. The notes were an aide-memoire for working with interview texts during the period of substantive analysis. Home interiors were furnished with items 'showing' women's relationships, identities and social class position (see Lawler 2002). I experienced the process of identifying markers of classed location as complex and uncomfortable. The living room interiors were both strange (in the sense that I had not been in them before) and familiar[179] and I was acutely aware of similarity and difference as I sat in these domestic spaces.

I anticipated that some of the women might ask me questions (Oakley[180] 1981), for example whether I had children, and I was prepared to share personal information. In the event they did not ask, and I understood this as their appreciation of interviews as time to focus on themselves, which they appeared to have little opportunity to do in their day to day lives. There were two occasions when I was not able to resist sharing information, although I had not been asked, in each instance referring back at the end of an interview to a woman's birth story. One woman gave an account of the birth of her daughter in the early 1980s. She talked about the effects of the analgesic drug pethidine

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[179] The living rooms reminded me of the homes of my maternal grandparents in particular and of others in our extended family. My father's academic achievements moved the nuclear family in which my sister and I grew up away from his and my mother's working class backgrounds.
[180] Oakley (1981) discusses the ethical issue of whether to give information when asked by a research participant.

and mimed the sensation of being drugged that she had had when she held her baby for the first time. This evoked the image of a photograph of me with my eldest daughter just after her birth in hospital in 1980, showing me similarly affected by the drug pethidine. Another woman talked about having a home birth in the 1960s, and her representation of the intimacy of the event reminded me of giving birth at home in the 1980s and 1990s.

The experience of unexpected, unsolicited conversations about teenage pregnancy outside of formal research settings is similar to that discussed by Kelly *et al.* (1995). It was a reminder of Wolcott's (2001) assertion that everyone knows far more than might be assumed, on almost every topic that is of professional interest. The volume of media coverage of teenage pregnancy, as well as personal and familial histories, could explain the ready responses and level of personal disclosure by people who happened to ask me what I was researching. Friends, acquaintances, colleagues and even a stranger on a train, who read my papers upside down, shared their personal connections with pregnancy defined as 'out of order'. Pregnancies were variously represented, as a "way of getting away and interrupting expectations" (fieldwork diary, 9 July 2003), "not at the right time" (ibid, 14 July 2003), and a "catastrophe, because it interrupted plans for higher education" (ibid, 18 July 2003).

Emotional connections

At the end of fieldwork I sent out a sheet with key research findings (Appendix 5) to the women who had asked for a copy, and this marked the end of actual contact with participants. During question-time following a presentation[181] of the findings to professionals in the research area, I was asked if I had kept in touch with the women who took part in interviews. I answered that the study did not involve long term contact, and then admitted that I *had* wanted to know what happened next in their lives. This difficulty of ending an emotional connection that has developed during a short-term research relationship appeared similar to that experienced by Pattman (Pattman *et al.* 2005) who was the fieldworker during an interview based study (1997-2000) of the identities of boys in London,

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[181] See Appendix 6 for a list of presentations in various settings.

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aged between eleven and fourteen. Co-producing interview data triggered memories of Pattman's own boyhood, in ways that working with the women in individual interviews evoked memories for me[182].

The difficulty of acknowledging, describing, and analysing the emotional work involved in taking part in in-depth interviews as a researcher, has been discussed for example by Kennedy *et al.* (1993), Bingley (2002) and Grinyer (2005). Martin (1987) writes:

> All of us doing interviews often felt swept away by them – either exhilarated or cast down – and the emotional effects lingered, as if we had had the most profound events of someone else's life shoehorned into our own.   (Martin 1987:9)

I asked the women who participated in the study to recall events and experiences without knowing anything about their lives and what I might hear, and was surprised by the depth of my feelings on occasion. I was reassured by Hovland (2007) who, in an introduction to a special edition of *Anthropology Matters Journal* on the emotions of researching, refers to a mix of feelings, including excitement, panic, satisfaction, loss of self-confidence, exhaustion, frustration, anger and exhilaration.

Endnote

Hockey and James (1993) discuss how their work on *Growing Up and Growing Old* caused them to think about themselves as women who are mothers and carers, and to acknowledge the interconnection of personal and professional concerns. Involvement in the co-production of the women's versions of their life stories prompted me to reflect on my overlapping generational positions as daughter and mother during my life course so far, and to imagine a future as a grandmother, while not taking that for granted. The following three chapters present my interpretation of the women's representations of their various transitions in status, and discuss their engagement, at different life stages, with transmitted ideas about ways of being a girl, a woman and a mother.

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[182] CASE funding made it possible for me to arrange confidential sessions, complementary to academic supervision, for discussion of the emotional work involved in this study.

Chapter 4
Growing up 'Girl'[183]

Introduction

This chapter examines the women's representations of growing up as girls and young women in their family groups at different points during the period from the 1930s to the 1990s. Each woman's life story included a version of her childhood experiences from her age and perspective at the time of taking part in the research (Sibley 1995). Ten[184] of the thirteen women began by talking about themselves as girls. The older women, who were girls between the 1930s and 1960s, were at different degrees of distance from their experiences of growing up, while the youngest women who were aged between seventeen and twenty-one were relatively close. They had recently become mothers at sixteen, seventeen and eighteen, ages at which some commentators might refer to them as girls.

The women's childhood experiences of family life were influenced by contemporary cultural blueprints for how things should be done (Spark 2004). Bonell's (2004:257) definition of cultural factors as 'the relationships within certain families and communities, and the values individuals, families and communities hold' is relevant to exploration of intergenerational transmission and teenage pregnancy. Young women's pregnancies, frequently described in relation to geographical areas of socio-economic disadvantage, are less often examined in intimate areas such as the home and the family.

Four women grew up exclusively in the research area. Six grew up in North East England within approximately twenty miles of Wansbeck, two of whom spent most of their childhood in the research area and two of whom moved there in their early teenage years. Three women lived away from the North East

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[183] The title of Chapter 4 is taken from the book by Walkerdine and Lucey (2001) about social class in relation to gender in contemporary Britain.
[184] One started her life story version with an account of her marriage, one with details of a house move, and one with a description of the birth of a child.

for periods of up to two years when they were girls because of fathers' job moves, abroad and within the UK[185]. Two of these women moved away from Wansbeck and returned there, and one was living in an area of the North-East adjacent to Wansbeck, and moved back to the same place[186].

The chapter is divided into four overlapping sections. Section one *Family Matters* introduces the women's representations of family configurations and connections, routines and rituals. Their exploration of the familiar connects with debate about diverse and changing forms and meanings of 'family', the persistent taken-for-grantedness of ideas about family structures and the tensions in negotiations between genders and generations within family groups (Clarke 1991, Ribbens 1994, Clarke 1996, Jackson 1998, Howard *et al.* 2001, Burford 2004, Pitt-Catsouphes and Christensen 2004, Pringle 2004, Becker and Charles 2006).

The second section *Textbook Perfect Upbringing*[187] examines constructions of 'good' girlhood (Montgomery 2005). There is also discussion of risk[188], rupture and the ramifications of change caused, for example, by the beginnings and endings of parental relationships.

In section three *"Remember dear that you're a girl"* the women's life story versions are discussed in relation to ideas about what girls and women should be and do (Sharpe 1976, Yelland and Grieshaber 1998) through historically specific performance of gender identity in relationships and day to day transactions at home and in communities (Butler 1990, Connell 1993 [1987], VanEvery 1996).

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[185] One woman's father was based abroad with the Armed Forces, and she and her mother lived with him for a year. Another woman moved back to Wansbeck when her mother left her father because of domestic violence. The third returned to the North East because her father, though successful in his job abroad, was homesick.

[186] The 'same place' refers to geographical location. Places do not stay the same over time, either physically, socio-economically or culturally, as Sections One and Two of Chapter 2 demonstrate.

[187] The title is taken from an interview with Susan, one of the 'grandmothers'. It was her definition of her experience of growing up during the 1960s and 1970s.

[188] Margaret Hodge (2004) outlined the UK government's vision for maximising opportunities and minimising risks for all children and young people, expressed in the Green Paper 'Every Child Matters'.

The final section *Great Expectations* examines the women's representations of imagined futures. The idea of a cultural lack of aspiration and ambition, expressed in government policy (for example Department for Education and Skills 2006), is examined in relation to the data produced by the Wansbeck women and the findings of recent research projects in socio-economically disadvantaged areas in other parts of the UK (Yeandle *et al.* 2003, Seaman *et al.* 2005, Tinklin *et al.* 2005, Osler 2006). There is discussion of the impact of class and gender positions on educational and employment opportunities.

Section One: Family Matters

Family ideology and structure differ across and within societies, for example between the various member countries of the European Union (Drew *et al.* 1995). They have shifted in the UK during the historical period covered by the interview data. The women, connected as mothers and daughters, produced complementary accounts of family groups that showed the importance of the quality of connections, communication and exchanges within households, and between households that are part of extended family networks. Other studies identify the meanings of 'family' expressed by individuals in different generational positions. Morrow (1998)[189], for example, represents young people's sophisticated reflections on their family groups and their expressions of the importance of family connections for them.

The women's accounts represent their family configurations. Eleven of the thirteen women spent some or all of their childhood living with a mother and a father (nine biological- and two step-fathers), nine sets of whom were married. Seven women grew up with both their biological parents without interruption, although two fathers were absent for periods of time in their respective jobs in the armed forces and the construction industry. One woman grew up as an only child, living with her mother until she was eleven (in the 1990s), when they

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[189] Morrow presents the findings of a research project with 183 children and young people aged eight to fourteen, living in two parts of East Anglia: a rural area and a town with a sizeable Muslim population. Various techniques were used in school settings to produce expressions of the children's and young people's ideas about norms and beliefs relating to family life. Their sophisticated views challenged stereotypical images of 'family'.

moved in with her mother's fiancé (not her father). Two found out, at different ages, that the fathers they had grown up with were stepfathers rather than biological fathers. Three women[190] experienced disruption to their lives as girls because of fathers' or stepfathers' violence.

Family practices[191]

Linda's (43, 'grandmother') family group was a model permutation of two parents of different gender and two children of different gender, although her mother carried parenting responsibility during relatively long periods when her husband was on active service in one of the armed forces. Linda's description of growing up as a girl during the 1960s and early 1970s included details of regular activities.

> I had a good childhood, ermm me and me brother, me mam, me dad. Me mam used to take wor (us) everywhere. During the summer holidays there used to be her and a few other women, they used to get together and they used to take wor all to the beach, all day, swimmin'. We used to gan on the bus. She would take wor over to what we used to call the burn, which was just like a stream where the old pits used to be, and we used to put Tarzers (rope swings) up, an' we used to go to the bluebell woods to pick bluebells. We'd pick blackberries for the day an' come back and make jam with me mam. Just things like that really. Me mam was good that way, and errr we used to play skippy outside as well, and we used to play rounders, all the kids in the estate and the mothers and fathers, they used to play quoits on the big green (communal space within the council housing estate) where we lived, and we used to play rounders and that, the rounders could go on for, phew, days and days … just generally having a good time.   **Linda** (43, 'grandmother')

Mary (69, 'great-grandmother' and in the same age cohort as Linda's mother) also said:

> I used to take them on arl the trips (with other women), we used to gan to Whitley Bay, the ice rink, the swimming baths, we used to tek them all ower, tek 'em ower the beach and tek em fishin an' climbin roond the rocks, an' (laughed) but that's what you dee when you've got kids.   **Mary** (69, 'great-grandmother')

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[190] One from the 'grandmother' group and two from the 'mother' group.
[191] Morgan (1999) suggests that diverse sets of practices define and produce 'families'.

Barbara (60, 'great-grandmother') who grew up during the period following the Second World War, remembered both her parents' and maternal grandmother's homes as always full of family and friends.

> Not much money, but we had a happy childhood (laughed). Home was just home, it was always, it was the place where everybody you loved was (laughed). There was never much for Christmas, never much in the way of toys an' what-not, but it was always such a happy time, eating, and your friends used to come, and the house was just always full, like on a Sunday when you visited your Granma for tea.
>
> **Barbara** (60, 'great-grandmother')

Speaking from a different generational position, the references by Sara (17, 'mother') and Joanne (19, 'mother') to frequent visits with relatives are illustrative of DeVault's (1991:54) definition of a family as a group that is defined by the mundane and reproduced through repeated ritual and shared activities.

> There's family lives round here. We used to go, and they had kids, so we just used to play with them, like on a night time after school, just like get in the car and go for a drive an have wor tea an' that. We used to do that quite a lot when we were little.
>
> **Sara** (17, 'mother')

> I lived one door off me Grandma, and I used to sleep at me Granma's every weekend, that was just like a thing from us growin' up. One time me Granma, she won the bingo and she errr booked the caravan at Berwick and she took arl (all) the grandkids away with her.   **Joanne** (19, 'mother')

Susan (39, 'grandmother') grew up as an only child in the 1960s and 1970s and outlined the interior of her paternal grandmother's house that was within walking distance of her own home, from her perspective as a young girl. She described the tall bodies of adult relatives filling the living room during regular Saturday afternoon gatherings, the "big men in suits" (her father's brothers), their wives and children. Susan's description of the "big black wall of suits" could be read as a sign of intergenerational respect (the sons dressing up to visit their mother) and of her family's respectability. It might also be interpreted as containment of the men's bodily presence, arguably illustrating a particular version of masculinity (Williamson 2003), exaggerated by the angle of a girl's view.

Natalie (20, 'mother') who lived at the time of interview in the area in which her mother, grandmother and other family members were also living, talked about the advantage her baby daughter, one of the next generation of girls, has in growing up surrounded by members of her partner's family as well as her own.

> Natalie: He (partner), is one of six, he's the oldest (21 at time of interview). He's nearly twenty-two and the youngest is five month (laughed)…..The little'uns, they love Ruby, they play around with her fine … I'm glad, cos when she goes to school they'll all be goin' to school at the same time, so she's not goin' to be by hersel'. I am glad of that.
>
> Ann: Do they live nearby ?
>
> Natalie: Just up the street, aye, just round the corner, so she sees them all the time. When she's there, she loves it, cos like it's always busy, there's always things goin' on, oh, she loves it.

Close connections

Laura (21, 'mother') described a close-knit network of family members and friends, illustrating how the definition of 'family' can expand to include people who are not relatives (Oakley 1992), who are a source of support.

> Me mam's really close friends, which we did class as family, lived round the corner. Me auntie lived across the road an' then me mam's best friend lived next door to me auntie, an' then just round the other corner me uncle lived wi' his wife an' their kids, an' then about ten minute walk from here me other uncle lived, an' some family live at (name of a small town about five miles away). Most o' the family are pretty close. **Laura** (21, 'mother')

The social lives of young people involved in Morrow's (1998) research project[192] similarly revolve around local networks that extend beyond biological relatedness, suggesting continuing importance of intergenerational connections and transactions of various kinds. The views of these young people and the 'mothers' in this study appear to challenge the idea expressed by Joan (36, 'grandmother') below, that there has been a significant change in social networking since she was growing up in Wansbeck through the 1970s. The contrast between her view and the younger women's references to what appear to be tight-knit connections, may reflect comparison between her remembered

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[192] See page 100, footnote 189, for an outline of Morrow's research project.

childhood before the upheaval of the miner's strike and closure of mines during the 1980s, and the fabric of Wansbeck communities at the time of interview.

> I was from the colliery end of the town, ermm it was good. I knew everybody in every house, all the streets right the way up, the cottages, knew every single person. I couldn't even tell you who lives where now, just totally changed.
>
> **Joan** (36, 'grandmother')

Distance from family and friends was experienced as difficult by the two 'mothers' who had not lived all of their lives in the same place up to the time of the study. Hayley (17, 'mother') described the isolation of living in a different town (less than ten miles away from where she had previously lived up to the age of nine, though not easily accessible by public transport), where she "didn't have any friends or any family or anyone around". At seventeen, Joanne (19, 'mother') moved several miles from the area in which she had grown up because of family tensions, which she described as the "full impact" of her experience of abuse as a child. She nevertheless missed close contact with her family and eventually returned to the area when she was offered social housing close to her mother and grandmother in the final stage of her pregnancy, a move discussed further in Chapter 6.

The potential social mobility of Susan's (39, 'grandmother') nuclear family in the 1970s appeared constrained by the tight-knit network of her father's family of origin and his homesickness when Susan's nuclear family moved from the area in which her father's family had lived for several generations, to follow his promotion at work. The interview extract below illustrates the issue of the importance of mobility in the context of a changing labour market, and how moves following employment opportunities are not straightforward. Goldthorpe *et al.* (1980), for example, in their examination of class mobility[193] led by male employment opportunity, refer to the importance of examining influences outside of the work sphere, including the quality of social and family relationships. Susan represented her analysis of generational and gendered

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[193] Goldthorpe *et al.* (1980) examine the formation of social class positions within a given historical context, using data from a 1972 survey inquiry by the Social Mobility Group at Nuffield College, Oxford. The data relate to occupational mobility among men aged 20 to 64 living in England and Wales.

power relations in her immediate family group of mother, father and herself as an only child. Susan's mother was too ill to take part in interviews during the period of fieldwork. She is introduced by Susan and Susan's daughter as a woman of personal ambition, who was in semi-professional paid employment for almost all of her adult life, and whose aspirations were bound by her husband's intergenerational family ties.

> Me dad's from (area) and his mam lived in the same house from when he was about two. You know, they've lived in that same house, the same place for seventy years, and some of them never left home. Two of his brothers never left home, one of them stayed there until he died, and me other uncle is still there. There was only me dad who didn't actually end up livin' within walkin' distance of their mam. I think it was fairly common then, because all the factories that they worked in were on their doorstep. I don't think you get that as much now. People tend to move away for jobs. We eventually, we moved when I was about nine, but that was after me dad's mam died. I don't think we would have gone before that. We only lasted a couple o' years, and we had to come back because he couldn't bear livin' without his family. Me mam would have stayed, me mam would have stayed all truth told, but me dad wouldn't. It was like a pining to go home, he needed to go home. Me mam's much more adventurous. Me dad was like, you know, "This is your mam, and you stay at home with your mam (laughed), and that's what you do", and me mam was like "I don't think so!" Me dad's the only one (of his siblings) that actually bought his house, and he said he wouldn't ha' done that if it wasn't for me mam, you know it was her that, she was the pusher. They were the first ones to have a car cos me mam thought they should have a car, you know. She was the go-getter.
>
> **Susan** (39 'grandmother')

Family permutations

Two women, Laura (21, 'mother') and Joan (36 'grandmother'), described intricate family permutations. When I asked them in their second interviews to tell me about "growing up round here", their accounts were initially similar to those of other women across the generations. Laura's early girlhood in the 1980s, playing out and in, appeared unremarkable. She described how she and her sister would sometimes perform 'shows' for their younger brother, of gendered activity that they had observed in day-to-day life.

> Me dad made swings an' that for the garden, so mostly we just took wor (our) friends an' played in the garden, and they used to

> have like a Play Scheme at the High School an' they (Youth Workers) used to take us on day trips. Me and my sister at night-time when we used to go to bed, ermm, we used to do little shows for me brother (laughed), we used to do them on the landin', you know, like upstairs, and he would sit an lie in bed and watch wor (us) through his bedroom door (laughed) ermm just things like goin' to the shops, or we would pretend we were playin' bingo. You'd play wi' your toys an' like I say in the garden on the swings.
> **Laura** (21, 'mother')

Joan mentioned more informal outdoor activities such as blackberry-picking, playing rounders and riding horses in the area surrounding her home in the 1970s.

> There used to be like loads o' wor (us), we used to gan (go) and seek everybody roond the lanes, till we got shooted (shouted) in. I used to gan lookin' for anybody with a horse that I could get on. There was a little Shetland pony and I used to jump on its back in that field across there (laughed).
> **Joan** (36, 'grandmother')

Both Joan and Laura lived with their mothers for brief periods as babies, and then grew up with their mothers and men they thought were their fathers, who were in fact stepfathers. This discovery (at nine for Laura and fourteen for Joan) disturbed their sense of identity and position in their respective family groups. Joan was told about the identity of her biological father by her maternal grandmother during an argument, illustrating the potential power of knowing a family secret. Joan retrospectively defined herself as sandwiched between two groups of siblings, the older ones who were the children of her mother and her mother's first husband who was killed in an industrial accident, and the younger ones who were the children of her mother with her second husband, the man she knew as her father. Joan was born in the 1960s between her mother's marriages, and her reference to being left out of a family event shortly before one of her interviews suggested a sense of stigma related to illegitimacy and difference. A large part of Joan's second interview consisted of her account of her infrequent meetings with her biological father and her tracing of her biological brother, her father's son. The significance of genetic connections is explored sociologically (see Taylor 2005), and in literature, for example in Forster's (1996) novel *Shadow Baby*, in which two young women search for their biological mothers.

Laura's mother decided not to marry during her first pregnancy, confirmed just before she was nineteen, having made an assessment of a future life with the father of the baby. She later married another man. Laura's life story version began with the event of finding out about her adopted status.

> Ermm (5) I can't really remember very much (laughed) ermm (7) whay right, I'll start from the beginnin', I've thought of something (laughed). Ermm I think I was nine (2) and this is what I can remember. My mam come an' told us that I was adopted like by my dad and I don't know, that was (2) scary, an' I didn't wanna have anything to do with my real dad cos obviously I call my dad my dad.   **Laura** (21, 'mother')

Subsequently I asked:

> Ann: can you tell me how that happened, that your mam told you that you were adopted by your dad?

> Laura: Yes, I had just getten out the bath, an' I was wet and had my towels on (laughed) ermm (2), an' I was really confused, an' obviously only bein' nine, I says, whay it was comin' up to Christmas, I says: "Can I send him a Christmas card", an' then there was talk of us goin' to see my real dad, but it caused a lot o', I don't know, animosity in the house, ermm my dad found it hard, I think so I changed my mind (3).   **Laura** (21, 'mother')

This short extract illustrates the complexity of the task that Laura's mother undertook, choosing the intimate space of bath-time to tell her oldest child about the identity of her biological father. Laura's reference to starting a version of her life story "from the beginning" suggests the impact of the news and her task of imagining another "real dad" and thinking differently about herself and her position in the family. Laura talked about her management of the emotional disturbance "in the house" following the transmission of this information, by postponing a meeting with her biological father in order to protect her stepfather's feelings. She subsequently moved into a flat when she was sixteen, literally removing herself from the family group, within which she felt she had become a source of conflict, "I just took it upon myself to get myself a flat, and ever since I moved out everybody's got on better, it's more peaceful". MacDonald and Marsh (2001) include the cameo of Sarah Black, a twenty-

three year old woman with two children[194], in their report of a study of young people's transitions to adulthood in another socio-disadvantaged area of North-East England. Sarah's experience of leaving the family home at a relatively young age following arguments, moving in with friends, and becoming pregnant as a young woman, is similar to Laura's.

Joan and Laura have each had some contact with their biological fathers and both describe their relationships with them as "difficult", showing the complexity of assimilating unexpected information about relatedness and identity (Schweitzer 2000), and the hard work that some babies born 'out of order' have to do as they grow up (Edwards *et al.* 1999). The issue of the turbulence beneath the surface of some apparently conventional families leads into discussion in the next section.

Section Two: Textbook Perfect Upbringing

The title of this section is taken from the transcript of Susan's first interview. Susan (39, 'grandmother') grew up during the second half of the 1960s and the 1970s in an area close to, and socio-economically similar to, the research area. She began her life story in the following way:

> I had a textbook perfect upbringing, nobody in my family was ever in trouble. I was the youngest grandchild and got loads of attention. I was surrounded by me family, which is a very secure environment for any child to grow up in. It was a very secure, happy environment. **Susan** (39, 'grandmother')

"Normal", "safe", "quiet" "secure" and "happy" were words that women used across the generations, as they remembered experiences and events from their periods of growing up[195], although of course the meanings relate to historically specific sets of circumstances. The reason for Susan's reference to her family as having been "trouble-free" is not linked with her future pregnancy which was confirmed when she was nineteen and had just married. Later in her first interview she gave an account of contact with the criminal justice system

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[194] The authors do not give the ages of the children, and it is probable that the first was born when she was under the age of twenty.
[195] Women tended to use the same words when they talked about aspects of relationships with male partners that they value, and I discuss this in Chapter 5.

because of a crime committed by her first husband. This was a devastating experience for her and her parents, who were from what Susan described as a working class area that was regarded as respectable in the 1960s, and is defined as a disadvantaged, disordered 'teenage pregnancy hotspot' (BBC 2005) at the beginning of the twentieth century. Susan's first husband's crime reversed her upwardly mobile trajectory.

Barbara (60, 'great-grandmother') introduced her childhood home as a safe place, where her sense of security appeared to be linked to daily routine and the dependability of adults in her life. She referred to the predictability of weekends, with her father taking her and her brothers on outings, "three stops on the train", on Saturday afternoons during the summer, and then chapel on Sundays. Sara (17, 'mother') and Hayley (17, 'mother'), who were born in the 1980s, and Joan (36, 'grandmother') who grew up in the 1960s and early 1970s, each described their early girlhood in the research area as being without incident.

> I grew up in (small town in the research area), aye, I was in quite a quiet place. I lived with me mam an' dad an' me brother and sisters in a quiet place, and I was just like normal really. I didn't, I wasn't a little rebel or nothin' like that. I was just normal, normal schoolin'. I was just in the normal school, normal house wi' me brother an' sisters, just grew up wi' them.
>
> **Sara** (17, 'mother')

Joan makes another comparison here between her experience of spatial freedom and sense of autonomy as a girl in the 1960s and early 1970s and that of her children's generation.

> We used to gan playin' rounders, or tuggy, or tinny[196], knockin' on people's doors, arl that. Whay we entertained worselves, where the kids now, they wouldn't kna how to play, have a game of tinny or owt like that. There used to be like loads o' wor, we used to gan and seek everybody roond the lanes, till we got shooted in. I used to gan lookin' for anybody with a horse that I could get on their horse (laughed).
>
> **Joan** (36, 'grandmother')

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[196] 'Tinny' was the one activity I had not heard of, and I asked Joan what it was. She explained that it was a chasing game that involved throwing a ball at empty spaghetti and baked beans tins, each allocated to one of the players. The player whose tin was hit had to chase and catch everyone else.

Her generalisation is challenged by the excerpt from Hayley's interview.

> It was quiet. We had lots of fun mind. We used to go into the woods and we built like three tree houses and all these zip lines and everythin'. We used to go for hours and hours, and there used to be like a big base, and someone would be on, and we used to chase each other round the field (laughed) and end up back at the tree house. We used to have lots of fun.
>
> **Hayley** (17, 'mother')

Linda's description of her mother's approach to discipline gives an example of a parenting skill likely to be recommended by professionals promoting the ordered domestic ideal of family life (Hendrick 1997:59).

> We were never smacked. I can always remember me mam used to say: "Right, you've done wrong, bed", and we went to bed and we came down when she said we could come down and that was the way we were punished. If you did something wrong, you had to go upstairs and sit and think about what you'd done and that's the way me mam brought us up.
>
> **Linda** (43, 'grandmother')

Linda also talked about doing homework straight away when she came home from school and having a regular bedtime. The quotation below, from one of the interviews with Linda's daughter, suggests intergenerational transmission of good parenting practice.

> If ma mam said to be in at a certain time, I was in. If ma mam said I couldn't go, I didn't go. If ma mam said to watch what I was doin', I did. If she asked us not to go somewhere or do anything, I didn't. I did what I was told – no smacking.
>
> (Linda's daughter[197])

In her second interview Linda mentioned a Social Services report written at the point at which she was accused of failing to protect her children from her violent partner[198]. She recalled her shock at seeing her childhood defined by a professional as 'deprived', remarking "I would say I was happy". Her comment illustrates how objective inequalities do not necessarily match perceived inequalities, and highlights the importance of examining whether people think of themselves as disadvantaged. Linda's comment represents her resistance to the representation of her family as not good enough, and is similar to Steedman's

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[197] Linda's daughter's pseudonym is not given, to protect confidentiality.
[198] Linda was acquitted of this charge.

(1986) realisation that her experience of growing up in a working-class family was discordant with the middle-class 'norm'.

Risk and rupture

While Susan's "textbook perfect upbringing" as a girl in the 1960s was interrupted only by a temporary move away from her family network[199], five women (three 'mothers' and two 'grandmothers') referred to significant points of rupture[200] during the time that they were growing up, connected with various forms of violence and abuse by known men, four in 'father' position. Three women talked about experience of 'domestic violence'[201] when they were girls, and two referred to sexual abuse[202].

One of the 'mothers'[203] (17-21[204]) introduced her experience of growing up as "not normal", which was in stark contrast to her own mother's account of an unexceptional girlhood, showing the possibility of drastic change of circumstance within the space of a generation.

> Well, I'm, from bein' little there's only been like me mam wi' us,
> cos me dad left her when I was young, an I've got a little brother

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[199] Susan moved from the North East when her father was offered a job elsewhere. He missed his large extended family so much that they returned after a year.

[200] Family disruption has been theoretically linked with unfavourable outcomes for young people (Ermisch *et al.* 2003), including teenage pregnancy.

[201] The term 'domestic violence' describes a continuum of behaviour ranging from verbal abuse, through threats and intimidation, manipulative behaviour, physical and sexual assault, to murder. Most incidents of domestic violence, and those that are most severe, are perpetrated by men against women and their children (Department of Health 2000b). Some men experience abuse in relationships with women, however they are less likely to report being hurt, frightened or upset by what has happened. They are also less likely to be subjected to a repeated pattern of abuse. Research in North London found that one in five men admitted to having used violence against their partner or ex-partner at least once, with only thirty-seven per cent saying that they would never act violently (http://www.domesticviolencedata.org, accessed 26 June 2004). During fieldwork in 2003 and 2004, although I did not systematically follow newspaper coverage of domestic violence, as I was reading newspapers I started to 'see' reports of the killing of women by partners and husbands, and of children by fathers and mothers' partners, even though they tended to be represented as minor items of news. For example, a wife stabbed and child killed by a fall from a bridge (Addley 2004); a wife and two daughters stabbed 'viciously and violently' (Wainwright 2004); a female partner 'battered and strangled' (In brief 2004); a daughter killed in a deliberate car crash (National round-up 2004b); a wife and sister-in-law shot (Cowan 2004); a wife and son shot (Lloyd Davies 2004).

[202] One woman referred to sexual abuse, and one to 'abuse', which I interpreted as sexual abuse, given that 'abuse' is generally used as a shortened descriptor. As this was the unreported abuse discussed in Chapter 3, it was inappropriate to ask for any clarification.

[203] To protect confidentiality, I am not using the pseudonyms.

[204] This is a reminder of the age range of the 'mothers' at time of interview. The same information appears for the 'grandmothers'.

> who doesn't live wi' us, he lives with his granma on his dad's side, an' errr, but me, me mam and him split up. So there's always been just like me and me mam an' that. It's been hard, but like there's so much happened over the years, there's never anything normal happened either (laughed). Everything what happens to us is like to the extreme. It's just one thing after another   ('mother')

This woman represented her early years as happy because "life was simple", however this period of simplicity was brief. She listed thirteen house moves between the ages of two and sixteen, because of the physical and sexual violence of her father towards her mother. She did not talk in detail about the violence, referring briefly to witnessing it at home, "Me dad used to batter me mam all the time an' that, I was only little but I do remember certain things, I do get flashbacks, it was horrible". She described one of the houses they rented as "at the bottom end " of the part of the town she has always lived in, showing her mother's downward social mobility. This woman had a brief settled period when her mother married again and they lived in a private detached house. Then a "load o' stuff happened" and upward mobility was reversed when her stepfather's violence resulted in a move to live with her maternal grandparents and subsequently to the council house where her mother still lives. She sat her GCSEs despite irregular school attendance, and not surprisingly did not achieve the grades of which her early secondary school reports suggested she was capable.

Another of the 'mothers' (17-21) described her first eight years as an "ordinary childhood". However, before I had finished asking her to tell me her life story, she had already evaluated her life overall as "rough". The beginning of her life story version was "It all started when I was about nine", a reference to her sister's disclosure of abuse by their father. I interrupted the life story at this point to check that contact had been made with a relevant agency, in line with child protection requirements. She confirmed Social Services' involvement and described events that followed: a court case[205], a house move, family members taking different sides. She then described a brief interlude, when "things were

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[205] This woman's father was prosecuted and given a prison sentence.

goin' OK for a while", until her mother remarried, a transitional point with potential for a positive outcome. However, the controlling behaviour of her stepfather included a range of violence[206] to which she, her mother and siblings were subjected. The pace of the woman's reporting was fast and I found it increasingly difficult to follow the changing shape of her family group. This led me to consider the complexity of her task of trying to take in what was happening at the time. The theme of family rupture ran through her interview accounts.

> We all used to be a really close family but now we're all spread out. I don't think we'll ever, wor family will actually quite be able to get back together, because there's so many bad things gone on. It hasn't been an easy life. It's been a rough life.   ('mother')

One of the 'grandmothers' (36-43) lived with both her parents until she was nine, at which point her mother left the family home with her and her siblings after years of physical violence perpetrated by the husband/father. When I asked her to tell me her life story, the events and experiences important to her, starting wherever she wanted, she began:

> Right, let's see, I, I think the first one would ha' been, ermm (1), I had a, a kind of errr (3), I think I'm tryin' to think of the word to describe it actually. I come from a ermm, a, a broken home actually, you kna. Me dad used to beat seven shades o' (slight pause to acknowledge the unspoken word 'shit') oot me mam, you kna..... an' arl I can remember about bein' really small is bein' terrified, really, really terrified, an' then errr, she, she finally left him an' we went from there to live at me granny's at (name of small town a few miles from where she lives now).....you were constantly livin' in fear of it happenin', d'you kna what I mean, you would tek one look at his face an' you would kna, an' you learnt as you got arder (older), you had to sort o' like tiptoe arund, an you had to sit there and just "shhh" and not a word. It would ha' ended up, I think, where he would ha' killed her or something really bad would have happened, it would ha' been the other way rund, because there was points in me mother's marriage where she would sleep with a knife, a bread knife under her pillow.   ('grandmother')

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[206] The violence perpetrated by this woman's stepfather included physical attacks on her mother and brothers, emotional abuse, for example questioning the paternity of the first child born to him and her mother, exercising control, for example sending her mother to bed with the children, and sexual assault. The forms of control and coercion covered by the term 'domestic violence' are highlighted by, for example, Mooney (1996), Ferris (2004), Home Office (2004), Stanko (2004) and Welch and Mason (2007).

Her mother's decision to leave her husband was spontaneous when she arrived home from work one day and found her husband trying to press the hand of the oldest child on to a heated electric cooker plate. This woman did not see her father again after their sudden departure from the family home. Her mother's parents, who lived in the research area, accommodated them all in their two bedroom house for over a year until they were able to move into social housing. She reported a discussion she had had as an adult with her mother about the violence. Her mother had described to her how the violence began on the night of her wedding, and how she had remained hopeful that it would stop. The violence towards one of her children was however unsupportable.

> I can remember once sayin' to me mam, when I was a teenager "Well, like why did you stay with him for so lang?" because she said the night she was married was the first time he ever hit her. An' I says to her "Well, why did you stay that lang?". An' she says, like a lot o' women, you know an', an' I've heard it umpteen times, you kna like, my friends that have been in the same sort of like relationships "Because you arlways think it's ganna change".   ('grandmother')

Two women, a 'mother' (17-21) and one of the grandmothers (36-43) talked about experiencing abuse perpetrated by known men, and both theorised this as a transformational point in their lives (Wengraf 2000), particularly in relation to the interruption of their educational opportunities. The 'mother' described her early childhood, growing up with her own mother who was supported by a large extended family, as "normal". She had some contact with her father[207] during her childhood, and enjoyed school up to the end of Middle School when she was thirteen. At that point she and her mother moved in with her mother's partner, who sexually abused her. The 'grandmother' referred only to "incidence of abuse"[208].

> Then I went to High School and then everything just went off the rails (4) and (2) I done everything wrong when I got to High School, skiving about, didn't take my GCSEs.   ('mother')

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[207] This woman's mother decided not to marry, when she became pregnant in the 1980s at the age of nineteen.
[208] As discussed in Chapter 3, this woman did not share any further detail of the abuse, apart from using the pronoun 'he' in relation to the perpetrator.

Quite a happy childhood, really, I suppose. There was an incidence of abuse (ermm) which sort of changed me in my teenage years, ermm I did become a bit of a rebel (laughed) ermm, I was always in top sets at school, there was always an expectation that I would go to university, there was, there was always, there was a lot of expectations put on me to sort of do well, to succeed, ermm, and I basically flew in the face of all these things (laughing). I left school at sixteen, and had a wild time.   ('grandmother')

The 'mother' interpreted the conflict between herself and her own mother at that time as caused by their different experiences of disruption and loss. The isolation of their respective positions in relation to the sexual abuse is powerfully conveyed in this excerpt.

About a year it went on for and I never telt noone. I used to tell me grandma and grandda *everythin'* (emphasis), but I just couldn't. I tried loads o' times. I did try loads o' times but I just couldn't. I couldn't get it out. I couldn't. I wanted to but I couldn't. It was like, what got me the most was that I knew me mam loved him loads. I just felt as if I couldn't and then errr one night it just went too far for us, and I just couldn't handle it, and I went to school that mornin' and I just wasn't with it. I was just starin' into space all day, cryin' arl the time, and it was one of me friends just bugged us and bugged us and bugged us, and says "What's the matter?, and I felt like screamin', and she just bugged us to the point where I telt her, and I telt her, and then the school got in touch with the Social Services. She (mother) couldn't believe it. She, she couldn't look at us, she couldn't. Sayin that, I understand now more what it must have been like for her, cos I've got like me own child, but she just couldn't dee nowt with us. She wouldn't let us tark aboot it tuv her. She wouldn't let us explain why it took us so lang to tell anyone. I couldn't tark aboot it. I couldn't tark to her. She was just like, like was here in person but her mind wasn't. It's just weird. Me mam still had like photos an' that of him, and I fund (found) a photo upstairs, an' I ripped it up and me mam went ballistic and telt us that I wasn't, that I wasn't allowed to rip the photo up, she said that the police needed them. But I think she wanted the photo for herself cos she was still tryin' to come to terms wi' what had actually happened. I was like thinking, whay what do you want a photo of someone who's done that for. But I mean, sayin' that, like I can understand now that I've got a child, and when you love someone, it must be hard cos when you, like if (partner) ever, if I had to choose between (partner) and (child), I would choose (child), but the fact is that (partner) feels a part of me now and I suppose she would have felt the same. So it would be hard. It would be like losin' part o' you. It's weird.   ('mother')

I heard again about the domestic violence described by the two 'mothers', in their respective mothers' interview accounts[209]. The 'mother' and 'grandmother' who referred to sexual abuse also took part in interviews before their mothers. However, their mothers did not refer to their daughters' experiences of abuse in interview. Given the 'mother's' representation of her mother's inability to talk about the abuse at the time, this gap in a life story version in an interview setting does not appear surprising. However, the 'grandmother' suggested at one point that "mam'll disagree with this" ("this" being her own analysis of the effects of the abuse she experienced), anticipating that her mother would talk about it, which she did not. This suggested to me that a mother's sexual story of the abuse of her child by her own sexual partner, or by a known man, can feel impossible to tell (Plummer 1995[210]), perhaps because of the difficulty of making sense of what has happened, or a fear that the researcher will not be able to bear to hear it, or in hearing, will judge them as irresponsbile mothers. The life story versions of these five women illustrate the ways in which some men abuse power and harm women and children within heterosexually organised intimate relationships (Hanmer and Maynard 1987), with significant impact on the futures of those involved.

Section Three: "Remember dear that you're a girl"[211]

The women's accounts show the complexity of the process of becoming a 'girl' (Sharpe 1976). For example, Laura (21 'mother') talked about growing up in the 1980s.

> Ann: How would you describe yourself when you were a girl ?
>
> Laura: Do you mean describe my character or my appearance ?

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[209] The mother of the 'grandmother' was not able to take part in interviews.
[210] Plummer (1995) explores the socio-historical conditions that provide an audience for particular sexual stories, making them possible to tell. Plummer gives a brief history of the various stages through which the book *Telling Sexual Stories: Power, Change and Social Worlds* grew. It was commissioned as a report of empirical research that produced life histories of paedophiles, transvestites and sadomasochists. The research raised the question as to why people might want to tell their sexual stories and why researchers would listen to them.
[211] Peggy Seeger (BBC 2007) sang these two lines from a song: 'An engineer could never have a baby, remember dear that you're a girl', to illustrate the idea of the need for new messages for new sets of circumstances for women in different generations.

Ann: Whichever …

Laura: (2) I was like a boy (laughed) (2) only way to describe it really, like a boy, very firm ideas about what I wanted to do and what I didn't want to do. I was never gonna get married. I was gonna have boyfriends but never get married. When you see little girls on telly, they always have dreams about getting married and having kids and things like that, so I think they're like more feminine ideas (2) but I didn't have them.

Laura (21, 'mother')

Laura's response illustrates the continuing, if changing, construction of femininity (Walkerdine 1987 [1984], Laurie *et al.* 1999, Harrison 2001, Griffin 2005, Jackson and Gee 2005) as 'other' to contemporary versions of masculinity. Laura could not define herself as a girl because she knew what she wanted, that is, she knew that she did not want to marry and become a mother. Judith Butler (1990:25) discusses gender performance based on 'truths' that are illusory 'products of specific circumstances in space and time', always being 'done' and having to be re-'done'. There is potential for change as the re-'doing' leaves gaps in which alternatives might be tried out, although Susan (39, 'grandmother') gave an example of the difficulty of trying to do things differently. Susan discussed the conflict caused by her version of femininity, different to that transmitted by her mother, when she was in her early teenage years in the 1970s. She referred to arguments with her mother because of her ability in sport and the effects of physical activity on her body shape and appearance. Susan's disidentification with her mother's ideas of femininity and respectable appearance is similar to Rawlins[212] (2006) finding that mothers play a significant role in 'allowing and constraining' what girls and young women wear, a particular form of complex intergenerational negotiation.

I was right into it (sport) and me mam didn't like it, me mam didn't like it at all. I was trainin' like five, six nights a week, I loved it. Quite often I would go an' play on whatever school team until five o'clock and then I trained till like nine o' clock at night. I was in perfect physical condition but me mam objected. She said trainin'

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[212] Rawlins (2006) discusses the findings of empirical research involving case studies of four sets of mothers and daughters living in a middle class urban area in the North of England. Data were produced in semi-structured interviews with each mother and each of thirteen daughters, and in draw and write exercises in which the young women participated. The daughters were aged between nine and sixteen at time of interview.

was turnin' me into an amazon and all the rest of it. And you know, I loved it, I loved it. I couldn't see what was wrong with it. I was in tracksuit and trainers most o' the time and she was always tryin' to get us to wear shoes that I didn't want to wear and you know like "Just wear a nice suit". I didn't wanna wear suits (emphasis). The fights I had with her about clothes. She wanted me to model clothes and she couldn't understand how I could possibly prefer runnin' round a track in all conditions than poncin' about on a catwalk. I've never been that trivial. I think they're a bad example to young girls. She'd say "But it'll be lovely" and I'd say "No, I don't think it will be". Me mam, she's like keepin' up appearances, and I'm not bothered.   **Susan** (39, 'grandmother')

Joanne (19, 'mother') represented a particular level of constraint exercised by her mother, against which she rebelled when she was old enough. Joanne's mother reflected separately[213] on the impact of her regulation of her daughter.

It (growing up) was alright, it was normal, but me mam, when I was a kid, arl the other kids would be like playin' on the horses' field and that and diggin' things and mekkin' things an' that, and I would, I had to stay in the garden and I wasn't allowed to get dirty, with us bein' a little girl, always in big frilly dresses and frilly socks and hairbands and everythin'. I couldn't stand them (the clothes). I couldn't do nothin'. I wasn't even allowed to sleep out at me friends and that. I wasn't allowed to do nothin' when I was a kid. Whay in the end (when Joanne was older) me mam had nee choice because I wanted to be away. So at the finish I just used to say "Right, I'm gannin'", and me mam used to shout "No, no", but I just used to gan.   **Joanne** (20, 'mother')

I often wonder did my lassie miss oot, cos I wouldn't let her get dirty or nowt like that   (Joanne's mother**)**

Paechter (2001:42) refers to the narrow range of physical movement available to girls 'within the normalizing discourse of gender difference' and of the difficulty of claiming an unambiguous identity as a girl who takes part in active play. The term 'tom-boy'[214] was used by several women in the 'grandmother' group, and appeared to be a way of explaining their level of physical activity and rejection of conventional girls' play in the late 1960s and 1970s.

I had a pram, pram an' a doll an' that, but I was more, I was more interested in bein' outside and playin' wi' arl me friends,

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[213] Joanne's mother did not know that Joanne had talked about this issue, as her first interview followed immediately after Joanne's.
[214] Ballardie (2003) explores tomboy identity among lesbian and heterosexual women.

> an' I was interested in horses an' that, so I never really played with me doll. Bit of a tomboy. **Joan** (36, 'grandmother')

> I was the original tom-boy, me. It was so much fun, hangin' round wi' the lads, climbin' trees an deein' God knows. I would rather gan wi' the lads and knock around wi' the lads than gan an' play wi' the lassies, cos lassies were just eughh, mind-bogglin', playin' with their tea-set. **Carole** (39, 'grandmother')

Dawn (39 'grandmother') described playing out when she was a girl as being "one o' the boys, you were like a tom-girl". Emma defined herself as a "tom-boy girl", similarly expressing the contradiction of transmitted expectations of how she should appear and what she wanted to do.

> I was a very tom-boy girl. I was never a girlie-girl. If there was anybody caught climbing on the sheds, it was me (laughed), ridin' the bikes up an' down, buildin' ramps an' things. Mum still used to dress me up. I was the one who was paraded round.
> **Emma** (39 'grandmother')

Several women in the 'great-grandmother' and 'grandmother' generations talked about different expectations of girls and boys within their family groups.

> Boys were allowed to do things that girls weren't allowed to do. Ermm (brother) would be able to go out to the pictures, but I wouldn't be allowed to, not unless I was with somebody that me mam and dad approved of (laughed), where (brother) it wouldn't matter, he would very much be able to please himself.
> **Barbara** (60, 'great-grandmother')

Gendered expectations also related to division of housework. Women in the 'great-grandmother' groups remembered work that they did at home as girls. Barbara (60, 'great-grandmother') for example, was asked to sweep the steps leading up to the family flat in preparation for the handywoman attending her mother during one of her labours at home. Carole (39, 'grandmother') looked after her younger sisters and brothers and managed housework while her mother was at work. Linda (43, 'grandmother') said that she was able to cook a dinner by the time she was twelve because, if her mother's employment as a cleaner involved early evening work hours, her mother would set ingredients out for a meal ready for Linda to prepare for herself and her young brother. The accounts of these older women illustrated how they learnt, as daughters, that they were expected to provide physical care for others (Ungerson 1990). This

echoes the work of Conradson (2003) for example, who gives an overview of research into the significance of care in particular settings, including home space, and the disproportionate level of physical and emotional labour undertaken by women in domestic as well as work settings.

In respect of intergenerational transmission, Emma referred to consciously avoiding repeating what had happened to her.

> I was treated very differently to my brothers. There was very much a girl and boy thing, like housework an' things I'd be made to do, but the boys would get off with it. I think it was unintentional. I don't think they realised they did it. The boys were allowed motorbikes an' I wasn't. I think they thought they were protectin' me. But at the time I felt it was very, very unfair, ermm an' I suppose that that's why my kids were all treated alike because I used to think it was very, very unfair.
>
> **Emma** (39, 'grandmother')

Four of the five 'mothers', all of whom were born in the 1980s, had grown up with at least one brother, and the other 'mother' was an only child. None referred to a sense of being treated differently as a girl, in respect of personal freedom or involvement in housework. This may suggest a conscious interruption of transmission of gendered expectations by the 'grandmothers', because of their sense of injustice. However, three of the youngest women talked about involvement in the care of relatives' babies (gendered work), and I did not ask whether this was paid babysitting work, or informal care that was expected of girls.

Women's work

Each of the women who took part in interviews, apart from the two who became pregnant at school, had combined paid employment with unpaid domestic and childcare responsibilities. There was no sign of a significant increase across the generations of equality in division of domestic work between married or cohabiting partners, as reported for example by Reynolds *et al.* 2003. Older men's contribution to housework tended to be limited by paid work commitments, and two of the youngest women claimed that this was the case

for their partners who had full-time jobs[215]. Barbara's (60, 'great-grandmother') father was employed in a local heavy industry and trade union activities took up a significant amount of his time outside of work hours. Linda's (43, 'grandmother') father was frequently away from home on active service in one of the British armed forces, and her mother took employment which could accommodate her children.

> Me mam used to work at the school. She used to be a cleaner at the school so if she was working down the halls, she used to get some of the P.E. equipment out for me and me brother while she was busy workin', and we just had like a normal childhood.
>
> **Linda** (43, 'grandmother')

> Me dad was very remote in that he worked, and when he wasn't working he had the Trade Union. The whole house revolved around the times that me dad had to go to work, come in from work, have his meals, you know, everything sort of revolved around me dad, ermm which again I think was perhaps perfectly normal in those days (1). He would come in on a Friday night and hand over the housekeeping money. You can't imagine that happening nowadays. Aye Friday night, he used to get paid and as he came home he always bought a big bar of Wall's ice cream, a packet of wafers and six teacakes, and that was Friday night (laughed), eeeh, I used to enjoy that.
>
> **Barbara** (60, 'great-grandmother')

Thompson (1997:40) refers to Northumberland mining communities in the first half of the twentieth century as 'dominated by men's work'. Mary (69, 'great-grandmother') introduced her father as a benevolent provider in a similar way to Barbara, and talked about the way in which he supported her mother, his second wife, who brought up the children from his first marriage[216]. She described how he took over the housework every Sunday and made his wife breakfast in bed. Mary initially summed up her father's contribution to domestic tasks as "she (mother) was tret great". However she modified this assessment

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[215] The employment situation of the partners of the youngest women, at the time of second interview, was that two were in full-time employment (one working for a local business and one a skilled labourer), one had just started a part-time work placement after a long period of unemployment, one was in receipt of disability living allowance, and one was actively seeking work having been recently made redundant.
[216] Mary's father's first wife died at a young age. I asked her if she had died in childbirth, as Mary said that there were eight children from her father's first marriage. She did not know the cause of the woman's death.

with reference to her mother's sustained physical labour caring for over ten children.

Three of the 'grandmothers' had made a decision not to marry when they discovered they were pregnant, and they continued to live initally in their parental homes, one led by a 'single'[217] mother, and two by a conventional married couple. One 'grandmother', though married, was in effect a 'single' parent because her husband was often away on active service in one of the armed forces, and she experienced mental health problems because of the isolation of living in camp accommodation away from family support. Another also brought up her children on her own with the help of her parents, as her husband was violent and she left him at an early point in their marriage. The remaining woman in the 'grandmother group' was already living with her partner when she became pregnant and they married shortly after their baby was born. She was the exception in assessing her husband as having contributed significantly to domestic work, although she suggested that she had had to instruct him, particularly in relation to childcare as there had been no babies in his extended family as he was growing up and he had not had a chance to learn by 'doing' as she had. Joan's account below of her husband's active share in housework and childcare was corroborated by her daughter in her interview, who described her father's contribution to her own daughter's care, particularly as a babysitter. At the time of interview he was able to be more involved than Joan, as he had taken early retirement from his job and she was working.

> Like we have the bairn two or three nights a week to stay over. Ermm, he teks the bairn shoppin' an' he has a lot more to do with the bairn that what I dee, cos I work. An' I've got me darts an' that on a Wednesday an' I've got hobbies. But he seems to like have more to dee with her, cos he's got more time on his hands than what I have   **Joan** (36, 'grandmother')

The 'mother' who had, at the time of interview, always lived separately from her partner commented critically on his contribution to the work of childcare. Four of

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[217] This woman had left her marital home with her children following sustained domestic violence.

the five youngest women cohabit or have cohabited with the fathers of their babies, before, during and after pregnancy, and they stated that their partners did not share domestic work equitably, which was a source of disappointment, resentment and argument. This representation of gendered division of housework matches one of the findings of research conducted in Northumberland, namely that three-quarters of women do most of the cooking and food shopping if they have a male partner and children (Lake 2006).

Section Four: Great Expectations

Women across the generational groups referred to thinking ahead, when they were girls, to the things they wanted to do as adult women. Their accounts showed the centrality of the idea of motherhood in relation to how they had imagined their future selves (see Richardson 1993). For example, Joan (36 'grandmother') talked about growing up 'knowing' she would have children. Sara's vision of herself in the future was also as a mother, if at a more conventional age.

> I've always seen meself havin' kids, I've always, since when I was little when you have your little ermm dreams an' little day-dreams an' stuff, always seen meself havin' babies, but I didn't think I would be this young (laughed) didn't think it would happen so quick (laughed). **Sara** (17, 'mother')

Laura (21, 'mother') by contrast defined her future plans against the normative expectation of motherhood for women, although her career choice could be read as a continuation of the childcare work she did for her aunt.

> I was always adamant that I would never have kids. Never wanted a baby, I used to love (emphasis) kids, like my auntie's got three and I would go an' stay with her an' like help her, but never wanted any o' me own. I wanted to be a midwife. **Laura** (21, 'mother')

Educational opportunities

Teenage pregnancy disrupted the education or training of only four of the thirteen women. At the beginning of the 1960s one of the 'great-grandmothers' was in an apprenticeship which she had to leave when she became pregnant. In the 1980s one of the 'grandmothers' was studying for A Level examinations at college and had to defer her exams for a year because of her pregnancy. As

the twenty-first century began two of the 'mothers' were still in school, one preparing for GCSEs and one in the first year of sixth-form, and neither young woman was able to complete her course. Susan (39, 'grandmother'), Emma (38, 'grandmother') and Hayley (17, 'mother') referred to expectations that they would study in higher education. However, their accounts also showed that there is no straightforward relationship between aspiration for social mobility and achievement of it.

> I wanted to go to college and do a business studies course. The whole family had high hopes for me about going to college, and I just felt like I'd let me mam down.   **Hayley** (17, 'mother')

> They (parents) didn't want me to grow up and have a, you know, just a factory job. They wanted me to make something of myself. None of my friends had children when I was pregnant, I mean, sounds snobby this, but people who were in the same classes as me at school, the sort o' high achievers, didn't get pregnant. They weren't expected to do that you know.
> **Emma** (38, 'grandmother')

Twelve women mentioned that a career had been part of their plans for the future when they were girls. Career plans were variously reported as having been interrupted by misinformation or lack of information about career routes, disruption at home, and school absence because of caring responsibilities. For example, Susan (39, 'grandmother') gave an account of being an A grade student, wanting a career as a physiotherapist and being misinformed at school about the A Level subjects that would provide entry to this professional training. Unsure as to what to do with the 'wrong' A' levels, she shifted to unskilled employment. Susan's account illustrated the complexity of negotiating entry to educational and employment areas that were unfamiliar within her family group.

> I was going to go to college and be a physiotherapist. I went on me work experience with the physiotherapy team, who said "Actually you need a Science subject to do this". So I'd been wrongly advised on what to take. And then you can't, it's like hard to correct that. Then it's like 'Oh I'll just get a job for a while". And then you get caught up in it. And then I met Natalie's Dad and then I fell pregnant and then I wasn't doin' anything. I still don't know that I wouldn't go to university, I have thought about it every year for the last few years.
> **Susan** (39, 'grandmother')

At time of interview Susan was considering applying to university as a mature student, having been promoted to a senior position in the organisation she worked for. Another woman in 'grandmother' position studied at a local university after the birth of her second child, with childcare support provided by her mother. Other women across generations referred to their potential for academic achievement.

> I was a quiet kid (laughed). I always had me nose in a book, What was that they used to say at school ? "If you want to find Linda, she's in the corner with her nose in a book". I still enjoy readin', I love readin'. I got grade 1s and 2s in the exams, came in the first two for maths as well.   **Linda** (43, 'grandmother')

Mary had wanted to be a nurse. When I asked if she made any moves towards nurse training, she replied:

> No, no, I ended up workin' in the breweries, believe it or not (laughed) aye, at Newcastle, I worked at the sweet factory on the Coast Road first mind, when I first left school, then I went to the breweries and I was there till I got married, so that was the nurse's career away (laughed), it was just a thought.
>   **Mary** (69, 'great-grandmother')

Mary's laughter suggested a positive reframing of a lost career opportunity, from her present position and status as mother, grandmother and great-grandmother. She insisted that her ambition was not completely unfulfilled, making a connection between wanting to be a nurse when she was a girl, and, at the time of taking part in the research, working as a volunteer at a local club for people with disabilities following retirement. Carole (39, 'grandmother') had also wanted to be a nurse and missed her opportunity to gain relevant qualifications when her mother left her father because of domestic violence, and had to become an income earner.

> I was kept off school to keep an eye on the house while me mam was away at work, to make sure the other ones were alright. An' it was like arl I seemed to dee was babysit. I had to watch the little ones, mek tea for them arl, "You'll have to stay off school to keep an eye on the house" an' what not. I would say I lost a good two an' a half year at school for arl the time I took off. Me last year at High School I was never there. I left school. I had nay qualifications or anythin' so it was just like try for a job, any sort of job, so I went to work in a factory, which I couldn't stand. I hated it.   **Carole** (39, 'grandmother')

Dawn's (39, 'grandmother') plan to be a health visitor changed with her desire for financial independence, linked to the availability of local factory work that did not require qualifications. She acknowledged that unskilled work was not what had been expected for her, illustrating her parents' classed aspiration for social mobility at a time (during the 1970s) when it would have been easier to achieve than in subsequent decades.

> Dawn: Never got there. I ended up working in factories and pubs and fish shops, what a let down.
>
> Ann: Did you ever talk about that at school, about what you wanted to be?
>
> Dawn: Aye, but I didn't want to go to college, three or four years in college. It's alright to gan to college but it's the money, you've got to have money in your pocket, and I think you only got £25 a week when we were younger to go to college, and arl the rest o' your friends was workin', bringin' in money and oot every weekend, where you couldn't on £25 a week, so I opted to gan into the factories, more money
>
> Ann: How old were you then, sixteen ?
>
> Dawn: Aye, sixteen I left school and I've worked ever since. I never stopped on for me exams. I regret that now like, but I had left because everyone else was leavin'. You could stop on at school, but there was nee money in it so we just left and went to factories. Them that stayed on at school eventually hoyed the towel in, because they needed money, the same as what we's did, which was stupid really, cos education gets you a long way nowadays, rather than leaving school and deein' stupid factory work, but you need money to live. The factory work was very well paid. But after a couple of years, you got fed up with it. I dee wish I'd stopped at school.   **Dawn** (39, 'grandmother')

The accounts of the 'mothers' highlighted the various educational risks for young women in Wansbeck[218] during the 1990s. Sara (17, 'mother')

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[218] Educational attainment in Wansbeck is below local and national averages at all stages (http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/reports, accessed 21 October 2004). Gillborn and Mirza (2000) suggest a clear correlation between young people's social class position and their level of educational success. They cite 1997 figures from the then Department for Education and Employment, showing that children from the most affluent backgrounds were more than three times as likely to achieve five or more higher grade GCSE examination passes than their peers in socio-economically disadvantaged areas. They also highlight that the gap in attainment between those in the wealthiest and those in the poorest areas has widened since the 1980s in the UK.

represented a turning point of educational opportunity in her school career, linked to the importance and influence of peers and popularity. Her account of regular exclusion from lessons, if not from school, highlighted the need for discussion of appropriate intervention to prevent young women failing to achieve their potential (Osler[219] 2006, Bonell *et al.*[220] 2007). Sara referred to her mother's attempt to regulate her social network to keep her out of "trouble".

> I was quite good at school. I wanted to be a Health Visitor or something. I did ermm my GCSEs and I got a good grade in Health and Social Care. But I just used to sit an' talk to me friends "What are you doin' the night like ?", just sit an' talk, an' I would get wrong. I would be the one in the class that would be like "Sara, stop the talkin', stop chattin' away please", an' I would just sit an' talk an' talk, an' just sit an' whisper when she was talkin', the teacher (laughed). An' I would get wrong a lot for that, sent out the room an' that, "You're goin' to have to leave the room cos you're talkin' too much" (laughed), an' I don't know. I think it was all about being popular an' being noticed, where people who worked hard were more quiet and would just get on with it, which we (laughed) should ha' done. I think it depended who you hung around with, like what friends. Me mam used to say "You're not hangin' around with her, cos you'll just get into trouble (laughed), an' I would just say "I'm not", an' I would be away out, just because me mam had telt us no to."
>
> **Sara** (17, 'mother')

One of the 'mother's' accounts illustrated the effects of the disruption of sexual abuse in terms of missed educational opportunities, and the complex circumstances that can lie behind 'poor' achievement.

> Everything just went off the rails (4). I done everything wrong when I got to High School, skiving, just everything. Me mam was always on me case about stupid little things, and then I would go to school and the teachers would be like in me face all the time, and it's just like I couldn't get away from it. I think everyone gets to the point where they start seein' how far they

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[219] Osler (2006) examines the experiences of young women of statutory school age in relation to school exclusion, in three local education authorities and three Education Action Zones in England. Eighty-one young women took part in individual and group interviews, and the data they produced highlight young women's exclusion from school as a relatively hidden problem. One young woman described a classmate becoming marginalised in school through bullying, and becoming pregnant at this point, 'and then that was it' (Osler 2006:585).

[220] Bonell et al (2007) discuss the potential of improvement of school ethos and institutional culture in the UK, where levels of disaffection among young people are high. They suggest that one outcome might be young women feeling more confident about their future careers.

can push their luck (2), but the teachers would just, if you done one thing wrong, it was like, how can I put it (3) as if you had a label on you and they just didn't gi' you that second chance. I couldn't hack it, I couldn't hack havin' people in me face twenty-four hours sayin' "Do this, do that, do this", and even when I sat down and tried my absolute hardest, it wasn't good enough, good enough for anybody (coughed) (5). I didn't take my GCSEs because I got kicked out of school, ermm gettin' in with the wrong crowd, drinkin', doin' everything wrong. And then, when I was sixteen, I thought to mesel', "Right, I want a career for mesel'", and by that time it was too late. So I got mesel' a job at (local factory), and errr I was just workin' and savin' me money up so that I could go on holiday and just tryin' to do things right and then errr (coughed) I got paid off from there. There wasn't enough work for all of wor, so they paid all the new starters off Then I got another job at (name of firm) and that's where I met (partner). Then I moved out o' me mam's, got a little bit more independence. I got mesel' a flat at (small town), where (partner) lived. Then by accident I fell pregnant.   ('mother')

Across the generations women represented themselves as having aspired to a 'good' career or job, as they were growing up[221]. This does not accord with the statement made by Chris Patten (BBC 2004), Chancellor of Newcastle University, that 'there is a real poverty of ambition' in the North East. The careers mentioned most frequently by the women were those stereotypically linked with women such as nursing, midwifery and teaching, involving emotional as well as intellectual and practical skills. Mary (69, 'grandmother') recognised the gendered nature of her aspiration to become a nurse, when she said: "I think it was just a lassy's thing really, you kna". Young women and young men continue to opt for gender-typical subjects in secondary school and

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[221] This is similar to one of the findings in Osler's (2006) research with working class white and black girls about their school experiences during 2000 and 2001, namely that they placed great emphasis on a good education for access to a good job. It also supports the findings of research by Yeandle *et al.* (2003:14) who used discussion groups in Middlesbrough (with young people aged sixteen to eighteen), Sandwell (with members of the Bangladeshi community) and Sheffield (with parents living with their children and a partner), to explore people's experiences and theories of poverty. Those who were parents viewed education as a 'way forward' for their children into a 'decent trade' or further education. Participants did however perceive a 'post-code lottery' in relation to access to good educational opportunities at school. Another UK research study (The Prince's Trust 2003) found that the aims and aspirations of disadvantaged young people were very similar to the control group of young people who were not living with disadvantage. Over 900 young people took part, aged fourteen to twenty-five. Many of those who were disadvantaged (unemployed, under-achieving in school, in contact with the criminal justice system, and in or leaving care) did not have a clear idea about how to realise their aspirations.

to aspire to gendered types of paid work with different rates of pay, generally lower for women (Buswell 1992, Equal Opportunities Commission 1999, Furlong and Biggart 1999, Raffo and Reeves[222] 2000, Harrison 2001). One of the findings of Tinklin *et al.*'s [223] (2005) research was that girls from working class background are more likely than middle class girls to pursue gender-typical jobs, which may reflect difficulty in accessing information about other options. Seaman *et al.*[224] (2005:4) found that many of the young women (as also the young men) in their study of resilience in disadvantaged communities 'had high educational aspirations but opted for traditional non-professional jobs, often gender-related'.

It has been claimed that class position and socio-economic disadvantage continue to impact on achievement of aspirations (Bynner et al 2002, Innes and Scott 2002, Devine 2004a, Devine 2004b, Dyson 2004, Furlong and Cartmel 2005, Schoon *et al.* 2005, Lewis and Macleod 2006). Osler (2006:585) refers to the barriers that young working class women can face within the education system as 'a form of structural violence'. This issue is discussed by Thomson *et al.* (2002) who describe the enormity of entering unfamiliar territory in order to pursue social mobility through careers, for the young people that they researched. Kenway and McLeod (2004) who studied the trajectories of individual young women and pairs of mothers and daughters living on low incomes found gaps in knowledge about how to negotiate entry to higher education institutions in order to turn aspiration into reality. The final report of the evaluation of the Teenage Pregnancy Strategy (Wellings *et al.* 2005)

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[222] Raffo and Reeves (2000) researched the schooling and training and further education experiences of thirty-one young people aged 15 to 24, sixteen young women (11 white, 4 black and 1 asian) and 15 young men (12 white, 2 black and 1 asian) in socio-economically disadvantaged areas of Manchester. They found that young people had had negative experiences in school, and were living in situations in which it was difficult to find ways of accessing new information about jobs and how to access them. Young women had gendered notions of types of work.

[223] Tinklin *et al.* (2005) examined the attitudes of 96 young women and 94 young men, aged fourteen to sixteen, from a range of social and family backgrounds in Scotland, on gender roles and their personal aspirations for the future. This exploration was part of a larger project on gender and school academic performance.

[224] Seaman *et al.* (2005) involved 231 parents and 259 young people in discussion groups and individual and couple interviews. The research was carried out in four neighbourhoods in the Glasgow area, Scotland.

highlights the strength of association between socio-economic determinants, difficulties in achieving full potential in attainment at school and teenage pregnancy.

All of the women, apart from the two youngest who became pregnant while at school and who had not been in any paid employment at time of interview, referred to their experiences in various jobs[225]. Mary (69, 'great-grandmother') and Barbara (60, 'great-grandmother') had had periods of full-time employment in the National Health Service and in the hospitality sector respectively. Their jobs were relatively low-paid, reflecting their lack of qualifications. Each had also worked part-time early morning and night-time shifts to accommodate childcare responsibilities. Three of the 'grandmothers' had been employed in the service sector, mainly part-time, from the point at which their children were "well settled at school". One had always worked full-time in the retail sector, one had been promoted into a management position within a public sector organisation (from which she had had to take prolonged sick leave because of the effects of domestic violence), and one had reconnected with higher education, with childcare support from her mother, and gained a degree and subsequent position as a youth worker. The youngest women with experience of paid employment referred to short-term contracts in local factories (one of which had closed by the time of fieldwork) and a recycling plant.

Several 'mothers' talked about gaining access to temporary and insecure paid employment through their networks of familial contacts. Family connections were the main source of information about jobs for those young people who took part in UK research[226] that explored the concept of social capital in relation to children and young people (Swann *et al.* 2002).

> Ermm, one of my Dad's relatives worked there in the factory an'
> he was leavin', so I asked him for the number, an' I rang them

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[225] The research findings do not support the idea of women's freedom to choose between work inside or outside the home, suggested for example by Hakim (2003).

[226] Swann et al. (2002) researched young people's perspectives on neighbourhood and social networks. The research was undertaken in two schools in a town within thirty miles of London. The town is in the top third of deprived areas in England. 101 young people took part in the research, aged twelve to fifteen. Fifty-four young women, forty-four young men and three young people for whom demographic data were missing, participated.

up an' I got the job. They asked us to go for an interview, an'
told us there and then I had it, cos you didn't really need any
qualifications or (laughed) anything like that. I did quite good
there, an' I stayed there. I was seventeen when I started there.
They fired us, cos that's when I found out I was pregnant.

Laura (21, 'mother')

Conclusion

The women's life stories illustrated the economic and material circumstances in
which they grew up in predominantly white, working class communities. The
transmission of a work ethic made sense in the context of a geographical area
where heavy industries such as mining and shipbuilding used to provide secure
and relatively well-paid male employment opportunities. It does not fit the short-
term employment contracts currently available in the research area and
elsewhere in North-East England, to which the majority of the women and their
partners are restricted because of lack of qualifications in secondary or higher
education.

Laura's account above is a contemporary illustration of what Hanson and Pratt
(1995) refer to as individuals' local access to social and cultural capitals, that is
the networks in which they are involved and the information[227] and range of
experiences to which they have access[228]. The youngest women and their
partners generally fall into the thirty per cent of the population exposed to the
risks of global market forces (Hutton 1996) that shape local employment
opportunities.

The women's life story versions showed the passing on of ideas about 'how to
do things' through gendered practices[229]. They similarly illuminated the range of
possibilities generated by transmission of gendered heterosexual norms. The
women's constructed life story versions included girlhood observations of
loving, respectful relationships between adult women and men, with varying

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[227] This includes details about different professional careers and the routes to them
[228] One woman with experience of teenage pregnancy, with whom I have worked in Newcastle
upon Tyne, recalled having known only one woman in a career, when she was growing up on a
social housing estate. Hanson and Pratt (1995:185) refer to '(w)hat is judged to be possible and
what is actually available as employment' as being dependent on geography.
[229] Changing gendered practices over the course of the twentieth century are outlined in
Chapter 2, Section Two.

degrees of male involvement in childcare and domestic work within and between generations. Four accounts of growing up included examples of the ways in which men abuse the power they have in relationships with women, for example by physically assaulting a wife or partner and/or her/their child(ren). These permutations of violence show the dangerous versatility of heterosexual organisation of domestic life.

The next chapter examines the historically and socio-economically specific sets of circumstances that shaped the moves of the women across the generational groups, as they learnt about sex and relationships, negotiated sexual encounters with men and became pregnant under the age of twenty in their particular contexts.

Chapter 5

Straight Ahead, Sex and Relationships with Men

Introduction

This chapter explores the women's accounts of how they learned about sexuality, sex and reproduction as young women at particular historical points, and their constructions of the dynamics of gender and power in their sexual relationships with men. The intergenerational aspect of the study provided an opportunity to examine the ways in which ideas about practices of gender and heterosexuality pass between generations in both directions.

At the point of beginning the study I did not assume that the women who had agreed to take part would have had exclusively heterosexual experiences, and did not ask them to identify as heterosexual, bisexual or lesbian. However, each woman talked exclusively about sexual encounters and relationships with men, and this might reflect their sexual identities or their response to the heterosexual focus of the research in the area of teenage pregnancy. Collectively the women had relationships of between one to fifty years to review, and their life story versions illustrated social changes that are inextricably linked with changes in the meanings of sex (Stanley 1995, Richardson and Seidman 2002).

The chapter is divided into two main sections, in the first of which *Breaking Taboos* there is consideration of the women's representations of learning about sexuality, sex and reproduction as young women.

Section two *Pleasures and Dangers*[230] *of Sex with Men* examines the women's heterosexual careers from their first moves into sexual relationships with men. The women's intimate relationships with men are discussed within the context of the daily routines of heterosexually organised domestic spaces (VanEvery 1996, Hockey *et al.* 2007). There is examination of the rewards and risks of the

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[230] This is a reference to the edited volume by Vance (1984), *Pleasure and Danger: Exploring Female Sexuality*, London: Pandora

women's intimate relationships with men, including the complexity of negotiating use of contraception, and the potential for male sexual violence[231]. This second section refers to sociological theories of gender and heterosexuality that explain the impact of social hierarchies on individuals' capacity to act assertively in everyday situations, including sexual encounters.

Section One: Breaking Taboos

The interview data suggest generally improving transmission of information about sexuality, sex and reproduction, through generational shifts in discussion of taboo subjects.

> I think it was taboo, sex. Like me mother never mentioned nowt like that to me. It was me sister telt us little ones. I was never telt owt at school. Me sister just said you had to be careful and what not, you kna, an' blah, blah, blah. I mean I telt my kids mind, because I think they should really be telt off their parents.
>
> **Mary** (69, 'great-grandmother')

Other studies have shown that young people in the pre- and post-Second World War periods generally did not have access to information about sex and sexuality within their family groups (see for example Farrell 1978, Allen 1987). McCrindle and Rowbotham (1977) introduce the biographical accounts of fourteen women born between the first and fourth decades of the twentieth century, and comment on their lack of knowledge about the sexual development of their bodies and consequent shock and shame when they began to have periods. As the findings of the 1949 British sex survey[232] show, it is important to specify time and locality in interpreting data produced in discussion of sexual values, beliefs and practices (Stanley 1995).

Intergenerational transmission and learning about periods

In this study the women who were born in the 1940s described starting their periods without any information about their changing bodies. Mary (69 'great-

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[231] Kelly (1990 [1987]) uses the term 'sexual violence' to refer to the interconnected forms of controlling violence used by some men in intimate relationships with women.

[232] The survey was undertaken by Mass-Observation, and is referred to as 'Little Kinsey', as it was influenced by the 1948 American survey of male sexual behaviour led by Kinsey. It was the first national sex survey using a random sample approach and complementary quantitative and qualitative data. Between 1937 and 1949, Mass Obsevation aimed to explore all aspects of British social life.

grandmother') described how she thought she was dying when she had her first period, until one of her older sisters explained what was happening. Barbara's account of her mother telling her exactly what would happen when she started her periods, introducing them as "part of growing up", when she was ten years old in the 1950s, was exceptional. However, Barbara talked about the shock of the actual experience of starting a period. The pauses and points of difficult articulation, often relieved by laughter, suggest embarrassment as well as a lack of vocabulary and practice in speaking about bodily experiences connected to sexuality and reproduction.

> I can remember the shock of me knickers being dirty and (2) I thought I'd pooed meself (laughed). An' then, eeeh, you know (5) you know, sort of, it, it, it wasn't, it was, it was, was blood, or (5), I can, I can actually remember the hair standin' up on the back of me head when I realised that, you know, with these dirty knickers, I can remember that (3). The only other thing I can remember about it (4), is, we, we were all marched from school twice a week, up to the swimming baths, an' everyone was taught to swim, and you weren't allowed to go in the swimming baths if you had a period in those days (laughed). I can remember the horror, cos me mother hadn't written a note, errr I can remember the horror. I can distinctly remember (4) the peculiar feeling and the hair standin' up on the back o' me head, when I realised that, yes, that you know, that I was, it was a period.   **Barbara** (60 'grandmother')

Barbara's daughter said that she had not had information "in good time", an example perhaps of inconsistent transmission of information within families. Carole gave an account of providing her daughter with information about menstruation, while understanding the inevitable gap between advance knowledge and the actual event of starting her first period. Her determination to adequately equip her daughter, in response to having been unprepared herself, was an example of doing things differently.

> I first had a period when I was eleven an' a half, an' it, you kna like such a young age, it's like "Whoa, where's this come from?". I can remember tellin' me mam when I first had a period, and it was like "Mam, I'm bleedin'" an' she went "Well, where?". "Between me legs", an' she marches up the stairs an' gives us a sanitary belt an' a sanitary towel. It was aboot eight foot lang (laughed). "You need to go in the bathroom". An' that was it. That's why, when I had a lass of me arn (own), I made sure she

> knew what to expect, or what to expect to a certain extent, till it actually happened. **Carole** (39 'grandmother')

Five of the six 'great-grandmothers' were represented by their daughters as not having given information about periods, and one as having shared some but not much. Four 'grandmothers' appeared to have reacted against the silence of their mothers by proactively equipping their own daughters, as four of the five 'mothers' said that they had had enough information before starting to menstruate. One 'mother' said that her mother had not passed on any information and another expressed disappointment and anger that her mother had not talked with her in sufficient detail, illustrating the expectation that mothers will do this sort of work. Other female relatives stepped in with information and support in some instances, although there were no examples of men's involvement. Emma recounted starting her first period one evening after she had gone to bed and coming downstairs only to be sent back upstairs by her father until her mother, who was working a night shift, returned. The young women who took part in three research projects discussed by Measor (2004), and in research described by Morrow (1998), emphasised the importance of female family members as potential sources of information and support, illustrating the belief that this informal personal, social and health education[233] work is women's responsibility.

Only one of the youngest women Laura (21 'mother') received a response that might be interpreted as celebratory when she started her first period at primary school, although the tone of voice in which it was delivered could have transmitted a different message, for example one of resignation. Laura received a message that menstruation and potential motherhood define 'a woman'. Despite the teacher's comfort and congratulation, Laura, together with women across the generations, linked the experience of managing periods in school with feelings of shame, dread, embarrassment, humiliation and degradation.

> Twelve years old and I went to the toilet, and even though people had told us all about it, I still didn't know what it was when I went to the toilet (laughed). I got myself all upset and I was cryin', and I went and told the teacher an' I got a big cuddle

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[233] Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE) is taught in UK schools.

off her, an' she says "Welcome to womanhood" (laughed). She give us some sanitary towels, cos I wasn't carrying them about, I just, even though people tell you, you just don't expect it anyway. It's dreadful. Most teachers don't let you go to the toilet until break, and I know it sounds disgustin', but if you can like feel yourself come on or whatever, it's really awkward, and sometimes if you say "Well, I need to go to the toilet", and then they ask you why, and then it's embarrassing cos you have to tell everybody in the class, so it's a bit degrading.

Laura (21 'mother')

I didn't like it when I was on at school. I used to always be goin' to the toilet to change and make sure I didn't smell and ermm PE was the worst cos I used to get ma mam to write an excuse so I didn't do PE when I was on. Cos you don't wanna be doing handstands or something and you get blood comin' down. It would be very embarrassin'.   **Hayley** (17 'mother')

Joanne illustrated how she learnt not to refer publicly to periods or to the fact that some women menstruate[234] (see Holly 1989, Laws[235] 1990).

I remember when I was young, me mam took us to the Co-op and I'm gannin' "Mam do you need some of these?" (sanitary towels), and I'm holdin' them up, and me mam's gannin' "Shut up". So I knew it was something that you weren't supposed to tell everybody about.   **Joanne** (19 'mother')

Intergenerational transmission and learning about sex

The 'great-grandmothers' and 'grandmothers' generally represented their first experiences of sex with men as uninformed, learning about sexuality and sex within their sexual encounters and relationships, by 'doing'. Mary was ill at ease in replying to my question about "how it happened" that she had sex for the first time, and her laughter and dismissal of sex as something that she did not particularly enjoy or value may have been a response to her embarrassment (Wilson 1980). It could also have suggested an actual lack of pleasure, an experience mentioned by the majority of women, at least in relation to their first

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[234] Laws (1990) highlights the reductionism of the equation of menstruation with womanhood. Some women do not have periods, because of lifecourse stage for example, and some do not have them temporarily through pregnancy or illness.
[235] Laws (1990) interviewed fourteen white men aged twenty-one to forty, and asked them to talk about their ideas about periods. Stacey (1990), who wrote the foreword to Law's book, congratulates her on approaching menstruation as an appropriate subject for sociological investigation.

sexual experience[236], in a study (Temkina 2003) fifty years after Mary's first sexual experience with her husband (see also Jamieson 1998). Mary commented on the difference between the historical context and meaning of first sex in the 1950s with her husband, who was also without previous sexual experience with a partner, and young people's experience at the time of interview in the early 2000s.

> Me and (husband) didn't know anything till we got married. I mean it's not very often you can say there's errr lads that are virgins nooadays, but I mean me and (husband) were (laughed), which was funny, it was. We just had a good laugh. I mean I could honestly just sit and say I would rather have a hot dinner (laughed). Nah, sex is not the be all and end all, I divn't think anyway, I mean a lot of people might like it better than me, but it doesn't bother wor. I think deep doon I'm a bit of a prude, I divn't like talking aboot sex actually. I think it's errr, that time o' your life's in your bedroom and that's it, you kna, it shouldn't be talked about. **Mary** (69 'great-grandmother')

Several women in the 'grandmother' generational group were similarly uninformed at the point at which they had sex with a man for the first time in the 1970/80s. Carole's first sexual partner (in the 1980s) had already had sex with another woman.

> Me mam was a funny woman. You could tell her any mortal thing, but she never explained to us the facts of life or anything like that, for all she had so many kids. You would ha' thought she would be more, more open with us, but she wasn't. She wouldn't tark to you aboot sex. That was the one thing she would not under any circumstances tark to you aboot. I fund oot aboot sex when I got into a relationship (laughed), plain and simple. **Carole** (39 'grandmother')

Linda (43, 'grandmother) understated the trauma of her experience of rape, which was also her first experience of seeing a man's genitals.

> I didn't even know what a man was like, cos you didn't in them days. Me mam never told us what a man was like. I didn't even know a man had pubic hair. I didn't know anything about that. I sharp found out. I mean, me mam never talked about it. She didn't even talk about periods. When I got me period at ten year old, I didn't kna what was happenin' to us. It was a taboo subject in them days. **Linda** (43 'grandmother')

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[236] Temkina (2003) does not clarify whether the women referred to heterosexual experiences.

Several 'grandmothers' consciously broke the taboo of sex to talk with their own children. At a later point in the interview from which the excerpt below is taken, Emma (38, 'grandmother') gave her explanation for her sons[237] not yet having 'made' her a grandmother at the time of interview. In their early teenage years she had put one or two condoms in a drawer in each son's bedroom, so that they would have time to get used to seeing, unpacking, feeling and practising using a condom well in advance of having sex. However, she expressed uncertainty as to whether, if she had had daughters, she would have put condoms in their drawers for familiarisation. Emma referred to doing as much as she could to create a home environment in which her sons would feel comfortable asking questions about relationships and sex if they needed to.

> I always did say to him (oldest son) "Look, don't, don't waste it (educational opportunity), please". You know, his girlfriend is at university an' I was like "Please, you know, she's there, be careful. You don't want to end up with a child at this age". My children have known the facts of life from bein' very young. If they asked questions, then I told the answers. I've never hidden anything from them, an' I think that approach has worked, because I've got kids who are quite grounded. I've bought my sons condoms and I always make sure the boys have got them in their drawers. I would rather they were safe, and I'd rather they sort of practised using them, than not know how to put them on. I don't make a big thing of it. They're just given them. I don't know how I'd be about a daughter, though, if I had one. I can't even remember sort of sex being talked about when I was younger, where, there's books in our house, you know, sort of proper educational ones, which are openly there, and they do read them   **Emma** (38, 'grandmother')

Dawn (39, 'grandmother'), whose mother shared information if asked, although apparently with some reluctance, also showed awareness of the efficacy of parents talking at home with young people about sex[238], in terms of avoiding unintended outcomes such as pregnancy. Fathers appeared to be as uninvolved with this sort of sex education work as with preparation for periods.

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[237] One of Emma's sons is no longer a teenager and the other is almost twenty.At the time of the interviews, one son had been in a sexual relationship for several years and was living with his girlfriend.
[238] Swann *et al.* (2003) report that there is good evidence for the effectiveness of including young people's parents in information programmes, so that they feel equipped and confident to talk with them about sex and relationships.

> We never had sex lessons. We used to ask me mam, and she used to tell wor to shut up (laughed). "You'll find oot" she says. She did tell wor like, but we wouldn't ha' dared gan in an' ask me father. I used to hear it at school an' that. I just used to ask her to mek sure it was right, an' me mother used to laugh. She did tell wor like, but she used to laugh. Me father didn't talk about things like that (laughed). But that's how errr pregnancies get stopped, if you can tark aboot it, an' tell people about condoms, and stuff like that.   **Dawn** (39, 'grandmother')

When women mentioned school as a source of information, this tended to be limited to the areas of menstruation, pregnancy and childbirth. 'Sex talks' could be viewed as setting the scene for pregnancy by representing reproduction as an expected part of a woman's life (see Measor[239] *et al.* 2000), in the context of which those women who had become pregnant as teenagers were 'doing the right thing', either in the wrong place (outside of marriage or a cohabiting relationship with a man in the 1930s, 1950/60s and 1970/80s) or at the wrong time (in the Teenage Pregnancy Strategy context of the early 2000s).

> The sex talks then were just about making babies. It was all about babies. It wasn't sort of the feelings and things that go with it.   **Emma** (39, 'grandmother')

Although the younger women knew more when they began sexual relationships with men, their accounts suggested that they were not fully equipped to discuss safe and pleasurable sex with male sexual partners[240]. Hirst (2004) discusses continuing gaps in young women's and men's knowledge of female and male bodies, and the range of physical and emotional sensations linked with masturbation and other sexual experiences[241].

Section Two: Pleasures and Dangers of Sex with Men

In the 1960/70s the norm for women was to become a wife and mother (Harris (1969), the first transition ideally happening before the second. Barbara's

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[239] Measor *et al.* (2000) discuss the findings of exploratory research that focused on sex education programmes for young people aged thirteen to fifteen in five mixed comprehensive secondary schools in South East England.

[240] The young women who took part in this study received Sex and Relationship Education (SRE) before the implementation of the Northumberland Teenage Pregnancy Strategy.

[241] Brook, a national voluntary organisation providing sexual health and contraception services for younger people, has lobbied for young people to get information about their bodies, masturbation etc. as a compulsory part of the national curriculum (Hall 2006).

pregnancy in the early 1960s, though outside of marriage, happened within a long-term relationship. The marriage, proposed by Barbara's then boyfriend in a letter with an enclosed ring, was brought forward to contain the birth of their first child. Barbara's dismissal of her account of their long courtship as 'stupid' may be a reference to social change. The historical context is identified by the details of the school leaving age, the immediate availability of work and the church as a regular part of social life. The ways in which the development of their relationship was structured by daily domestic and school life (VanEvery 1996) and shaped by the responses of close family members are also evident.

> Barbara: I was best friends with him, and then when we were eleven he asked us to marry him. An' when we were seventeen I got pregnant (laughed) and forty-odd years later we're still married (laughed). He's been there as long as I can remember. He lived sort of in the same neighbourhood and we just always sort of gravitated to each other. We were in the same year at school, and we just sort of went through school just always being friends. And sort of (1), well, he had his boyfriends that he used to play football with, an' I had me girlfriends (laughed), but then you always sort of gravitated back towards each other (laughed). Stupid now.

> Ann: Do you remember how he asked you to marry him?

> Barbara: Oh, I remember the letter. I've still got it in the house somewhere.

> Ann: He wrote you a letter?

> Barbara: Oh yes, and they passed it across the classroom to me and it said (laughed) "Darling Barbara, I want to marry you, but don't tell our (husband's brother) or he'll tell me mam and I'll get wrong" (laughed). Eeeh, when I think about it now.

> Ann: Do you remember opening the letter?

> Barbara: (2) Do you know, I can't actually remember that. It was accompanied by a blue ring that you got for sixpence out of one of those machines (laughed). I do remember that. I dunno what happened to the ring but the letter's still goin' somewhere (laughed). And then everybody just took it for granted. We were always just together (1) an' then when we left school at fifteen, for a while we didn't see as much of each other, and then we actually started I suppose dating, going out, you know. Even me mam and dad, when I think about it now, just accepted the fact that we were an item. So did me granma, because we used to

> go to me granma's on a Sunday (laughed). As I say, we left school, and for a few months, cos we both started work the next day sort o' style (laughed), we didn't see much of each other, but we still saw each other at church. I mean we lived in the same area, and then as I say, we started to meet instead of it just always being ermm well on the way to school (laughed).
> **Barbara** (60, 'great-grandmother')

Emma (38, 'grandmother') was engaged to be married when she became pregnant. She rebelled against the expectation that she would marry to legitimise the birth, and cohabited long-term, a more acceptable option in the 1980s than in the 1960s.

> I suppose there was like the ideal, you know, you'd get married, have this lovely big white wedding and then, a year or so down the line, have children (laughed). Unfortunately I didn't quite do it that way round, but never mind (laughed).
> **Emma** (38, 'grandmother')

Joan (36, 'grandmother') and her partner, also engaged, brought their marriage forward to just after their baby's birth. Joan gave her analysis of changing forms of heterosexual relationships from the 1980s to the 2000s, and at the same time expressed her regret at not having had the performance of a conventional wedding ceremony.

> I think there's a lot more doesn't get married now than what they did then (1980s) (2). I think that there's hardly any marriages now really, to what there was like when I got married. Ermm (1) we got engaged before ermm I fell pregnant. I wanted to get married more because I had the baby, just the thing to do really. I would ha' loved a great big white wedding an' arl that, but just didn't have the money, couldn't affort it cos we were buyin' the house.
> **Joan** (36, 'grandmother')

Fox Harding (1996) suggests that people have become 'wary' of the formal marriage contract, although they still attach significance to intimate relationships. However, the belief in 'happy ever after' (despite the negative experiences that some had had in relationships with men and in heterosexually organised households) appeared strong within the group of 'mothers', as three of the five were engaged to be married and another had been.

> It's good to know that I've got a proper commitment off someone. Just to get married, you know, that I'll always have him there.
> **Natalie** (20, 'mother')

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This appears to support Lawler's (2002:252) suggestion that the 'narrative of heterosexual romance and marriage remains compelling, even in the face of rising divorce', and the findings of Milnes'[242] study (2003, 2004), namely that a romantic narrative tends to inform young women's accounts of sexual relationships. However, Sharpe (2001) reports that young women in her 1990s study were more ambivalent about marrying than those in the 1970s.

Sara (17, 'mother') introduced the idea of the excitement of a relationship with a young man with a 'bad' reputation, which could be assumed to be a risky move in relation to the convention of marriage. Although Sara was engaged to her partner at time of interview, she was living on her own with their baby in what she described as "the roughest place".

> I was livin' in a quiet area actually. Now I'm in probably the roughest place (laughed). It's the only place I could get off the council, aye. Like, I was in the quiet end o' (town), it's further up there next to the beach front, up there. I've known him for a long time. I used to go to the allotments (grandfather's) an' I'd see him there. He lived in the rough part (laughed). I was fourteen when I first like started talkin' tov him, only fourteen, an' then I got pregnant when I was sixteen. Sometimes I just sit and think "My God, can't believe I'm like seein' you" (laughed). I couldn't stand him when I was little, didn't like him, he was one of these rough lads (laughed). But I think when you're young, that's who you seem to go for, don't you, when you're like young
>
> **Sara** (17, 'mother')

The accounts illustrate the relative immobility of the population of the research area, notwithstanding the temporary movement away of some of the participants. The processes of 'how it happened' that the women met men who became their sexual partners appeared similar across and within the generations, giving the appearance of an almost inevitable sequence of events (Lawler 2002:250).

> I went through school with him an' one of my best friends was ermm goin' with his brother. An' she'd come round an' then she used to bring her boyfriend, an' then the brother used to come as well, an' then, I don't know, it just happened.
>
> **Laura** (21, 'mother')

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[242] Nine mothers defined by Milnes (2003, 2004) as 'young' took part in narrative interviews designed to explore their representations of sexual relationships and motherhood.

I had knarn him from bein' at school. He lived at one end o' the street and we lived at the other end of the street. It's like history repeatin' itself[243], isn't it (laughed), He used to hang around wi' wor (brother), so he was arlways at our house anyway, and I think we just, you just kind of like drifted together, do you know what I mean. An' then he had kissed us one night an' it was like "Whoa, heng on a minute" (laughed). But you, you just sort o' like drifted alang with him, type o' thing. An' then, it got like, when we left school, it got more serious, an then when I fund oot I was pregnant, it was like "Ooh, nay" an' at the end o' the day, you had to ask yourself did you actually want to spend the rest o' your life with this person an' it was like "No, I divn't". He asked us, he asked us twice to marry him.

Carole (39, 'grandmother')

It was just a friendship at first and we used to like stand on the lines (factory lines at work) and tark (talk) for ages, just aboot friends and friendships and, if we ever did have a relationship, what we'd want and how we'd want it. And we were both sayin' exactly the same things. And then it was ermm me auntie's party, and we'd been tarkin' loads every day. We used to like meet up at dinnertime and play cards in the canteen and that. Just sit and tark. And errr it was me auntie's birthday party and I says "Do you want to come?" We just sat and talked all night, just starin' into each others' eyes, and it didn't even feel real. And then we ended up kissin'. And then we used to, at the weekends, I used to gan to his, and it just got on from there really. It was *ages* (emphasis) before I slept with him.

Joanne (19, 'mother')

We were on a residential, and I think we started going out together on the second week, and it just sort of snowballed from there, ermm, and we kept seeing each other. Well it just (laughed) it just sort of progressed from there, till we ended up having (baby). **Emma** (38, 'grandmother')

Joan's experience was somewhat different in that she saw her future partner literally passing by and, feeling attracted to him, actively approached him when she saw him in a local social setting.

Ermm I just, I used to see him pass me mam's window an' that, and I used to say "He's lovely" an' that, an' then I seen him in the Social Club, an' just went to talk tov him an' that, and it just went from there. **Joan** (36, 'grandmother')

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[243] This is a reference to Carole's parents who lived in the same street in the same area.

What's sex got to do with it?[244]

Across the generational groups, the women's accounts elaborated aspects of heterosexuality as institution, social practice, social identity (Jackson 1999, Richardson 1996, 2000) and 'embodied, spatially located emotional experience' (Robinson *et al.* 2004:417). The women talked about the importance of the physical intimacy of cuddling and kissing, the fun of sharing social activities, the familiarity and comfort of long-term attachment, and the mutual construction of a love relationship. In defining their intimate relationships with men and (for those living with a husband or partner) their day-to-day heterosexual coupledom *against* the assumed centrality of sexual intercourse, the women illustrated Jackson's (1996:30) argument that heterosexuality is 'not merely sexual', VanEvery's (1996:4) reference to heterosexual relationships as encompassing 'much more than sex', and Richardson's (1996) definition of heterosexuality as an encoder of many different and connected parts of everyday lives. Hockey *et al.* (2007) contribute empirically to the theorisation of heterosexuality as an organising principle of day to day lives, drawing on data produced by their research participants of their 'mundane heterosexualities'.

> Sex is not the be all and end all. I divn't think so anyway. I mean, a lot of people might like it better than me, but me and him just paddle along like two ard (old) shoes now. I divn't think I could live withoot him. He loves us to bits.
> **Mary** (69, 'great-grandmother')

> There's more to this relationship. It's, you divn't *have* (emphasis) to have sex. It's an intimacy that's nice when you share it, but there's more to two people than just sex (2). It feels right, and it's something that I want.   **Linda** (43, 'grandmother')

> About sex itself, I would say it's the actual closeness and the fact that it was something just between the two of you, the being together afterwards and the closeness of two people.
> **Susan** (39, 'grandmother')

> We talk about our relationship all the time, how we think we could improve it or how we think wor relationship is. I just know we love each other, cos you can just see it's there (laughed). We always have a laugh and like fun with each other. I wanted it

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[244] This is a chapter title in *Mundane Heterosexualities* (Hockey *et al.* 2007), a reference to the song by Tina Turner, 'What's love got to do with it?'.

> to be more than just sex. I wanted it to be love, and it is love wi'
> him.   **Hayley** (17, 'mother')

Another theme across the generational groups was the gap between women's expectations of first sex, in terms of physical pleasure, and the reality of their initial sexual encounters.

> You're thinkin' "I must be missing something really terrific here", and I can honestly remember I was absolutely gutted the first time we ever had sex, and I just thought "Whay, if that's what you're missin' arl this time, I far best find something else to dee". I knew nothin' until like I went wi' him, and it was like, I didn't find sex, sex was just "Oh no, dear me, people do this to each other. I divn't think so". You divn't kna nee different, an' it's like you dee it for the first time and you think "Oh God, uh huh, not quite what I expected". It wasn't (2) it never has been the be all and end all, you kna what I mean, but I think it's as you get arder, you learn to enjoy it. When you're younger it's just "Phew, aye right, there you are" you kna. Once you get into a proper relationship with someone who you really find that you really do have feelings for, and you get emotionally involved, that's when things change.   **Carole** (39, 'grandmother')

> Sex, it's just nice after you get used tov it, nice feelings and close to your partner.   **Dawn** (39, 'grandmother')

> It hurt and it kind o' put us off for ages, really like ages an' ages. I can remember lyin' on me mam's bed cryin' about it. I still do wish I had o' waited.   **Natalie** (20, 'mother')

> Sex is painful for a woman isn't it, the first time. Whay not painful as such but it hurts. You hear them all "Eeeh, it's brilliant", so you expect it to be good and it's not meant to hurt, and it's not like that.   **Laura** (21, 'mother')

Dawn (39, 'grandmother') expressed resentment at intergenerational silence in relation to first sex, "Neebody telt you it hurt. Neebody ever telt you you would bleed or nowt like that on your first time".

Lees (1993:197) refers to Shere Hite's research into adult women's experiences of sexual pleasure in the USA[245] in the 1970s and 1980s, the findings of which included women's 'limited gratification which can be attributed

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[245] *The Hite Report: A Nationwide Study of Sexuality* was published in 1976 by Macmillan, followed by *Women and Love: A Cultural Revolution in Progress*, produced in print by Knopf in 1988.

to such factors as the difficulties they experience in negotiating the nature of their sexual interactions with male partners and the identification of sex with penetration'. Other studies (for example Holland *et al.*[246] 1998, Carmody and Willis[247] 2006) have documented the incidence of reporting by women that first sexual experience with a male partner was not pleasurable, or was actually painful. Holland *et al.* (1998:43) report that most of the young women who took part in interviews in their study of young women's sexuality claimed 'both limited experiences of pleasure and a limited sense of the potential for women's sexual pleasure'. The feedback below was given in the context of young women's discussion of condom use, and included reference to painful first sex with a male partner with subsequent limited improvement.

> She said later that sex had been very painful at first but that after the third time it got better which, she explained, meant that it had stopped hurting. This comment was made well into the interview and it seems it had been easier initially to draw on the public/male discourse of condoms as passion-killers. She went on to say that she and her boyfriend did not talk about sex and she felt unable to tell him what she liked sexually.
>
> (Holland *et al.* 1998:43)

Connell *et al.* (1981:157) discuss romance and sexuality and critique the representation (for example in Barbara Cartland's romantic novels[248]) of women's first experiences of heterosexual encounters as 'magical' and 'absolutely successful'. They suggest that it is important to transmit a message to young women that sex is something to be learnt about and discussed, and that it needs practice. This remains an important issue in the contemporary context in which the media portray sex between women and men as invariably 'successful' in terms of appropriate venue, performance and pleasure (Dickson

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[246] Holland *et al.* (1998) discuss the findings of two studies of young people's sexuality, carried out between 1989 and 1992. 148 young women took part in interviews in Manchester and London, and 46 young men participated in interviews in London.

[247] Carmody and Willis (2006) report on the first stage of a three year Australian Research Council project. This is an exploratory study of how young women and young men of diverse sexualities, aged sixteen to twenty-five, negotiate sexual intimacy. 56 young women and men in three locations in Sydney and three areas of New South Wales took part in interviews.

[248] Barbara Cartland (1901-2000) was a prolific British author who produced over 700 titles, mostly stories of romantic love.

et al.[249] 1998). One of the findings of a research project into young people's sexuality in Northumberland[250] (McNulty and Richardson 2002) was that young women and young men (who had not had sex at the point of interview) had received feedback (from both young women and young men) about negative experiences of first sex, overheard in school settings. Despite this, they remained optimistic about the possiblity of enjoyment in sexual relationships.

> I think people think it's gonna be more than it actually is, like in the films, seems like more passion, and I think they seem disappointed it wasn't actually like that. (young woman, 13)

> Just he says it hurt. He said he would do it again with the same person, but he didn't expect it to be like that. (young man, 15)

> I think they might like it a lot once they get into it.
> (young woman, 14)

"The curiosity was killin' us"

A 'mother', 'grandmother' and 'great-grandmother' each gave curiosity as the motivation for their first heterosexual experience, with the youngest woman knowing most about the potential of sexual encounters, though still not enough. Being 'curious about what it would be like' was the most common reason for first intercourse given by both women and men who took part in Dickson *et al.*'s study (1998). Natalie (20, 'mother') described how she had planned the event for a time when everyone else was out of the house. She defined the overall experience as successful, unspoilt by the mundanity of 'sex'.

> I was kind o' curious and it was with a lad who I really liked, I'd fancied him for ages and ages and ages. I was over the moon because of who it was. It was nothing to do with actually having sex. I wouldn't say it (sex) was particularly special.
> **Natalie** (20, 'mother')

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[249] Dickson *et al.* (1998) interviewed young men and women in New Zealand on two occasions, at age eighteen and twenty-one. In the first interview participants were asked about sexual activity in the previous twelve months, and in the second about attitudes to sex and sexual relationships. Many of the questions used were from the 1990 British national survey of sexual attitudes and lifestyles (NATSAL).

[250] Northumberland Teenage Pregnancy Strategy Group commissioned the research to gain better understanding of the meanings young people give to sexuality, sex and relationships. Single gender group discussions comprised the first stage of the research, to identify areas for in-depth discussion in interviews. Eleven young men and thirteen young women, all white, took part in interviews during 2002. Twenty-one of the young people who participated were aged 13 to 16, and three 16 to 18. Eighteen were living in Wansbeck.

Barbara (60, 'great-grandmother') explained that she had not known that her partner's penis would "change shape and size". The venue for her first experience of sex was "his mother's front room" when his parents were out. The reference to the room being "his mother's"[251] suggests women's responsibility for regulating domestic spaces, and sexual activity in this space therefore appears particularly daring. The 'front room' at that time (late 1950s) could be read as a symbol of working class respectability.

Keeping up appearances

A theme to emerge in analysis of interview data was the regulatory work of mothers in response to ideas about a 'good' family reputation (Mason 1996b), defined differently at different historical times. Coincidentally, as fieldwork came to an end, I heard the radio broadcast of an interview with Diana Athill[252] (2004), who referred to her mother's surveillance intruding on her sense of excitement on the occasion of her first kiss with a boyfriend in the 1930s. She knew that her mother was anxious that she might have sex and become pregnant outside of marriage and 'just hoped that I wasn't going to'. Barbara's mother used to check the regularity of her periods in the 1950s and discovered her pregnancy in this way, at an early enough stage for a wedding to be arranged in order to legitimise the baby. Street-Porter[253] (2004) spoke about the difficulty of accessing contraception as a young woman in the 1960s, with the fear that "even if you took the pill, your mother would find it", a situation that happened to Linda (43, 'grandmother') in the 1970s. Susan (39, 'grandmother') gave an account of her mother's attempt to control her public image, linked to her sexuality as a teenager in the early 1980s. This area of mothers' power is mentioned by Rawlins (2006) in her discussion of intergenerational ideas of fashion and identity.

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[251] Two women, Jean and Diane, who took part in the study (Robinson *et al.* 2004) investigating changes and continuities in heterosexuality as institution during the course of the twentieth century, discussed their defiant use of parental domestic spaces, including 'mother's settee', for early sexual activity.

[252] Writer and book editor Diana Athill took part in Desert Island Discs at the age of eighty-six (BBC Radio 4, broadcast on 20 June 2004). One of her choices was *The First Kiss* composed by Sibelius.

[253] Janet Street- Porter, a television presenter, took part in a BBC Radio 4 Woman's Hour interview, 8 May 2004.

> When I got older and I started buyin' me own clothes, she actually purposely destroyed things so I couldn't wear them, things that she didn't like. She thought the skirts were too short an' that. In them days it was like the twin-tub, the separate washer and spinner, and a few times I'd come in from school and she'd say "Oh your skirt got caught in the spinner". She was like, you know, keepin' up appearances, and all the rest of it.
>
> **Susan** (39, 'mother')

Susan also referred to her mother's insistence that she continue to wear a wedding ring at the point of her (Susan's) divorce in the 1980s: "You can't walk about the streets with two kids and no weddin' ring, because people'll think you've never been married'.

The following extract illustrated Sara's mother's efforts to prevent Sara from beginning a sexual relationship at sixteen, an age she (Sara's mother) assessed as too early. Sara described her move to stay overnight at her boyfriend's parents' house, with the approval of his mother[254].

> She (mother) would say "Whay, I'm sending a taxi, Sara, to get you", and I'd say "Whay, I'll not get in. I'll just tell him to go away. I don't want a taxi", and in the end sometimes she'd just give in on us, and I would come home in the morning, get dropped off.　　　　　　　　　　**Sara** (17, 'mother')

Several 'mothers', including Sara, mentioned staying at their partner's homes with the assumed approval of "his mam". This highlights the significance of gender in relation to regulation of sexuality, and the work done by mothers of daughters, including attempts to set age-appropriate boundaries. Several women evaluated their sexual careers in relation to the notion of respectability, and these self-appraisals could be interpreted as internalised forms of regulation, 'practices of the self' (Foucault 1989 [1984]:458). For example, Natalie assessed herself as having been too young when she first had sex, and said that she felt disgusted with herself. Skeggs (1997) argues that feelings of disgust and shame are a consequence of sexual encounters that do not match normative expectations, and she and Lawler (2000) each discuss the legitimacy of sets of values, beliefs and practices associated with particular class positions. They do this in relation to women's efforts to identify with,

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[254] Sara's boyfriend's father was working away from home at the time.

respectively, respectable working class female identity and sexuality, and ideas of 'good' mothering.

> I think I felt closer to him afterwards, but I was a bit disgusted at meself. I think it was with us bein' only sixteen, like with us bein' so young. I've only had him as a sexual partner, but I did feel a bit like "I shouldn't ha' done that".   **Natalie** (20, 'mother')

'Unplanned' pregnancy

Women across the generations spoke of relatively easy access to contemporary contraception services, although there was no reference by the younger women to use of emergency contraception. Mary (69, 'great-grandmother') and Barbara (60, 'great-grandmother') referred to the arrival of the contraceptive pill in the 1960s. While it transformed Barbara's ability to control her fertility (Turner 2003), Mary experienced significant side-effects and had to stop using it.

> It nearly killed us, the pill, errr side effects. I had to come off of them.   **Mary** (69, 'great-grandmother')

> Before the invention of the pill, the worst thing was every month wonderin' "I am going to have my period, aren't I?" But there was always the fear that you wouldn't, and I suppose that was the worst of it, ermm the fact that you enjoyed it (sex) (laughed), but then if you were a couple o' days late, you know you almost had (laughed) to get the smelling salts out, because you wondered if you were pregnant. But once the pill came along, I can't really say it had a down side.
> **Barbara** (60, 'great-grandmother')

Women in the 'great-grandmother' and 'grandmother' generational groups used their own knowledge and experience of methods of contraception to support their daughters to avoid unintended pregnancy, despite being limited in what they were able to achieve in this respect. Their descriptions of informal sexual health and contraception work were often corroborated by their daughters' separate accounts.

> Ermm, she had the pill, an' I used to say "Ha' you took your pill?" An' I used to even get it out the packet an' say "Open your mouth" (laughed).   **Joan** (36, 'grandmother')

> I said "If you've got a boyfriend and you want to go on the pill, come to me and I'll take you to the doctors and then that way you don't have any unwanted babies". I've always said "Look,

there's pills. If you can't go on the pill, there's injections. You don't need to have an unwanted baby now, you can take precautions".   **Linda** (43, 'grandmother')

She (mother) said "You better get up to the doctors and get yourself on the pill". Cos I'd been in the relationship a canny bit, so we went. She said "Use protection all the time, cos you divn't want to end up with a bairn".   **Dawn** (39, 'grandmother')

Before I fell pregnant I was on the pill. Me mam had put me on the pill cos she always told me if I wanted to start havin' sex, ermm, she says "Come to me and I'll put you on the pill". I had taken the pill every day, because I used to get me mam to watch us just so she knew I was takin' it.   **Hayley** (17, 'mother')

Although younger women had more knowledge about the mechanics of heterosexual intercourse and contraception, their accounts suggested that they were not adequately equipped to discuss sexual safety with their partner. This was demonstrated in representations of condom negotiation that appeared to be as complex with long-term male partners as with new ones (Coleman and Ingham 1999). Laura's account below initially suggested that when she and her partner stopped using condoms, it was a joint decision. In response to the question about whether they had discussed this move, she revealed her accommodation of her partner's expressed wish, illustrating the implication of gender in heterosexual social and sexual relationships (Richardson 1996, 2000, Jackson 2003). This association is also noted by Coleman and Ingham (1999) in their examination of young people's strategies in negotiating condom use. I was reminded of Laura's definition of herself as a 'boy' as she was growing up because, as she said, she knew what she wanted, which she understood as an unfeminine characteristic. At this later point of significant sexual negotiation, as a young woman she appeared unable to say that she wanted to continue to use condoms, and the consequence in this instance was unintended pregnancy and motherhood.

Laura: We did (use condoms) when we first got together, but we just stopped using them.

Ann: Did you talk about that, about stopping using condoms?

> Laura: Yeh, I think he just said he didn't want to use them any more, and I said "Right, fine", cos we used them nearly a year, and then we just didn't bother.   **Laura** (21, 'mother')

Each of the 'mothers' represented her first pregnancy as unintended and I did not question this. This was partly because of the general level of disclosure in the interviews, which led me to believe that if one or more had been trying to conceive ('out of order' as one of the 'grandmothers' had done as an unmarried seventeen-year-old in the 1980s), they would have said so. Also, the detail of whether pregnancy was intentional or accidental emerged as the women told me about events and experiences in their lives, rather than in response to a direct question, and they were therefore in control of the information-sharing. All of the women in the 'mother' group reported that they had been using the contraceptive pill at the time of conception, and had either not understood the importance of taking the pill at approximately the same time each day, or had simply forgotten to take it sometimes. One woman had an eating problem and had not realised that vomiting would be likely to result in loss of contraceptive protection. The gap in knowledge about how different contraceptive methods work, and the difference between "being told" how they work and putting this information into practice in the context of relationships and daily life, left women at risk of unintended pregnancy. Joanne (19, 'mother') illustrated this: "The doctor tells you how to take it, but no-one talks to you about actually taking it", that is, about the everyday circumstances that mitigate against effective use. Experience of the shock of unintended pregnancy was, however, an incentive to become a knowledgeable and proficient user.

> It was my friend was tellin' us about it (contraceptive implant). She liked it an' that. But I'm on the pill now, cos it (implant) was givin' us bad heads, migraine. I do remember how to take it (pill) now, *do I not* (emphasis) (laughed).   **Natalie** (20, 'mother')

There was evidence of intergenerational transmission of negative perceptions of some forms of contraception (Heyman 1998), particularly the intrauterine device, highlighting the importance of sufficient time during consultations with health professionals for explanation of the range and reliability of contraceptive methods (Asker *et al.* 2006). A key finding of the review of literature on the economics of contraception and abortion services (Armstrong *et al.* 2005), is

that there is evidence of a direct link between improved access to a full range of contraceptive methods and a reduction in unintended pregnancies. Only one woman (who gave birth in the 1970/80s) accounted for her pregnancy as a result of not using a condom because she and her partner had drunk too much alcohol. She represented this as a one-off event, with subsequent effective use of condoms, although she illustrated the difficulties of accessing condoms as a young woman in the late 1970s and early 1980s.

> When we were young, they had a family planning clinic, but they asked too many questions, and they were right nosy, so neebody would go. They felt embarrassed, so neebody went. I mean, haway, you only want some condoms. We just went to the toilets and bought them. Easier, nee questions asked. That's the last thing you want to gan and tell your mam, where you've been to get them, isn't it (laughed). She would chop your heed off (laughed). Whay, I did use protection, but (1) we'd been drinkin', so I mustn't ha' used it that night (laughed). It's one o' them things that happened. I mean I was disappointed at mesel'. **Dawn** (39, 'grandmother')

Most of the women who took part in the study (ten of the thirteen) had not been hoping to become pregnant when they did. Hadley (1996:164) highlights the changing meanings of 'unplanned' pregnancy, mediated by the historical and geographical places in which women confront 'a decision between alternative futures'. Earle (2004:39) claims to expose the 'false dichotomy' between planned and unplanned pregnancies through her analysis of interview texts produced with nineteen women[255] in the UK West Midlands. The idea of communities within which, over generations, women have made 'choices' to have a baby at an early age', as suggested by the Teenage Pregnancy Unit and Neighbourhood Renewal Unit (2002:44), is challenged for example by the difficulties working class women have experienced during most of the twentieth century in accessing contraception. This can not be defined as a situation of 'choice'. The Family Planning Association (fpa 1999) produced a report

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[255] Earle (2004) introduces the women as between the ages of sixteen and thirty (most in their mid-twenties), white (with one exception), the majority in work (sixteen of the nineteen), all heterosexual and all but two in long-term relationships (although there was some movement in and out of relationships during the course of the research). The interviews were part of a wider qualitative study of women's experiences of pregnancy and childbirth.

Misconceptions[256] highlighting the number of pregnancies (between a half and a third in the UK) that result from heterosexual vaginal intercourse without the intention of the couple involved. The concept of 'intentionality' is discussed as dynamic rather than fixed, and as not necessarily connected to what women do in sexual situations, for example in relation to consistent use of contraception. At least three-quarters of pregnancies in young women under the age of seventeen are unintended (Lhussier 2001), a statistic supported by studies by Sharpe[257] (1976) and Lees[258] (1993).

The fpa (1999) research findings illustrate that interventions to prevent unintended pregnancies must take into account broader issues of socio-economic disadvantage, as well as societal expectations of women as 'mothers', and women's ambivalence in response to these. Cater and Coleman[259] (2006) explored young women's motivations for 'planning' pregnancy. They found that all of the (41) young women who took part in in-depth interviews had grown up in socio-economically disadvantaged areas, with over two thirds living in the quarter of wards in England with the highest levels of deprivation. Cater and Coleman's definition of 'planning' stretches to include young women who had used contraception inconsistently as well as those who were hoping to become pregnant and who had actively planned for this potential transition with their partners. The fpa findings suggest that inefficient contraception use does not equate with 'planning' a pregnancy, and that women re-frame their 'intentions' at the point of having a pregnancy confirmed. Many of the findings that Cater and Coleman interpret as aspects of 'planning'

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[256] The fpa research was conducted in Birmingham, Barnsley and East Dereham (a rural location). Women aged between sixteen and forty-nine participated in face-to-face interviews and in group discussions, and there was a spread of social class positions and experiences of pregnancy and motherhood.

[257] Sharpe (1976) researched the experiences of over two hundred girls in four schools in one area of London during the 1970s.

[258] In the 1980s Lees and Cowie undertook a study of how young women and men saw their lives (friendship, school, love, work and the future) in their own terms. The research involved one hundred young women and thirty young men, aged fifteen to sixteen, in three London schools. The young people were from varied ethnic and social class backgrounds. They participated in unstructured individual interviews and in group discussions.

[259] Cater and Coleman (2006) carried out research in different parts of England. Forty-one young women and ten young men took part in in-depth interviews, all of whom were white British. The young women reported 'planning' pregnancy between the ages of thirteen and twenty-one, and the young men between sixteen and twenty-two.

a pregnancy, for example the perception of pregnancy as an opportunity and as providing a sense of purpose, are discussed in the fpa report as women's pragmatic adaptations to an unexpected and unintended (at that particular point in time) situation. Phoenix (1991) comments that of those women who took part in her study of 'young' motherhood, who said that they wished they had become a mother 'later, all meant 'later' only by several years, reflecting cultural and family values and beliefs about the optimal circumstances for mothering. This emphasises the importance of checking what research participants mean.

The theme of a significant minority of men (four of the fifteen 'fathers' in this study) denying paternity in circumstances of unintended pregnancy is consistent with the findings of, for example, Hardy *et al.* (1990) in their discussion of the circumstances of the fathers of the babies of a sample of young mothers living in urban areas in the USA. At the point of a confirmed pregnancy, several partners threatened women's sexual reputations by suggesting that they were not the father of the baby. This exercise of a particular form of control, unexpected by the women and hurtful, leads in to the final section of this chapter that discusses the serious risks of violence perpetrated by some men in heterosexually organised domestic settings.

Love hurts[260]

The women were generally positive about their 'comprehensive'[261] heterosexual relationships. However, a significant minority referred to the impact of male violence. Two 'grandmothers' constructed accounts of their respective first and second husbands perpetrating sustained and systematic violence in the home, including attempted murder in one instance and threatened murder in another. Two of the four men had also sexually abused at least one of their children. Another 'grandmother' began her Gestalt with the memory of her childhood terror on occasions when her father assaulted her

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[260] This is the title of a song first recorded by the Everly Brothers in 1960.
[261] I use this to convey the significance of all aspects of the heterosexual organisation of the women's lives.

mother, and of the constant background threat of violence[262], and another discussed her partner's controlling behaviour. Two 'mothers' also reviewed their experiences of growing up witnessing adult male violence.

Violence by men against known women can be understood as a possible, though by no means inevitable, outcome of the structuring of social relations by heteronormative expectations (Hird 2002). Hird's (1995) doctoral research examined young people's experiences of heterosexual dating violence in the UK, and found that forms of physical violence such as slapping, hitting and punching were defined as 'normal' by young women and young men. Most, though not all, of the reported physical violence by young women was defensive. Giddens' (1992:3) reference to a 'rising tide of male violence towards women' is questionable in the absence of evidence that there is increasing prevalence (as opposed to reporting). To refer to the spectrum of violence perpetrated mainly by men within heterosexual relationships as a 'tide' implies an irresistible force, whereas the majority of men are not violent or systematically controlling in their relationships with women. As men's violence often begins or escalates at the points of their increased control of the sexuality of women partners , in terms of assumed 'ownership' in marriage and during pregnancy (Royal College of Midwives 1998), Giddens' (1992) argument that violence is a product of the breakdown of men's sexual control of women is also open to challenge.

> I can always remember me mam saying that me grandda, the day she was marryin' me dad, me grandda had begged her for to change her mind and not, like not to gan through with it. And I had says to me Mam "Well why was that? Had he like, was he violent to you, towards you, before?". But she says he never lifted a hand tov her before they were married. But she says it sharp changed the day they got married. Because she says the first time he attacked her was the night of their wedding day. I just wondered what made her stay there for so lang. She arlways did say mind that with having that many kids, there was neewhere for her to gan. Cos I mean, there wasn't. I divn't think there was such things as women's refuges, and things like that

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[262] Dobash and Dobash (1998) refer to the dynamic aspects of violence directed against wives that are difficult to capture with quantitative data.

in them days, you kna. I mean she did eventually leave him, cos we ended up living with me granny for a year and a half back at (town). I think there was a couple o' times when he come to me granny's when we were living there. And he had telt me mam he wanted her back, and I firmly think, if it hadn't been for me granny at the time, she would ha' gone back, she would ha' gone back tov him (2). I think me granny must have said to her she couldn't. Because me father wanted me mam back, but he didn't want us, and he tore up wor birth certificates, and he had says to me mam, he says "Whay, there you are, they divn't exist any more, what are you worried about". I dee honestly believe she would've, if it hadn't been for me grandma telling her she couldn't, she would have gone back to him.

('grandmother', 36-43[263])

He was very much in control of us when we were together, ermm, I wasn't allowed to work, I wasn't allowed to do certain things, and I depended solely on him. He once admitted that he was frightened to let me go to college or anything, in case I got a better job than he had. He got more and more in control, and it wasn't until I left him that I realised how much in control he had actually come in my life. Very controlling and I hadn't even realised he'd done it.   ('grandmother', 36-43)

Two or three days after gettin' married, that's when the violence started, and continued. Didn't get any better. The violence just got worse and worse, ermm (2) and then he beat us up, smashed me jaw, fractured me skull, give us a good pastin', tried, was gonna stab us, but didn't get round to that. If he wanted sex you had to have sex every day of the week, you didn't get a reprieve. If he came in at two o'clock in the morning or three o'clock in the morning, you were woke up.

('grandmother', 36-43)

He (step-father) dangled us over the stairs and threatened to push us down the stairs, and this violence went on for aboot five, six year. He threatened to shoot wor, and when ma mam finally stood up to him, ma mam got punched in the face, stood on, she got her face stood on, and he threatened to kill her and he was arrested for that.   ('mother', 17-21)

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[263] This defines the age range of the women in this generational group.

Conclusion

The accounts of women across generations illustrated the persistence, rather than inevitability, of gendered inequality of power within social and sexual settings structured by a hegemonic form of heterosexuality (Wilkinson and Kitzinger 1993, Richardson 1996, Kehily 2002, Jackson 2005). McLaughlin (2003:149) refers to the 'regulatory fiction' that is a product of the co-constitution of gender and heterosexuality. This is illustrated by Laura's dilemma in condom negotiation discussed above (pages 152-3), namely how to be powerful[264] as a woman in a sexual relationship or encounter with a man.

There was no empirical evidence of intergenerational transmission[265] of a message promoting teenage pregnancy. On the contrary, the accounts of the 'grandmothers' in particular demonstrated a significant level of effort, time and hard work, including informal sexual health and contraception work to equip daughters[266] to "be careful" and to avoid the "trouble" of unintended pregnancy. The extent of what they were able to achieve was limited by the gendered organisation of heterosexual relationships, which made it difficult for their daughters to be assertive in negotiating safer sex with men.

Interview accounts covered positive experiences with men as husbands and sexual partners. However, two women who had married twice described the systematic and sustained violence of their (four) husbands. Their descriptions covered physical, emotional, sexual and economic violence and threatened and attempted murder. At the point at which they took part in the research, each was living with a man without violence. Three accounts of witnessing or learning about violence against mothers and siblings, as girls, have been

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[264] My approach to the research was informed by feminist theorising that has provided a framework for understanding ways in which heterosexuality is reproduced through ideas about gendered power in public and private places. I use the word power in the sense of the cognate French verb 'pouvoir', which translates as 'to be able to'. Pouvoir is used in conjunction with other verbs, describing ability to do things, and in this way it is usefully linked with the idea of agency.

[265] This is similar to one of the findings in a study of mothers (born in the 1930s) and daughters (born in the 1950s) living in Aberdeen. Blaxter and Paterson (2002), exploring the theory of the transmission of deprivation, found no evidence of transmission of attitudes and values that could account for continuing deprivation, rather unchanging adverse socio-economic circumstances (see also Blaxter 2002).

[266] Sexual health and contraception work with sons in Emma's case.

discussed in Chapter Four, Section Two, and together these women's life stories reflect the statistical probability of a proportion of women in any UK research sample having experienced domestic violence perpetrated by a man (British Crime Survey 2004). This probability is predicated on gender hierarchy within a compelling 'culture' of heterosexuality (Rich 1980, Wittig 1992, Holland *et al.* 1998, Ingraham 2002, Milnes 2004). It is not linked with teenage pregnancy per se.

Kelly's (1990 [1987]) articulation of the concept of a sexual violence continuum highlights the potential for abuse of power by some men in their intimate relationships with women. Structural inequality of power is discussed by Holland *et al.* (1998) in relation to their empirical study of young people, heterosexuality and power, and by McLaughlin (2003) in her review of contemporary theoretical debates in the area of feminist social and political thought.

An area in which women appeared able to articulate power and purpose was in their management of motherhood. Their representations of their transitions to motherhood under the age of twenty at different historical points from the 1930s to the 2000s are discussed in the following chapter.

Chapter 6

Managing Motherhood

Introduction

This chapter is divided into two main sections, each of which explores the theme of intergenerational transmission of values, beliefs and practices, through discussion of the women's accounts of 'becoming', 'working as' and 'being' a mother. These categories reflect Rich's (1986 [1976]) exposition of motherhood as experience and institution and Richardson's (1993:3) analysis of motherhood 'as an identity, as an occupation and as a relationship', which explain women's contradictory feelings about being and not being mothers.

Section one *Rite of Passage* examines the women's representations of moves into new generational positions and intergenerational relationships, becoming mothers, grandmothers and great-grandmothers. For ten of the thirteen women the transition to motherhood was unexpected, and there is discussion of the ways in which responses to the news of pregnancy, and pregnancy decisions, reflected contemporary norms rather than a fixed 'culture of early pregnancy' (Department of Education and Skills 2006:37) passed between generations.

Section two "*Getting There*" explores women's accounts of the day-to-day physical and emotional work involved in mothering a baby, and the resources and forms of support on which they were able to draw. There is also discussion of the women's imaginative re-thinking of themselves as mothers, reflecting how the sociological identity of motherhood has shifted across the second half of the twentieth century and into the twenty-first, with changing socio-economic contexts and sets of values, beliefs and practices, as discussed for example by Oakley[267] (1979), Calvert (1985), Miller (1998) and Richardson (1993).

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[267] For example, Oakley (1979) researched social and medical aspects of the transition to motherhood in the mid-1970s. Sixty-six women took part, each expecting her first baby during 1975 and 1976, aged between nineteen and thirty-two. Oakley met women four times, twice during pregnancy and twice after the birth, and by the time of the fourth round of interviews fifty-five women were still involved. Approximately a third of the women were working class.

Becoming a mother has had different social meanings at the various historical points covered by the data, depending on the status (married or unmarried) and age of the women who have made this particular transition. Transition is an apposite word as it suggests a period of adjustment rather than a sudden shift from one socially constructed position (young woman) to another (mother) (see Ball *et al.* 2000). Kitzinger (1998) describes being 'turned into'[268] a grandmother as another often unacknowledged transition[269]. The oldest women who took part in the study represented their accumulation of generational positions from mother to grandmother to great-grandmother, their responses to their daughters' moves to motherhood, and their review of their own experiences of becoming a mother under the age of twenty.

Section One: Rite of Passage

All of the women who took part in this study became mothers via sex with a male partner, unassisted conception, pregnancy, and vaginal birth. Other ways of becoming a 'mother'[270] include adoption[271], co-, step- and foster-mothering, as well as the option of technically assisted conception and donation of egg, sperm, embryo or gestational space[272]. This expanding range of technologies challenges taken-for-granted ideas about female sexuality, reproduction and

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[268] During the period of fieldwork I had an unexpected meeting in Newcastle town centre with the mother of a girl who was at primary school with one of my daughters, who told me: "Katy (pseudonym) has made me a granma".

[269] Taylor (2005) also refers to the formation of siblings, aunts, uncles and cousins.

[270] I use inverted commas here to highlight how the criteria for the relational status of mother are open to debate. For example Haimes (2003) discusses case studies that challenge taken-for-granted notions of biological connection, including a mix-up of embryos during fertility treatment and one of babies in a maternity hospital nursery.

[271] Pringle (2004) provides a brief overview of adoption policy regimes over the historical period covered by the women's interview accounts. Adoption was not a popular solution to pregnancies outside of marriage before the Second World War, as institutional and foster care, apprenticeships, and the child migrant scheme (through which over 150,000 children were shipped to British colonies between the 1880s and 1950s) accommodated illegitimate children. From the end of the war, for a quarter of a century, closed adoptions of babies shortly after birth reflected the desirability of 'happy nuclear families' (Pringle 2004:228). In May 2002 an amendment to the Adoption and Children Bill gave unmarried gay, lesbian and heterosexual cohabiting couples the right to apply to adopt.

[272] Discussion of the implications of technological transitions to motherhood has included 'a flurry of horrified interest in artificial insemination' in the 1930s (Hall 2000:165), responses to the birth of the first 'test-tube baby' in England in 1978 (Taylor 2005:189) and overviews (Stacey 1992, Strathern 1992, Franklin 1997) and critiques (Hanmer 1997 [1993]) of the expanding range of reproductive routes, towards the end of the twentieth century.

motherhood (as highlighted in Kaplan 1992, Richardson[273] 1993, Cunningham-Burley 2004, Nash 2004, Franklin 2005, Gordon *et al.* 2005). Smart (1996:39) deconstructs the supposedly natural chain of events leading from heterosexual encounters to motherhood, highlighting the 'channeling of choices and options that are historically and culturally specific', shaped by contemporary values, beliefs and practices, or as Karpf (2007:40) writes, the way we, in our historical time, like to think about 'making' babies.

The women's life story versions included an account of the adoption of a first-born child within which, implicitly, was the story of another anonymous woman becoming a mother. There were several references to intra-familial placement of a child with a married couple who "couldn't have any kids", with one of the couple in each case being the sister or brother of one of the child's parents. One of the older women, growing up in a family unit of mother, father and over ten children went to live with an aunt and uncle and enjoyed unfamiliar space and attention. This form of exchange[274], in the sense of a child and a related married couple benefitting in some way, illustrates the symbolic value of children, and ideas about the incompleteness of child-less heterosexual coupledom and marriage as the 'place' for a child.

At the point of becoming 'mothers' the youngest women simultaneously became *teenage* mothers, a particular construction at the beginning of the twenty-first century, framed by the 2001 to 2010 Teenage Pregnancy Strategy in England. All six 'grandmothers' conceived outside of marriage and three became 'single' mothers, the others managing to escape this label because they were close enough to marriage (one had her pregnancy confirmed just after marrying, and two became pregnant while engaged to be married). One 'great-grandmother' had been married for a year when she found out that she

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[273] For example, Richardson (1993) examines the taken-for-grantedness of motherhood for *some* women, and discusses the mothering experiences of lesbians. The experiences of lesbians who become mothers are referenced only in the afterword of Woollett and Phoenix' (Phoenix *et al.* 1994) edited volume on the meanings, practices and ideologies of motherhood, despite their aim of acknowledging the diversity of mothers.

[274] Williamson (1982:209) describes a different form of exchange, namely his grandparents' 'unofficial adoption' of his grandmother's niece's illegitimate daughter in the 1930s. She wrote from the Poor Law hospital in which she was staying, to ask for their help.

was pregnant, by which time comments had already been made about the absence of children[275]. The other 'great-grandmother' who took part in interviews became pregnant at seventeen and avoided the stigma of 'illegitimacy' by marrying before the birth of the baby.

Breaking News

Mary had been married for more than a year when she became pregnant in the 1950s at the age of nineteen, and the announcement of her pregnancy was expected and immediately celebrated.

> We were just ower the moon because I was married for a year.
> Me mam and dad just cuddled us, ower the moon.
>
> **Mary** (69, 'great-grandmother')

Joan also represented herself and her partner as hoping for a baby. In the 1980s they were living together as an engaged couple in their own house and they married shortly after their baby was born. Joan legitimated her pregnancy (and heterosexual relationship) by telling me that she and her partner were planning to get married "anyway", and she reflected the historical context[276] and what was possible at the time, with her statement of intention not to marry during the pregnancy. However I would suggest that a vestige of maternal regulatory power is evident in the quote below. The fact that Joan was living in her own home and therefore outside of the domestic sphere of her mother's moral authority, appeared to protect her from being "given wrong" (censured) for pre-marital pregnancy.

> Ermm, I just told me mam. I wasn't frightened or nothin', cos I was livin' with (partner), so (3) aye, I was plannin' on gettin' married anyway when I fell pregnant. I said "I'm not gettin' married when I'm pregnant". It didn't bother us, tellin' her. I didn't get wrong or nothin', whay she couldn't give us wrong, I wasn't livin' there. **Joan** (36, 'grandmother')

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[275] As discussed in Chapter 3, I was surprised during the course of the study by the number of people who talked about their own experiences, in response to the research topic. Several women working and studying in higher education settings spoke about their parents' expressions of frustration at their not having had a child by their thirties, the assumption being that they would have at least one at some point.

[276] During the 1980s social pressure did not push women into marriage in the same way as had previously happened (for example Barbara married during her pregnancy in 1960).

Emma's parents expected that she would marry before her baby was born as she was also engaged to be married when she became pregnant in the 1980s. Like Joan she refused to marry for appearance' sake, and in the following interview excerpt she critically evaluated contemporary society's convenient 'over-looking' of the fact of pre-marital sex and pregnancy.

> It must have only been within a week of me finding out I was pregnant that it was said to me about getting married. Makes it look nice. I don't see how (laughed) because at the end of the day I was still pregnant (laughed). I would still have been pregnant when I got married, so I don't see how it actually fits in, but I suppose in society's eyes.   **Emma** (38 'grandmother')

Complex communications

Each of the other ten women who took part in the study represented first pregnancy as unintended, and communication of this news tended to be more complex depending on the circumstances of conception and expectations at the time. Barbara was seventeen in 1960, unmarried, working and living at home when her mother noticed that she had not had a period. This watchfulness over a daughter's sexuality is another example of the exercise of maternal regulatory power discussed in Chapters 4 and 5. Barbara expected her father to react angrily when her mother passed on the news of the pregnancy, instead of which he re-framed the pregnancy as an expected transition to womanhood[277], if somewhat earlier than expected. The stigma attached to illegitimacy in the 1960s was avoided by the arrangement of marriage during the pregnancy, and Barbara suggested a 'happy ending'. Her tears during this part of the interview, as she explained later, were of sadness at remembering her father who had died several years earlier, and her mother who had died shortly before the study began.

> I was terrified (4). It's something that happens to other people. It doesn't happen to you. I remember when me mother found out, errr (3) and she actually said to us "Have you had a period this month?" and I said "No", and she asked me if I was pregnant and I said I thought I was (7), and that was it really. It was not the done thing in the 60s, with a cloud hanging over you of

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[277] This idea of the achievement of adult female identity through having a baby persists (Riessman 2004), and was illustrated in the accounts of several 'mothers' who emphasised their process of 'growing up' through having a baby.

being pregnant and not married. I got pregnant (laughed) (3), and even then me parents didn't react the way I thought they would (4). Cos I expected to get into bother off me dad, *real* (emphasis) bother, and I didn't (Barbara began to cry at this point) (10). I can remember me dad comin' in the bedroom, pattin' us on the back an' sayin' "It's nae good cryin', you're not a bairn any more, you're a woman", an' that was it, an' I expected to get a real bollockin' (laughed while still crying), a real tellin' off. Eeeh this is silly (still crying). So we got married, and, whay I'm saying so we got married, we always intended to get married, but we got married, and really it's been a happy life. And that's it (laughed).   **Barbara** (60 'great-grandmother')

With one exception, mothers were the first to know about a daughter's pregnancy, and each mother then undertook the mediatory work of passing on the information and absorbing the anger that the majority of fathers (who were present in their daughters' lives at the time) expressed, some through silent rage. Dawn interpreted her father's refusal to speak to her as an expression of anger and disappointment, when she broke the news of her pregnancy at the relatively uncontroversial age of nineteen. She linked his displeasure with her flouting of the conventional sequence of marriage followed by sex and pregnancy, in the 1980s.

I had to gan an' tell me mam an' dad, an' me mother was alright but me father went crazy. I telt me mam and me mam telt me dad. Me father would ha' killed us (laughed), he stopped speakin' to us for aboot six month, an' then after that he was alright. But it was hard, cos he was really disappointed. I suppose he just didn't want his daughters to come in and say they were pregnant withoot them bein' married. You never think it's ganna happen to yourself, but it does, doesn't it. I went up to the doctors and I put a pregnancy test in, and I never thought another thing aboot it, and they said they would phone me. She says "Oh, come up" and when I went up, she says "You're pregnant". I went "Don't be stupid". I nearly died with shock, I nearly died. Everybody was shocked.

Dawn (39, 'grandmother')

I understood Dawn's reference to her father's 'six month' silence to be an exaggeration, to emphasise the strength of his feelings at the time. The phrase "(he) would ha' killed us" is commonly used hyperbolically, nevertheless in this context it is resonant of the fact that some women, in some cultural settings, are killed because of what is perceived to be sexual misconduct. Two other

women mentioned their fathers not speaking to them initially. Another father who asked "What have you been up to?" seemed unable to acknowledge his daughter's sexuality. A finding of this study is that it was mothers who had carried out the 'work' of imagining the possibility of their daughters' heterosexual encounters and then of offering contraception and sexual health support, apparently linked to their position of surveillance in relation to daughters' sexualities. They did not appear to share this work with their male partners, although they were given (by being told first) the task of telling them about unintended pregnancy.

Wrecked lives?

In the early 2000s, Hayley's anxiety about having a pregnancy confirmed was linked to her anticipation of expressions of disappointment in the context of her family's assumption that she would move into higher education.

> I wanted to go by meself (to the doctor's) because I, I, I knew what the results were going to be. I just didn't want me mam there cos I didn't know how she'd react cos the whole family had high hopes for me about goin' to college. I just felt like I'd let me mam down. **Hayley** (17, 'mother')

In the 1980s, Emma's parents and teachers similarly expected her to go to university because she was academically successful. News of her pregnancy disappointed these expectations of social mobility through professional training, which were themselves illustrative of the intersection of generation and (respectable working class) aspiration (Skeggs 1997).

> I was expecting, whay, you know "You stupid thing. What have you done that for?", but really, I got disappointment. They never got angry, just disappointed that I'd thrown my life away.
> **Emma** (38, 'grandmother')

Another example of an interrupted route to academic (and assumed economic) success was provided by Carole's daughter, one of the 'mothers' who, mimicking her own mother's voice, said that Carole had always wanted her to "get a good career an' make something of myself before I tied myself down and had children". Carole corroborated her active transmission of the message about the importance of doing things differently to herself and not having a

teenage pregnancy, and her feelings of shock and disappointment when her daughter became pregnant under the age of twenty as she had done.

> I was devastated actually when she said she was expectin'. Whay, because you dee, you spend that many years fetchin' them up, you want what's better. You wanted somethin' better for them than what we had, d'you know what I mean. An' to see her come in at nineteen an' tell you she's expectin, it's like "Oh, what!"   **Carole** (39 'grandmother')

Mary (69 'great-grandmother') compared her daughter who was unintentionally pregnant at nineteen with another who was able to travel in her job and "have her own life"[278], albeit before marrying and having children in her thirties. Joan, one of the 'grandmothers', recalled her husband's expression of anger and frustration at the news of their daughter's pregnancy at sixteen at the beginning of the 2000s, which reflected twenty-first century construction of teenage pregnancy as a disruptor of educational achievement (see for example Dawson and Hosie 2005), conceptualised in turn as an important route to employment and personal success.

> He just says "Oh, she's wrecked her life", cos she was still at school, "wrecked her life". He used to keep goin' on "You've wrecked your life" an' "You could ha' like gettin' on at school, an' stuff like gettin' a job".   **Joan** (36, 'grandmother')

However, at the time of interview it appeared that he had fully embraced his relationship with his granddaughter, as Joan said that "if he doesn't see her for one day, he gans an' seeks her, absolutely mint with her". Carole reported a similar adjustment to grandparenthood, "But I mean now we've got him we wouldn't be without him, cos I mean, he is gorgeous, and he's such a well-behaved babby for her". This highlights the disjunction expressed by other 'grandmothers', between initial negative assessment of a daughter's pregnancy in the context of an expected future, and reappraisal of the situation from the pleasurable position of grandmother. Expressions of delight such as Carole's might be misinterpreted as approval of teenage pregnancy, if taken out of the context of the 'whole story'. Joan narrated her accommodation of the idea of

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[278] Richardson (1993) shares her experience of receiving the intergenerational message 'Don't do it!' in relation to marriage and motherhood, that is until she had 'lived her own life first'. This warning makes explicit the tension between the expectation that women will become mothers and recognition of the constraints of motherhood and consequences for individual women.

her daughter's move to motherhood and her own transition to grandmotherhood. She described the scene of her daughter telling her that she was pregnant. She was in her bedroom packing to go away for a weekend with friends from work, and was off-guard in relation to her usual watchful position. It did not occur to her that her daughter was about to tell her that she was pregnant, and her initial response was shock and concern. However her redefinition of the situation was already beginning during the same weekend.

> We were gannin' to Blackpool that weekend and it was a, I can remember, it was a Friday, an' I was sittin' on the bedroom floor sortin' me makeup, an' she comes in, an' she says, whay, if she used to like come in and say "Mam, I've got something to tell you", straightaway I would say "You're not pregnant, are you?", an' she used to say "Don't be stupid". An' then she come in, and it didn't even cross me mind. She just went "Mam, I've got something to tell you" (laughed). I says "What?". She says "Whay guess", and it just didn't even come to me mind, an' she says "I'm pregnant". I says "Oh *nae*" (emphasis), and I cried. But I went to Blackpool. I still enjoyed meself, but she was on me mind arl the time, an' just it was really mixed feelin's, ermm sayin' that, I bought her a baby blanket (laughed).
> **Joan** (36 'grandmother')

The gift of the blanket could be read as a sign of Joan's early conversion to the idea of grandmotherhood and also as an expression of intergenerational connectedness through motherhood, as Joan referred to a pram set (sheets and pillowcase) given to her by her own mother when she (Joan) was pregnant for the first time. She added that she still had the pram set and kept it white, suggesting symbolic transmission of the idea of respectable mothering. Joan's daughter was one of two 'mothers' who had had a baby at sixteen, and Joan's response might be seen as part of the process of transforming her daughter's pregnancy, which was out of contemporary 'order', into the acceptable social status of motherhood, albeit in the less valued form of teenage motherhood.

An exceptional experience

One of the 'grandmothers' was pregnant in the 1970s, a situation complicated by the pregnancy being the outcome of a rape by an unrelated man who was known to her within her community. She did not tell anyone about her experience of rape and was unaware that she was pregnant until her mother

noticed at five months into the pregnancy. Her mother's threat to smother the baby was obviously not a statement of intent, rather an expression of the strength of her feeling in her position as keeper of her daughter's and her family's respectability. She managed to "get the baby out the house" symbolically (during the rest of the pregnancy), and in the long term through arranging an adoption[279], as it was too late for her daughter to have an abortion. This was an exceptional response, as all of the other babies in the research sample were accommodated[280]. The adoption had a significant effect on this woman ('grandmother') in terms of loss[281] which was a leitmotif through her version of her life story, and also disappointment in her mother, which had significantly affected the quality of their relationship. Her status as first-time mother was hidden by the completed adoption of her child. Although the event was not a family secret and her daughter (one of the 'mothers') talked about it in her interviews, the events of the rape and the birth of the illegitimate baby appeared to have become unspeakable (Plummer 1995) between her and her own mother (a 'great-grandmother'), erupting only at times of stress, for example during arguments. When she began to say "Me mam wouldn't have ..." and stopped herself, I assumed that she was going to say that her mother would not have talked about these events with me if she had participated in interviews. She had at this point already told me that her mother had decided not to take part in the study because she did not want to "go over the past". Given the events included in this woman's life story version, of which the rape was one, I could understand her mother's decision.

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[279] Amanda Whittington's play *Be my baby* was staged at Live Theatre, Newcastle upon Tyne, between 12 and 14 February 2004. The production tells the story of Mary Adams, 19, unmarried and pregnant. 'Sent to a mother and baby home, she faces up to the shame of her pregnancy, her boyfriend's gentle rejection, and the dawning realisation that the only option she will be offered is to give up her baby for adoption' (publicity flyer).

[280] Shurmer-Smith and Hannam (1994:31) refer to the portrayal in contemporary soap operas of rehabilitated 'errant teenage daughters and their babies', where the 'underlying message is that whatever disruptions and transgressions have occurred, home is the place where, through love, healing can happen and the world be faced again with personal strength'.

[281] This woman communicated a sense of waiting for a reunion with her 'lost' child, not uncommon apparently among women with experience of having a child adopted (Fursland 2003). At another point in the interview, her recall of the baby's exact birthweight was poignant confirmation of her continuing sense of connection.

I can remember me mam goin' to see the baby and it wasn't until years later that me dad told us what the bairn looked like. I always remember I was due to get a photograph and me dad says, just before he died, he says "You'll get that photograph when your mam dies", and I just looked at him and I says "Me mam's got the photograph, hasn't she" and he says "Yes", but he says "You won't get that till your mam dies", and I've never asked for it mind. I was not forgiven for that, for bringin' disgrace on the family. I was not forgiven for that. In them days, it was a disgrace (2), not like it is now, but it was then (2), it hurt me mam a lot that, it hurt her a lot.   ('grandmother', 36-43)

This account illustrated the context of the 1970s, since when there have been important changes in relation to the stigma of pregnancy outside of marriage and the possibility of talking about sexual violence.

In them days, you didn't get pregnant, you did *not* (emphasis) get pregnant (laughed). All hell broke loose. Actually, when the baby was born, me mam says "We either get the baby out the house", or she was gonna smother it. I never seen the baby. I wasn't allowed to see it, it was just taken away, ermm eight pound thirteen she was. That was a very rough period in me life. Me mam wouldn't have… (sentence unfinished) (1), but whay, she doesn't talk about it. It's something that's taboo. We don't talk about things like that. It's been brought up in arguments. I would like to have met her (the adopted baby), to have seen her, but you didn't in them days.   (grandmother', 36-43)

Moving towards motherhood

The ten (of the thirteen) women who took part in this study, who said they had had no intention of becoming pregnant, continued with their pregnancies even when this meant disruption to career and employment plans. Their interview accounts across the generations show that this move towards motherhood was not straightforward and was at times tortuous, reflecting the continuing, if changing, stigma of abortion (see Lee *et al.* 2004). The validity of the theory that people in communities that are socio-economically disadvantaged unproblematically accept teenage motherhood is considered by Turner[282], who

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[282] Turner (2004) surveyed a sample of 248 fifteen-year-old young women who had never been pregnant, in three secondary schools in Scotland. The young women were from diverse social and economic backgrounds. Turner's analysis of survey responses and discussion group data does not indicate that young women in socio-economically deprived areas view teenage motherhood in a positive light, rather shows varying levels of acceptance of both teenage motherhood and abortion. Turner does not discuss the issue of access to abortion services.

concludes that there is a lack of a solid body of research demonstrating a link between response to teenage pregnancy and socio-economic position. Similarly, Tabberer's (2000) analysis of focus group discussions involving young 'non-pregnant'[283] women shows their sophisticated level of understanding of the complexity of situations of unintended pregnancy.

The life story versions produced by the women in Wansbeck illustrate the intricacy of moves in relation to the alternative routes of abortion or continued pregnancy (Hadley 1996), in intergenerational arenas where other people have an investment in the idea of a baby, as well as in the idea of a career for their daughter. For example, Dawn and Linda ('grandmothers') both advised their daughters against having an abortion, despite having encouraged their ambitions to study in higher education. In contrast, Carole, who was nineteen and unmarried in the 1980s, made the decision to continue with her pregnancy with her mother's unspoken permission to do what she thought best. In a similar situation almost twenty years later when her own daughter was pregnant, Carole was able to be more explicit in outlining options, including the possibility of having an abortion. Contrary to the idea that abortion is invisible in areas with high teenage pregnancy rates, most of the 'grandmothers' and 'mothers' said that they knew women who had had a termination of pregnancy.

> I've knarn (known) plenty of lasses who've been away an' had an abortion, but I personally wouldn't want to. I wouldn't slate anybody cos they went. Whay, I could ha' done it but I didn't want tee. Whay, me mam had says "You've made your mistake, noo you've got to figure oot what you're ganna dee aboot it". To me, there wasn't any figurin' oot to dee. It wasn't the end of the world. She didn't mention the word abortion, but whay that was her way of tellin' us. I telt (daughter) she had the same choice, like I said

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[283] Although Tabberer (2000:44) introduces the young women at the beginning of the paper as 'non-pregnant', she qualifies this later with '(mostly) non-pregnant', with a footnote explaining that two young women in one focus group were pregnant, and that 'there were women with children' in two other groups. It is not clear therefore how many of those who took part had experience of teenage pregnancy. The age range of participants was thirteen to twenty-six, and they lived in an area of economic decline with a rate of teenage pregnancy similar to Wansbeck. Tabberer organised ten focus groups, in age bands, with between four and nine young women participating in each group discussion. Her findings are part of a larger research project examining potential influences on young women's pregnancy decision-making in England. This qualitative study included interviews with forty-one young women with experience of deciding whether to continue with a teenage pregnancy or to have an abortion, interviews with some parents, as well as focus groups.

> to her "Whichever way, if you want to keep the baby then have the baby, an' we'll help you all we can, that's all we can do, an' if you divn't want to have the baby, you divn't have to have the baby, nobody can make you have a baby". An abortion wasn't a choice for me, but if she had decided to have an abortion, I would have stood by her.   **Carole** (39, 'grandmother')

Laura (21, 'mother') who was pregnant in the early 2000s, with relatively easy access to abortion services, represented herself as caught between conflicting messages from her partner who said that he wanted her "to keep the baby", and her father who advised her to have an abortion. She referred to her negotiation of the situation of unintended pregnancy as a "rollercoaster".

In the interview excerpt below, Sara (17, 'mother') explained that she understood her mother's unconvincing reference to the option of abortion as an expression of her belief in her (Sara's) capacity to become a mother, affirming her own sense of power. Sara therefore did not think of herself as "stuck", that is without the possibility of becoming a mother. The decision to continue with an unintended pregnancy was influenced, for the majority of women in the study, by their capacity to imagine themselves as mothers.

> I just knew I could do it. I felt as though I could. I was old enough an' I thought "Well I'm old enough for sex, I have to do this". Me mam mentioned it (abortion) but she sort o', she didn't tell us that she didn't want us to, but she made it quite clear. I think she knew I could do it (be a mother) as well, an' I must ha' known. I do understand why they do it, people that's like stuck, but I didn't feel like that. I felt as if I could, I thought I could.   **Sara** (17 'mother')

Sara's admission, at a later point in her interview, that she "could not have done it" without her parents and her partner (mentioned by Sara in this order), corroborates the findings of Allen *et al*[284]. (1998) that the positions young

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[284] Allen *et al.* (1998) present the outcomes of an ESRC funded project designed to add to understanding of young women's negotiation of pregnancy options. Thirty-four women living in Leeds, twenty-three in Solihull and twenty-seven in Hackney, each of whom had had a baby aged sixteen to nineteen during 1995, took part in in-depth interviews. Twenty-four fathers (just over twenty per cent of whom were teenagers), thirty-five grandmothers and six grandfathers also participated. The geographical areas were selected on the basis of high (Hackney), average (Leeds) and low (Solihull) teenage pregnancy rates. More women in this sample had a mother who had not had a baby under the age of twenty than one who had become a teenage mother. Just over a quarter of the women in this sample had 'planned' a pregnancy, and the majority of these were aged eighteen or nineteen. Forty of the eighty-four women had thought about and/or discussed abortion as an option.

women assume in their pregnancies in relation to potential outcomes are influenced by their perceptions of available support

Birthdays

As mentioned above, all of the women who took part in this study had experienced pregnancy and birth, and so for each of them the physical event of labour was a significant stage in becoming a mother. The women's accounts, covering the period from the 1930s to the 2000s, documented changing midwifery and obstetric practice[285] in the UK, from home births attended by handywomen and midwives to hospital confinement (Oakley 1976, Leap and Hunter 1993, Peplar 2002, Segouin and Hodges 2005). Birth in hospital remains the norm at the beginning of the twentieth century[286].

The youngest women, who had had their babies during the two years before the study, generally narrated[287] labour and birth in great detail (up to seven pages of transcribed interview text) and I interpreted this as reflecting the continuing and predominantly positive emotional impact of the births. The birth stories[288] can be read as part of these women's constructions of themselves as competent mothers. The following extracts are examples of the 'mothers' representing themselves as having been efficient labourers:

> I got there (hospital) an' I was eight centimetres dilated (laughed). They couldn't believe it. They couldn't believe how I had done it without any pain relief. **Hayley** (17 'mother')

> I wasn't even cryin', I was just like "Oooh (low groaning sound), like that, leanin' over goin' "Oooh (laughed). **Sara** (17 'mother')

The women's accounts illustrated historically specific social and cultural aspects of birth, including birth attendance, and women's differing levels of

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[285] Changes in experiences in childbirth were similarly illustrated by six women who talked respectively with Moorhead (2006) about having a baby from the 1950s to the 2000s.

[286] In 1960, one in three births in England and Wales happened at home compared with approximately one in fifty in 1997 (Office for National Statistics 2002). The shift into hospital has not been reversed, despite evidence relating to the safety of home births.

[287] See Oakley (1979) as an example of a publication with women's accounts of giving birth, and Cosslett (1991) for discussion of issues relating to the representation of childbirth in fictional and non-fictional versions.

[288] I use 'stories' here as each of the birth accounts had an obvious protagonist (the labouring woman), a supporting cast, a beginning and an end.

knowledge of the physiology of birth in advance of the event. In terms of knowledge, some of the women were as unprepared as the members of the Women's Cooperative Guild who represented their experiences in letters in the early part of the twentieth century (Llewelyn Davies 1978). Barbara for example expressed disappointment that her mother had not been able to help her prepare for the birth of her first child.

> You didn't have a midwife in those days (1930s), you had the handywoman. She used to lay people out and deliver people. When me mam had (Barbara's younger brother), she had to actually stay in bed for ten days. You weren't allowed out o' bed at all. Oh, and another thing, you had your stomach bound. Yes, whay me mother said that she had her stomach bound and you had your lyin-in' period when you weren't allowed out of bed. I mean, when I had our (name of Barbara's first child), you didn't go out of the house for ten days, but I think I was in bed about five days. Nowadays, they're five minutes in the hospital and they have to come out (laughed). Yeh, a bit of a difference, the difference in the actual confinement itself, you know, that the handywoman was there for me mother, where I had the same midwife who looked after me and was there at the birth, plus the family doctor was there at the birth, errr cos he came in every two hours right through the night, bless him. He kept sayin' "I'll be back in two hours and it'll all be over", and then he turned up again and it wasn't all over (laughed). I didn't know exactly what to expect, and I certainly hadn't seen any videos (laughed) you know like nowadays. They know exactly what's gonna happen. I didn't actually know what was going to happen to me. It was very much (5), you know (2) my mother (2), I kind of expected her to actually tell me what I was gonna go through (1), but she didn't. I mean, (husband) wasn't there when (the baby) was born. He was outside in the next room (laughed). You didn't have your husband with you in those days, cos his mam an' my mam, they were all sort of in the next room you know (laughed). I always remember his mother sendin' him to the shop for some sausages (laughed) and as he came back the baby was there, but he actually missed the birth. He was at the shop (laughed).
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> **Barbara** (60 'great-grandmother')

Each of the youngest women who became mothers at the beginning of the 2000s was supported during birth by a relatively large, intergenerational group. For example, Sara was attended by her partner, mother and partner's mother, and Joanne by her partner, mother and grandmother. One of the 'grandmothers' was exceptional in having excluded her mother from the hospital birth of her first baby in the 1980s, representing this as a form of self

protection, because she "does tend to interfere and thinks she knows everything". This was an example of the complex issue of establishing maternal status and authority, particularly for those women 'outside' of marriage or a cohabiting relationship with a man, as discussed for example by Marsden[289] (1973 [1969]).

Another 'grandmother' described the trauma of seeing her daughter's labour turn into a medical emergency. She cried as she narrated the experience of shifting her concern from the baby who was obviously in difficulty, to her daughter who she thought might die. With the exception of this woman, all 'grandmothers' expressed pleasure at being at the births that shifted their generational position, with some juxtaposing the delight of the birth of the baby with the displeasure they had experienced when they heard the news of the expected arrival:

> The best experience I ever had was when she had the bairn. He was absolutely beautiful. It's when they come in an' say "Oh Mam, I'm pregnant", you're sayin' "You're bloody stupid at your age", you kna. But then, when you see them and everything's alright, it's a totally different thing.   **Dawn** (39 'grandmother')

Mary said that she could have danced all night at the hospital when her first great-grandchild was born.

A more complex mix of emotions and sensations was represented in accounts across the generations, of the period immediately after birth when the women had 'become' mothers. Women referred to excitement, tiredness, bewilderment, enjoyment, love, ambivalence, protectiveness and a profound sense of responsibility. Natalie commented on the stark gap between the idea and the reality of becoming a mother, described by Oakley (1993:127) as the fissure between women's experiences and 'dominant ideological expression'.

> I thought it was just, you have the bump, you have the baby, but it was nothing like that at all   **Natalie** (20, 'mother')

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[289] 116 women participated in interviews during the mid-1960s. Interviews took place in a northern industrial borough and in a southern market town. Marsden introduces the women as 'unsupported mothers on national assistance', that is, unsupported by men.

> It was the best feeling in the world. You're so protective towards them, even though you've only had them a couple of hours.
>
> **Dawn** (39 'grandmother')

> It's like you know you love them but you're not sure how you love them, and things like that. It's very strange (3). It's not like instantly you think "Wow, I love this thing so much"
>
> **Laura** (21 'mother')

> Bewilderin', because you gan through that many emotions. You look at this tiny thing beside you and you're thinkin' it's part of ye, an' then it's like "God, what am I ganna dee when it cries". It's one o' the best things that ever happened to you, but it's also one o' the most frightening things that ever happened to you. You can swing from elation to just despair in minutes, so it's a very strange time for you. They're the funniest things ever created, but mind they can make you just (wasp sort of noise) (laughed)
>
> **Carole** (39 'grandmother')

Section Two: "Getting There"

The two oldest women ('great-grandmothers') were married when they gave birth. One was living in a flat with her husband, and the other was 'living in' with her husband's parents[290]. Each woman said that she was left to "get on" with the care of her baby and had very little support other than babysitting on rare occasions, although her mother would offer advice if asked. Joan's (36, 'grandmother') description of the limited help offered by her mother suggested that she would have liked to have had the support that she has been able to give her own daughter. Joan's account and those of the 'great-grandmothers', Mary and Barbara, suggest marriage as a marker of independence and assumed competency.

> There was only me an' him (husband). I never got any help like off my mam. She would never have them through the night, ermm (1) she just wouldn't. So I had hardly any help. Ermm, she would mind them through the day if I wanted to go shoppin', but she used to say "You better hurry up". An' I, like I couldn't like phone up an' say "Will you come down, I'm strugglin'". I had to get on with it.
>
> **Joan** (36 'grandmother')

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[290] Mary lived in with Norman's parents for several years. While three generational households were not unusual in the 1950s and 1960s, the incidence had reduced to 1 in 200 in 2002 (Charles *et al.* 2003).

The move to independent living was complex for the 'grandmothers' who decided against marriage for various reasons and who lived initially with their babies in their parents' homes. When Emma's baby was born in the 1980s she was still living at her parents' house while her partner completed his training, although they were engaged and in the process of buying a house together. Emma discussed the effort and stress involved in negotiating her position as a mother in her own mother's space, and defined her eventual house move as a point of difficult separation and risk, as well as opportunity.

> It was quite stressful, cos I was still living at my parents' house, and because mum wanted to take over everything, and she'd already been told that it was my baby. It was still a big wrench actually, upheavin' an' movin'. For all it was just one end of the town to the other, it was ermm leavin' the security of home was very difficult. Ermm (2) it was fun but it was difficult. It was quite hard for me to leave home because it was quite frightening to suddenly have this baby. It became reality then, that I had this baby and I had to move out, you know, I was moving into my own home and at the end of the day I was going to be responsible and it was like, it did hit, reality, then, and it was quite, it was quite stressful and quite strenuous. But it was just one of those things. You survive it, ermm you either survive or you go under and (laughed) it was a case of survive it.
>
> **Emma** (38 'grandmother')

Dawn (39, 'grandmother') and Carole (39, 'grandmother') also expressed anxiety and ambivalence about moving from their parental home to a home of their own when their babies were about a year old. This was linked to the unfamiliarity of living alone with a baby after growing up in crowded and noisy households. Their accounts challenge the idea, prevalent in the 1980s, of women becoming pregnant in order to secure a council house.

> I mean I didn't get a hoos straightaway, when errr I had her. I waited till she was one, cos I was frightened to gan and live by mesel'. I lived with me mam and dad. When I got me hoos, I didn't like it. I hated it, cos there was just me and the baby, and I was so used to people bein' around wor all the time (2), but you've got to get used to it. I stopped at home right up until she was one. I didn't wanna leave home mind, cos they were brilliant with the littl'un, but I had to get me arn hoos an' I had to fend for mesel' and bring her up because she was gettin' too attached to me mam and dad and I was relyin' on me mam and dad too much, so I had to get oot and dee it mesel'.
>
> **Dawn** (39, 'grandmother')

> She was six month old when I got me own house, an' it was like strange gannin' into there because there was only me an' her, comin' from a hoos where there was arlways so many people comin' in and oot, in' an' oot. Well, because I was classed as bein' overcrowded wi' livin' at me mam's, I got a council house like for me an' the bairn. It was more or less across the road from where me mam was, which I thought was champion, because like me mam would be there if anything went wrong.
>
> **Carole** (39, 'grandmother')

In fact, five out of the six 'grandmothers' lived with their parents at some point after they had had their baby. Linda had moved to a different part of the country with her husband by the time she gave birth, and when she experienced severe post-natal depression her father travelled by bus to collect her and bring her back temporarily to the family home in the North East[291]. Susan returned to her parents' home sporadically because of her husband's violence. The accommodation of a daughter and grandchild(ren), including at points of crisis, emerged as a significant area of work and social support, with attendant physical and emotional disruption.

Each of the youngest women was living in her own home at time of interview. Two lived with their partners and babies, and three lived with their baby separately from their partner. It would be inappropriate to describe the three women whose partners were not living with them as 'lone' parents because of the support they referred to, from parents, partners and siblings (usually in that order). However, neither the support nor their level of independence in living on their own with a child appeared uncomplicated. Natalie, for example, expressed her longing to return home to live with her mother. This may have been related to Natalie's description of a peripatetic childhood, with thirteen house moves between the ages of two and sixteen because of the physical and sexual violence of her father towards her mother. She referred to there always having been "just like me and me mam", illustrating the difficulty of separating from the family 'unit'.

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[291] Her husband served his notice in his job and followed Linda north shortly afterwards.

In data analysis the theme emerged of the effort involved in assuming authority as a 'mother' under the age of twenty. The excerpt below demonstrates the difficulty a young woman can experience in being assertive as a mother, while maintaining relationships with people who are key sources of support. Sara's (17, 'mother') account of her conflict with the mother of her partner illustrated the complexity of negotiations within new, extended family relationships. Sara, in this instance, demonstrated her knowledge of child safety and challenged the idea that younger mothers lack parenting skills. She described an occasion when her partner's mother asked if she might look after the baby, and Sara and her partner had a day out together. The end of the story was an argument between Sara and her partner because his mother had over-ridden Sara's clear childcare instructions. The quickening pace of Sara's narrating and the detail and dramatic delivery of the reported speech, suggested the continuing emotional impact of the exchange.

> So I says "Yes, you can" (look after the baby), but I says "I don't want her at the fair very long because with it bein' so hot. It was a really hot day, and I says ermm "The sun, my sun canopy isn't very good". I says "I don't want her at the fair very long" an' she went "Oh, we're only goin' for an hour anyway". So I was like "Oh whay then". So I went to Flamingoland thinkin' she was only goin' to the fair for an hour, but I was on edge all the time anyway, I was always thinkin' about if she was OK. I phoned. It was about five I phoned, and she had said she was goin' at eleven (in the morning) to the fair, an' I phoned at five, an'I says "Oh, is she alright ?". "Oh we're still at the fair ?". And I was like "You're still at the fair ?" (loud and angry tone), an' I just totally went off it. An' I come back an' the bairn was bathed and in her cot cos we got back really late, there was loads of traffic, and she was just lyin', an' her little cheeks were bright red. An' I says to (partner) "How is her cheeks so red ?", an' his mam come into the room an' she says "I think she might ha' caught the sun a little bit", an' I says "Caught the sun at two month old ?" (loud and angry tone). I was really, really annoyed. **Sara** (17 'mother')

The issue of balance between 'being' a mother and being a woman who does other things was discussed by several women. Laura (21, 'mother'), for example, expressed ambivalence about the breaks from childcare provided by her mother, related to the way in which her day-to-day life as a mother had become structured around the care of her daughter:

> It's just like, you don't know what to do with yourself any more. I just find that when me mam takes her away for a few hours, or his mam, or ermm one of me sisters'll come an' take her out for a walk in her pushchair, I'm just lost. I don't know what to do. I'll just do the housework an' that, an' I'll just be lost, I won't have a clue what I'm doin', I'm just sittin'. I think "What am I gonna do?"
> **Laura** (21, 'mother')

Carole (39, 'grandmother') shared her mother's message about the importance of making time for herself by establishing a clear bed-time for her baby, and she described her annoyance with those friends who came to socialise with her at her home during her evenings 'off', who brought their children with them.

Intergenerational exchange

A theme emerged of the range of resources other than financial capital that 'mothers' were able to draw on within their family groups. This range covered work done during pregnancy in preparation for the arrival of the baby, as well as continuing practical and childcare support offered mainly, though not exclusively, by the 'grandmothers'. In this sample the 'grandmothers' were also, with the exception of the woman who had one child, actively involved as mothers in the work involved in having teenagers still living at home.

Neither Mary (69 'great-grandmother'), secure and respectable in her marriage to a man with a full-time job and her living-in arrangements with her parents-in-law, nor Susan (39 'grandmother') who realised she was pregnant just after she had married, nor Joan (36 'grandmother') who was engaged and living with her partner in a house they co-owned when a hoped-for conception happened, needed to draw particularly on intergenerational resources. Barbara however was unmarried when she became pregnant and a wedding had to be hastily organised. She described the unexpected death of an elderly neighbour of her parents as "good luck", in that her mother managed to negotiate the lease of the neighbour's flat for her and her new husband. While they were on honeymoon, staying with her husband's sister in Scotland, Barbara's grandfather died, and her parents moved his furniture into the flat in preparation for their return. The other four 'grandmothers' were living in their parents' home when their unintended pregnancies were confirmed. Linda's mother worked

hard to retrieve her daughter's reputation, arranging the adoption of a baby conceived during rape. The babies of the other three women were inconveniently accommodated[292] in houses that were already overcrowded (the women had three, four and five siblings respectively).

The women's accounts illustrated the norm of turning to family for support in difficult circumstances, in different ways at different times. With one exception[293] the 'mothers' described receiving the greatest level of support from parents and others. All five of the youngest women referred to receiving support from the local Teenage Pregnancy Team during pregnancy, and three said that they had been helped to move into social housing[294] by workers in a Barnardo's housing project. Without exception, the women and their partners and parents were not aware of their entitlement to social housing and financial support[295]. They generally represented the experience of negotiating access to state support as "horrible", "hassling", "harassing", "terrible" and "awful", and commented on the level of intrusion into the details of their personal lives. The four 'mothers' who were living in social housing at the time of their interviews had been allocated accommodation towards the end of their pregnancies. Each described how mothers (in particular), fathers, partners and other relatives invested time, physical labour and money in their houses, to prepare for the arrival of a baby. Several women described the classed geographical areas in which they were offered social housing as "rough" [296]. As a counterbalance to

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[292] Two women decided not to marry or live with the fathers of their babies and eventually moved into social housing. One woman moved into the house that she and her partner were buying together, several months after the birth of their baby.

[293] One woman severely restricted her contact with her grandchildren because of her experience of being accused (even though she was acquitted) of not protecting her children from an abusive husband, and this affected her level of childcare support for her daughter.

[294] There is no evidence of young women becoming pregnant intentionally to secure social housing (Swann *et al.* 2003). There are many challengers (for example Phoenix 1991, Selman and Glendinning 1996) to the myth that young women become pregnant (as if that was absolutely in their control) in order to qualify for welfare support, including social housing.

[295] It is possible, though unlikely, that they knew and pretended otherwise. However, the descriptions of the conditions the houses were in and the work needed to make them 'respectable', suggested that a council house was not an incentive to become pregnant.

[296] I have worked with women with experience of teenage pregnancy, who grew up and live in a disadvantaged area of Newcastle upon Tyne that has a similar reputation for being 'rough'. They refer to their postcode being a disadvantage on job application forms, as it immediately associates them with the reputation of the area, from which they do all that they can to distance themselves.

the 'outside world', internal decoration and furnishing appeared particularly important. The descriptions of the areas where they were living were generally presented humorously, possibly as an attempt to defuse the tension of stressful living situations. I interpreted this as part of the work that the youngest women felt they had to do to appear as good mothers in the context of the twenty-first century teenage pregnancy discourse.

> When I got this house, the council waited right until I had just five weeks left in me pregnancy. They give us this house. It had been on fire twice. There was not a single room decorated. It had no kitchen, no bathroom, nothin', not a thing. Not a single sheet of wallpaper in the whole house. All the windows were out. Him (partner) and me mam put the wallpaper up, done everythin'. I've tried hard. I've, whay, I've worked for everything. Me mam bought me wallpaper and me grandma bought me carpet for me Christmas box. **Joanne** (19 'mother')

Laura's apology for the state of her curtains and mirror (which I had not noticed) suggested her level of self-consciousness in relation to the home environment that she had successfully created as a mother living alone with her baby.

> I applied to the council and I was told I would either have to wait till the baby was born to get a house or take one in a bad area, which this is like, quite a bad area (laughed). So I think I was only on the waitin' list a couple o' month, an' they rang us up an' they said "Oh, there's an empty property at (address)", an' I says "Oh right". So I come down wi' me auntie an' had a look, an' I just decided to take it, because basically a house is what you make of it. It's not what's out there, goin' on out there. Me an' me mam (laughed) we decorated everywhere. I did the baby's room because me mam was workin' a lot of overtime, an' she says "Oh, I'll come down at the weekend", but I couldn't wait. I had to have it done so I got it done. It took a lot of time an' a lot of money, but we got there. Don't look at my chocolatey curtains (laughed). It's the baby with his hands. He gets everythin', even the mirror, it's got little handprints all over (laughed). **Laura** (21, 'mother')

The accounts of the three 'mothers' who at the time of interviews were living with their babies independently of their partners and parents, highlighted the importance of inter- and intragenerational exchange of emotional and practical support. Mothers featured most frequently as supporters, illustrating the

significant level of work undertaken by 'grandmothers'[297], with partners, fathers siblings, friends and partner's parents appearing to a lesser extent. Sara, for example, had appreciated her partner coming to stay with her during the period immediately after the birth of their baby, to help with feeding during the night[298]. Laura's friends and her partner's mother cleaned through her house in preparation for her return from the hospital with her baby. Laura also gave an account of her mother's staggered form of support and transmission of babycare skills in the immediate postnatal period, to build her confidence and capacity to 'mother'[299].

> Me mam stopped I think three, two or three nights with us. But I had to get up with her an' like she showed us how to make bottles an' steriliser an' all that. She just went through to make sure I knew what I was doin', an' then she just left us an she just kept poppin' over to see if I was alright an' phonin', which was helpful really. Cos I needed it, someone to be there, for like when the visitors were comin' an' I was like totally tired an' it was awful, it was nice to see that people were comin' to see her an' that, but it was so tirin', so tirin'.   **Laura** (21 'mother')

Laura's mother corroborated her account, and referred to conscious intergenerational transmission of support at a time of anxiety and lack of confidence.

> When he was first born, I practically moved in here for the first couple o' weeks to help her, because I had says to her "You'll not realise how tired you get", an' it was just a bit o' company for her, an' just to make sure things were alright. But I mean, I can remember how I felt when I had her. I mean, you were frightened.   (Laura's mother)

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[297] A postgraduate colleague from Zimbabwe commented on her observation of people in Newcastle while travelling around the city by bus. She referred to women of different generations waiting together at bus-stops with children, pushchairs and shopping, and interpreted these groupings as older women stepping in to help their daughters with domestic labour.

[298] One young woman who took part in MacDonald and Marsh's (2005:138) research project, described being penalised through docking of benefit when her partner moved in temporarily to provide support just after the birth of their child. Twenty-seven of the young people in MacDonald and Marsh's sample of eighty-eight were already parents or pregnant or with a pregnant partner (sixteen women between the ages of fifteen and twenty-two, and eleven men aged seventeen to twenty-seven).

[299] This is another example of the skills and resourcefulness of the women in this sample, challenging the idea of deficit linked with teenage pregnancy.

During an interview in her flat, Hayley (17, 'mother') pointed out the furniture and ornaments that her mother had given her when she moved in. Natalie (20, 'mother') talked about her partner's sister serving an extra plate of food at mealtimes, and bringing it "along the road" to her during periods when she had not received benefit payment on time. Laura (21, 'mother') mentioned her mother bringing her groceries, and Joanne (19, 'mother') gave a similar example of her grandfather stepping in at times of financial crisis:

> He (grandfather) comes alang, and he'll say "Whay, I was in ASDA", and he says "And this bread was arnly fifteen pence" he says "so I bought it". You kna, he tries to mek everything out to be as if like he had to do it, but you know he's been to ASDA by hissel' an' he's come back with a loaf of bread an' milk. An' there was one time when the dole was messin' us about, and they didn't pay us for like three weeks. Whay, I've arlways got nappies and baby food in advance, but they hadn't paid us for three weeks, so I was down to like the last essential food, me last few nappies, me last baby food, and errr me grandda went to ASDA. I don't even know how he got the size o' the baby's nappies, but he come back with a big box o' nappies, two carrier bags full o' jars o' food, shoppin', unbelievable. "There you gans" he says "an' I divn't want the money back". Me granma and grandda totally try to look oot for us, every time they gan shoppin' they come back with a little suit or something, "Bought this for the bairn".   **Joanne** (19 'mother')

Other studies illustrate the range of resources available to young women who become mothers, who are in touch with and have a good relationship with their parents and people in their extended family (for example Owen *et al.* 2000, Tabberer 2000, Barry 2001, Dawson *et al.* 2005, Hirst[300] *et al.* 2006). Gillies (2003) refers to the continuing significance of connections and exchanges within family groups.

The meanings of motherhood

All of the women expressed pleasure in being a mother (see also Musick 1993, Seamark and Lings 2004), grandmother and great-grandmother respectively.

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[300] Hirst *et al.* (2006) involved women and men across three generations (though not intergenerationally related) in an exploration of experiences of teenage parenthood. Twelve people aged over fifty (six women and six men), nine between twenty-nine and forty-nine (three women and six men) and seven aged fifteen to twenty-five (five women and two men) from South Yorkshire took part in the research project.

I love being a mam. I've never, ever regretted it since the day he's been born. I would never change it for the world. I love it, best thing that's ever happened to me (laughed). I feel as if I'm here for a reason. I'm his mam.   **Joanne** (19, 'mother')

Whay, I think I'm a mint Granma, me (laughed). Oh, I love him to bits, I really do love him to bits, couldn't imagine life withoot him. I just love to see him. I love to see his smiley little face, cos he's such a happy, contented little chap.
                                        Carole (39, 'grandmother')

Really, the most important thing was havin' me kids and me grandbairns. I mean me grandbairns are me *life* (emphasis), they are, they're the most important thing tov us, me grandbairns. Aye (6) couldn't imagine bein' without any of them I mean me, me husband, he's important tov us, but (1) (laughed) I mean he's like shoved away poor soul for the kids, you kna (1). I was ecstatic when I was a granma the first time. It's a different kind of' love you have. Smashin' bein' a great-granma, could ha' danced arl night at the hospital (laughed). It's three different kinds o' like love you've got, I think. I mean I loved bein' a mother, and I loved bein' a grandmother, but I adore bein' a great-grandmother.   **Mary** (69, 'great-grandmother')

The theme of various forms of intergenerational investment (of love and material things, though not of wealth) was evident across the generational accounts. For those 'grandmothers' who were financially better off than they had been when they had had their babies as teenagers, their gifts could be read as a form of deferred pleasure. The birth of Joan's grand-daughter, for example, appeared to have been an opportunity to 'give' to herself, her daughter and her granddaughter simultaneously.

We couldn't afford anything, so like things I never had for her, I've like gettin' for (granddaughter). We bought her Moses basket, her pram set, her cot. She's got a four poster cot, curtains and everything. It's all this material (pointing to the broderie anglaise on the Moses basket sheet), things that I would ha' loved, but we couldn't afford it. So I like splashed oot an' got her (baby) all them, spoilt her (laughed). I think it's cos we didn't have much, an' I wanted like to dee it for (granddaughter), an' whay, it's for her (daughter) as well, d'you know what I mean.   **Joan** (36, 'grandmother')

Sara (17, 'mother') talked about "doing without" herself in order to be able to buy things for her daughter. Other 'mothers' mentioned making personal sacrifices such as restricting social outings with friends.

> I'll just like get the money together. I'll save an' get her it. I do without now. I, I hardly get anything. I feel as if, I don't know, I just want everything for her really (laughed). **Sara** (17, 'mother')

The importance of acquiring the status of a 'good', 'fit'[301] mother emerged as a common theme across the generational accounts. Both 'great-grandmothers' and three 'grandmothers' achieved this by marrying. As the mothering capacity[302] of the 'grandmothers' who decided not to marry, and all of the 'teenage mothers' was (by contemporary definition) questionable, there appeared to be an imperative to 'show it off'. Dawn suggested that her daughter was a more capable mother than she herself was (as a single, full-time working mother), illustrating the potential divisiveness of ideas of 'good' mothering. Emma referred to her own experience in the 1980s and to that of young women in the 2000s, while Carole succinctly captured transmission of useful advice about baby bed-time routine from mother to daughter to daughter.

> She got there eventually (3), an' she's a good mother, although she's young, she's still a good mother. She does everything for him and keeps him lovely. **Dawn** (39, 'grandmother')

> You had to prove that you were a good parent. It was something that you had to do twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. It wasn't something that you could just, you know, do when you felt like it. It's a lot to take on, I think, for anybody. I think it's just made worse for the younger ones because, ermm, because people frown on them and think that it was irresponsible, and some of the best mums I know are teenage mums. You always felt people were judgin' you an' you always felt that the baby had to look nice an' everythin'. An' you couldn't really afford it but you felt that you had to, because you always felt that you had to be (1) sort of better, you know, proof that you could do it, that you were as good as anybody else.
> **Emma** (38, 'grandmother')

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[301] *Fit Mother* is a short story (Davies 1999) written from the point of view of a young woman who has to prove that she is a responsible adult and a fit mother, and the theme of the story is her love for her daughter.
[302] Richardson (1993) approaches exploration of motherhood through discussion of women's capacity for it.

> She's getten' him into a nice little routine noo actually, so he normally gets away to bed aboot half-seven. Whay you see, she (daughter) had a bed-time, cos that's what me mother had said to me.   **Carole** (39, 'grandmother')

Sara's Gestalt represented her preoccupation with her new status as a mother. In a condensed life story version[303] (Gestalt), she reported, in a matter-of-fact way, biographical events that were remarkable for a sixteen-year-old[304]. I understood her explanation of her joblessness to be an important part of her self-introduction, given the expectation in the 2000s that young working class women will achieve social inclusion through qualifications and paid employment.

> Well, I got this house an' then I, whay I fell pregnant, then I got this house, then I had (baby), so wi' bein' so young, I didn't really have a chance to get a job or, I went back to school, like, and done a bit, a bit more, to add on to me ermm results that I got, me GCSEs. An' then I fell pregnant so I, I left school, an' then I ermm got this house an' then I had (baby), but (laughed) that's about it really (laughed).   **Sara** (17, 'mother')

The data illustrate an imperative to identify as a 'good' mother through disidentification with 'other' groups (even younger, too old, neglectful and career-focused) stereotyped as morally and socially irresponsible.

Aspirational targets

A common thread in the accounts of the youngest women, who had recently and unintentionally[305] become mothers, was their motivation to reconnect with routes to the sorts of jobs they had hoped for before they became pregnant. This contradicts the claim that young women's 'low' aspirations are a factor in their teenage pregnancies (Social Exclusion Unit 1999). Clarke (2001) refers to findings of research with young parents[306] in Gateshead (Gateshead Young

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[303] Follow-up questions did however produce forty pages of transcript.

[304] Sara was sixteen when she became pregnant, moved into her own house and had a baby, and seventeen when she took part in the study.

[305] All of the 'mothers' said that they had not planned their first pregnancy. Ball *et al.* (2000) discuss motherhood as a significant change of expected direction in the lives of four young women who took part in their study.

[306] In 1999, Health Action Zone funding was allocated to Gateshead Young Women's Outreach Project to identify key issues for teenage parents. Young fathers contributed substantially to the research.

Women's Outreach Project undated), that demonstrated their commitment to achieve paid employment and independence from state financial support. The support that they needed to be able to achieve their aspirations was also highlighted, for example, access to childcare. The desire of the 'mothers' to study and eventually work in a good job was similarly in tension with the constraints of having a dependent child. A crucial issue was the perceived quality of available childcare, a concern that teenage mothers share with other women with children (see McKie *et al.* 2004). The value of childcare provided by trusted family members was hghlighted, as was the difficulty of routinising support to meet the demands of training and higher education, given that the majority of grandparents were in paid employment and unable to make a regular, substantial childcare commitment (see Innes 2002[307]).

> I want a job. That's what I want to do next. I want to like get on. I want to go and get some qualifications at college. It's just finding a babysitter really. Me mam works, his mam has a job as well, so I find it hard to ask them.   **Hayley** (17 'mother')

> When I go to college, it'll either have to be a family member or nobody. So if I can't get a family member to watch (the baby), then I'll not be goin'. I don't know, you hear some terrible stories and that (about childcare). It's difficult, child care, to organise it. Well it doesn't have to be difficult, but, you know, you do want to find someone that's right.   **Laura** (21, 'mother')

A key concern of the 'mothers', all of whom were child-caring full-time at the point of interview and making plans for employment in the longer term, was the wellbeing of their children (see Phoenix[308] 1991). The material benefits for children of economically active mothers in the future had to be reconciled with short-term risks such as inadequate childcarers and lack of money because of dependency on a student loan. Several interviews took place during the autumn period, and there were references to the financial challenge of preparing for the expense of Christmas.

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[307] Innes is the author of an evaluative report of a Lifelong Learning setting in Scotland, aiming to reduce the level of women's poverty by improving life chances through learning.
[308] Phoenix (1991), who interviewed fifty women who had had a baby under the age of twenty, found that children's needs were identified as the most important in the households in which they were living. The women were aware of current thinking on 'good parenting' and their low incomes meant that negotiation of the ideologies of the time (for example that children should play with commercially produced educational toys) was difficult.

Conclusion

Hockey and James (2003:10) use the example of a young woman's experience of becoming a mother to illustrate how an intensely personal experience throws the cultural meanings of other (contemporary and historical) births and transitions to motherhood into relief, which they capture as 'I know what I am by what I am not'. They discuss 'never the same again' transitions in people's lives, of which having a baby as a teenager in the early twentieth century is a particular form, and having a baby as an unmarried woman until relatively recently was another.

As Hockey and James (2003) point out, individual young women draw on the range of resources available to them in order to negotiate the new social identity of mother, about which they and/or others may feel ambivalent. Managing motherhood in their own homes, living with and without male partners, the women who took part in the research talked about negotiating a balance between independence and reliance on support from members of their extended family. The improvisations of the majority of the women (ten of the thirteen) whose pregnancies were unintended demonstrated the range of resources upon which they were able to draw in their adjustment to motherhood, and their level of resilience that tends to be obscured by the negative publicity surrounding national and local teenage pregnancy rates.

The next steps that the women were taking into the immediate future at the end of fieldwork, towards the end of 2004, lead in to the final chapter.

Chapter 7
Next Steps

Introduction

This concluding chapter has four sections. In section one there is a final acknowledgement of the adventurousness[309] and narrative skills of thirteen women who produced life story versions in interviews. Section two discusses the sociological significance of the empirical findings of the study, and what they add to our understanding of teenage pregnancy as one of various constructed social problems that are frequently 'not what they seem' (Chamberlayne and Rustin 1999:14). This is followed by a review of the contribution of the findings to practice and service developments in the context of the 2001-2010 Teenage Pregnancy Strategy in England. The third section considers what the study adds methodologically to the research literature, and section four suggests further research questions. The thesis concludes with words from one of the women who took part.

Section One: Narrating Women

Thirteen women composed life story versions that placed their teenage pregnancies in particular historical contexts in one geographical area that has changed significantly over the time period (1930s to early 2000s) covered by interview data. The women represented pregnancy and motherhood as significant life events and made sense of them in the wider context of their ongoing life-courses. By the time of the writing of the thesis they had already moved into the future that they were imagining in their interview accounts. If each woman were to produce a life story at this point, it would be shaped by intervening experiences and events in her life (which for the younger women

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[309] By this I mean their willingness to take part in interviews about sex, relationships and 'out of order' pregnancies with a researcher they had never met before, and to construct life story versions.

might include the births of more babies) and her perspective and interpretation at the time.

Section Two: Sociological significance of the findings

The small sample of women composed life stories illustrating the complexity of sets of circumstances and relationships producing pregnancies that have been abbreviated to pejorative labels within various discourses at different times, namely 'illegitimate', 'single parent' and 'teenage'. 'Unmarried' and 'teenage' motherhood, at times inappropriately conflated, tend to be discussed as social phenomena without attention to individual women with different experiences of heterosexual relationships, pregnancy, birth and parenting. The level of detail in the life story versions shows women in similar situations making their own moves, and challenges the homogenising effect of the labels. The improvisations of the majority of the women (ten of the thirteen) whose first pregnancies were unintended, demonstrated their resilience and the range of resources upon which they were able to draw in their adjustment to motherhood, however their status might have been defined against the contemporary norm (Laurie *et al.* 1999).

The assumption of a 'long-standing culture of early pregnancy', as expressed in one of the more recent teenage pregnancy policy documents (Department for Education and Skills 2006:37) is challenged by the interview accounts which illustrate diversity within, as well as between, the generational groups rather than intergenerational sameness. The pregnancies of some of the women in the older generations, in contexts (1930s and 1950/60s) in which marital status rather than age was the primary marker of convention, were neither personal nor social problems. The pregnancy of each of the youngest participants was sensationally public (Hadley 1996), even though, for four out of the five, it was not the most disruptive life event they had experienced at the point at which they took part in the study.

Hadley (1996) refers to the historical specificity of what is taken for granted or considered socially unacceptable. The life story version of each woman demonstrated the intrusion of social policy in differently stigmatising ways at

different times. For example, Mary's own pregnancy in the 1950s when she was nineteen was "not a problem", because she was married. However, her biographical account represented the difficulties experienced when one of her daughters became a 'single' mother in the 1980s, and when one of her granddaughters became a 'teenage' mother in the early 2000s.

There was no empirical evidence of intergenerational transmission of a message promoting teenage pregnancy. The accounts of women in different generational positions were corroborative of a significant level of effort made by the women who became 'grandmothers' in the early 2000s, to prevent their daughters from becoming pregnant. The success of their complex sexual health and contraception work was, as discussed in the second section of Chapter 5, limited by the gendered organisation of heterosexual relationships, which made it difficult for their daughters to be assertive in negotiating safer sex in relationships with men.

In terms of what could be said to be intergenerationally transmitted, the women's accounts illustrated the persistence of a culture of heterosexuality rooted in gendered inequality of power in social and sexual settings (as discussed by Wilkinson and Kitzinger 1993, Richardson 1996, Holland *et al.* 1998, Kehily 2002, Jackson 2005). Laura's choice (discussed on pages 152-3) between questioning her partner's wish to stop condom use in their long-term relationship and accommodating it, is illustrative of women's dilemma in their negotiations of what they want in heterosexual situations. Unintended pregnancy is a potential outcome of concession, and it was for Laura. The teenage pregnancy target is unlikely to be met without disruption of this transmitted form of heterosexuality. The descriptions produced by some women of the systematic and sustained violence of husbands and male partners, including physical, emotional, sexual and economic violence and threatened and attempted murder, together with several women's accounts of witnessing or learning about violence against mothers, sisters and brothers, represented extreme versions of what is possible within heterosexually organised settings.

The interview accounts demonstrated that the women are socially included in relation to family and community networks and involvement in local activities (voluntary work, for example, on darts club and swimming pool committees). They appeared however to be generally excluded from access to information about routes to 'good' jobs in an area that has been reliant on heavy industries and where, in general, men are experiencing unemployability and women have access to part-time, poorly paid jobs (Laurie *et al.* 1999).

The absence of all except one of the women from contemporary further education settings is interpreted in current policy terms as cultural deficit, intergenerationally transmitted through 'poor' expectations (Social Exclusion Unit 1999) and 'low' aspiration (One North East[310] 2007). This despite empirical evidence of high aspiration constrained by structural factors, as referenced in Chapter 4. Improved educational opportunities would support young women to realise their aspirations, which start high and then encounter the constraints of class position and income bracket and, for some, the effects of domestic disruption on their capacity to achieve their potential (Dyson 2004).

Connecting with practice and service development

Following analysis and interpretation of the data, a report (McNulty 2005) was prepared for the CASE partner, Northumberland NHS Care Trust. Judith Stonebridge requested a brief report (24 pages) that professionals in different disciplines and agencies would be likely to read, with key findings and recommendations for practice and service development[311] (Shakespeare *et al.* 1993, Bornat 1999). The recommendations have informed the Action Plan for the Wansbeck Young Mothers Forum[312], for example. The research findings have been presented to professional groups (Appendix 7) in Northumberland and elsewhere in the UK and Europe.

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[310] One North East (2007) publicised a regional network of schools aiming to raise young people's aspirations in the region (http://www.onenortheast.co.uk/page/raisingaspirations, accessed 1 July 2007).
[311] In Northumberland there has been a consistent, long-term and inclusive approach to health improvement, including in sexual health. In particular, over the last decade, commissioners have taken into account the views and ideas of young women and men in the development of young people's services (Archbold *et al.* 1998, McNulty and Turner 1998).
[312] As documented in minutes of a Teenage Pregnancy Team meeting on 10 November 2004.

Anonymised interview excerpts have been piloted in a mixed comprehensive school in Newcastle upon Tyne as stimulus material for discussion in Sex and Relationships Education sessions. Excerpts include Laura's dilemma (pages 152-153) in relation to condom use in her long-term relationship with a male partner, and are intended to provoke discussion about 'who can say and do what?' and 'why?' and 'whether things might be done differently?'. Following positive evaluation there is discussion about using the excerpts in PSHE sessions in schools across the city and elsewhere in the region, including Northumberland.

Section Three: Methodological development

The biographical narrative interview method was effective in encouraging the women to exercise their authority as theorists and narrators (Skultans 2004a). Their interpretive activity (Lawler 2002) provided insight into the complexity of life events and 'the interplay between ideological constructions and lived experience' (Finch and Summerfield 1991:8). The life story versions that they produced were pivotal to the exploration of teenage pregnancy and intergenerational transmission, in their illustration of changing contexts and norms. Each woman represented perceived options at the point of thinking about having sex with a man, having sex, having a pregnancy confirmed under the age of twenty, and having a baby at a particular historical time in a particular geographical area. Their nuanced accounts highlighted a range of possibilities for 'doing things differently'.

The biographical narrative interpretive method was particularly effective in providing information about events and experiences that I had not considered significant in relation to the research aim, and there were accounts of experiences that might not have been elicited otherwise. For example, life story versions included details about managing on a low income, showing skills and resources that are unacknowledged in contemporary teenage pregnancy discourse.

The women responded to the opportunity, perhaps their first, to compose a version of their life story with someone who said they would listen and not

interrupt[313]. There was a productive tension between our commonality of gender and ethnicity (discussed in Chapter 3, Section Two) and our different, complementary positions in relation to the study, namely their skill in composing life story versions that integrated their experiences of pregnancy under twenty, and my capacity to co-produce and analyse data and represent the research findings in places to which they did not have access. We were able to generate a shared agenda of challenging stereotypes and myths that underpin policy constructions of teenage pregnancy. This achievement is epistemologically interesting in relation to issues of power in the production of knowledge. Each of the thirteen women approached the reseach interviews with a partial, personal perspective of teenage pregnancy, and I brought a similarly limited professional view. Our co-production of meaningful data suggests potential in appreciating difference and combining abilities (Mason 2002) against the grain of conventional social hierarchy. I would describe it as cooperative balance of our different capacities to exercise power.

The study has highlighted complex ethical issues in relation to the representation of the findings of intergenerational research, as discussed by Lewis (1996). Methodologically, I would suggest that it raises questions about preparation and clear boundary-setting, in relation to the experiences and events that participants might edit in to their life story versions.

The study contributes to methodological discussion about management of the emotional work of researching (see for example Kennedy *et al.* 1993, Grinyer 2005). It highlights, with other empirical studies in the area of heterosexuality (Holland *et al.* 1998, Hirst *et al.* 2006, Hockey *et al.* 2007), the importance, for reflexivity and analysis, of building time into study design to allow sufficient distance from the emotional effects (Martin 1987) of co-producing data.

Section Four: Further research questions

During the course of the study the following research possibilities were identified:

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[313] See discussion of the interview method in Chapter 3, Section Three.

- A return to the research area, with the aim of re-contacting the women who participated in the study and inviting them to take part in another round of biographical narrative interviews, would offer a longitudinal perspective. A return to Wansbeck and this group of women could potentially produce versions of 'what happened next?' in relation to the women's aspirations for 'good' jobs for themselves, their daughters and granddaughters, and/or their continuing negotiations of 'heterosexuality'. The possibility of engaging the next generation at some point would be an area for discussion.

- A return to the research area with the aim of contacting the fathers, potentially in parallel with further interviews with the women. The issue of the prevalence of violence within this group of fathers highlights the need for careful preparation and discussion with researchers in the area of domestic violence, for example. The success of Brannen *et al.* (2004) and Hockey *et al.* (2007) in encouraging some men to narrate their respective experiences of working and caring, learning about sex and relationships and 'doing' heterosexuality, suggests that this might be possible.

Epilogue

Carole (39, 'grandmother') who transmitted, without the desired effect, a clear message to her daughter not to become pregnant as an unmarried teenager as she herself had done, has the final word:

> Whay I divn' kna, cos me mam was, she was quite young when she first had hers, an' then I was quite young when I had mine, an' daughter's quite young when she's had hers. I mean, me mam stayed wi' me dad for a long time. I didn't stay wi' her dad, she hasn't stayed wi' (baby's) dad. So, I, it's just what makes the world go, isn't it, although like your circumstances an' everything change. I didn't have the hard graft me mam had to dee when we were little, an' things are easier for (daughter) now than what they were to a certain extent for me when I had her, so aye, things change but they stay the same.
>
> **Carole** (39, 'grandmother')

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Appendix 1

Can you help ...

- **The Northumberland Teenage Pregnancy Team has asked Ann McNulty, who is based at Newcastle University, to meet with women who have been pregnant under the age of twenty.**

- **Ann would like to hear from families in which women in three different generations (daughter, mother, grandmother) have had this experience.**

- **She would like to hear about your experience of being pregnant / having a baby as a young woman under twenty.**

- **She would like to hear how you found out about sex and relationships, and to hear as well about your relationships.**

- **There's no pressure to take part.**

If you would like to take part …

ring[316] …………………………….…… and leave a message for Ann with your telephone number. She will ring you back and you can ask her about any of the things mentioned above.

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[316] The name of the local professional using the flyer to give information to women was added.

Appendix 2

Information Sheet: Research Project

This sheet should give you an idea of why the research is being done and what it will involve. You can then think about whether you want to take part.

The research will help to develop Northumberland services in the areas of sex education, sexual health and contraception, pregnancy, birth and early parenting support. The researcher, Ann McNulty, will meet with women who live in Wansbeck. The areas to be covered in interviews will include:

- What it was like growing up round here

- How you got to know about sex and relationships

- Your experience of sex and relationships

- Your experience of being pregnant as a young woman

If it is possible for you, Ann would like to meet with you twice, to have one interview and then a follow-up about a month later. Each interview should last about an hour, although you might want to talk for longer. We can speak by telephone to arrange a suitable time, and the interviews can be in a place where you feel comfortable, and where there is some private space. We can also discuss any childcare you might need to sort out.

You can take part at a level that feels OK for you, and there will be no pressure to answer questions if you don't want to.

Interviews will be audio-taped if you give consent. The tapes will be kept anonymously (ie no name labels on them) and securely in the university. The tapes and transcripts (the interviews written out in full) will be destroyed when the study is completed.

If you are interested and would like more information, let (name of the professional who was passing on the information sheet inserted here) know, and, if it's OK with you, she / he will pass your telephone number to Ann, who will give you a ring to arrange interviews with you and your (daughter / granddaughter / mother / grandmother).

On the phone, you can ask her about any of the things mentioned above, and let her know where you would like the interviews to take place and which times of day suit everyone.

You decide whether you want to take part or not. Nobody will try to talk you into it. If you do want to be involved you will be asked to sign a consent form. You can still change your mind at any time.

Appendix 3

Consent Form for the Research Project on Teenage Pregnancy

Interviews will cover:

- What it was like growing up round here

- How you got to know about sex and relationships

- Your experience of sex and relationships

- Your experience of being pregnant as a young woman

In writing up the research Ann McNulty will take care not to identify you, and she will not directly pass on information that you share in your interviews to anyone else. The only exception to this is if you mention something that suggests a child is at serious risk of harm. If this happens, Ann wil contact another worker who will be able to give the right sort of support.

The interview tapes and the transcripts (the interviews written out in full) will be kept without name labels and will be stored securely in the university. They will be destroyed at the end of the study.

- I consent to take part, and have had information about the research and the confidentiality of the information I share.

- I consent to tape-recording of the interview.

- I know that I can withdraw my consent at any time without giving a reason.

Name

Signature   Date
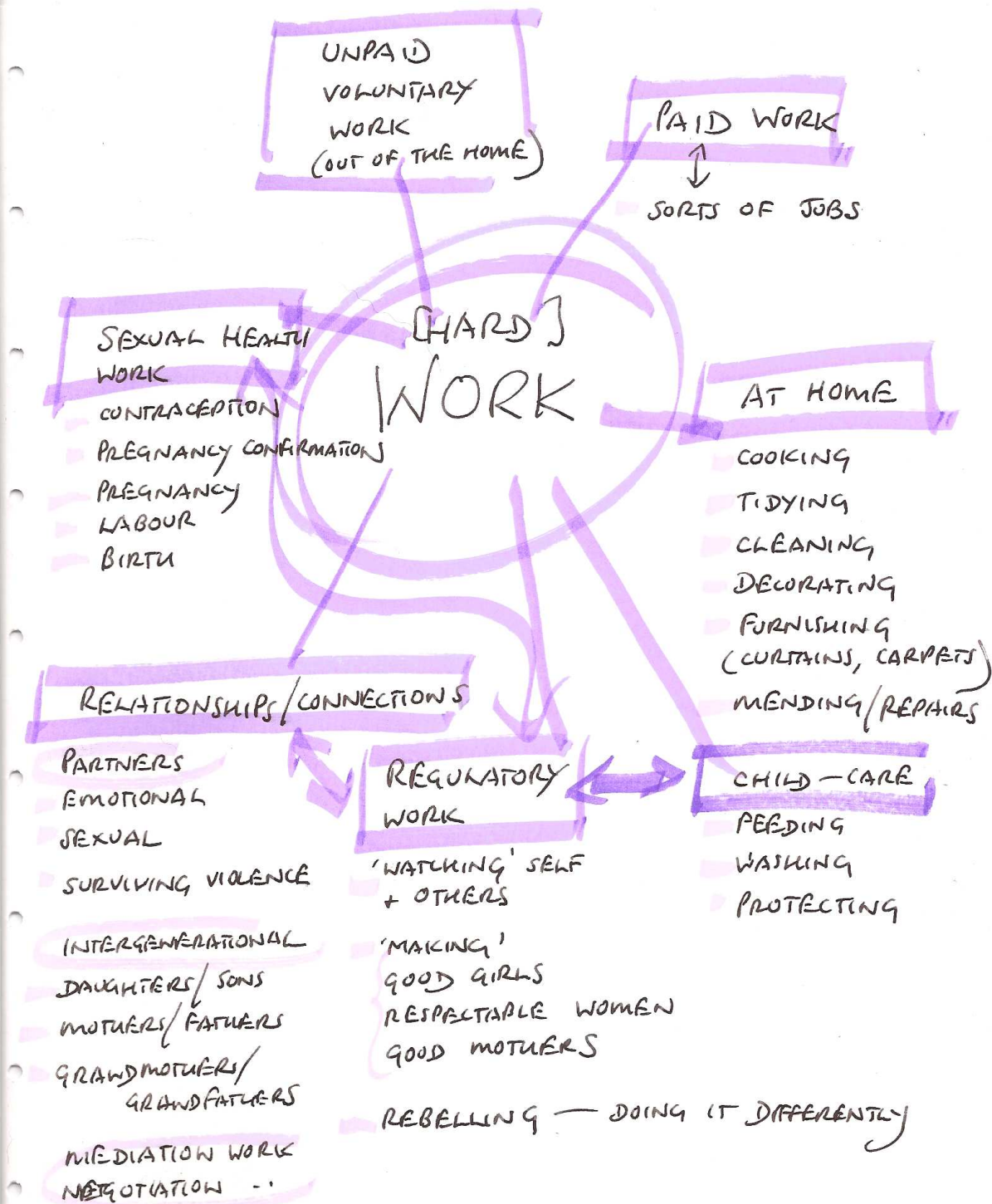
Appendix 4

Interview schedule

- Growing up: "Can you tell me what it was like growing up round here in the (decade)?"

- Hopes for the future: "Did you have an idea about what you wanted to do when you grew up / about having children?"

- Sexuality, sex and relationships: "Do you remember how you found out about your body as you were growing up / about relationships / about sex?"

- Starting to have periods: "Do you remember what happened when you had your first period?"

- Meeting partner(s): "How did it come about that you met (name of partner)?"

- Experience of relationships and sex: "Can you tell me how it happened that you had sex for the first time?"; "When you first had sex, was it how you expected it would be?"; "What would you say are the good things / not so good things about being in a relationship / having sex?"

- Experiences of getting information about, accessing, and using contraception: "Do you remember how you found out about contraception / where to go to get information about forms of contraception and how to use them?"

- Becoming pregnant: "How did it happen that you became pregnant?[317]"

- Confirmation of pregnancy and perception of pregnancy options: "Can you tell me about when you realised you were pregnant?"; "What was it like being a young pregnant woman round here in the (decade)?"

- Becoming a mother: "Do you remember what happened when you had your baby?"; "Can you tell me about being a mother / grandmother / great-grandmother?"

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[317] Before the pilot interview, I was unsure whether this question would 'work' in terms of gaining information about the circumstances of first sex. The following is an example of its effectiveness in an interview with one of the 'great-grandmothers':

- Can you remember how it happened that you became pregnant?
- (laughed) The usual way
- (both laughed)
- Although, mind, it was a hell of a shock (laughed), so (laughed), ermm (laughed), you know (laughed), it was in his mother's front room (laughed). But errr (2) it's something (4) well, you never expect it to happen to you. I wouldn't care, I think we only tried it once or twice (4) but unfortunately it worked (laughed), eeeh, although not unfortunate, no, cos our (oldest child) was lovely, errr (2) but (3) ermm, to be quite honest, when I think about it now (2) my sex education was *nil* (emphasis). I knew about periods, but compared to what it is nowadays (laughed) ermm, some of it really wasn't talked about was it, not openly, errr (2) but (laughed) if you mean where did it happen, and when, well his mam and dad were out (laughed) and things went too far (5). And then you felt you'd let everybody down when you realised (2), but never mind (sigh), that's life (6). It was a long time ago (laughed).

Appendix 5

UNPAID
VOLUNTARY
WORK
(OUT OF THE HOME)

PAID WORK
↓
SORTS OF JOBS

(HARD)
WORK

SEXUAL HEALTH
WORK
- CONTRACEPTION
- PREGNANCY CONFIRMATION
- PREGNANCY
- LABOUR
- BIRTH

AT HOME
- COOKING
- TIDYING
- CLEANING
- DECORATING
- FURNISHING
  (CURTAINS, CARPETS)
- MENDING/REPAIRS

RELATIONSHIPS/CONNECTIONS

PARTNERS
EMOTIONAL
SEXUAL
SURVIVING VIOLENCE

INTERGENERATIONAL
DAUGHTERS/SONS
MOTHERS/FATHERS
GRANDMOTHERS/
GRANDFATHERS

MEDIATION WORK
NEGOTIATION ...

REGULATORY
WORK
'WATCHING' SELF
+ OTHERS

'MAKING'
GOOD GIRLS
RESPECTABLE WOMEN
GOOD MOTHERS

REBELLING — DOING IT DIFFERENTLY

CHILD-CARE
- FEEDING
- WASHING
- PROTECTING

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Appendix 6

Feedback from the research you took part in:

I have interviewed women in six family groups, and have enjoyed meeting you all. Each of your life stories is different, and the following were mentioned by most or all of you:

- Pleasure and a sense of achievement in being a mother / grandmother / great-grandmother.

- Gaps in information about your bodies, sexuality and sexual relationships when you were growing up, although younger women gave some examples of good sex education in school.

- Your life stories included examples of good relationships with fathers and grandfathers, and with male partners / husbands. Many of you talked about the importance of feeling close to your partner / husband, of discussing things and having fun together. Several of you, however, talked about the impact of male violence, for example there was more than one account of a woman having to move into her parents' house at the point of getting out of a situation of domestic violence.

- You talked about your hopes for a good job, when you were growing up. Apart from the two youngest women (who became pregnant while still at school) you have all been in employment, for example in the NHS, in the catering business, and in community development work. One of you has a university degree, and some are thinking about going to university. Between you, you have a wide range of skills.

Thanks once again for taking part.

Appendix 7

- Research Conference, Newcastle University, May 2003

- Gender Research Forum, University of Teesside, May 2003

- Northumberland GP Vocational Training Scheme, June 2003

- ESA Conference, University of Murcia, September 2003

- Conference: 'Intergenerational Relationships and Research', Centre for Research on Family, Kinship and Childhood, University of Leeds, May 2004

- Conference: 'Sexualities in the 21st Century', University of Cardiff, July 2004

- NHS Conference: 'Pathways to Research and Practice', Durham University, September 2004

- British Medical Association Conference: 'Narrative Research in Health and Illness', London, September 2004

- Regional Working Class Studies Seminar, Newcastle University, October 2004

- Northern Primary Care Research Network, Durham University, November 2004

- Northern Narratives Network, Newcastle University, December 2004

- Newcastle Community and Schools Sexual Health Network, December 2004

- BSA Conference, University of York, March 2005

- Northumberland Care Trust Research Conference, May 2005

- NHS Research and Development Conference: 'Making Research Count', Ushaw College, September 2005, with Judith Stonebridge

- Northumberland Teenage Pregnancy Team, October 2005

- Seminar, Centre for Gender and Women's Studies, Newcastle University, November 2005, with Mandy Cheetham and Meena Poudel

- Action Plan Review Meeting, Northumberland Teenage Pregnancy Team, Merley Croft, November 2005

- National Teenage Pregnancy Midwifery Network, London, November 2005

- Tynedale Teenage Pregnancy Network, January 2006

- Newcastle Community and Schools Sexual Health Network, March 2006

- Newcastle Teenage Pregnancy Partnership Board, April 2006

- BSA Conference, Harrogate, April 2006

- Northumberland School Health Network, June 2006

- Biographical Narrative Interview Method Review Day, University of Central Lancashire, July 2006

- Northumbria Health Care Trust Delivery Suite Forum, July 2006

- Ashington Children's Centre (Sure Start Teams), August 2006

- Workshop: 'Complex Contexts', School of Education, Newcastle University, February 2007

- Government Office North-East Seminar, Durham, December 2007