

**Young Pregnancy and Motherhood: A Discourse
Analysis of Context and Experience**

**A thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of
Philosophy**

by

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Abstract

Progressing into the 21st century young pregnancy and parenthood in the United Kingdom is a focus of political, media and public attention. The country is described as experiencing an epidemic, with the highest rates of young pregnancy and parenthood recorded in Western Europe. Statistics demonstrate that in 2000 38,690 under 18 year-olds in England became pregnant, of which 44.8% ended in legal termination. In light of this data, and within their remit to address the issue of Social Exclusion, New Labour commissioned a report into young pregnancy resulting in the development and implementation of the Teenage Pregnancy Strategy. The Strategy has two main aims; namely reducing the rates of young conceptions and providing better support and education for young parents.

This thesis argues from a conceptual framework that questions the contested assumption that young pregnancy and parenthood is a problem. A literature review demonstrates a lack of representation of the voices and experiences of young mothers. This directs the research question to ask what is the experience of young mothers in their own words and placed within context?

Critical Discourse Analysis is used to examine three examples of context shaping data that includes government policy, a newspaper article and a radio talk show programme. The analysis reveals discourses that suggest there is a right time and framework for motherhood. These discourses form a dialectical relationship with voices and experiences of young mothers that are analysed using Discourse Analysis. This analysis elicits two key central discourses permeating the experiences of young mothers that are the Good-Bad mother binary that informs and exacerbates experiences of maternal ambivalence. Moreover, these discourses inform the practice of discrimination against young mothers. The thesis concludes with a call to listen to the experiences of young mothers in order that their needs might be more fully understood. It suggests that discrimination against young mothers be incorporated into Equal Opportunity and Anti-Discrimination policy.

Keywords: young pregnancy and parenthood, Critical Discourse Analysis, Discourse Analysis, maternal ambivalence

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

The purpose of this introductory chapter is to introduce this research and place it within its contextual and conceptual framework. The chapter begins with setting the context of the research before detailing the way in which the research idea was conceived. It progresses with a statement of the research questions. Finally, an overview of the thesis format will be given.

1.1 New Labour and the Third Way - a conceptual framework

Moving into the 21st century and with a third New Labour term beginning in office, young pregnancy and parenthood continues to incite attention from policy makers, academics, the media and the public, both in the UK and around the globe. Successive political parties in the UK have defined it as a social problem since the 1980's (Griffin 1993).

The Third Way is constituted and re-constituted as the value base for New Labour and as such the discourse features in its policies, documents and speeches (Fairclough 2000). It is defined as a new politic that

“stands for a modernised social democracy, passionate in its commitment to social justice and the goals of the centre-left, but flexible, innovative and forward looking in the means to achieve them. It is founded on the values which have guided progressive politics for more than a century – democracy, liberty, justice, mutual obligation and internationalism” (Blair 1998 p.1)

The Third Way pays particular attention to family life, crime and the breakdown of the family and is concerned to engage with “life politics” which are about

“how we should respond to a world in which tradition and custom are losing their hold over our lives, and where science and technology have altered so much of what used to be “nature” ” (Giddens 2000:40) .

Within the ideological rationale of the third way is a new discourse, specific to New Labour, that of social exclusion that has been described as becoming increasingly detached from the concepts of poverty and inequality (Gillies 2005). The reduction of social exclusion is one of the key priorities in New Labour policy, constituting a target for the Social Exclusion Unit (SEU) and embodied within policies including the New Deal welfare-to-work policy (Department for Work and Pensions 2005) and the Bridging the Gap (Social Exclusion Unit 1999) policy that aims to get young people not in education, employment or training in to work. The SEU was established in 1997 as a unit within the Cabinet Office, its role is summarised thus:

“The work of the SEU includes specific projects to tackle specific issues and wide ranging projects to assess past politic and ideas for future trends” (Social Exclusion Unit 2004)

The remit of the SEU includes unemployment, discrimination, poor skills, low income, ill health, family breakdown and teenage pregnancy.

The inclusion of young pregnancy heralds the first time Government has developed a specific strategy for “tackling” the issue. This inclusion is centralised in the “cross Government” (Teenage Pregnancy Unit 2005) Teenage Pregnancy Unit (located within the Department of Education and

Skills) whose role is the implementation of the Teenage Pregnancy Strategy. The strategy centres on two aims:

- Reducing the rate of teenage conceptions, with the specific aim of halving the rate of conceptions among under 18's by 2010
 - Getting more teenage parents into education, training or employment, to reduce their risk of long term social exclusion
- (Social Exclusion Unit 1999:6)

Underpinning these goals lies a set of contested assumptions. Firstly, that young pregnancy represents a problem and secondly, that the problem has reached such an extent that rates should be reduced (Phoenix 1991b; Luker, 1996 #144; Birch 1996; Davies, McKinnon et al. 2001). Thirdly, that the solution to the problem of young parents being at risk of social exclusion lies in education, training and ultimately, employment (Kidger 2004). The first and second assumptions form the focus of this thesis, for an analysis of the third assumption see Kidger (ibid). At this stage it is useful to briefly consider the statistical evidence informing the above policy aims.

The Teenage Pregnancy Strategy cites the following statistical data as the basis for evidence of a problem:

“In England, there are nearly 90,000 conceptions a year to teenagers; around 7,700 to girls under 16 and 2,200 to girls aged 14 or under. Roughly three-fifths of conceptions – 56,000 – result in live births ...within Western Europe, the UK now stands out as having the highest rate of teenage births.”(Social Exclusion Unit 1999:12)

Despite the worrying picture presented in this statement it is valuable to recognise “teenagers today are far less likely to have a baby than was the

case 20 years ago” (Corlyon and McGuire 1997:1). In the 1970’s the figure fluctuated around 50 births per 1,000 teenagers in England and Wales. During the 1980’s there was a rise in the proportion of teenage women becoming pregnant. In the late 1990’s this figure had decreased to less than 30 births per 1,000 (Singh and Darroch 2000). These statistics demonstrate a mismatch between highest rates of teenage pregnancy and parenthood and the creation of the Teenage Pregnancy Unit (Arai 2003b). Equally, the aims to reduce rates of young pregnancy and parenthood coincides with a time of concern that ratios of young to elderly people are becoming disparate (the number of children aged under 16 in the UK fell by 18% between 1971 and 2002 whilst in the same period there was a 27% increase in the number of people age over 65 (Summerfield and Babb 2004).

Latest progress reports from the Teenage Pregnancy Strategy (Teenage Pregnancy Unit 2004) state all 30 points of the Teenage Pregnancy Strategy Action Plan are being implemented. Key points from the report suggest data for 2002 show a decrease in England of 8.6% in the conceptions rates for the under 18’s since 1998, and an additional decrease of 11.2% in conception rates for the under 16’s in the period 1998 – 2001. Data for 1997-99 shows that 29.7% of young parents were in education, training or work in 2002-04, compared with 23.1% in 1997-99.

The concept of social exclusion is defined and deconstructed to the deployment of three discourses in the work of Levitas (Levitas 1998). These include a redistributionist discourse (RED), a moral underclass discourse (MUD) and a social integrationist discourse (SID). Young mothers find themselves located and having to operate within these inter-related yet conflicting political discourses. This thesis seeks to understand how this context manifests in everyday discursive practices. It further seeks to

understand how young mothers experience and operate within these discourses. The rationale for wishing to understand what it is like to be a young mother and whether it is experienced as a negative phenomenon is described in the research origins (1.2).

As described in the Teenage Pregnancy Strategy (Social Exclusion Unit 1999) the discourse developing in the UK of young pregnancy and motherhood relates globally to what is occurring in other nations regarding the phenomena, the UK being defined in comparison to Western Europe as the country with the “highest rate of teenage births” (ibid).

1.2 Research origins

The Teenage Pregnancy Strategy has facilitated and legitimated the creation of numerous projects (for listings of some of these see (Teenage Pregnancy Unit unknown) and jobs across the UK, including a national network of Local Teenage Pregnancy Co-ordinators. Among these is a charity operating from outer London by which I was temporarily employed as a group facilitator. My role was to lead a programme in secondary schools directed toward encouraging young people to understand what pregnancy and parenthood involves with the aim of educating them to make informed choices about pregnancy. During one session a young woman asked me a question that was phrased along the lines of “come on then, what’s the big deal about being a young mum?” The young woman was adamant that being a young mother would be a positive choice for her and challenged every rationale I offered to the contrary. In her, and my own dissatisfaction, with the debate I decided further to seek to understand the experiences of young mothers. Since that time, the way in which I view young motherhood has been altered. This thesis reflects some of the journey toward the change.

1.3 The research questions

The conceptual framework is defined as one that begins with the contested assumption of young pregnancy and parenthood as a problem. The framework recognises a New Labour discourse of social exclusion that aims to reduce rates of young pregnancy and parenthood whilst offering young parents support in remaining in, or returning to education, or gaining employment. The conceptual framework places young mothers at the centre of this study seeking to explore their experiences within it because if we want to engage in a life politics that embraces change in the family and world (as described amongst the aims of the Third Way (Giddens 2000)) we must listen to the concerns and considerations of all its number, including young mothers, in order to develop policies and practices that are responsive and respectful of their lived experiences (Davies, McKinnon et al. 2001). In the case of young mothers this is particularly important as in being positioned as socially excluded, they are so often denied the ability to inscribe their own subjectivities (Skeggs 2004). The study is therefore directed to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the lived experiences of young mothers – as constructed by themselves and placed within a policy and media context?
2. What are the pervasive and significant concepts held and used by young mothers to guide, justify and explicate their experiences?

1.4 Thesis structure

This thesis consists of seven chapters sequenced as follows. Following Chapter One with an introduction and an overview of the thesis, Chapter Two provides a critical engagement with the body of literature relating to young pregnancy and motherhood. Chapter Three focuses on the methodological

issues for this study as they relate to the research questions and include the rationale for the selection of the research methods employed, these being Critical Discourse Analysis and Discourse Analysis. Chapter Four presents the Critical Discourse Analysis of three types of data that form a context for young pregnancy and motherhood. This forms a gateway to Chapter Five, which demonstrates a Discourse Analysis of the data gathered from interviewing a group of young pregnant women and young mothers. A discussion of the analytical findings, in relation to the literature forms Chapter Six. Chapter Seven draws together the thesis by presenting the research conclusions and suggesting areas for further research.

CHAPTER 2

Literature Review

The introductory chapter addressed the conceptual framework of this research that has as its focus young pregnancy and parenthood. There is an expansive and expanding corpus of literature pertaining to the issue. The purpose of this chapter is a critical exploration of the corpus as it relates to this study.

A literature search was undertaken at the beginning of the research process. Throughout the research process this search was supplemented, diversified and expanded upon to reflect and incorporate the developments in the field and the changes and developments in the research process. Tools employed for the search include the library systems at Brunel University and the University of Southampton. The World Wide Web was also used, along with the British Library. The literature was searched over a time period of the last twenty years, as this reflects the duration in which young pregnancy and parenthood has escalated as a focus of attention within the academic, political spheres and public (Vinovskis 1988), which is consistent with the scope of this thesis.

Far from reaching a consensus on the issue of young pregnancy and parenthood, opinions remain conflicted amongst academics, policy makers, practitioners and the public. This conflict is enhanced by the emphasis placed by New Labour's Third Way morality (Fairclough 2000) upon the newly defined concepts of social inclusion and exclusion that are defined as being about more than income poverty. Instead social exclusion is said to occur when people or places suffer from a series of problems, among them

“unemployment, discrimination, poor skills, low incomes, poor housing, high crime, ill health and family breakdown” which can contribute to a vicious cycle which can affect a person’s future life chances (Social Exclusion Unit 2005). One of the foci of the Social Exclusion Unit, established by New Labour, is the issue of young pregnancy and parenthood. This has resulted in the development and implementation of the Teenage Pregnancy Strategy (Social Exclusion Unit 1999). The strategy has two key strands focusing firstly on the need for prevention of and subsequent reduction in the number of young pregnancies and births, and secondly, upon the provision of support (with particular reference to education) for young parents and their children. Specifically these aims are stated:

- “Reducing the rate of teenage conceptions, with the specific aim of halving the rate of conceptions among under 18’s by 2010
- Getting more teenage parents into education, training or employment, to reduce their risk of long term social exclusion.” (Social Exclusion Unit 1999:8)

Following the Teenage Pregnancy Strategy the Standard Fund Grant was introduced by New Labour in September 2000 with the intention of helping to reintegrate young mothers back in to school in England. The Grant enabled most local education authorities to appoint a reintegration officer whose remit included all aspects of training, support and liaison between young mothers and schools. The grant has now been subsumed into the new Vulnerable Children Grant developed in April 2003 to amalgamate and build upon existing Standard Fund grants to provide education for those unable, or finding it difficult, to attend school, to aid integration or reintegration to school and to provide additional educational support to enable vulnerable children to achieve their potential (Department for Education and Skills 2004). The shift of funding of the new grant has been critiqued for its placing

of young mothers within a problem category along with, among others, drug users and asylum seekers (Hosie and Selman forthcoming).

This literature review will explore the issues that have arguably driven the development of current policy as described above. Consequently, it will address questions such as: “what is a young mother? what is the relationship between young mothers and motherhood? In particular the review will analyse why young motherhood comes to be constructed as a problem, and how does this persist? Moreover, what is the effect of constructing young motherhood as a problem? As well as interrogating the literature and identifying gaps in current knowledge, it draws attention to the lack of young mothers voices in the corpus of research.

2.1 Scope of the issue

In order to place the research within context the first section of this review will begin by examining the statistical evidence underpinning the construction of young pregnancy and motherhood as a problem. The issue of young pregnancy and parenthood is constructed as problematic to the extent that 15 of the 28 countries that form membership of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), which constitute the group of countries that produce two-thirds of the world’s goods and services, are trying to reduce their rates (United Nations Children's Fund 2001). As described in the introduction to the thesis policy makers have focused on the UK as having the highest rate of teenage births in Western Europe, with “rates twice as high as in Germany, three times as high as in France and six times as high as in the Netherlands” (Social Exclusion Unit 1999). Current data compiled by Eurostat, the Statistical Office of the European Communities whose task is to provide the European Union with statistics at a European level, demonstrate that during the period 2002-03 rates of live

births in women under the age of 19 years in Germany were 26 522, data for France were unavailable, the Netherlands rate was 3324 and the UK set a provisional figure of 49 633 (Eurostat 2005). The countries with the lowest rates of young pregnancy and parenthood are Korea, Japan, Switzerland, the Netherlands and Sweden each of whom experience teen birth rates of less than 7 per 1000 women (United Nations Children's Fund 2001).

The UK in the twentieth century has witnessed an overall downward trend in fertility rates whereby there were rates of 115 live births per 1000 women aged 15-44 years at the beginning of the century with a decrease to 57 per 1000 women in the same age group by the end of the century. In the interim period there were peaks in the birth rate following the World Wars and the 1960's. The year 2003 has seen an upturn in birth rates (Office for National Statistics 2005). Focusing the field to that of young mothers in 2003 there were 44,200 births to women in the under 20 age group out of a total of 621,5000 births in England and Wales. (Office for National Statistics 2005). This represents a percentage of 7.1%.

Despite the focus given to rates of young pregnancy and parenthood a close reading of the statistics reveals a decline in the rates in most areas of the industrialised world, including the UK, in the last 25 years (Singh and Darroch 2000) thus it is emphasised "teenagers today are far less likely to have a baby than was the case 20 years ago" (Corlyon and McGuire 1997:1). The decline in young pregnancy represents part of the overall decline in fertility in industrialised countries with the younger proportion often being much larger than the general decline (Singh and Darroch 2000). This picture does not deter New Labour from unfavourably comparing UK rates with those of other European countries as justification for its goal of reducing rates of young pregnancy and parenthood. Arai (Arai 2003a) critiques this approach

as being inappropriate as inter-country comparison ignores variations in conception rates and the use of abortion. The point that abortion related decisions needs examination in the UK is made by Lee, Clements et al (2004) whose methodological approach uses high-level statistical analyses of complex datasets in conjunction with qualitative analyses of individual accounts of experiences, to examine the rationale employed by some young women to continue with a pregnancy, and others to abort, and the factors that influence their decisions. They conclude that decision-making appears to be affected by a number of factors including the views of family and community, the availability of services and with the key factor being social deprivation reflected in data demonstrating the more deprived areas in the UK having higher conception rates and lower proportions of under 18 year olds terminating a pregnancy. A further point demonstrated by Arai (2003a) is that in comparing rates of young pregnancy and parenting between countries it is assumed that the experience of the comparable countries can be applied to Britain, which is unrealistic on the grounds that the UK is demographically and socio-economically distinct rendering comparison impossible. Similarly, religious and cultural attitudes within countries are varied; thus Korea's low rate of young pregnancy and parenthood has been partly attributed to its strong social disapproval of pre-marital sex, which places young pregnant women in considerable financial and social difficulty (United Nations Children's Fund 2001).

This section has provided a statistical context to young pregnancy and parenthood and a discussion of some of the tensions arising from the use of statistics to justify the problematisation of the issue. The next section continues by further examining the context of this research.

2.2 What is a young mother?

Continuing with the contextual shaping of this research, this section considers definitions of a young mother beginning with those used in published research. There are a number of inconsistencies in the terminology used to describe a young mother (Dennison and Coleman 1998). Among the terms used are “young mother” [Phoenix, 1991b #183 (Levine, Pollack et al. 2001), “adolescent mother” (Jorgensen 1993; Samuels, Stockdale et al. 1994; Birch 1997), “children who have children” (Family Planning Association 1994), “schoolgirl mother” (Horwitz, Klerman et al. 1991; Dawson 1997) as well as “teenage mother” (Sharpe 1987; Hudson and Ineichen 1991; SmithBattle 1995; Allen and Bourke-Dowling 1998). The abundance in terms contributes to the lack of clarity and general confusion surrounding the issue. Language is important, it reflects social processes and structures, (Wodak 1996) thus the choice of labelling terminology is significant to the way in which the described issue, person or people, comes to be interpreted. “Adolescent,” “teenage” and “schoolgirl” mother suggest a more clearly age and developmentally related interpretation whilst “young” mother is more open to interpretation allowing for an appreciation of the differentiation in all aspects of maturity.

Studies employing the listed definitions have incorporated research with young mothers between the ages of 13 to 24. The upper parameter is clearly outside the definition of teenager or schoolgirl. It is open to debate as to whether it also equates with the concept of a young or adolescent mother.

2.3 Societal definitions of age

The differences discussed above reflect a generalised lack of consistency over age related terminology and definitions. There is no consistent or universal definition of a young person in the UK infra-structural institutions such as

education, legal, health and welfare systems so it remains unclear by which criteria an age construct is measured in a given situation. Fundamental to the issue of teenage pregnancy is the assumption that there is such a phenomena as “teenage” (Macleod 2003).

Until 1970 the age of majority (the age at which a person is eligible to vote in an election) was 21. This was then reduced to 18 which now is the age at which a person can:

- legally buy alcohol, gamble in a licensed betting shop, be tried in an adult court, vote and lose the need for parental consent to do those things that require it at 16.

At 16 a person can (amongst others):

- legally leave full-time education, enter full-time employment, have sexual intercourse, smoke tobacco, pay tax and National Insurance, and (with parental consent) marry and leave home (The Electoral Commission 2003).

An area of particular relevance to this study is the age of consent. The Criminal Law Amendment Act 1855 increased the age of consent (defined as the age at which a person can give consent to sexual intercourse) for heterosexuals from 13 to 16, where it remains. This was brought into line for homosexuals in 2001 (Stonewall 2004).

Contradictorily, whilst people under 16 are not legally able to have sex, the age of consent does not preclude them obtaining contraception. This can be accessed confidentially as, within medical guidelines, a young person can consent to medical treatment if deemed suitably mature to make a

judgement to enable them to fully understand the implications of a proposed treatment (Brook 2005).

This brief synopsis of the UK age parameters demonstrates the inconsistencies within which young people, and professionals working with them, must operate. These inconsistencies are reflected within the literature on young pregnancy and motherhood that is described in the preceding section as being unclear and unclearly defined.

2.4 Thesis definitions of age

In recognising the differences and potential confusion inherent in the aforementioned definitions and in the absence of a universally acceptable choice it remains necessary to select a term of reference for this study. “Young mother” is the terminology of choice in this thesis. The rationale for this is that it best encompasses the diverse age and maturity of the women involved whilst also being less distancing and disconnective than is implied by the term “teenage.” This choice reflects that of Phoenix (1991b) whose research represents a comprehensive, detailed analysis and therefore, influential body in the field of young pregnancy and parenthood research. The rationale for her use of this term is: “while mothers who are in their teenage years are clearly young people, most are not “young mothers”. That is to say they are not too young to be adequate mothers” (ibid). I will return to Phoenix’s work later in the chapter. The term “teenage” is employed when text has been directly cited.

This section has described the complex issue of the definitions of a young mother/person and has considered the frameworks for these definitions. The following section will consider the roles performed by the construction of

“adolescence” and the construction of young women’s sexuality, in their contribution to the way in which young motherhood is conceptualised.

2.5 Discourses of Adolescence

Adolescent sexuality, specifically adolescent women’s sexuality in this study, lies within the over-arching framework of theories of adolescence. This section considers the construction of adolescence as a distinct age-related period.

The definitive terms described, i.e. teenage mother, adolescent mother, and schoolgirl mother; locate a young mother as a woman who becomes a mother during the period between childhood and adulthood. This time has come to be known as “adolescence.” The construction of a period of time called adolescence is of recent development (Furstenberg 2000). The way in which it is defined is culturally and historically specific for example, adolescence in western nations relates to a progression through the education system and the transition to the labour market. This coincides with various other transitions equally symbolic of the passage to adulthood, for example the transition from virginity to sexual activity (ibid).

Multiple inter-related components constitute levels of development including physical and psychological maturity. Physical changes occur in the body that symbolise a progression to physical maturity, a process that has been identified as speeding up during the twentieth century. This secular acceleration is partly attributed to higher standards of nutrition and improved environmental circumstances (Tanner 1961). An example of the progression to physical maturity is menarche in women. A commonly cited cause of the protraction of adolescence concerns the belief that menarche is

on average, occurring earlier although as Whincup et al (2001) demonstrate any decrease in the last twenty or thirty years is signified by a reduction of less than six months. This does not detract from the evidence that suggests one in eight girls in the UK will experience menarche whilst at primary school (ibid). Furthermore, evidence from Dann (1993) gathered by survey over a period of sixteen years suggests the mean menarchal age is increasing thus reversing the downward trend in its onset. The arguable earlier onset of menarche has been discussed as a contributory factor in the contested rise in the number of young pregnancies [Manlove, 1997 #430].

Increasing numbers of young people are staying in the education system for longer (Department for Education and Skills 2005). This defers their progression to economic independence, previously recognised as a demarcation between the world of adolescence and adulthood.

The arguable decrease in the average age of menarche and the deferral of entry to economic independence, combined with other factors including changing relationship patterns whereby adolescent marriage is less normative (Furstenberg 2000), leads to the understanding that the duration of adolescence in western nations is extending and becoming increasingly complex (Morrow and Richards 1996). In recognition of this the concept of stages of adolescence is discussed whereby the process is divided into three subdivisions;

- pre-adolescence - the age span between the onset of pubertal changes until menarche
- adolescence proper – from menarche until the end of the pubertal process defined as the manifestation of drastic deceleration in physical growth and equilibration of the menstrual cycle and fertility

- post adolescence – from that point until the attainment of adult status defined as the attainment of sexual, legal and work responsibilities, despite the vagueness of these definitions within their fields (Kohen-Raz 1983:10)

This formulaic conceptualisation of adolescence may be of help in focusing definitions of adolescence. However, the protraction of adolescence and the accompanying conflict in roles has resulted in adolescence becoming constructed as a “category of exclusion”, neither childhood nor adulthood, but simultaneously both (Macleod 2003). The result of this is that young people are experiencing an increasing mismatch between their expectations and ambitions and the reality of their everyday transitional experiences (Morrow and Richards 1996).

2.6 Discourses of Sexuality

The above discussion describes some of the discourses that shape adolescence subjectivities. As concepts of adolescence have altered, so have concepts of sexuality. It is now salient to focus on discourses of sexuality as they influence and relate with the formation of subjectivities (Foucault 1990). The subject is more than a product of the discourses of institutional regimes, subjects are dynamic and multiple, positioned in relation to particular discourses and practices that produce them (Henriques, Hollway et al. 1988). These practices are continuously changing and so our subjectivities change as we relate and intersect with other practices. Sexuality is a component of our subjectivities and the way in which it is experienced is also affected by multiple inter-related discourses.

Knowledge of sexuality and sexual moralities have been constitutive and constituting, in relationship to the changing structure of the family, the role

of religion, an increasingly multi-cultural society, changes in the way “society” is constructed and perceived, improvement in accessibility of contraception and increasing advances in technology. The impact of this can be seen in the changing structures of the family for example, affecting patterns in marriage and divorce rates, changes to family structure in terms of number and gender of parents and changing patterns in rates of childbirth and their relationship with marriage (Gittins 1993). It is therefore, within a complex and dynamic landscape that we must explore the construction of young pregnancy and motherhood, another aspect of which is understood through the lens of sexuality. Jackson (1982) describes the centrality of sexuality to our lives:

“Sexuality is an important area of social life. It is closely related to the most fundamental of social divisions, that of gender, and to one of the most basic social institutions, the family.”(Jackson 1982:163)

Jackson understands relationships with sexuality as reflecting gender and familial divisions. The significance of the role of sexuality and its relationship with social policy as an institution that influences, and is influenced by the social divisions defined by Jackson, remains largely ignored and under-researched (Carabine 1996). Arguably as a result of this and despite the significance of sexuality, omnipresent in the West are conflicting and confused ideologies about childhood and adolescent sexuality. This manifests as anxiety, imbuing sexuality with a special status whereby instead of being a simple everyday activity it is entwined in polarised understandings as being associated with extreme pleasure or extreme danger (Jackson and Scott 2004).

The framework of sexuality as special informs the way in which children and young people are enabled (or disabled) in developing their sexuality. A binary

of the sexually innocent and the dangerously aware is constructed within which young people are expected to self locate. The sexually innocent construct is increasingly enforced with the heightened anxiety witnessed in response to perceptions of sexual abuse and the increased awareness of child sex offenders, especially in relation to information technology and the World Wide Web (Jackson *ibid*). The conceptualisation of children as holding a sexual innocence that can be stolen or removed is historically specific as demonstrated by the change in the age of consent from 13 to 16 in the last one hundred and fifty years (see 2.3).

The above discussion locates sexuality as having a special status (Jackson and Scott 2004). The boundaries of sexuality are conflicting. The conceptualisation of children as sexually innocent conflicts with the increasing sexualisation of, in particular, young women. Jackson (Jackson 1992) discusses the historical processes leading to this whereby young children and women were social inferiors, living under the patriarchal authority of men. Prior to the nineteenth century women and children were expected to participate fairly equally in life. By the nineteenth century the bourgeois man wanted a wife to serve as a visible symbol of his economic and masculine success; thus began the establishment of the roles of the cosseted wife and children. Boys were encouraged to leave behind their childlike qualities in order to supersede their fathers and become a “man,” whilst girls were trained to stay at home to satisfy the needs of more men. Part of the process of becoming a man includes developing a masculine sexuality that is associated with activity and performance. Girls however, are encouraged to remain childlike, innocent and vulnerable, an image that still constitutes part of the current conflicted representations depicted of female sexuality. In order to maintain the innocence of children sexual information was/is withheld and concealed from them. The complex management of young

women's sexuality is seen as a central factor in determining the role and position of women (Ward 1995) and therefore, as contributing to the oppression of children, and sequentially, women (Jackson 1982).

Changing discourses of sexuality highlight the continuing contested nature of sexuality whilst influencing personal and institutional attitudes to sexuality. In the education system this is demonstrated by an education curriculum that embodies the conflict between repressing child sexuality and regulating sexual behaviour whilst all along representing political desires to regulate sexual liberty (Monk 1998). As such the classroom

“is constructed as a location for programmes of moral education with the aim being that it will enable children to regulate their own sexual behaviour in accordance with traditional norms” (ibid:254)

Thus the institutional framework of education plays a significant role (Althusser 2001) in the formation of subjectivities that are individually and collectively accomplished through participating in social, material and discursive practices [Potter, 1987 #271).

Continuing from a historical perspective, second wave feminism is seen to have contributed a new dimension to sexuality discourses that have arguably improved the formation of young women's lives and subjectivities. Equal opportunity discourses and legislation suggests an availability of opportunity to young women never before in existence. The advent of the contraceptive pill afforded some women greater sexual freedom in protection against pregnancy by their own control. Whilst these concepts remain highly contested the arrival of the Girl Power concept in the 1990's added a further dimension to the construction of femininity. Girl Power stemmed from a movement within youth culture to reclaim the word “girl” and reinvest it with

a sense of power and energy previously associated with the masculine orientated punk movement of the 1970's (Aapola, Gonick et al. 2005). It has resulted in further development in the discourse of femininity. Another facet to this discourse is the way in which young (and increasingly younger) women are targeted with relentless amounts of sexualised marketing. Young women today are faced with the complex task of locating themselves within these ever expanding and changing discourses.

Murcott (1980) has argued that young pregnancy and parenthood is located as a problem at the intersection of ideologies of reproduction and childhood. Taking this standpoint this section has discussed the construction of adolescence, young women's subjectivities and sexualities; the next section will consider discourses of reproduction and motherhood.

2.7 Discourses of Reproduction and Motherhood

Historically women's identities have been inextricably linked to, and defined by, their relationship with motherhood (Silva 1996). At a physical level reasons for this are evident – women can be impregnated, carry and bear children. Post birth other people can accomplish the role of child carer. It is the biological association between women and the outcome of (hetero)sexual activity that connects women with the institution of motherhood that is treated as a given fact instead of as the possible outcome of specific social processes (Smart 1996). This consideration has arguably done little to diminish the strong connection between women and motherhood. In this section I will discuss political and psychological discourses of motherhood that will be related to the concepts of the idealisation and the depreciation of motherhood.

Motherhood is constructed in such a way as to serve political and psychological purposes (Phoenix and Woollett 1991). The implicit interpretations and the personification of the purposes of motherhood are based upon patriarchal ideology about reproduction and the role of women (Gittins 1993). Whilst “the state” is not unitary ideologically or practically, a number of state institutions (such as health, education and welfare agencies) are designed to enforce and enact government opinion. Mothers are to variable extent, subject to the control of these institutions. The political agenda of motherhood via institutional control is to attend to the passing on of state discourses or ideologies. Manifestation of dominant discourses are seen in policy, legislation and in the discursive interpretations of mothering, described as the process of mothering being “moralised, medicalised, psychologised, psychiatrised, and more recently legalised (Ambert 1994)”. Paramount in recent and contemporary policy discourse is the need for parents to provide economic support and care for their children (Phoenix and Woollett 1991). Current government policy places an emphasis upon economic independence, with its agenda of getting people off welfare and into work (Fairclough 2000). Parents unable to provide economically for their children cost the state in terms of benefits and welfare. The majority of parents reliant on state assistance are mothers. This leads to a focus on mothers as costly to the state, hence a concern with lone mothers and young mothers, both depicted as homogenous groups heavily reliant on the state. Whilst welfare receipt may be the experience of some lone and/or young mothers, it is not that of all. The effect of a focus on lone and/or young mothers will be discussed later in the chapter.

In a critique of New Labour’s welfare project, Lister (2001:245) argues that two characteristics, “a populist tendency to woo rather than to lead the electorate and a pragmatic “what works” approach” undermine its more

progressive policies and result in a reactionary stance whilst partially ignoring structural inequalities. This is demonstrated by the instrumentation of policy that ensures the nuclear family framework remains the idealised, and dominant and privileged paradigm despite the increased numbers of men and women parenting outside of the traditional nuclear family framework (Summerfield and Babb 2004). The issue of varied and changing cultural and societal attitudes toward young parenthood is rarely mentioned in the young pregnancy and parenthood literature yet would seem to be critical to the debate. Little recognition is made that in some religious and cultural groups early motherhood is positively sanctioned (Birch 1997). Moreover, in recognising the vast differentiation in cultural and religious attitudes toward young pregnancy and parenthood, consideration must also be paid to the complexity of these attitudes that are influenced by changes and advances in society (Lee, Xiong et al. forthcoming).

Psychological constructions of motherhood provide a framework for motherhood that demonstrates the articulation between knowledge and power to suggest “ideas about the circumstances in which motherhood should occur and how mothers should interact with their young children” (Phoenix and Woollett 1991:21). Examples of current psychological theory would include the theoretical construction of a right age at which to mother, a concept that will be returned to in the thesis.

Dominant psychology based theory about how motherhood should occur, like political ideology, is expressed through state institutions, the media and public discourse. Whilst, psychological discourses of motherhood are not enforceable, it is in a strong position to inform, and lend credence to, political discourse and practice. Research into mothering has been critiqued as focusing upon, and reinforcing androcentric, patriarchal middle-class

perceptions (Walkerdine and Lucey 1989; Phoenix and Woollett 1991). Studies have focussed on a limited or single dimensional understanding of mothering, as opposed to considering the multiple influences on the way in which women mother. The result of this is acceptance and normalisation of particular prescribed standards in mothering.

Standards for mothering are not routinely articulated, but are covertly expressed through institutional and personal discourses (Phoenix and Woollett 1991). It is not only in what is said about that which constitutes a good or bad mother, but what remains unsaid therefore research focusing upon mothers who are in some way deviant, or pathological, by default create an understanding of mothers that are not. The emphasis on lone mothers as deviant is one example of the “wrong” sort of mothering (Roseneil and Mann 1996), another is lesbian and single mothers as demonstrated by a study that focuses upon an Australian parliamentary debate over the drafting of legislation aimed at preventing lesbian and single women accessing In-Vitro Fertilisation techniques (Smith 2003). This thesis will explore the construction of young mothers as another.

Accepted ideas about standards for mothering are historically and culturally specific. As described in the introduction, young women now are less likely to have a baby than those twenty years ago (Corlyon and McGuire 1997). The options available to those women who did get pregnant twenty years ago were more limited than those of today. Many of those young mothers married to keep within the acceptable moral standards of the time in order to avoid discrimination thus maintaining a degree of invisibility. The advent of oral contraception and the arguable access to equal opportunities in the work place has contributed to women postponing their reproductive careers. This is reflected in trends of childbearing. Increases are demonstrated in the

fertility of women in their thirties and forties, while that of women in their twenties or younger has decreased. The average (mean) age for first birth in the UK is currently 27.4 years, representing an increase in previous years (Office for National Statistics 2004). Extension of reproductive opportunity is exacerbated by an increase in availability of reproductive technology enabling a greater number of women the potential opportunity to have children where physically they had encountered difficulties in conceiving. This has resulted in higher numbers of women becoming mothers at a later age. This framework explicates the dominant age at which to have a child as being in the late twenties. Women who mother outside of this framework, i.e. “young” or “old” mothers are less prevalent and constructed as deviant (Berryman 1991; Phoenix 1991a and b). The conceptualisation and discourse of a “right” time for motherhood will be revisited in the thesis.

The “right time” numbers one of the circumstances in which motherhood idealistically should occur. Another is that it should take place within a “steady” relationship, ideally marriage, in order to form a “family”. Moral and policy discourses around lone mothers demonstrate this conceptualisation (Harding 1996). The early 1990’s bore witness to a moral panic about lone motherhood, fed by a discourse linking lone motherhood with the generation of a moral underclass. This interrelates with a moral discourse centred on the “breakdown of the family” (Roseneil and Mann 1996). In this context the “family” refers to the westernised institution of the nuclear family as a household of a couple and dependent children. The existence, role and nature of family has been extensively debated and is a focus for feminist thought. New Labour’s Third Way discourse features the family as an extension of its conceptualisation of community (Fairclough 2000) whereby both are central to the organisation and functioning of society. Smart (1996) argues that the “traditional family” is a

“nineteenth century construction that was dependent upon clear strategies of disempowering women and binding them to motherhood and the private sphere (Smart 1996:56).”

This epistemological history provides a framework for the way in which women operating outside of it come to be constructed as deviant.

The “traditional family” or what has been defined as the discourse of Conservative Gender Relations (Lazar 2000) that understands the roles, responsibilities and expectations of men and women as gender specific, remains the most common household structure in the UK, whilst proportional representation of alternative family structures is changing. In evidence are increasing proportions of couples in a household without children and more lone parent households (Summerfield and Babb 2004). This situation developed despite the moral panics of the 1990’s and discrimination against lone mothers. Roseneil and Mann(1996) argue lone mothers are agents, as opposed to victims, in their decisions and processes leading to motherhood. Recognition of this suggests some women operate in a culture in which they feel able to make the choice to parent independently, outside of the confines of the “traditional family”. The debate about lone mothers therefore needs to shift its emphasis from denying their rights or existence to one that seeks to recognise their particular perspectives and needs, an approach that is consistent with a call for recognition as defined by Lister (2001) in her compass guide to New Labour.

Lone mothers and young mothers share attributes (motherhood, exclusion and in some circumstances single parenthood). Exploring and understanding the way in which lone mothers have been constructed, contributes to the understanding of the construction and experiences of young mothers.

Edwards and Duncan (1996) describe two key discourses of lone motherhood. The first of these features lone mothers as a moral and financial threat to society. The second sees them as a social problem. These discourses bear close resemblance to those of young motherhood as will be discussed.

The dominant political and psychological ideologies of motherhood result in the construction of a Good-Bad mother binary whereby women who mother within the dictates of these ideologies are considered “good mothers”, those who operate outside them are “bad mothers” (Ladd-Taylor and Umansky 1998). Ideologies of motherhood are historically, socially and culturally specific (Ambert 1994) so the binary is dynamic yet inherent in the construction of mothers.

The conceptualisation of the Good-Bad mother places a narrow emphasis on the relationship between mother and child(ren), the underlying assumption being the existence of mothers and mothering. Biologically, mothers exist, although there is the scope for agencies outside the biological, consider the example of a woman whose child is conceived via IVF. Mothering arguably is a social construct (Silva 1996). Adopting this standpoint, the opportunity for the Good-Bad mother binary to thrive becomes severely constrained. This thesis develops the argument that the Good-Bad mother binary is evident in the data gathered in this study, suggesting political and psychological discourses of motherhood are active and pervasive in explicating the experiences of young mothers. As Silva states this is important because:

“What mothers do whilst mothering matters strongly because, whether mothers make autonomous choices or fall under the domination of men, they continually recreate mothering and the conditions under which mothering happens”(Silva 1996:33).

This section has explored the political and psychological discourses of motherhood. It has discussed the Good-Bad mother binary as a framework for mothering. Discourses have been described that represent lone mothers as a financial and moral threat to society that resonates with discourses of young motherhood. The following section will examine how these concepts relate to young mothers.

2.8 Young Mothers as Bad Mothers?

This section considers how young mothers come to be located within the Good-Bad mother binary. It begins with a discussion of the literary themes of which the literature review demonstrates four operative and interrelated themes that are young motherhood and the negative sequelae, motivational factors in young motherhood, preventative strategies and alternative conceptualisations of the issue.

The most prevalent theme in the research literature is the discourse of young motherhood and its negative sequelae whereby a number of research studies demonstrate the negative effects of young pregnancy and parenthood upon both the mothers and their children. These stem around a few key areas including poverty, social deprivation and poor physical and/or psychological health. Many of these outcomes are defined as inter-related (Simms, 1986 #26] (Allen and Bourke-Dowling 1998). An example of such a study is the National Child Development Study (Kiernan 1998), which deduced that among the consequences of having a child whilst a teenager are an increased incidence of residing in social housing (by 50%) and a 40% incidence of benefit receipt and low household income.

The second theme features motivational factors in the decision to become a young mother. This theme focuses upon why young women want to become

young mothers and features arguments about low self-esteem and low aspirations (Ferguson and Woodward 2000; Tabberer, Hall et al. 2000; Arai 2003b).

The third theme focuses upon strategies for the prevention of young motherhood whereby motivational and risk factors are used to provide a platform upon which to build preventative programmes (Woodward and Fergusson 1999; Barranti forthcoming). Kiernan (1995) attempts to format a profile of those most at risk of young pregnancy, so they might be identified and subsequently targeted with intervention strategies. Adolph, Ramos et al (1995) considered the effect that communication has upon young women drawing the conclusion that adolescents whose mothers communicated with them about sex were less likely to become pregnant. Prevention lies at the heart of a number of studies (Adolph, Ramos et al. 1995; Wellings 1999; Chambers, Wakley et al. 2001) and forms the greater emphasis of the Teenage Pregnancy Strategy (Social Exclusion Unit 1999). The focus is upon ways of changing those at risk of becoming a young mother as opposed to making changes to the structuring of their lives (Fairclough 2000).

The final theme takes alternative conceptualisations of young motherhood and asks questions about the contextual positioning of the issue. This is in contrast to the majority of the literature, the thematic analysis of which demonstrates the propensity of it to work from the assumptive standpoint that young motherhood is a problem. The following section discusses the rationale for this standpoint.

2.9 The cost(s) of young motherhood.

The costs of young motherhood are frequently cited in the literature body. These are divided into two areas – the costs to the mother and/or child in

terms of health and the cost to society in terms of welfare. This argument is encapsulated thus “too many teenage mothers – and fathers – simply fail to understand the price they, their children and society, will pay” (Blair 1999:4). I will consider the arguments leading to this statement.

Young motherhood is described as costing the physical and psychological health of young mothers and that of their children (Carlson, Labara et al. 1986; Irvine, Bradley et al. 1997)]. Botting et al (1998) demonstrate that young mothers have an increased risk of health problems during pregnancy including anaemia, toxemia, hypertension, low birth-weight babies and higher risks of prenatal mortality of babies. Research into the psychological effects of motherhood on young women has demonstrated an increased incidence of depression (Simms and Smith 1986; Kiernan 1998)]. Research with young mothers is focused upon those who are socio-economically disadvantaged (Kiernan 1995) which places these women at greater risk of poorer health. At the heart of the health costs debate are questions about general inequalities in health relating to socio-economic factors. Poor health outcomes experienced by pregnant young women and their babies are associated more with poverty and social exclusion than with the age of the young women itself although this is an area that requires further research (Smith and Bell 2001). Research specifically focusing on the diet of pregnant young women demonstrates that whilst motivation to eat healthily was high for the sake of the baby’s health, many young women living on welfare could not afford to do so (Burchett and Seeley 2003).

Hudson and Ineichen (1991) suggests one of the reasons attributable to the poor health of young mothers and their children is the poor attendance of young mothers at ante-natal clinics with the associated risk of medical problems remaining undetected resulting in more serious medical

complications with greater management difficulties. Reasons for poor or late attendance are complex and individual including fear (of being treated unsympathetically and/or of being socially excluded by older pregnant women) and embarrassment, denial of pregnancy, concerns about confidentiality (particularly with regard to informing parents) and lack of awareness of the need to attend or of the service (Hudson and Ineichen 1991). This suggests there is a need for research and practice to establish ways to overcome these challenges in a way that is acceptable to pregnant young women.

The second dimension to the cost argument is the cost to “society” with reference to lost educational opportunity or work related productivity on the part of the mothers and the cost to the state in maintaining and supporting her and her child(ren) (Olausson, Haglund et al. 2001). A point frequently overlooked in the homogenous grouping of young mothers but which is important is that not all young mothers require welfare assistance. This is important because one of the frequent discourses concerning young mothers is one that associates young motherhood with welfare which influences the way young mothers are constructed and the way they construct themselves. Some young mothers do require welfare; an analytical deconstruction of the welfare argument longitudinally illustrates that whilst young mothers take time out to have their children early in their life span, this is re-addressed with time as they then are in a position to go on to work for many years to come without a further break. Women who have their children later in life take a similar amount of time away from economic productivity but do so later. In effect then there is little difference to the state in terms of economic productivity (Noble, Smith et al. 1998)]. The prevalence of the cost discourse encourages the representation of young mothers as “benefit scroungers”. This image resonates with the binary construct of the Bad mother. The value

system being espoused when viewing the situation primarily in economic terms is open to challenge. It suggests that a person's ability to be of economic value to society is of greater value than that which they are providing in fulfilling the role of mother in doing so discounting full-time mothering as a valid option (Kidger 2004). This is consistent with New Labour's Third Way morality with its emphasis on work for everyone (Levitas 1998).

Carabine (2001) describes the potency of discourse and its ability to "hook" into normative ideas about issues such as young pregnancy and parenthood and to utilise them alongside other dominant discourses until they create new and accepted "wisdom" about the issue. To illustrate this point the "getting welfare and housing" discourse was used as a platform for a study that demonstrates the complex and individualistic range of issues that transpire before a young woman makes the decision to become pregnant and/or to proceed with a pregnancy or termination. The study demonstrates "little evidence that they had become pregnant in order to get council housing" (Allen and Bourke-Dowling 1998:103). This was also demonstrated to be the case for claiming benefit. The benefit system currently only pays benefits to people aged 16 plus therefore mothers younger than this are ineligible (Jobcentre Plus 2005) rendering the benefit scrounger discourse redundant. People who have a "low income" may be entitled to Income Support. Similarly, such claimants are also entitled to Housing Benefit. The rates of housing benefit and Income Support are age related with less going to those in the 16 – 17 year old category than those older. Income Support is currently paid at a rate of £33.50 per week to the 16 – 17 year olds and £44.05 per week for those aged 18 – 24 (Jobcentre Plus 2005). Benefits payments then are relatively low. Going to the extent of having a child would appear to be quite drastic action to be in receipt of such amounts. Despite

these research findings and “reality checks” about standards of benefit, the media have added fuel to the “benefit scrounger” discourse that is a frequently cited rationale for young motherhood by utilising comments such as the example cited on p.46 and feeding them into discourses of young motherhood to the extent that one of the myths surrounding young motherhood is the perception that young women get pregnant in order to acquire priority state housing and welfare.

The construction of young motherhood as costly detracts from the central issue that concerns socio-economic disadvantage and the role of the state in relationship to this. A key question is: does young pregnancy and parenthood cause poverty (costing society) or does poverty cause young pregnancy and parenthood (Selman 2003)? Earlier it was stated that research with young mothers is focused upon those who are socio-economically disadvantaged (Kiernan 1995). Research placing a focus upon lower socio-economic groups as samples bias findings with the effect that issues relating to poverty are most likely to arise (Murcott 1980). Lee, Clements et al(2004) defends the bias towards lower socio-economic groups by arguing that many young women from the higher socio-economic groups are excluded from young motherhood data not because they don't get pregnant but because they terminate their pregnancies (see 2.1). This observation frames the issue of young motherhood within the realms of class (Walkerdine, Lucey et al. 2001). Phoenix (1991b) and Luker (1996) argue that teenage parenthood does not cause poverty but that poverty “makes women bear children at an early age” continuing “society should not worry about some epidemic of “teenage pregnancy” but about the hopeless, discouraged and empty lives that early childbearing denotes” (Luker 1996:192). The way forward in addressing young pregnancy and parenting, lies in changes to policy and potentially to the structure of society whereby those most at risk of becoming young

mothers can see a future for themselves which offers more choice and realistic opportunities, as opposed to a future where the best they can aim for is motherhood.

Upholding the costs of young motherhood debate are epistemological theories about the role of women, the division of labour and the family, all of which historically and continually inform the development of the state and subjectivities within. The British welfare state was established around a framework of assumptions about the nature of British society and how these needs should best be addressed. At the core of this framework are three central and interconnected themes, namely the notions of family, nation and work, which Williams (1992) argues in the context of Britain, is about the values of patriarchy, imperialism and capitalism. Clarke and Newman(1997) describes how the family, in its heterosexual and patriarchal guise of full employed male and breadwinner and female spouse as wife and mother, formed the corner-stone of the welfare system in which the state would assume responsibility for dependants (i.e. children, the sick and the elderly) only when the family failed as such roles were assumed to be the duty of the family, primarily, women in the family. In the 1970's, within the context of the global recession public spending was seen in a new light that focused instead of upon the social investment nature of the plan, on the drain it was on public resources. During this period challenges were being made to the assumed accepted notions of the family, among the central proponents being feminists who questioned the gendered division of labour and women's role within the family (Friedan 1965; Gavron 1973; Rowbotham 1973; Bernard 1976; Millett 1977; Greer 1999). The advent of the New Right signified the reconstruction of the relationship between the state and social welfare in response to the challenges posed by global recession and changes to the traditional family model whereby New Right ideologies are evoked of neo-

liberalism and economic individualism, and neo-conservatism with a commitment to traditional morality (Clarke and Newman 1997). These ideologies are represented in the political and public representations of lone and young mothers, in particular the well-rehearsed discourse of the motivational factor in young motherhood being the acquisition of state housing exemplified in this statement:

“Does my hon. Friend agree that family stability comes best from children being born of a loving relationship between a man and a woman? The strong movement towards girls and very young women to have babies to get flats and houses is damaging to them and their children, because those children do not have the proper background that they should have.” Harry Greenway MP, speaking in 1993, quoted in (Carabine 2001:270)

In this statement Greenway espouses a number of value positions consistent with the neo-conservative discourse described above hence a belief is stated in the traditional family that is followed by a paternalistic defining of women (“girls and very young women”) as manipulative. He represents the “decisions” made by the women as harmful to themselves and their children. The statement suggests there is an accepted knowledge of what constitutes a “proper background” for children.

This section has considered the central themes in the body of literature. Within a framework that arguably depicts young mothers as costly to society, as choosing to become mothers for their own gain, it becomes clear how young mothers are positioned as Bad mothers within the Good-Bad mother binary.

2.10 Young pregnancy and parenthood is a problem – or not?

The final theme of the literature review thematic analysis deconstructs young pregnancy and parenthood as a problem and argues for alternative conceptualisations (Murcott 1980; Nathanson 1991; Phoenix 1991b; Luker 1996; Davies, McKinnon et al. 2001) that includes expanding on the limited research that attempts to understand the experience of young mothers from their perspectives.

Phoenix (1991b) argues that there is little research evidence to make a case in support of the notion of young parenthood as a problem. She undertook a longitudinal study of women having their children between the ages of 16 and 19. Using a series of semi-structured interviews and analysis informed by a life course perspective she was led to conclude:

“researchers are increasingly finding that the reported adverse consequences of early motherhood are not as widespread or as devastating as has been assumed (p:2).”

These findings challenge the previously discussed themes regarding the so-called negative effects of young motherhood (for example those of (Wells 1983; Simms and Smith 1986). Phoenix (ibid) raises a number of alternative questions by critiquing the epistemological and methodological constituents of the dominant research discourse, in doing so drawing attention to the “double speak” that surrounds motherhood. An example of the manifestation of this double speak would be the concept that there is an age at which women are too young, and likewise too old to become mothers. This has been discussed in this chapter as the right time for mothering discourse (see 2.7).

A fifteen-year longitudinal study of 174 young mothers in the London area (Birch 1996) provides an insight into the complexities of their lives. In her

conclusions Birch suggests that some young mothers do experience problems with their motherhood, as do their children. However, she argues

“in pinning down which aspect of teenage motherhood is due to the young age of the mother and what is due to other, perhaps linked parameters is harder to do and perhaps impossible (p:201).”

Birch goes on to suggest that not all young mothers experience problems. Indeed:

“there certainly seems to be a group of girls who wish to become pregnant at an early age, are ready for it, are mature emotionally and physically and if it were not for the stigmatising of our society and the lack of support they would have every chance of success. Those who do get some support in this situation make good parents and fare no differently from older mothers in similar circumstances. Parenthood is right for them, for their partners, for their children and for their families (pp: 203-4).”

Aarvold and Buswell (1999) drew similar conclusions from their research with young mothers that led them to conclude young motherhood is not a problem, but a process to be understood. The process facilitates the maturation of young women that enables them to develop into responsible and caring mothers.

The images described have demonstrated another binary construct – that being a young mother is catastrophic as opposed to being a mother at the right age, which is life enhancing and the pinnacle of womanhood (Ussher 1990). It is more helpful to keep a balanced perspective in recognising that young motherhood, whilst not always easy, can be a positive experience (Sharpe 1987; Hudson and Ineichen 1991). The arena of motherhood is recognised as challenging for most women to enter. There is a body of

research that recognises the struggle women of all ages experience in coming to this process (Rich 1977; Parker 1995; Smith 1999)

Despite the representations of young motherhood that challenge its construction as a problem and suggest a more balanced scenario, it continues to be seen as a problem. Critical questions then are how this perspective is maintained and to whom the problem belongs (Nathanson 1991; Macintyre and Cunningham-Burley 1993; Aarvold and Buswell 1999). The following section will address these questions.

2.11 Language and the maintenance of young motherhood as a problem

Earlier in this chapter I explored the discourses and ideologies of motherhood that provide a framework for the Good/Bad mother binary. An ideology is defined as a way of constructing a practice from a particular perspective that seeks to dominate (Chouliaraki and Fairclough 1999). Exploration of the way in which language is used demonstrates the covert nature of the transgression of ideology. The use of language in the construction of young motherhood is developed in the next chapter. The following example demonstrates the powerful effect of a seemingly simple sentence: "...how do teenage mothers compare with normal mothers..."(King and Fullard 1982). The statement starts from the assumptive position that there is a normal mother and that it can be defined. By describing young mothers as something other than normal the inference is that young mothers are abnormal. Finally, young mothers are represented as a homogenous group when the only thing that they are required to have in common to fit the definition, is to be a teenager and a mother. No scope is given for the multiplicity of differences that comprise individuality. At face value a simple sentence belies a number of hidden assumptions, judgments and inferences that is powerful.

Another example of the subtle interchange of language in the literature is that between the use of the term “young mother” and that of “unmarried mother.” A young mother will not always be unmarried and even if she is, the emphasis on her marital status reveals the author’s value or epistemological positioning. Motherhood as discussed earlier in this chapter (see 2.7) is constructed within a framework that defines the preferred context for childbearing to be within marriage (Macintyre and Cunningham-Burley 1993). McIntosh(1996) demonstrates that unmarried mothers are subject to stigmatisation and discrimination. Young mothers are therefore at even greater risk of discrimination having twice deviated from the cultural expectation of the good mother i.e. someone who becomes a mother within marriage and at the right age [Hyde 2000).

Foucault (1990) demonstrates how issues such as sexuality are constructed through discourse and power that operate together to become accepted as “truths.” By the same process we can see how certain “truths” about young motherhood are produced. The following section considers who is constructing the discourses of young pregnancy and motherhood, and who is not, or put another way to whom does the problem of young motherhood belong?

2.12 To whom is young pregnancy and parenthood a problem?

Addressing the question of to whom the problem (in this case, that of young pregnancy and parenthood) belongs is central to the structuring of public problems and their ability to be resolved (Nathanson 1991).

Returning to the foreword to the SEU strategy on Teenage Pregnancy:

“The report reveals the scale of the problem we face in this country and the cycle of despair in which many teenage parents are trapped. It also shows how too many teenage mothers – and fathers – simply fail to understand the price they, their children and society, will pay” (Blair 1999:4).

In the first sentence the problem is constructed as belonging to “this country.” In the second sentence young parents are subdivided into two categories according to gender, with the primary emphasis being placed upon the mothers, the recognition of the fathers seems an afterthought. The problem is then positioned as belonging firstly to young mothers, next to young fathers, then to their children and finally, to society. This suggests that this is the weighting given by the government to the allocation of responsibility for the problem – i.e. first and foremost with mothers

Utilising the deconstructed holders of the government positioning of responsibility for the “problem” of young parenthood the argument can be addressed. The following section will consider how the problem is perceived by those attributed responsibility – young parents, their children and society.

2.13 A problem for the young mothers?

In the foreword to the Teenage Pregnancy Strategy (Blair 1999) young pregnancy and parenthood is defined as a problem for young parents. There is little data with which to determine the depth of problem the issue manifests in the lives of young parents as it represents an identified area as requiring further research (Phoenix 1991b; Arai 2003b). There is a wealth of literature surrounding the issue from the perspective of “outsiders”, but of which only a small amount comes from the voices of experience – those of the young parents themselves. An exception to this is Phoenix’s (1991b)

examination of the lives of young parents that used qualitative analysis to understand their experiences, which found:

“Contrary to popular belief and the ways in which “teenage motherhood” has been socially constructed, early motherhood does not constitute cause for general concern. The majority of mothers investigated in this study were coping with motherhood well.” (Phoenix 1991b:247).

In keeping with other studies that have analysed the experiences of young mothers (Sharpe 1987; Hudson and Ineichen 1991) Phoenix demonstrates young mothers’ lives to be varied and complex, constitutive and constitutional. This resonates with Birch’s findings (Birch 1992; Birch 1996).

A qualitative study examining the accord between the given accounts of young pregnancy and motherhood and those of Teenage Pregnancy Local Co-ordinators in diverse English localities led Arai (2003b:199) to suggest “structural factors may be more important in explaining early pregnancy than those relating to sexual attitudes and knowledge.” Arai suggests it is within the context of structure (in particular, poverty) that many young women make choices to become young mothers noting that for some of the young women the decision represents a positive and rational choice. There are two dimensions to this decision – firstly, it suggests a relative fatalism reflected in their class background, with its arguably limited life options and secondly “it also reflects a genuine desire for the maternal role” (ibid:213). This can be seen as a sign of maturity born of early life adversity or as a strong orientation to motherhood. It is within the aspirations of class that judgements about the acceptability of this are made hence the desire ascertained by Arai in the Local Co-ordinators to encourage the young mothers to see there is more to life than motherhood.

The way in which young pregnancy and parenthood is experienced needs greater understanding from the perspective of young mothers themselves. Research by Phoenix(1991b), Birch (1992; 1996) and Arai (2003b) suggest it is not the problem to them outsiders perceive or construct it to be. Moreover, we must consider the meanings individuals attach to their own interactions, for without doing so, we are at risk of causing damage through outside interventions (Ribbens 1994).

2.14 A problem for the children of young mothers?

The conceptualisation that young motherhood is a problem for the children of young mothers originates in the literary theme of the negative outcomes of young motherhood (see 2.8). Lee, Clements et al (2004), have shown there to be negative health, academic and behavioural related effects to the children of young mothers but as demonstrated these are arguable. Long-term effects of being the child of a young parent are difficult to access when allowing for the potentially huge number of variables involved. It is impossible to claim that being the child of a young mother per se is harmful to either mother or child.

The problems young motherhood presents to society have been discussed earlier in relation to the costs of young motherhood. Beside the economic cost it is difficult to locate within the body of literature any other clearly defined cost or problems for “society”.

2.15 A problem for the families of young mothers?

No specific reference is made to the role of the family in New Labour’s foreword to the Teenage Pregnancy Strategy (Blair 1999). In omitting the contribution made by the family to managing young motherhood the binary

of the individual and society is invoked whilst altogether denying the presence of an intermediary context. The family is the context in which many of the dilemmas and decisions regarding a young mother's pregnancy and its sequelae are enacted to the extent:

“In this sense the child is often born to an existing family unit which supports it, and the mother, both financially and emotionally. If there is a problem, then it is one that is born by this group rather than by “society.” (Aarvold and Buswell 1999:3).

Not all families are able or willing to support their daughters (and sons) and their extending families. With their ability to earn a living and be independent severely constrained many young mothers face the option of becoming dependant upon their male partners where present, or upon the state as discussed. This transfers women's dependency from one source to another with the same effect – they remain dependant and poor, thus perpetuating the feminisation of poverty (Pascal 1997; McRobbie 2000).

2.16 A problem for “society”?

The final allocation is to society of those cited as bearing the cost of young pregnancy and parenthood in the Teenage Pregnancy Strategy foreword (Blair 1999). This statement will later in the thesis be analysed using CDA later in the thesis (see 4.1). Whilst “society” is cited, the Teenage Pregnancy Strategy fails to define what is meant by the term.

I have demonstrated the cost of young motherhood to society, with regard to taxpayers, if the argument is assumed to stem from an economic position, as being contested and conflicted. The limited research conducted with young mothers argues it is not always a problem for them. Neither is it solely the

responsibility of the family who are in a position to decide whether they wish to accept responsibility. To whom then does the problem belong?

Nathanson (Nathanson 1991:12) suggests that alternative ownership “has shifted back and forth among moral, medical and legal authorities.” These institutions remain central contributors to the construction of the discourses and the delivery of interventions aimed at young mothers. The addition of New Labour’s voice to the debate adds a new dimension – a politico-moral discourse. The politico-moral discourse is embodied in contemporary social policy that perpetuates women’s oppression by reinforcing the feminisation of poverty and constructing young mothers as the victims of this poverty with the suggestion that they are “social unfortunates” caught up in tragic circumstances beyond any control. This argument is too simplistic and calls for a greater investigation of the feminisation of poverty. Measures should be taken not to address the issue of young women becoming mothers but instead the ideological system that allows women so few alternative life choices preferring to enforce upon them expectations of roles and behaviours (McRobbie 1991).

The problematisation of young motherhood is framed within this ideological system and belongs to “outsiders” i.e. those not directly associated with the matter. Ward (1995) describes outsiders as professionals who have a concern about the independence being demonstrated by young women acting against the structures of authority. Luker (1996) similarly concludes the problem is one of “many well meaning middle class people” who view the situation from the perspective of difference:

“The trouble with poor and pregnant teenagers is that they do not do what middle-class people do: invest in education, establish themselves

in a job, marry a sensible and hard-working person and only then begin to think about having a baby.” (Luker 1996:107).

From Luker’s perspective the problematisation of young motherhood is about middle-class ideology that views the role of women as clearly defined, and young mothers as deviating from these parameters. Underpinning this ideological perspective is motivations reinforcing gendered power relationships, with women remaining as the subject of male domination (Macleod 2003).

The question then of for whom is young pregnancy a problem moves into a more complex area that involves individual and collective beliefs about the intrinsic nature and destiny of young women and their duty to the state (Nathanson 1991; Ward 1995). The terminology used to define young mothers has already been discussed (see 2.2). An examination of this language demonstrates the moral positioning assigned to young mothers. It includes terms such as adolescent mothers, children who have children, unmarried mothers and places an emphasis upon sexual activity and relationships that occur outside marriage. The deviant, uncontrollable and powerful nature of young women’s sexuality is embodied by their fecundity (Walkerdine, Lucey et al. 2001). Such is the threat posed by this deviancy that it results in:

“our national preoccupation with controlling females’ actions, their bodies, and the products of their bodies (that) profoundly conditions our understanding of and interventions in the arena of teenagers, sex and the genesis of the family.”(Ward 1995:140).

In this statement Ward explains the way in which we come to understand and allow the control of women’s bodies in relation to the arena of reproduction. It is this control that has facilitated a host of interventions

aimed at managing, what Nathanson has described as “sexually unorthodox girls” (Nathanson 1991). Such interventions include schools for “wayward girls”, maternity homes and contraceptive and sexual health services in various guises. Some of these measures are now seen as moralistic and dated. Arguably, they are perpetuated by strategies such as the Teenage Pregnancy Strategy with its emphasis on prevention. In recognising this and not wishing to be perceived as paternalistic “The vocabulary of New Labour is emblematic of the search for a rhetoric of moral civility that will waylay and reinvent the wayward”(Bullen, Kenway et al. 2000:445).

The processes employed to mobilise the aim of re-inventing the wayward can be compared with the aims of New Labour’s education system. In her analysis of the system Gewirtz (2001) explores the mechanisms by which New Labour is attempting to universally apply a middle-class set of values, attitudes and behaviours. The issue of class is contentious within New Labour discourse and young pregnancy and parenthood discourses. Whilst New Labour is reluctant to acknowledge the power of deep structural inequalities (Lister 2001) they, via the Teenage Pregnancy Strategy, place a specific focus on geographical areas where young pregnancy rates are high (Arai 2003a). The Teenage Pregnancy Strategy (Social Exclusion Unit 1999) describes a positive correlation between young pregnancy and area deprivation. This situation manifests in the process whereby young women in poorer areas are more likely to become pregnant than wealthier young women, and the poorer young women who do conceive are less likely than wealthier young women to obtain an abortion (Griffiths and Kirby 2000). The lower rates of middle class young pregnancy demand an explanation as strongly as rates of young working class pregnancy, a point frequently left unconsidered (Walkerdine, Lucey et al. 2001). Their analysis of young motherhood leads Walkerdine, Lucey and Melody (ibid) to argue that middle

class young women are “expected to regulate their sexuality and fertility in favour of academic attainment” p.188. Without sexual regulation of the same kind being exerted upon them working class young women are positioned to be fecund thus making young motherhood a mainly working class event. What precipitates the positioning of working class women as fecund and middle class women as sexually regulated is caused by the desire of the bourgeois to regulate all female fecundity, regardless of class. Thus, despite their reluctance to enter into debates of class and structural inequalities, by problematising young pregnancy and motherhood, Gewirtz’s (2001:365) conclusion that New Labour “aims to eradicate class differences by reconstructing and transforming working class parents into middle class ones” is as applicable to the Teenage Pregnancy Strategy as it is to her analysis of the education system.

This section has described young motherhood within the conceptualisation of an ideological perspective that seeks to control young women and their sexuality. Within this conceptual framework women whose mothering falls outside the definition of what is understood as good are constructed as deviant or even pathological (Llewelyn and Osborne 1990). The resultant moral and financial threat is argued earlier as being applied to lone mothers and demonstrated similarly as being applied to young mothers. These mothers are “bad” mothers who are subsequently held responsible for all manner of societal, physical and psychological ills. The following section will discuss the effect of constructing young mothers as a problem.

2.17 Moral discourse and the effects of constructing young motherhood as a problem

The process of positioning young mothers as problematic is a process of scapegoating whereby mothers are constructed as a problem or more simply

as bad mothers. Mothers of all ages are scapegoated and held responsible for a host of social, psychological and physical ills ranging from their children's autism to drug-use to criminal activity (Ladd-Taylor and Umansky 1998). Scapegoating fulfils the purpose of creating a false psychological distance between those who are positioned within the construct of the good mother and those who fit the bad, reinforcing the binary opposition. Positioning a person as a good mother absolves her from taking responsibility for the issues that contribute to the formation of the bad mother. Ladd-Taylor and Umansky (ibid) suggest that this is not only a personal process but one that also serves a political purpose. Thus:

“We cannot afford to let the cipher of the bad mother stand in for real confrontations with the serious issues of our society. When in fact we need to examine poverty, racism, the paucity of meaningful work at a living wage, the lack of access to day care, anti-feminism, and a host of other problems, let us not be diverted by “bad mothers” (Ladd-Taylor and Umansky 1998:23).

This statement provides a synopsis of the argument herein whereby young mothers are constructed as bad or problematic who require help and guidance. The argument for the prevention of young motherhood detracts from more challenging issues of as great concern in the lives of young mothers such as poverty, work, socio-economic issues and anti-feminism.

The process of scapegoating has also been described as “Blaming the Victim.” Ryan (1972) profiles the typical victim-blamer as belonging to the middle-class and being relatively economically secure. Victim blamers are people who enjoy the comforts and benefits of a political system yet experience psychological discomfort with issues such as racism and poverty. They feel conflicted between their privileged position and those of the problematised. The source of inner conflict becomes irreconcilable. The victim blamer's

solution is to construct the issue as a social problem. The problem has its victims who may be researched, theorized, blamed and treated. In doing this the “them” and “us” binary is created. The problem is constructed as belonging to them, not us, but victim blamers can salvage their conscience by “helping” solve the problem with interventions. This detracts from the need to address and change the fundamental causes of social problems as described in the previous citation by Ladd-Taylor and Umansky (Ladd-Taylor and Umansky 1998). Ryan initially applied the process of victim blaming to the construction and management of racism and poverty but later revised this to include anyone experiencing, or at risk of experiencing, inequality. His definition would include young mothers and the process of victim blaming resonates with the way that young pregnancy and motherhood has been constructed as a social problem.

The effects of the process of pathologising, blaming and scapegoating are seen in the form of stigmatisation. Goffman (1963) defines three types of stigma all of which are relevant to the construction of the young mother as a problem. These include abominations of the body that would include physical deformities. An example of this is pregnancy (albeit a temporary state). Second are blemishes of the character. The pregnant young woman can be constructed as embodying this as her physical condition demonstrates what could be included in this category, for example, undesirable personality traits such as dishonesty (defrauding the state housing system by conceiving for a home) and weak-wilfulness (having sex, particularly where outside of marriage). Finally, he lists tribal stigma that applies to race and religions etcetera. Young pregnancy can be seen to fit this definition when research focuses upon the attributes of young mothers, an example of which is the focus upon young pregnancy and motherhood as it relates to specific ethnicities (Boult and Cunningham 1991; Adolph, Ramos et al. 1995;

Hoffman 1998). Research taking this focus results in the maintenance of traditional stereotypes of young mothers as black or otherwise culturally located. Likewise the development of culturally specific interventions such as the Safe Passages to Adulthood programme, funded and led by the UK Department for International Development, places its emphasis on “research into young people’s sexual and reproductive health in poorer country settings” (Safe Passages to Adulthood 2001:17). This discourse reinforces the “them and us” conceptual binary. Furthermore, research placing an emphasis on cultural understandings of young motherhood suggests an over simplistic understanding of the issues that define and elucidate both culture and young motherhood (Phoenix 1994).

Goffman (1963) describes the assignation of a stigma theory to a person or tribe as facilitating the construction of an ideology to justify the inferiority of the stigmatised. This equates to blaming the victim.

Social policy has strong links with sexuality and as such has played a strong part in the stigmatisation of the victim. This discourse has “regulatory implications for women with respect to their sexual behaviour and relations, and with respect to their eligibility for poor relief” (Carabine 2001:304). For example, prior to the advent of reliable contraception and a change in attitudes, the stigma associated with being an unmarried mother was seen to act as a deterrent against out-of-marriage sexual activity. Although it can be argued this stigma remains, a relaxation in moral attitudes is cited as a cause of the increase in young pregnancies and sexually transmitted infections (Hill and Boydell 2001). This conceptualisation is consistent with the traditionally right wing agenda of the maintenance of traditional family values which targeted young mothers but that can also be seen to underpin some of New Labour’s thinking (McRobbie 2000).

Looking to other arenas in which people have experienced the effects of stigma can help us conceptualise the effects it may have on young mothers. This includes work in the fields of race, sexuality, mental and physical illness (Sontag 1979; Katz 1981; Sontag 1989; Gilmore and Somerville 1994; Henriques 1998; Teo 2000). Stigmatisation is an unhelpful concept as it focuses attention on the victim, placing blame with them. Henriques (1998) describes this process using a psychoanalytical model that has three steps in its construction of prejudice, these being frustration, aggression and displacement. Displacement is the important function of

“recognizing and theorizing the way in which an object may have no logical relation to the response it triggers but rather be a displacement which occurs as a defence” (ibid:74).

So feelings that might be self-located as difficult or unpleasant get put onto the “victim.” Henriques suggests the third step is often dropped from explanations of prejudice as biological models dominate psychological theories. The effect of dropping and therefore ignoring, displacement in the process is to place the responsibility for prejudiced responses back with the stimulus object, a process earlier described as blaming the victim. A key question is why no explanation is given for the reason the problem’s “victim” is a “victim” in the first instance, suggesting a covert belief that the victim may be to blame in some way. The question of how young pregnancy and parenthood comes to be constructed as a problem is central to this thesis and will be developed in the methodology chapter. The stigmatisation of “victims” is more appropriately conceptualised as prejudice that manifests behaviourally as discrimination (Ehrlich 1973). The use of the terms prejudice and discrimination places the responsibility with the respondent for unfair treatment as opposed to situating the problem with the “victim”

(Sayce 1998). Recognised effects of discrimination include social exclusion, rejections, poverty and isolation. Paradoxically, these are the very issues that New Labour claims to be seeking to address in the Teenage Pregnancy Strategy.

Discrimination against young mothers has recently been recognized by the charity, YWCA, who has launched a campaign entitled “Respect Young Mums” (YWCA 2005). The campaign seeks to address the discrimination experienced by young mothers using various approaches, inherent in which lie positive representations of young mothers.

This section has considered the effects of constructing young mothers as a problem that have been discussed in terms of stigmatisation and discrimination. The research questions seek to further understand this experience and will be discussed in chapters four and five. The research questions seek to further elucidate how these terms come to exist and how they effect the subjectivities of young mothers who are at the centre of the debate, yet whose voices this literature review demonstrates to be lacking.

2.18 Chapter Summary

This literature review has discussed the discrepancies apparent in the defining of young mothers. It has discussed the relationship between young mothers and political and psychological ideologies of motherhood that have arguably informed contemporary social policy on young motherhood including the Teenage Pregnancy Strategy (Teenage Pregnancy Unit 2005). The literature review has examined the construction of young pregnancy and parenthood as a problem. It has considered the effect of this discourse as leading to discrimination toward young mothers.

The review has demonstrated a number of areas in the pregnancy and motherhood research corpus, which are construed as tensions and dilemmas. The following list summarises the key points of the review and states the overall research areas and themes which will be discussed in the subsequent chapters.

Firstly, according to Ladd-Taylor and Umansky (1998) mothers are placed within the binary of the Good/Bad mother. Is this dilemma resolvable for them? If not, how do young mothers experience the dilemma? Secondly, young mothers are subject to stigmatisation and discrimination. What is it like to be a young mother operating within this context? Thirdly, much of the previous research on young pregnancy and parenthood fails to include the voices of young mothers and their accounts of pregnancy and parenthood. This thesis will attend to this omission by addressing the need to understand young motherhood by developing an understanding of the policy and social contexts and the way in which these frame their experiences, as described by young mothers, within these contexts.

CHAPTER 3

Methodology

The previous chapter demonstrated areas of tension and the existence of dilemmas within social science and policy literature on young pregnancy and motherhood. A number of themes run through the literature, summarised as follows:

- The negative sequelae to young motherhood
- Motivational factors in the decision to become a pregnant teenager
- Preventative strategies for limiting young motherhood
- Challenges to the construction of young pregnancy and motherhood as a problem

At the end of the previous chapter, key research areas were listed that focus upon the absence in the literature of an analysis of young pregnancy and motherhood from the point of view of young mothers. The purpose of this chapter is to explore the range of theoretical and methodological issues relevant to the research question that will address this perspective.

This chapter will consider the theoretical and epistemological underpinnings of the study that utilises Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA thereafter) and Discourse Analysis (DA thereafter). It will articulate and discuss the methodological issues that relate to the choice of CDA and DA. Ethical implications are discussed as they relate to power issues in research, researcher and participant safety, and confidentiality and young people. The rationale for the choice of data which includes policy and media texts and

interview generated texts, is discussed. The process of data collection will be detailed.

3.1 The research questions

Much social science research into young motherhood falls into the first three categories of the above list in the introduction to this chapter. The research in the fourth category is that most in need of further development [(Phoenix, Woollett et al. 1991), particularly with the younger age groups, as this is where statistics show the greatest increase in numbers of young mothers, and least data to be currently available. The literature has also been demonstrated to be lacking in qualitative data. There is little evidence to tell us how it feels to be a young mother or how young mothers themselves construct the issue. Such data will offer a different perspective to those currently available, with the potential to illuminate and expand understanding and knowledge. Current literature is based upon a number of assumptions about societal ideologies, the primary issue being that young pregnancy/parenthood is a problem and should as such be prevented. The research has been criticised for being based upon androcentric and primarily Eurocentric, ideologies and epistemologies (Macintyre and Cunningham-Burley 1993). The previous chapter has offered a critique of these constructions.

The young mother is often portrayed as something of a stereotype (Keep; Mills 2003; Alderson 2004; Driscoll 2004). This can be seen as a result of the media oversimplifying and reinforcing some of the “negative” messages conveyed by recent research and debates amongst politicians and policy makers (Klein 1999; Marsh 2000). In order to understand the experiences of young mothers it is necessary to deconstruct the stereotypical image of the young mother that represents young mothers as one large homogenous

group. It is more appropriate to consider the ways in which young mothers construct themselves as directed by the research question. This research aims to understand the experiences of young parents from their perspectives. In doing so the researcher will gain access to, and explore the lived experiences of young women as parents. The research will be concerned with revealing pervasive and significant concepts that young mothers hold and which they use to guide, to justify, or to explicate their experiences.

The research questions are:

1. What are the lived experiences of young mothers – as constructed by themselves and placed within a policy and media context?
2. What are the pervasive and significant concepts held and used by young mothers to guide, justify or explicate their experiences?

In order to answer the research questions, in the following section I will explore the methodological issues of epistemology as they relate to this study.

3.2 Discourse, Analysis and feminist epistemology

This study utilises two distinct, but inter-related methodological approaches, CDA and DA, the theoretical justification for which will now be discussed. CDA has its roots in the work of a number of philosophical approaches including the work of Marx (1954), Gramsci (1971), Althusser (2001), Foucault (1969), Bourdieu (1991), Bakhtin (1981), Halliday (1978) and Derrida (1976). The work is informed by the disciplines of semiotics, linguistics and pragmatics each of which brings further theoretical influences to bear. CDA theory is therefore, a “shifting synthesis” (Chouliaraki and Fairclough 1999) of theories and methods that remain in a dynamic state providing a continuously evolving capacity to shed light on the dialectic of the semiotic

and the social in a diverse range of settings by the utilisation of shifting sets of theoretical resources and the changing operationalisation of them.

In this study I am concerned with the ideological constructions of young motherhood in the way that Althusser was concerned with the reproduction of the means and relations of production through ideology. In his analysis of this process Althusser defines a reality he calls “Ideological State Apparatuses” (ISA’s thereafter) as consisting of various institutions, among them the institutions whose discourses will be analysed in the forthcoming CDA as being contextualising to the experiences of young mothers i.e. the political ISA and the cultural ISA. ISA’s function by ideology that is defined as “the system of the ideas and representations which dominate the mind of a man or social group” (ibid) and have been described in this way as it relates to understandings of reproduction and motherhood (see 2.7). CDA facilitates the analysis of the ideological framework of young motherhood because:

“if we want to know what ideologies actually look like, how they work and how they are created, changed and reproduced, we need to look closely at their discursive manifestations” (van Dijk 1998:6).

Central to this thesis is the term “discourse,” which has wide usage in the academic disciplines of, amongst others, critical theory, socio-linguistics, philosophy and social psychology. The term has a complex history leading to a fluidity of meaning, upon which there is varied degrees of consensus (Henriques, Hollway et al. 1988). The meaning employed is specific to the context that must therefore be made clear. In this thesis the term is used with a social psychological and CDA interpretation that integrates concern with power relationships and the resultant structures of texts. The thesis is informed by an epistemological positioning that aims to explore and elucidate the power relationships at work in the structuring of the discourses of young

pregnancy and motherhood and the way in which young mothers manage their own power. The epistemological positioning recognises that power is available through discourse, and manifests in practice but that power is not one sided, it is “always exercised in relation to a resistance, though a question is left about the equality of forces” (Henriques, Hollway et al. 1988:115).

The episteme is attributed to a Foucauldian definition of discourse in particular as interpreted and employed by feminists. In this respect the definition of discourse evolves from the Althusserian conceptualisation of ideology that is concerned with the acceptance and maintenance of power relations (Althusser 2001). Discourse theorists define discourse as always being about ideological struggle (Pecheux 1982) although the extent varies as to the degree of interchangeability applied in the use of the terms ideology and discourse. Foucault named three differences between ideology and discourse that include the opposition of ideology to a position of truth whereby Foucault makes no claims to speaking from a position of truth. What is knowable is limited and “all knowledge is determined by a combination of social, institutional and discursive pressures” (Mills 2004:30). Secondly, Foucault chose to ignore the subject or individual and chose to focus upon the constitution of the subject as a product of discursive and historical frameworks. Finally, Foucault considered the role of the economy in discourse whereby it is not the sole contributory in the production of state control. Instead he views it as interacting with social structures and discourses in a complex and unequal process of discourse formation. A Foucauldian approach to ideology suggests a dominant theoretical position in which the subject remains passive and without influence in its determination. Recognising agency allows the subject to have a position and to be resistant to dominant discourses, a valuable conceptualisation for

feminists. Whilst agency allows for resistance to dominant discourses feminists have attempted to modify Foucault's model of discourse to allow for a conflict in discourses as well as a cohesiveness whereby multiple discourses may be operative together to form further discourses whilst simultaneously conflicting to likewise form discourses (Mills 2004). Analysing the discursive manifestations of ideology resonates with a Foucauldian conceptualisation of discourse that defines it as a set of related statements that produce and structure a particular order of reality and which within that makes available specific subjective positions. These subjective positions operate collectively to form what becomes accepted knowledge that is historically and culturally specific. A Foucauldian conceptualisation of discourse does not suggest there is one clear truth that analysis can unearth but in the understanding that versions of reality are constructed in discursive formations (Slembrouck 2004).

The research questions seek to understand the contexts in which young parents operate. Critical Discourse Analysis (henceforth CDA) takes the position that there is a dialectical relationship between an event (in this study, young parenthood) and the situation(s), institution(s) and social structures that frame it (Fairclough and Wodak 1997). CDA is ideally positioned to explore the contextual framework within which young mothers operate (research question 1).

Keeping a focus on young parents in a bid to illicit any pervasive or significant concepts held by them results in the selection of Discourse Analysis (henceforth DA) as the most appropriate methodological approach to the analysis of the data obtained from interviewing young mothers. DA concerns itself with the way in which versions of the world and psychological realities are produced in discourse (Silverman 1997) thus enabling the

extrapolation of a conceptual understanding of young mothers experiences (research question 2).

Finally, the epistemological underpinnings of this study are made explicit. Taking a reflexive position, the review of the literature relating to young motherhood locates me as feminist. Feminist research is not about the tools and methods used but about the epistemological principles of a study (Harding 1987). In this study the principles focus upon the following key issue identified as being central to the principle aims of feminist methodology namely, that the methodology encourages women to speak for themselves about their condition. In doing this, an aim of feminist research is to understand women's oppression in order that we might reduce, or bring an end to it (Kelly, Burton et al. 1994; Crotty 1998). This study places young mothers at it centre. Their narratives provide a unique insight into the lived experiences of young mothers.

3.3 Methodology

The research questions stated in 3.1 represent the final product in an evolving struggle. At the start of this study I set out with a loosely defined set of research aims that still feature within my research question. These included the desire to understand the experiences of young mothers and to humanise the stereotype of the young mother.

From the process of reviewing the literature it has become clear that in order to understand the experiences of young mothers it is also necessary to understand the contexts within which they operate. Such contexts include policy, welfare and public. The experiences of young mothers and the contexts within which they operate are inter-related and inseparable, constructive and constitutive. As opposed to imposing my perception of the

contextual framework of young parents lives and in keeping with the aims of feminist methodology this research sought to enable the young mothers themselves inform me of the contextualisation of their lives. This was undertaken at an early stage of analysis of the interviews. A thematic analysis generated key areas perceived by the young mothers to inform their lives.

The result of this process was that I established two separate, and inter related, research areas. The way in which I developed these two areas is in reverse to the way in which I will present the data and their corresponding methodologies. This is for reasons of logical sequencing and greater clarity in presentation. Hence the two areas are defined thus:

- Stage One - that which requires an examination of the contextual location of the research. This will inform the second area of
- Stage Two - that which demands the researcher gaining an insight into the experiences of those at the centre of the inquiry.

The different areas under investigation will require the use of different methodologies. These will now be discussed.

3.3.1 Stage One –Methodological choice for Contextual Data

The aim of this study is to understand how young mothers construct and experience their lives. My initial choice of methodology was to interview young parents, as I wanted to hear the experiences of young mothers using their own voices. However, this is too simplistic as:

“we are beginning to realise that we cannot lift the results of interviews out of the contexts in which they were gathered and claim them as objective data with no strings attached.” (Fontana and Frey 2003:91)

In order to access and understand the experiences of young mothers we must first understand the context within which they exist. The literature review (see Chapter Two) has described how the issue of young pregnancy and parenthood has come to be constructed as a social problem. This accepted wisdom informs and shapes the experiences of young mothers. The thematic analysis of the interviews provided a number of institutions named by the young mothers during their interviews as impacting upon their lives. Amongst these institutions were policy and media. These institutions are hugely influential upon various aspects of young mothers lives ranging from the ability to affect their quality of life (e.g. housing and financial support) to the way in which they are constructed in society. It was decided to undertake an analysis of two examples of texts taken from the institutions described in order to gain an insight into the context in which young mothers lead their lives. The examples chosen represent texts taken from the following areas:

- social policy
- the media

The rationale for the selection of the specific examples of these texts is discussed in the data section of this chapter (see 3.3.3).

Once the type of institutional documents had been selected, it was necessary to select the most appropriate method of analysis. This technique has been described ensuring a fitness for purpose (Cohen, Manion et al. 2000). Most primary source documents are presented in one of the many types of textual format. Therefore, it was necessary to adopt a method of analysis that could

be applied to text. The method chosen as representing that, which would most ably meet the aims of this study, is Critical Discourse Analysis. I have stated the epistemological underpinnings of this research as being predominantly feminist. In keeping with this feminist epistemological positioning it is relevant to explore some of the political contexts within which young pregnancy and motherhood is located as potential sites for the maintenance of female oppression. The following section will define Critical Discourse Analysis and justify its application.

3.3.2 Critical Discourse Analysis

This section will discuss the methodological components of a CDA approach. CDA being of no single methodological approach, has various definitions. In simple terminology “CDA is the analysis of linguistic and semiotic aspects of social processes and problems” (Wodak 1996:17). This definition recognises discourse is a form of social practice. It takes the position that there is a dialectical relationship between a particular event (in this study, young pregnancy and parenthood) and the situation(s), institution(s) and social structure(s) that frame it (Fairclough and Wodak 1997). This study is concerned with understanding the lived experiences of young mothers but as stated these cannot be seen in isolation but should be viewed as part of a dialectical relationship. Therefore, it is necessary to analyse both the experiences of young mothers, as the discursive event, and the situation within which it is framed. CDA recognises discourse as socially influential and powerful. This power relationship will not be entirely visible. Thus one of the central aims of CDA is to make more visible opaque aspects of discourse and power relationships (Fairclough 1995). To this end CDA has been applied in various ways and fields including critical linguistics, social semiotics and reading analysis. CDA has been used in various and diverse types of social research including, for example, the study of racism (Teo 2000), to explain

how diagnosis' of attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder are made (McHoul and Rapley 2005) and to examine how Hong Kong has attempted to discursively construct itself as a city in the light of globalisation (Flowerdew 2004).

CDA has a political agenda and has been used in particular by feminist researchers (Wodak 1996; Mills 2004) and those challenging oppressive issues, among them racism (Wetherell and Potter 1992). The recognition of these political drives forms part of my commitment to the research principle of reflexivity.

A wider debate examining the ontological and methodological components of CDA is considered by various academics (see for example (Fairclough 1989; Chouliaraki and Fairclough 1999; Johnstone 2002). It is helpful to conceptualise it as both a theory and method (Chouliaraki and Fairclough 1999). There is no consensus about "how to do" CDA, no such methodological recipe. However, there are a number of core principles that will be adhered to, in most analyses. The task, in this study, is to choose the method with greatest fitness for purpose. Having explored the concept of CDA, I explored the various approaches within it. I found the work of Fairclough (Fairclough 1989; Fairclough 1995; Fairclough and Wodak 1997; Fairclough 2000; Fairclough 2001; Fairclough 2003) to provide the method best designed for addressing my research questions.

3.3.3 Data

CDA can be applied to any form of text (this definition includes written text, signs, photographs etcetera). Chapter Two has referred to the numerous discourses featuring young pregnancy and motherhood that are developed and sustained by various institutions. As described earlier it was decided to

undertake an analysis of two types of such discourses. The first example comes from social policy: it is the foreword to New Labour's policy on teenage pregnancy (Blair 1999). This was chosen as it represents and summarises most recent Government thinking on the issue, the analysis of whose language facilitates understanding of, and access to, the politics of New Labour (Fairclough 2000).

The second type of discourse is taken from the media. Chapter Two has described the media's propensity for articles featuring young pregnancy and parents. Two examples of such discourse were chosen. The first is an article from a national daily tabloid (Sherry and Price 2002) and details the experience of one young mother-to-be. This article was chosen as representative of many such articles. It is typical of a genre of article about young parents featured with some regularity in the media. By this I refer to features common to the articles such as the use of a "shocking" story of a young mother (usually, although not exceptionally (see Loudon and Vasager 1999 for an alternatively presented feature). The feature is constructed around a series of "facts" about the person's life. These are constructed as irregular and with alarmist language or tone. A commentary weaves its way through such articles often locating the issue statistically and asking rhetorical questions about the cause of the situation (see also Driscoll 2004). The tone of these texts locates an attributive factor, person or institution that can be held responsible for the situation. Examples of this include the young mother, the family, the government or failing moral standards in society. The images of the young parents are negative, presenting them as "failures in life" and a "burden to society."

The second example of media text is a transcript taken from a radio broadcast (Murray 2004) of which the subject under debate is the concept of

motherhood being left “too late.” This text was chosen as it represents a contrasting facet of the broader motherhood discourse featuring in this study (see Chapter Two). Texts of this type are fewer than those about young motherhood. However, the binary of too young or too old to mother creates implicitly the concept of a right time at which to mother. This will be discussed in greater depth in Chapters Four and Five.

3.3.4 Analysis in CDA

Having selected the texts for analysis this section will consider the analytical processes of CDA. Fairclough (Fairclough 2001) offers a five-stage model of CDA.

3.3.4.1 Stage One

The first stage of the analysis is to focus upon a social problem as opposed to a more traditional research question or hypothesis (Fairclough 2001). In this thesis the focus is upon the “problem” of young pregnancy and parenthood as discussed.

3.3.4.2 Stage Two

This requires the identification of obstacles to the social problem being addressed and resolved (Fairclough 2001). In order to explain the failure of society to address a social problem we must first understand how the problem comes to exist. Only then can we consider how it might be addressed, or consider what prevents this from happening. A number of analytical strategies are suggested revolving around the aim of exploring the roots of the problem – in this study these roots are seen as the practices and discourses within which young motherhood is located. This approach is consistent with the theoretical underpinnings of this research

that are informed by questions about social order, in particular, the location of women and their role and value in society.

In this situation the analysis will focus upon three networks of practices within which the social problem is located – policy, media and young mothers lived experience. These will be described later in this thesis (see chapter five) as among the thematic groups extrapolated from the data obtained from the young mothers. This therefore, maintains the original research goal of understanding the experiences of young mothers as constructed by themselves, in their own contexts.

In answering the above questions I show, using a process of deconstruction, how the discourse is structured in specific situations. The focus of the following sections will be an analysis of the three themes identified (policy, media and young women's lived experiences). The analysis will involve thinking about the target audience for the text(s) and how they will make sense of it, how they will interpret it.

Stage Two constitutes the heart of the analysis. The aim of this stage is to show how semiotic, including linguistic, properties of the text connect with what is going on socially in the broader interaction. It features a number of methodological techniques that can be summarized thus:

- textual analysis
- interdiscursive analysis
- linguistic analysis

3.3.4.2.1 Textual analysis

Textual analysis involves the paradigmatic and syntagmatic analysis of the text. The paradigmatic analysis explores the patterns and choices made in texts. The syntagmatic analysis focuses on the way in which words and phrases are linked together. This can be seen as the texturing work of the text. It has many facets including representation, relating, identifying and valuing.

3.3.4.2.2 Interdiscursive analysis

This section of the analysis involves the exploration of the differing genres and discourses used throughout the text in question. It is useful to consider how they operate together.

3.3.4.2.3 Linguistic analysis of text

Fairclough describes a number of foci for the linguistic analysis of text that range from looking at the entire way in which the dialogue is structured throughout to the application of individual clauses and even specific words. The way these are linked together can form part of the analysis, as it considers the use of tones of voice and mood.

3.3.4.3 Stage Three

Having elicited data that provides an understanding of how teenage pregnancy and parenthood comes to be constructed as a social problem, stage three focuses upon asking questions about the way in which people or institutions might be in a position to want to maintain the social order as it is.

3.3.4.4 Stage Four

Stage four complements the second stage. It looks at ways in which social order might change and be re-structured.

3.3.4.5 Stage Five

Finally, the researcher is provided with an opportunity to critically reflect on the research process and consider their positioning within it. This emanates from the understanding that all knowledge is generated from a particular position. Being reflexive is to be aware of this and to acknowledge the position from which a researcher is working (Chouliaraki and Fairclough 1999). This resonates with the commitments to reflexivity undertaken in this study.

The above five-stage model describes one interpretation of the analytic framework for CDA. This will be the model applied to the data in this study. This will be the model of CDA applied to the data in this study. It represents one interpretation of the analytical framework. I have discussed the rationale for the use of the method as a way of deconstructing some of the societal dynamics within which young parents situate themselves. I will now consider the methodology chosen for the second set of data.

3.3.5 Stage Two – Methodological choice for analysis of young parents lived experiences.

The first stage of research provides a contextual shaping for the social problem being studied. The second strand of research concerns itself with the focus of the research – the young mothers themselves.

At the centre of this study was the desire to make heard the voices of young mothers, thus addressing the gap identified in the literature review and being

consistent with a feminist epistemological agenda. It is central that the voices be those of the young women describing their positions in their way. The choice of research tool considered most fit for purpose (Cohen, Manion et al. 2000) was the semi-structured interview with an analytical approach of Discourse Analysis. DA will be discussed later in this chapter. First, a justification is demonstrated for the choice of the research tool.

3.3.6 Data

Interview methods can be situated along a continuum. At one end of the continuum are found surveys and questionnaires and at the other, the unstructured interview. These tools use different techniques and will permit the researcher access to different types of data, requiring different tools of analysis. The choice of tool is dependant upon the type of data required (Robson 1993). This study requires data generated by the respondent which a survey or questionnaire will be unable to attain. An unstructured interview allows the respondent to control the flow of the interview and the subsequent data generation (Scott and Usher 1999). A semi-structured interview was undertaken. The rationale for this follows.

3.3.6.1 The semi-structured interview

A way in which to gain access to the lived worlds of young mothers is to talk with them and ask them directly about their experiences as mothers. This correlates with the aims of this study that is to enable the participants to tell their own stories. It is of central importance that I limit my shaping of the way in which the stories unfold as it is important in this study that the data comes as directly as possible from those who I perceive to understand best the experiences of young mothers – young mothers themselves. The rationale for the use of a semi-structured interview were:

- I wished to create a safe environment in which to explore issues
- Freedom for the researcher to explore issues as they arose
- Freedom for the participants to explore issues as they arose

I was concerned that some of the participants might find an open interview threatening. The result of this may have been discomfort for them and in turn a poorer data collection. This would be inappropriate for two reasons. Firstly, there is the ethical consideration of the incorrectness of placing any participant in such a position (see 3.4.2). Secondly, for my own gain, I wanted the participants to feel comfortable with talking freely about their experiences. A loose framework provides a limited structure that acts as a generative guide in this case (Kvale 1996). This framework and its value will be discussed later in this chapter (see 3.3.6.1).

The use of a loose framework afforded me the opportunity to explore the issues that I felt relevant to the study. During the interviews I had at my side a list of prompts for use during the interview. I used this list as discussion triggers as opposed to a set of questions to be asked in a particular format. This is the list:

1. How did you come to be pregnant?
2. Describe your experiences as a mother.
3. What do you think about the way the media represent young mothers?
4. How are your parents about you being a mother?

These prompts were based around the aims of the research.

The first trigger was the only one utilised at each interview. It served as an opening to discussion. It would often cause a humorous reaction as the

question could be interpreted as my asking how the participant physically got pregnant. This small injection of humour acted as an icebreaker thus putting both the participant and myself more at ease. From that point a discussion would ensue. I rarely had to utilise the prompt list or refer to it, as the issues were generated as part of the natural flow of the interview conversation. Upon occasion I did ask a question or offer a prompts. As such I have shaped the outcome of this research despite aiming for the discourse to be led by the participants.

It is impossible for a researcher hand over this locus of control entirely (Kvale 1996). From the first moment the issue of participating in the interviews was raised with the women they would begin to formulate ideas and feelings about the research and me. Indeed, it is worth making the observation here that a gatekeeper previously approached by me would always make the suggestion that a person might participate in the research to the potential respondent. This allows for another interpretation of the research to be added to those of the participants. Their responses to these stimuli would be made in direct response to the information given at the outset by the gatekeeper and would be the start of an ongoing dynamic occurring between them and myself. In addition, their perception would be informed by multiple earlier experiences such as previous interview situations.

The use of a semi-structured interview affords the greatest opportunity for freedom for participants to raise and discuss any issues they choose. This has been explained to the participants at the beginning of the interview as part of the process of establishing boundaries. This allowed freedom for the participants to explore areas I had not anticipated thus allowing the shaping of the dialogue to be in part controlled by the participant.

The previous sections have considered the selection of the semi-structured interview as the research tool most appropriate for the purpose of this study. The next section will discuss the choice of methodology.

3.3.7 Discourse Analysis

There are many methods that can be described as discourse analysis. Using the term in its broadest sense it has been described as analysis of “all forms of spoken interaction, formal and informal, and written texts of all kinds.” (Potter and Wetherell 1987:7). Thus DA can be applied to a host of interactions and texts including the choice of data, which are written texts taken as transcriptions from semi-structured interviews. DA is a methodology that has three unifying assumptions. These are anti-realism, constructionism and reflexivity. Thus DA is concerned with “the way versions of the world, of society, events and inner psychological worlds are produced in discourse” (Silverman 1997:146). The focus is therefore, upon the way in which participants construct their positions and the way in which subjectivities are positioned and constructed by discourses. The focus is upon the way in which texts are built. These principles work well with the aspect of the research question that seeks to explore the lived experiences of young mothers.

DA recognises that self identity is not a fixed entity, at the core of which lays a true reality to be revealed. Instead, it focuses on the concept that the self is dynamic and situational, constructing and constitutive. The task of this study is to discover the way in which young mothers construct their positions. CDA will be used to explore the more constitutive elements of this process, whilst DA will focus upon the constructive role. For the purpose of the study this is a simplistic way of expressing the construction of self-

identity. It is more appropriate to acknowledge the inter-relatedness of these processes.

DA, like CDA, has been used to examine power relations for example, in the construction of femininity and masculinity (Henriques, Hollway et al. 1988) and the indoctrination of children into fascist ideology (Pinto 2004). This examination of power relations is consistent with the feminist underpinnings of this study (Kelly, Burton et al. 1994; Crotty 1998).

Practical approaches to DA vary according to the researcher and the issue being researched. There are multiple ways of applying DA. It is helpful to conceptualise DA as a mentality as opposed to a specific recipe for analysis. Indeed:

“there is no *method* (emphasis in original) to discourse analysis in the way we traditionally think of an experimental method or content analysis method. What we have is a broad theoretical framework concerning the nature of discourse and its role in social life, along with a set of suggestions about how discourse can be studied...”
(Potter and Wetherell 1987:175).

In this study the texts being researched are interview transcripts. Underpinning these texts are discourses which elucidate the self-locating of the respondents. The task of DA in this study is to elicit these discourses thus addressing the research question. The approach taken for this data set is to search the data for what has been described as discourses or more recently as “interpretive repertoires” (Potter and Wetherell 1987; Silverman 2001). This required that the data be explored a number of times and in a variety of ways.

Having described the features of DA as applied in this study at this point it is helpful to make explicit the methodological differences between CDA and DA.

3.3.8 The application of CDA and DA

This thesis uses both CDA and DA. A return visit to the research question illustrates the rationale for the choice of these two approaches. The first question states:

1. What are the lived experiences of young mothers – as constructed by themselves and placed within a policy and media context?

DA is concerned with describing how texts are both constitutive and constructive. Hence, the ways in which young mothers live out their experiences are shaped by numerous factors, and young mothers reciprocally shape these factors. The discourses produced by the two sets of factors serve different purposes, one being predominantly constitutive, and the other being predominantly constructive, although both share the commonality of serving to justify their position. It is this difference in purpose and type of discourse that warrants the use of different methodologies.

This thesis is concerned with analysing the contexts within which young mothers operate, in particular this relates to the political ideologies and psychological theories, expressed as discourses, which inform the policy that shapes their existence. The use of the word “critical” creates a significant difference between the two approaches taken to the data. “Critical” in a discourse analytical context suggests “a systematic methodology and a thorough investigation of context” (Wodak 1996 p.19) that is consistent with the need recognised in this study to analyse the context of the young mothers experiences as an expression of ideological discourse. Wodak (ibid)

argues it is insufficient to analyse texts to ascertain if it does ideological work, it is also necessary to consider how texts are received and interpreted and to consider the effects of this. The use of DA is an interpretive process (Potter and Wetherell 1987) facilitates this consideration and is consistent with the acceptance of CDA as a multi and inter-disciplinary approach.

CDA has previously been applied in the analysis of social problems (see (Fairclough 1993; Talbot 1998) by analysing the contextual fabric of these problems and their representation as opposed to analysing those constructed as being at the root of the problem, in this study young mothers. Thus, in this study it can be demonstrated to be the research method fit for the purpose of exploring the contexts in which young pregnancy/parenthood is constructed and represented as a social problem.

The second research question asks:

“What are the pervasive and significant concepts held and used by young mothers to guide, justify or explicate their experiences?”

A different method is required for the analysis of the way in which the young mothers interviewed come to construct their lived experiences as this question is concerned with discourses are received, interpreted and experienced. One way this manifests is in self-identity with which DA is concerned with understanding.

The application of a dual methodological approach to the issue being investigated strengthens the findings of this study (Silverman 1997). CDA is critiqued for its explicit agenda, which challenges the orthodox academic belief in objectivity. In going beyond a single text and seeking to understand the meanings made of these texts by the actors (young mothers) involved this

dual analytical approach addresses this criticism (Cameron 2001). It recognises that a social problem is comprised of many interrelated factors and seeks to understand some of these.

3.4 Ethical research

Having established the methodological choices for this study and before the process of data collection is begun, the research must be considered in terms of ethics. The research has a number of issues that are ethically sensitive including:

- Issues relating to power
- Issues relating to researcher and participants safety
- Issues relating to confidentiality
- Issues relating to young people

The issue of ethics is one that threads its way throughout the thesis, the implications of which are not simply confined to the methodology chapter (Ely, Anzul et al. 1991) The aim of the exploration of ethical questions as they relate to a piece of research is to ensure that the research poses no risk of physical or psychological damage to the research participants (Fowler 1993). Such a goal is unattainable. A safer aim may be that all risks to participants are minimized, as the taking of risks is an inevitable hazard in the quest for knowledge. Strategies should be in place to ensure, and when, damage does occur, however limited, support is available. I was conscious of the risks to the participants in my research in advance. In particular, I was aware of the potential for people to experience psychological difficulties as a result of the potentially sensitive areas that may be addressed during the interviews.

I will now discuss each of these areas individually and describe what was done to minimise any potentially involved risks.

3.4.1 Issues relating to power

It is important to acknowledge the power dynamic between the researcher and the participant. The participants in this study will have a degree of power over the researcher as they control the information provided. The research is non-existent without participants. The researcher also has power as someone who is perceived to be in control of the research situation. There may also be power issues relating to issues such as socio-economic class and ethnicity. Once the information has been supplied the researcher can be seen to take control of it. It will be primarily within my control what becomes of the information in terms of how I collate it and analyse it as data. What happens to the data thereafter (in terms of publications etc) will also be within my jurisdiction.

The issue of power is particularly salient when recognising the feminist epistemological stance of this researcher. In arguing for a feminist methodology Mies (1993) stipulates one of the postulates as being research with a “view from below.” This concept links to the notion of reflexivity or what Mies (ibid) terms “conscious partiality” in recognising research as being a potential instrument of dominance. A feminist methodology aims for the integration of women’s issues into the academic research agenda. This study contributes to achieving this aim. Recognition must be given to the understanding that the unequal power distribution in the researched-researcher relationship and process is unavoidable. Instead the solution

“lies in accepting the dilemmas and maintaining an awareness of when and why we are not able to make the research process a true dialogue,

thus giving full legitimacy to the subjectivity of the other as well as to our own.”(Acker, Barry et al. 1991:142).

Attempts to attend to the issue of power can be demonstrated by the application of the principle of consent. In this study the medical concept of maturity (see 2.3) is applied in deeming a person capable of making consent. Hence, all participants will be asked to read and sign consent prior to their interview (see Appendix 1). This will illustrate the participant’s rights that will include:

- the right to withdraw from the research at any stage,
- the right to refuse to answer any questions they wish
- the right to request the presence of another person during the interview.
- the right to read the transcript of their interview
- the right to change, or withdraw, anything they wish in this transcript

The rights are particularly pertinent in light of the potential sensitivity of some of the areas that could arise for discussion, during the interviews. During, or as a result of the interviews participants are potentially vulnerable to experiencing a range of emotions. As the researcher and interviewer, I am ethically bound to be aware of this and to have considered possible consequences. As a former Sexual Health Counsellor I am used to addressing such issues and will utilise skills gained from this experience, if required. However, I am also aware of my boundaries in my capacity as a researcher and to this end will promote more appropriate support mechanisms in the form of youth workers, support workers, counsellors etc, if required.

3.4.2 Researcher's and participant's safety

This definition includes both physical and psychological safety, both of which will now be discussed.

Physical safety means the need to be aware of the possible risks being taken by the researcher and the participant as two (relative) strangers meeting, on unfamiliar territory. Safety measures will be taken. For the purpose of this data collection these will include meeting in a public venue where other people are present (although the interview will be performed in a private area to protect the confidentiality of the participant). Both parties will leave contact details with someone. I will carry a mobile phone for emergency contact.

The risk of psychological distress is referred to earlier. I am aware that our discussion may be raising difficult feelings for my participants. Equally, I am conscious of the risk posed to me, of discomfort, both personally and professionally. It is important to surface these difficulties and to be prepared to address them by both parties having a safe place to debrief as necessary. I have described these mechanisms for the participants. In my case, I am able to seek support from my supervisor and from fellow research students.

The data analysis will demonstrate how these sensitive issues were managed.

3.4.3 Confidentiality

Confidentiality is of vital importance to every research study (Kvale 1996). This is particularly so for this study given the small number of participants, the sensitive nature of the information to be gathered and the potential depth of this information. There are a number of routine steps that will be taken to ensure participants confidentiality including:

- A discussion about confidentiality with participants prior to the audio taping of any material
- Limiting the number of people who hear any audiotapes of interviews to myself and to my supervisor.
- The use of pseudonyms for participants and locations in any written materials produced as a result of the research
- The safe storage and ultimately the safe destruction of all audiotapes and transcripts acquired during the research process.

3.4.4 Issues relating to young people

I hope to conduct my study with younger mothers of the age 13 – 16 age group, although practicalities necessitated those in the 16 - 19 age group also (see 3.7.1). In the past research with young people/children has raised a specific set of ethical questions regarding their ability to offer informed consent to participate in research, their right to protection from inappropriate questioning and subsequent possible exploitation. The guidance and literature available on this topic is limited. Societal institutions (health, education, the legal system) vary in their definitions of what constitutes a young person (see 2.3) the age at which they become capable of taking responsibility for their actions, thus including the ability to form consent. It is therefore difficult to ascertain clear guidelines on how to protect a potentially vulnerable section of society. The most helpful guidance I have found is that provided by Barnados (Alderson 1995:49)

“children is used as the only term which includes everyone from babies to people in their mid to late teens who are in many ways young adults...Many adults are nervous and vulnerable, and many children are articulate and confident.”

This statement draws attention to the complex issues involved in the application of age criteria and subsequent attempts to secure consent. The document provides a comprehensive discussion of what constitutes ethical research with children (and I would suggest, with all participants). These issues include: considering the purpose of the research, costs and hoped-for-benefits of the research, privacy and confidentiality, selection, inclusion and exclusion of participants, funding, review and revision of the research aims and methods, information for children parents and carers, consent, impact on children. Each of these issues was given consideration prior to progressing with the study.

As part of the commitment to undertaking ethically sound research, I submitted a paper (see Appendix 2) about this study to the Ethics Committee of the Department of Education at Brunel University. This process involved detailing the outline of the research and its methodology. I discussed the ethical issues that related to the study. This was then considered by the committee and advice given about the need for changes or any additional measures to be included. The process was helpful and productive. In the end, my research proposal was approved.

3.5 Evaluation of the research

Thus far the methodological choices and ethical considerations of this study have been discussed. The following section will consider the way in which the study will be evaluated.

This study employs a variety of evaluative methods based upon the epistemological understanding that the knowledge generated is situated and contingent (Taylor 2001). This refers to the knowledge claims that will be made being specific to the circumstances of time, place and participants,

which this study was conducted. The claims therefore, “do not have the status of stable and enduring truth” (ibid). Techniques applied to ensure the good quality of this research include the use of insider status, and member checking of the data. A further measure is a commitment to reflexivity in the research process. These will now be discussed.

3.5.1 Insider status

This refers to the emphasis placed by researchers on their particular ability to collect and interpret data. This may include professional qualifications. As a former Sexual Health Counsellor I am trained and practised in active listening and the skills used in aiding understanding of a persons conceptualisation of an issue. This will be of use in the data collection process.

Insider status also includes issues perceived by the researcher to be shared by themselves and the participants that they perceive to create a shared understanding of the issue being investigated. In this study I share with the participants the experience of becoming a mother and undertaking the journey that is motherhood.

It is acknowledged that both my professional background and personal experience affects the way I hear and understand the data. No two people are the same and therefore, they cannot share an entire understanding of any experience or phenomena. It is appropriate to surface and recognise the similarities and differences between participants and the researcher. This constitutes part of the reflexive process in research and is demonstrated throughout this study (Taylor 2001).

3.5.2 Member checking

This process is a way of promoting the quality of the interpretation of the interview generated data. At a basic level this will be done during the interviews by using skills such as listening, questioning and paraphrasing to ensure that I have understood what the participant is saying. The technique therefore employs the participants as validators (Potter and Wetherell 1987). In this study it will involve them at another level of checking by asking them to take the opportunity to revisit their interview by reading the transcripts of it.

I will send each participant a copy of their transcript, along with a covering letter and a return stamped addressed envelope in an envelope marked "Private and Confidential". This will be sent to a mutually agreed address, discussed at the conclusion of their interview. In doing this the women will be presented with an opportunity to amend anything with which they are dissatisfied for any reason. I will explain to the women that I will honour any alterations the women might choose to make. This was considered by the Ethics Committee to be an important part of the structure provided to assist in the protection of the women's psychological well being. I did not receive any reply from the participants.

This process can be critiqued as actually altering the data and therefore changing its original reality. However, this study makes no claims to its ability to access the truth. Instead, it represents only the researchers interpretation of a jointly constructed social reality.

3.5.3 Reflexivity

The way an individual researcher experiences and understands a situation is based on their individual experiences and epistemological positioning.

(Hammersley and Atkinson 1995). The same can be said of research participants. What occurs during an interview will be a unique co-construction of a social reality. Therefore,

“A discursive conception of truth goes beyond polarization of objective and subjective – valid knowledge is sought through a rational argument by participants in discourse. The basic medium of this discourse is language, which is neither subjective nor objective, but inter-subjective.”(Kvale 1996:286).

This statement argues that polarising research methods into those that are objective or subjective is over-simplistic, instead it directs us to consider the inter-subjectivity of the creation of knowledge that occurs during a language based research (or otherwise) medium. In recognition of this, it has been suggested the way forward is for researchers to analyse and make explicit their agendas and role in the co-construction of knowledge (Potter and Wetherell 1987) therefore, being reflexive throughout the research process enables the researcher to make explicit their personal contributions to the research process and subsequent findings. Denying the role of the researcher and all they comprise, along with the messy, contradictory process that is research, reproduces the research ideology of “hygienic research” that is fundamentally dishonest (Stanley and Wise 1993). However, the recognition and practice of reflexivity demands “that all practices have an irreducible discursive aspect...in the sense that discursive constructions of practices are themselves parts of practices” (Chouliaraki and Fairclough 1999:26). Reflexivity forms part of a debate about self-production, which assumes access to the resources, techniques and practices necessary for producing, and knowing, a self (Skeggs 2004). Furthermore, the creation of the self is dependant upon that which the reflexive practitioner selects that is always reliant upon history and memory [Bennett, 1998 #394 in (Skeggs 2004). In

the light of this I recognise the limitations of my (or anyone's) ability to be reflexive whilst still valuing the contribution the approach makes in illuminating and making explicit the processes and subjectivities involved in the making of this piece of knowledge.

3.6 Moving into the research field

With the selection of the appropriate method and having paid due attention to the ethical considerations of this study I went about making contact with young parents via various services available to them. This was a safe way for myself as a researcher and offered more likelihood of securing a positive response to the request for an interview. Services targeted included young mothers support groups, youth groups, child-health related services and educational establishments.

I made contact with the appropriate "gatekeeper" (usually the service leader in the first instance, amongst these were youth workers, project managers and head teachers) via the telephone or email, introducing myself and explaining my wishes. The responses to this varied and can be summarised thus:

	Response	Action	Result
1.	Not able or wishing to be involved	None	
2.	Willing to advertise the research	Poster sent requesting research participants	No response
3.	Willing to discuss the	Personal visit with	Invited back to

	research in person	accompanying supportive literature	interview participants
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Figure 3.1: Results of contact with Gatekeepers

3.6.1 Access to the research participants

The most successful means of recruiting participants proved to be making direct contact with a service provider and following this up with a personal visit. These meetings were fruitful. I was able to clarify my research aims and ensure that the service client group was appropriate to my research criteria. In turn, the gatekeeper could assess my work. I hoped to reassure them of my best intentions and integrity. I would take to each of these meetings my university identification, a letter of introduction from my supervisor and a synopsis of my research with my contact details. These were left with the gatekeeper for future reference. At the end of each of these meetings I was happy to make an appointment to re-attend the centre to interview any willing volunteers who could be recruited by the gatekeeper in the interim. The following describes a meeting with a gatekeeper.

3.6.2 A Meeting with a Gatekeeper

My contact with Hilary was entirely serendipitous. I was struggling to make any contact with service providers who could lead me to young parents. This was for various reasons – the information about services was scarce, difficult to locate and unreliable. Some gatekeepers did not wish to engage with me for reasons including confidentiality policies and lack of recourse. Some services did not have the clientele appropriate for my study. I obtained Hilary’s phone number via a colleague of hers who suggested she might be able to put me in contact with services providers for young parents. On speaking to Hilary I learnt she had recently established a support group for

young mothers in an inner city area. I explained my aims on the telephone and she agreed to meet with me to discuss them further.

We met at the Youth Club that housed the Young Mums Group. It was situated along a dirty alley in an inner-city suburb. My young daughter accompanied me. No one else was present at the meeting. Hilary and I began by introducing ourselves and she gave me a background to the project – she was a youth worker with teenage children of her own. She had wanted to provide a service specifically for the young mothers with whom she made contact as part of her youth working remit. She felt that these young mothers were experiencing a host of complex difficulties as they adapted to becoming parents. Her aim was to offer support for them in these areas.

I explained my professional background and my research aims. Initially I felt Hilary was wary of me. We discussed this and she explained the main reason for this was that she was protective of the young women with whom she worked and she didn't wish to introduce an "outsider" to them with the potential to cause them harm. She sought assurance of my personal and professional integrity. I aimed to demonstrate this by providing the documents detailed above and by talking with her. As the discussion progressed we seemed to relax in each other's company. I noted that Hilary particularly welcomed the concept of returning the interview transcripts to the participants. She described this as empowering and validating to them.

As well as answering questions specifically about my research I felt Hilary was checking me out and we discussed feminism and in particular, experiences of motherhood.

Hilary took copies of my documents before showing me the room in which she hoped I would feel comfortable to conduct the interviews. This room was her small, but valuably private, office. She showed me the facilities for making drinks so I could make the participants and myself comfortable prior to the interview.

We agreed a date upon which I would return to start the interviews. This was in two weeks from our meeting. Hilary and I agreed this as suitable as it allowed her time to speak with the young women about the study and for them to consider participating.

I left the interview feeling a variety of emotions. I was relieved it had gone seemingly well and that I had my desired outcome. I felt excited and nervous at the prospect of finally actually undertaking some interviews after the long preparatory period. And finally I felt grateful to Hilary for being so generous of her time and help. I was fast realizing my study depended upon such help.

3.7 In the field

Figure 3.2 details the environments and number of participants interviewed in this study.

LOCATION	n
Young Mums Group	4
SureStart	3
Provider Referral Unit (PRU)	2
Church based Educational Establishment	2
Total	11

Figure 3.2: Participant recruitment

As detailed above the participants interviewed represent a random sample selected from a number of bodies offering services to young parents.

3.7.1 Difficulties in recruiting participants

My original target group for this study was the younger end of the spectrum of young parents. I hoped to interview young parents and parents-to-be aged 13 to 17 years old. In reality, I experienced a number of difficulties in accessing this group. Some of these have already been described.

3.7.2 Absent voices

As described I had difficulty in accessing parents from the 13-16 year old category. One reason for this may be that I chose to approach participants via organisations. Younger parents don't appear to utilise these services as much as older parents. The service providers I met were facing a similar problem and they described difficulties in finding ways to reach young parents, particularly young fathers. The absence of data relating to young fathers is also recognised within the research field and contributes to the poor public perception of young fathers, an image contradicted by empirical evidence demonstrating young single fathers to be no less able or caring than divorced older fathers despite hindrance from a range of practical, legal and emotional barriers (Nyland forthcoming; Speak forthcoming). The inability to access young parents was frustrating. I was aware the younger parents were "out there" particularly when I visited my local shopping complex and could see them. It was hugely tempting to approach people on the street for an interview but would have been unethical as well as compromising the safety and rights of any participants or myself as a researcher.

I chose to extend the age group. The following demonstrates the age range of the participants that were interviewed:

Age at interview	n
16	3
17	1
18	2
19	4
20	1
Total	11

Figure 3.3: Participants age profile at time of interview

Figure 3.3 demonstrates the age range of the women interviewed when they had their first child

Age at first birth	n
15	2
16	3
17	3
18	2
19	1
Total	11

Figure 3.4: Age of participants at time of first birth

3.7.3 Reflections on the participant recruitment process

I perceived many of the gatekeepers to be suspicious of my intentions. Having worked on their “side,” I am able to sympathise with this point of view. Requests for access to clients for research purposes are commonplace

in some environments and are time-consuming for the professional who is unlikely to benefit directly from the experience. Of greater importance is the duty of client confidentiality to which many of the service providers must adhere. I found myself feeling uncomfortable on occasion as I empathised with the gatekeeper's apparent reluctance to engage with me but equally felt frustrated at not being able to gain access to my target group. I was therefore very grateful to those gatekeepers who were prepared to give me a hearing.

It was difficult to not to be deterred when I made seemingly endless phone calls to people unable to help me gain access despite the above valid reasons.

Finally, it was disappointing when participants chose not to attend our meetings. I was unable to obtain my data and had wasted resources.

3.8 On being in the field

3.8.1 Interview protocol

The semi-structured interviews were each conducted within similar parameters. Kvale (Kvale 1996:128) states, "The first few minutes of an interview are decisive". Recognising the importance of this statement I used the first few minutes of the interview to frame it, putting in place boundaries and a framework to ensure maximum psychological safety for the participant. I therefore begin each interview by introducing myself (again) and thanking the young mother for participating in my research. I explained the limited framework of the interview. I then asked a few relatively safe questions about the person's name, age and age of her children. I then reiterated the agreements on the consent form and checked it was signed. I concluded this section of the interview by checking the recording equipment was working and that the participant was comfortable with proceeding.

3.8.2 The interview framework

I would begin each interview with the same question: “Can you tell me about how you came to be pregnant, the circumstances leading up to it?”

From here, the responses varied and the interview took on its own dynamic. I had a prompt sheet at my side detailing a number of issues (see 3.3.6.1) I aimed to address during the interview. I only referred to this if I felt concerned that the participant had not raised these issues as she allowed her story to unfold by itself. I did not take field notes during the interview as I felt this to be too distracting for both myself, and the participant.

As would be expected, some of the women were more confident at expressing themselves than others. Some had areas of their stories that were painful or private. I did my utmost to work with these issues in a safe and professional manner.

3.8.3 Reflections on interviews

I found this part of the research process immensely interesting and enjoyable. I also found it sometimes very painful. I was aware on a number of occasions that I found it difficult to deal with the issue of professional boundaries – for example when a young woman talked about her experiences of sexual abuse I would find it difficult not to slip in to my previous professional capacity of counsellor. My field notes describe this:

“That feeling of now knowing what I was walking into was partially realised today. The first woman I interviewed was very vulnerable and talked openly from an early stage about her history of sexual abuse. I had forgotten how difficult for me it could be to hear these accounts. Momentary panic about where to take our discussion. Felt rather voyeuristic – unsure how much to ask, explore – what was relevant, what was not – how to sound “right”, not

too noseey, not too dismissive or trivialising. Concerned at end about leaving woman raw and open. Shared this with her and suggested she seek support but felt very inadequate.”

I was aware of the potential for such circumstances to arise and was prepared. I had available details of local support facilities for the women should they wish it. I was grateful to my supervisor and my fellow research students in providing me with a space in which to de-brief.

3.8.4 Concluding the interviews

The interviews drew to a natural close. The women generally made completing signals and I took some time to reflect upon the process and clarify any issues as required. I would check out that I had not only addressed everything I hoped to but that the women had said all they wished.

I would conclude the interview by thanking the women and repeating again what would happen to the audiotapes once we separated. The tape recorder was switched off. I observed that on a few occasions it was at this point a few of the women visibly relaxed and began talking openly. This phenomena is recognised in the counselling community as the moment when the participant/client thinks they are “safe” and that their interview is complete. They then chose this moment to say something of particular salience leaving the counsellor with no room to follow-up on the comment. I too felt unsure about how to address this situation. I decided that the participant had defined the interview as complete and therefore, anything said after the tape recorder was switched off, was not for use as data.

Once the participant had left the interview room I made some brief field notes that consisted of an interview synopsis, my reflections on the process and any points of practical concern that required further attention. These notes proved to be useful in the analytical process. I used them as a trigger for alternative ways of reading the data when I felt I was getting stuck in a rut of only being able to see what was being said from a particular perspective. I used them also to stimulate thought processes when inspiration was running thin.

3.8.5 Difficulties during the interviews

A number of difficulties arose during the interviews. The major difficulty was that of child-care. Most of the women interviewed had children. I had asked that, if possible, the women be interviewed alone but for various reasons this was not always possible. On several occasions interviews were conducted with babies sleeping in their mothers arms. In addition, on a few occasions they were conducted with children awake and in need of some form of occupation. This could be viewed as problematic and causing a compromise to the data collection. Alternatively, it can be viewed as adding a realistic quality to the data – a genuine reflection on the realities of life as a mother.

Other practical difficulties included being unable in some settings to access a quiet, private space in which to conduct the interview. Generally, this did not pose a problem but one interview was interrupted a few times. I found this disturbing and believe the participant did also. The majority of interviews were conducted in private rooms on the organisations premises. This was deemed the most appropriate environment for safety reasons.

Another potential difficulty is that referred to in a psychoanalytical situation as “transference.” This describes the process whereby feelings raised in the

client about a particular person or events are transferred onto the therapist. Whilst I recognise that the interviews with the young mothers were not therapeutic in their intent, the issue of transference is always a possibility. I was particularly conscious of this, as I was pregnant during some of the interviews. I was also conscious of my age at this point, as I was clearly quite a deal older than the women were. Equally, I felt that my pregnancy gave the women something in me to which they could relate and for some there seemed to be a sense of camaraderie stemming from the (perceived) shared understanding that we were both mothers.

The issue, which challenged me most personally, was my own discomfort at some of the situations I discovered the women to be living in. Some of the women were living in difficult circumstances and one in particular was in a violent relationship. I found this uncomfortable to hear about and had to work hard to resist the temptation to comment.

I wondered how the women perceived me and what they felt toward me. I was clearly older than they were and was visibly having my children at the opposite end of the age spectrum to them. I may have appeared to be wealthier and to be in a position of being educationally privileged compared to most them. At times I felt uncomfortable with this, as if in some way I was using their positions to benefit my own. This discomfort has been described by other feminist researchers [Skeggs, 1994 #211(Birch 1998)].

3.9 Transcribing the interviews

The next stage in the process was to transcribe the interviews. This is a lengthy and complex process the results of which represent an “artificial construction of an oral to a written communication” (Kvale 1996:163). The researcher undertook all the transcripts. Interviews were recorded entirely

verbatim, including the written observation of emotional expressions such as laughter and sounds such as “hmm”. Two sample of transcription are included in Appendix 6 and 7.

The complexity of this process cannot be over emphasised. There was conflict for me in the way in which I represented the voices of the young mothers. During the interviews we seemed to speak very similarly – conversations were full of laughter, pauses, incomplete statements and slang. Yet transcribing this made the text clumsy. Of greater difficulty was the process of analysing the texts and processing our words into academic language. At times the deficit between the two styles seems huge and I was conscious of the way in which access to correct conventions in the written and spoken word can create hierarchies of knowledge (Standing 1998).

3.10 Analysis

The next stage in the analysis is to concentrate these themes into something more specific by searching for patterns in the data that will take two forms – differences in accounts and shared features in the accounts (Potter and Wetherell 1987). This will focus and structure any themes into categories, or discourses, operating within the data. Part of this process will involve exploring the way in which the young women position themselves within their narratives. The concept of positioning originates in the work of Hollway (1988) and is developed to recognise the structure of conversations is tri-polar, they consist of story lines, positions and relatively determinate speech acts (Harre and Langenhove 1990). The analytic focus on these points allows us to understand how the participants construct their experiences. It is equally important to acknowledge my role in these acts of positioning as positioning is an interdiscursive practice. By this I mean that the participants are not the sole contributors in the process of positioning, my

understanding and interpretation of how they describe their position is also part of the process and the resultant construction.

This process will form the analytical basis to answer the second question of this study that asks if there are any pervasive and significant concepts held and used by young people to guide, justify and explicate their experiences? The findings will be discussed in chapter five.

3.11 Chapter Summary

This chapter has explored the theoretical and methodological issues related to the research question. A CDA and DA approach, underpinned by a feminist epistemology was detailed and explicated as the most appropriate methodological choice. The trustworthiness of CDA and DA was discussed and a commitment to reflexivity stated. Ethical issues were discussed as were the measures taken to minimise risks to participants in the research. The processes were demonstrated of data collection involving a choice of texts.

Chapter Four will present the CDA of the data obtained in the public domain and Chapter Five will present the DA of the interview data I obtained specifically for this research.

CHAPTER 4

A “Right” Time and a “Right” Framework in which to Mother

Chapter Three has described the rationale for the requirement of this study for two data sets and two analytical approaches. This chapter demonstrates the application of the first of these approaches – Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) – to the data that provides a contextual shaping of the second data set. A multiplicity of inter-related operative discourses are demonstrated as those that suggest there is a right time to mother, a right framework in which to mother informing a discourse of the Good/Bad mother binary. A discourse of Blaming the Victim is demonstrated as leading to a discourse of discrimination.

In recognising the value of exploring both the lived experiences of young mothers and the context in which they operate this chapter seeks to explore the latter. The emphasis of this study is to seek understanding from the perspective of young mothers hence a thematic analysis was undertaken as an initial stage in the DA process during analysis of the interviews with young mothers. This analysis generated a list of the institutions or bodies perceived by young mothers to impact upon their lives and the way in which they perceive themselves as being constructed. Amongst these bodies were those relating to policy and the media? Examples are taken from the institutional discourses of policy and media to which the analytical process of CDA is demonstrated.

The chapter focuses upon three separate items of data. These are:

1. An example of policy discourse in Tony Blair's forward to the Social Exclusion Unit Teenage Pregnancy Strategy (Social Exclusion Unit 1999) a copy of which is to be found in Appendix 3.
2. Two examples of media discourse - an example of media generated text taken from the Daily Mail (see Appendix 4) and a second example of media generated text taken from a BBC Radio 4 Women's Hour broadcast (see Appendix 5).

Not only is it necessary to seek to understand the experiences of young mothers within context it is also necessary to be explicit about the context of the research itself (Fontana and Frey 2003). This process was begun in Chapter Two with a discussion of the epistemological underpinnings of the research and continues thus demonstrating a level of transparency compliant with the study's reflexive approach.

4.1 Contemporary Policy Context – an analysis of Tony Blair's Foreword to the Teenage Pregnancy Strategy

The Social Exclusion Unit was commissioned by New Labour to undertake a report into the issue of young pregnancy and parenthood (Social Exclusion Unit 1999). The resulting document lays out the nature of the "problem" and Government plans to address it. The report has resulted in the creation of numerous related jobs and projects with the agenda of reducing rates of young pregnancy and parenthood. The document opens with a foreword from Tony Blair, UK Prime Minister (see Appendix 3). This document was chosen as it represents current government thinking on young pregnancy and parenthood locating it as context shaping data for the lived experiences of young mothers. It is to this foreword I shall apply Fairclough's model of CDA.

In chapter three (3.3.4) I have described (Fairclough 2001) five-stage analytical framework for CDA. A brief reminder of this is summarised in figure 5.

Analytical Stage	Task
1	Focus on a social problem
2	Identify obstacles to the social problem being tackled
3	Consider whether the social order “needs” the problem
4	Identify possible ways past the obstacles
5	Reflect critically on the analysis

Figure 4.5: Fairclough’s five-stage model of CDA (Fairclough 2001)

Having placed the research question within the CDA conceptual framework, it is now necessary to begin to explore the data in greater depth, using what Fairclough (2001) describes as interactional analysis – the heart of the analysis. This will be divided into the following 3 stages of application each of which focuses upon different aspects of the text and discourse:

1. text
2. interdiscursive analysis
3. linguistic analysis of text

4.1.1 Text

In stage one of the process the text is the focus of the analysis. The process involves deconstructing the way in which the text is structured and chained together, the way in which the words are given textures in order to create a discourse. Text analysis is exploring the work of:

- representing
- valuing
- identifying
- relating

4.1.1.1 Valuing and Representing

I will begin by analysing the texts' work of valuing and representing. This will be addressed by analysing the various images and issues that are raised throughout the text. These will be considered individually in terms of the underpinning values being espoused.

4.1.1.1.1 Young pregnancy/parenthood as a negative construct

The foreword is compiled of fourteen paragraphs concluding with the signature of Tony Blair. The first sentence states "Britain has the worst record on teenage pregnancies in Europe." (Blair 1999:4).

The first observation to make about this sentence regards the value system being utilised. This is denoted by the use of the word "worst." In fact Britain has the *highest* record of teenage pregnancies in Europe. In this sentence highest has been used to equate to worse. Young pregnancy is immediately located as negative.

This negative construction is supported in the subsequent paragraph with a list of seemingly negative consequences of young pregnancy and parenthood. These are consistent with those discussed in chapter two and include including a young mother being less likely to finish her education, find a good job and to experience poor health.

What is the impact of the exchange of the words “worst” and “highest?” It could be viewed as very significant in that it could be seen to inform the way in which young parents social identities are constructed and semiotically interpreted.

If so this can be viewed as further evidence to support a Blaming the Victim (Ryan 1972) theory whereby those experiencing a so-called social problem are blamed for it as opposed to looking at the responsibility society may have in creating the situation (see Chapter Two).

4.1.1.2 Cultural and moral values

Fairclough also describes the role of text in representing cultural values. In this text the SEU (Social Exclusion Unit 1999) document constitutes an ideological apparatus to promote New Labours agenda. This manifests in the shape of hegemonic rule, a way of conceptualising power that involves the use of coercion (Fairclough 1995). This can be seen to be happening on a number of occasions in this text.

Paragraph 13 demonstrates an example of New Labours value system “They (young parents) should be strongly encouraged to complete their education and keep in touch with the jobs market.”

The cultural value being supported here is that of a work ethic within a capitalist society. This is consistent with New Labour ideology that constitutes work as employment (Fairclough 1995).

4.1.1.2.1 Parenting

More covertly, what does this say about the way this culture values parenting? Throughout the document references are made to the importance of young people having a *good* job, although the definition of a good, or bad one, is not provided. No mention is made of the theory that for some people parenting is a job or a vocation, to which they chose to devote themselves, either permanently or temporarily. No mention is made of the value this has on the child's well-being and development.

If parenting is not being represented as a very favourable cultural value what is? In light of the above the favoured life choice for people is one of economic productivity. The following issue of the cost of young pregnancy further supports this theory.

The text has examples of both covert and overt values being expressed. A frequently reoccurring notion is that of the cost young pregnancy/parenthood affords society "Our failure to tackle this problem has cost the teenagers, their children and the country dear" and "simply fail to understand the price they, their children, and society, will pay."

In one sense, the price to society refers to the economic cost to society – through loss of economic productivity, payment of benefits, cost of health care and cost of housing. These costs have been challenged (see 2.9). This constructs and homogenises young parents into the role of passive beneficiaries of support from society. It fails to acknowledge all those who do

financially support themselves. It also places an emphasis on young parents whilst ignoring the other members of society who may need its economic support. In addition the costs refer to those afforded by the parents themselves that refers to the loss of their freedom and opportunities.

4.1.1.2.2. Marriage

In paragraph 2 of the foreword reference is made to the concept that young parents are at greater statistical risk of being single parents. This is framed within the broader context of the negative consequences of young parenthood.

It is unclear what actually defines a single parent in this context – it can mean a single parent or it may refer to *unmarried* parents whom nevertheless are in some form of on-going relationship.

Either way the inference is that being a single parent is not as desirable as being a married parent. The cultural and moral value being expressed is therefore one of institutionalised monogamy as the favourable state.

4.1.1.2.3 Sex

In paragraph 8 Blair expresses a clear moral and cultural value about what he believes to constitute the right age at which to have sex.

“Let me make one point perfectly clear. I don’t believe young people should have sex before they are 16. I have strong views on this. But I also know that no matter how much we might disapprove, some do. We shouldn’t condone their actions. ”

The first three sentences of this paragraph express Blair’s personal opinion. In the fourth sentence the noun becomes “we.” This subtle technique is well

used by politicians (Fairclough 2000). “We” is ambivalent in meaning thus enabling the user to infer a number of definitions. In this context we could be used to suggest “all of us.” This assumes the cultural value of sex before the age of 16 as being morally wrong and places Blair in the position of advising “us” how to behave i.e. in not condoning their actions.

Sex under the age of 16 is illegal. Blair locates himself as agreeing with this standpoint. Using this dialogue enables him to take a moral stance whilst simultaneously retaining the opportunity to act outside of his moral framework.

4.1.1.2.4 Construction of social identities – young mothers

I have already mentioned the approach of analysing texts for their representation of many issues, including social identities. To explore the concept of social identities further is it worth looking at the way in which young people, in particular, young mothers, are represented in this foreword.

Young mothers constitute the heart of this document; they are central to its focus. The voices of various actors are evident throughout the document; predominantly that of Tony Blair, and various anonymous experts who provide unsupported data about the effects of young pregnancy/motherhood. However, the voices of young mothers are conspicuously absent in this foreword. Tony Blair tells us of what they do in this context, and the resulting sequelae, but their perspective on the issue is absent.

Young mothers in this foreword are constructed as a passive and homogenous sub-group of society. This statement, paragraph 6, demonstrates their passivity “too many teenage mothers – and fathers – simply fail to understand the price they, their children, and society, will pay.”

Similarly, in paragraph 13, “we” are told we must do more to support those teenagers who do have a child. Likewise, young mothers are to be encouraged to complete their education, get a job, and to live with their parents or in supervised accommodation. The young parents themselves are not described as asking for any of these things. There is a sense of this is what is right for “them” - whether or not they realise it. Young people are constructed as objects to be done to, as opposed to human beings who are able to take responsibility for their own actions (Fairclough 2000). This construct can be viewed as patronising and paternalistic.

This completes the textual analysis of the SEU foreword. The next stage is the interdiscursive analysis.

4.1.2 Interdiscursive Analysis

The purpose of interdiscursive analysis is to explore the differing genres and discourses used in the text and to see how they operate together (Fairclough 2001). This refers to the use and styles of language and to the societal practices associated with particular language styles. These may appear diverse, but operate together to form a text (an interdiscursivity).

In this text it is possible to identify a number of genres and discourses. The first example is the use of a multiplicity of voices throughout the document. These voices include those belonging to:

- I (Tony Blair)
- We
- Outside “experts” such as academics

- The Social Exclusion Unit
- New Labour

The first two paragraphs constitute a discourse led by an “expert” voice. It describes the basic UK statistical picture of young pregnancy and parenthood followed by some unsupported “facts” regarding the outcomes. The voice itself is anonymous, as none of the data is supported by references. The tone and the data are supplied in such a way as to suggest a degree of authority – as such these are the facts about young pregnancy/parenthood. No representation is given to the challenges that may have been made to this data – this invokes the concept that not only are these the facts but they are the only ones and therefore the correct ones.

The subsequent paragraphs reveal a variety of voices being used interchangeably – predominantly those of “we/our” and “I”. The “I” refers to Tony Blair. The “we” and “our” refers to society as a whole, a united collective. This is a subtle, yet powerful, juxtaposition. On one level it has the effect of allowing Tony Blair to say what he thinks whilst simultaneously making the assumption that it is right and that “we” i.e. society are all in agreement with him. On another level, the author may perceive it as having the desirable effect of softening the impact of his effectively telling society what it should think about the issue of young pregnancy and parenthood.

Naturally, the voice of the Social Exclusion Unit (SEU) is present thus providing an institutional discourse. Tony Blair established the SEU in 1997. It:

“works with colleagues in departments right across Government to find solutions to some of the most intractable social problems and act as a catalyst for change at the heart of the Government.”
(Social Exclusion Unit 2004).

The Teenage Pregnancy Strategy in its entirety fails to detail the constituents of the SEU, or how and what they do. Subsequently, in paragraph 5, when Tony Blair states he asked the SEU to study the reasons for young pregnancies, it is not made evident that they represent a government department. As a discourse the SEU voice represents a particular genre, the voice of institutional authority. This voice is sponsored by New Labour and is therefore subjective. The text makes no attempt to be reflexive about this. It does however, make substantial claims. In terms of this stage of the analysis however, it is appropriate to comment upon the use of the SEU's voice of authority in the foreword and to register its lack of objectivity in the construction of the discourse.

I have also suggested the voice of New Labour is apparent in the foreword. This is particularly evident in the paragraphs detailing the action being undertaken by the SEU in the TP strategy. For example; “It sets out what we are doing to improve education and job opportunities.”

Education is placed as central to New Labours mission to “deliver social justice and equality of opportunity” (The Labour Party 2005).

At this point the salient question is what is the effect of this use of multiple voices in this text – what interdiscursivity does it help to formulate? The effect would be that of a powerful argument being constructed to support the notion that young pregnancy and parenthood is a negative phenomenon, as recognised by various authorities and supported by the agreement of society.

The final point to make here is to reiterate that which was made earlier. Whilst the text features a multiplicity of voices the one most obviously lacking is that to whom the text refers – young parents, specifically mothers, themselves.

The interdiscursive analysis completed, the following section considers the linguistic analysis of text.

4.1.3 Linguistic analysis of text

Fairclough (2001) describes a number of focuses for the linguistic analysis of text which range from looking at the entire way the dialogue is structured through to the use of individual clauses and even words. Furthermore, the way these are linked together can form part of the analysis, as does a consideration of the use of tones of voice and mood.

4.1.3.1 Tone

The tone(s) of the foreword is interesting and worth commentary. Upon analysis these can be observed to change a number of times during the document. The first paragraphs have a disciplinarian tone resonating with the stereotypical voices of a disapproving teacher or parent. It demonstrates under-currents of disapproval and failure “It is not a record in which we can take any pride” and “what is even worse...”

Having set the scene, the tone changes to one with an air of tragedy with descriptions of the scale of the problem and the “cycle of despair in which many teenage parents are trapped.”

In paragraph eight Blair then makes a strong statement about his personal moral stance on the issue of young people and sex “Let me make one point perfectly clear. I don’t believe young people should have sex before they are 16. I have strong views on this.”

The tone of this statement is one of authority and straight talking. It could be constructed as paternalistic. However, a few sentences later the tone changes to one of support and understanding with the statement “...we should be ready to help them avoid...”

The change of person from “I” to “we” has been discussed earlier (see 4.1.2). The change in tone is crucial in managing the work of problematisation thus Blair locates a situation which he is morally at odds with but rather than being seen to judge negatively he imparts sympathy and understanding. A critical transgression is made here in the transference of responsibility for the problem with the switch from the use of “I” (used in relation to Blair’s morality regarding under age sex) to the use of the collective “we” relating to the assuming of responsibility for the situation.

A further change of tone follows commencing with the sentence “But the report is not just about what has gone wrong. It sets out how we can put it right.”

This tone is decidedly more positive and uplifting. There is a sense of the reprimand and the doom being over and so begins the constructive phase of the speech. Once again, note the use of “we” assuming a collective responsibility in addressing the issue.

This collective responsibility is applied in rather a generic fashion in paragraph 11 when “all the different agencies” are called upon to deliver the message about the real impact of young pregnancy and parenthood. Two agencies are specifically named (religious leaders and the media) as being included in the need to take on board this responsibility. This approach could be seen to be dictatorial. What about the rights of the individual agencies to collectively debate the stance they wish to uphold?

The analysis so far can be seen to use what Fairclough (2001) describes as the whole text language organization. It has looked at the way the dialogue is structured. The next stage of the analysis follows.

4.1.3 Clause analysis

This stage in the analysis focuses upon the use of specific phrases and words in this text. Consideration has to be given not only to these individually but also to how they are worked into the text to build up the discourse. An example of this can be found in paragraph one. It begins with a statistical record of young pregnancies and births in the UK. This information has already been described (see 4.1.2) as being presented as facts from the voice of authority. The following two sentences are slotted between this and a further set of “facts.” This would suggest that these then are all facts being used to “set the scene.” A closer examination of the two sentences “Some of these teenagers, and some of their children, live happy and fulfilled lives. But far too many do not,” reveals a subjective value generalisation. The statement is based around something that is impossible to quantify – happiness and fulfilment, so rendering it meaningless. I am unable to locate any research evidence for this statement included in the document, unlike the statistical data that is referenced later in the document.

This is an example of the rhetoric used throughout the document in which the construction of the issue of young pregnancy/motherhood is negative. The foreword makes reference to a number of the highly complex and sensitive issues (for example, under age sex) that contribute to the dynamic that results in young pregnancy yet does not acknowledge these or the need to address them within their own context.

The use of generalisations is consistent throughout the text. Young people are defined as a homogenous category, “we” or “the nation” as another. This is not the case – there are multiple factions within these broad categories with a whole spectrum of differences.

4.1.3.1 Word Analysis

The final stage in this level of the analysis involves a close inspection of the text reveals a number of words and phrases in use that can be described as “emotive.” Examples of these include:

- shame
- pride
- cycle of despair
- failure
- shattered lives and blighted futures
- prejudice

All of these are powerful words that are used to inform potent images. Few of them can be defined as “positive” descriptions. They are inextricably placed within the broader context of the negative images that are constructed as facts about young pregnancy and parenthood.

These small, powerful, phrases and words can be seen to build up the negative discourse being constructed about young pregnancy and parenthood. Add these to the carefully chosen negative data and a discourse is forming.

The use of certain words and phrases can be described as alarmist. For example the sentence “The fact is that unprotected sex at any age is dangerous” is both potentially worrying and untrue. It is not stated how dangerous is defined in this context. It could be referring to the risk associated with unprotected sex of sexually transmitted infections and/or pregnancy. Whilst these risks are frequently present there are situations where they may not be. People may choose to experience the “danger” in order, for example, to become pregnant.

Having created such a negative picture of the issues surrounding young pregnancy and parenthood, the foreword then establishes a second discourse. This discourse features Tony Blair and New Labour as the rescuers and details “how we can put it right.”

This clause has a very direct tone. There is no question – the issue can be addressed and “cured” and New Labour can do it. Furthermore, they will be instigating their action programme “straight away.” The concluding sentence of the text serves the purpose of affirming this assertion whilst placing the courage of New Labour in a modest light “... we owe it to today’s and tomorrows teenagers to get this right at last.”

This analysis has elicited a number of discourses weaving through the SEU foreword. They can be summarised thus: young pregnancy and parenthood is a negative phenomena. The discourses supporting this are based upon moral

and economic arguments. Young people are constructed as being a passive and homogenous group.

In the next part of this chapter I will now apply the analysis to the second text example: an example of media text addressing the issue of young pregnancy/parenthood.

4.2 Analysis of Media Text

The issue of young pregnancy/parenthood has featured frequently in the media in recent years (Loudon and Vasager 1999; Marsh 2000; Adams 2002; Mills 2003). A number of the women interviewed in this study were aware of this and discussed their thoughts and feelings about the images portrayed, which will be explored in the following chapter.

Continuing with the use of CDA, let us now focus our attention upon two examples of media constructs of young pregnancy and parenthood.

The first example features the story of Amy Crowhurst, a twelve year old from West Crawley, interviewed in the Daily Mail (Sherry and Price 2002).

4.2.1 Text

As demonstrated in the previous section the purpose of the text analysis is to consider its work of representing, valuing, relating and identifying. This text speaks to us of a number of representations the first of which is the representation of Amy.

4.2.1.1 The representation of Amy

The opening sentence in the article describes Amy's physical condition as being four months pregnant. The subsequent sentence states her age – 12 years old. The second paragraph provides sparse details of the conception of her pregnancy – readers are informed of the context of the relationship that was a “one-night stand.” Information about Amy's partner upon that occasion is also given – his age being 15 years and that Amy is unaware of his surname or address.

Later in the article the reader is supplied with a few details regarding Amy's physical appearance. These include the fact that she has her nose, ears and belly button pierced. Furthermore, she wears a neck chain from which hangs her father's wedding ring. She is a smoker. These facts are placed seemingly randomly within the text. Their relevance is never stated.

Representation is also made of Amy's moral and philosophical persona:

“I know I was stupid to get pregnant but I'm not that bothered really,” she admitted yesterday “Of course I wish it hadn't happened but its too late now...I don't really mind because I don't like school anyway and now I don't have to go anymore.”

These quotes demonstrate the construction of Amy's identity as problematic – she even tells us herself she is “stupid.” This is reinforced by the second quote that tells us that she doesn't like school thus subtly inferring a lack of academic potential.

4.2.1.2 The representation of Amy's family

The article also describes certain features of Amy's family. In the sixth paragraph the family home is detailed as consisting of “two council houses

knocked into one – to accommodate the still growing family of Amy’s 42 year old mother Rose.”

Rose, the reader is informed, has nine children, fathered by two men. Further details are provided about the relationships with these men and the family structure. The article even details the family income. Whilst stated as “facts” these details can be constructed as part of the moral representation of the family, in particular, Rose. The effect is that Rose is constructed as failing as a role model and as endorsing Amy’s behaviour. This resonates with the construction of the Good-Bad mother binary as discussed in chapter two (see 2.7).

The key character in the article is Amy, closely followed by Rose. Interestingly, little mention is made of Amy’s father. The reader is informed that:

“Three years ago Amy’s father walked out on the family and set up home with another woman. Since then her mother has had a number of relationships.”

Later her father was described as being unavailable for comment upon the situation. This discursive suggests the concept of some form of continuity in the “problem” – it “runs in the family.” This discourse can be seen in the academic literature that focuses upon the increased likelihood of young mothers having children who become young mothers (Kiernan 1995).

4.2.1.3 Values

The inclusion of the afore mentioned statements about Amy and her family can be seen to be demonstrative of the value base of the articles author and in turn, the newspaper itself. Whilst never actually stated as being the case,

the statements can be linked together to form a picture of Amy that suggests she is from a low socio-economic background.

The reader is informed that the pregnancy was conceived as the result of a “one-night stand.” Its early location in the article suggests this is considered a key fact. This also suggests the author feels this is unfavourable. Would Amy’s pregnancy be more acceptable if it had occurred within a longer-term relationship? This changes the discourse from being of one about young pregnancy and parenting to one of relationships.

The choice of which details to include, and by default, which to exclude, provide a picture of the moral stance taken by the article. Therefore, the article can be seen to be taken a blaming the victim(s) approach as described in 2.17, in this situation the victims being Amy and her mother.

4.2.1.4 Text as representation

The above two sections describe the details supplied by the article about Amy and her family. At a glance the information appears to be nothing more than a collection of facts pertaining to the issue that is that of a 12-year-old girl being pregnant. The “facts” which the authors choose to present enable the reader to formulate a picture of Amy as problematic. Ryan (1972) suggests that a part of the process used to blame the victim involves creating an image of the victim as “different.” In this sense he means different to the majority of society and specifically here the authors and the readers. Thus these victims

“think in different forms, act in different patterns, cling to different values, seek different goals, and learn different truths” (Ryan 1972:10).

Fairclough (2001) suggests it is the way in which statements are worded and put together that constitutes a particular genre (s) or discourse (s). To assess this in more detail an interdiscursive analysis is necessary.

4.2.2 Interdiscursive analysis

As described in the previous section the next phase of the analysis is to explore the differing discourses and genres found in the text and to consider how they operate together. Likewise, as was the case in the SEU text, there is a multiplicity of voices used in this text. These voices include those of:

- The authors – Kate Sherry and Richard Price
- Amy Crowhurst
- Rose Crowhurst – Amy's mother
- An anonymous voice speaking on behalf of Peter Crowhurst – Amy's father
- Social services

The voices operate collectively to weave a picture of a dysfunctional family at the centre of which sits the embodiment of this in the form of Amy. This is achieved by the collective working of the individual contributions as now described.

The dominant voices are those of the two authors. They provide a list of facts surrounding Amy's pregnancy as well as others that don't directly pertain to the issue. These are interspersed with comments from Amy and her mother. The authors state they were invited into the family home for the interview. Given the space constraints of such an article it is inevitable only a limited amount of the interview will actually appear in the text therefore, it is to be expected that only a small amount of direct quotations will come from Amy

herself, and her mother. However, the choices of citations taken from the interview are relevant. Amy is directly quoted on three occasions:

“I know I was stupid to get pregnant but I’m not that bothered really,” she admitted yesterday “Of course I wish it hadn’t happened but its too late now.”

“I don’t really mind because I don’t like school anyway and now I don’t have to go anymore. I don’t need to go to ante-natal classes because nobody knows more than my mum about bringing up children”

and

“I am worried about the actual birth because I’m so small and I know it’s quite painful. But I know I can cope. I’ve had lots of practice with my brothers and sisters. I know all about feeding, bathing and changing.”

Each of the quotations is chosen to represent Amy and provide a platform upon which the reader is invited to formulate an opinion of Amy. Each of the three quotations is negative in what they present her as saying about her situation. Amy is also presented as somewhat immature and naïve. It is pertinent that of all the data generated by the interview, these are the three statements chosen to represent Amy opinion of her situation. Their negativity can be seen to support the general negativity of the whole text – which in turn can be seen to work in concurrence with the negative discourse that seems to dominate the current discourses on young pregnancy (see 2.8).

The quotations chosen to represent Rose are equally limited – she is quoted twice directly. One of these quotations can be seen to support the above concept that Amy is naïve whilst equally presenting Rose as supportive of her daughter:

“She thinks its all exciting being pregnant and having a baby, but she is throwing half her life away. She’s really just a girl herself. She is still a giggly 12-year old at heart. But she’s mature for her age and I’m sure she’ll be a good mum.”

The presence of Amy’s father in the text is limited. He is the subject of two paragraphs toward the end of the article. A few words of his are quoted indirectly thus he is reported to have “reluctantly” accepted his daughters intention to go through with the pregnancy.” and that “he is understood to be “deeply concerned” that Amy...is racing toward motherhood when she is still so young” Peter.

The weighting given to Rose and Peter in this text is markedly different. Rose is constructed as an active agent in Amy’s life whilst Peter is unavailable and passive. There is no telling from the article if this reflects the nature of Rose and Peter’s relationship with Amy. However, the construction of Rose as a bad or failed mother is a stronger discourse than the role Peter plays in his daughter’s situation.

The final voice is that of a spokesperson for the social services department involved in providing support to Amy. They give a statement detailing the service they will be providing to Amy. The use of this voice offers an institutional perspective on the situation that has the effect of giving gravitas to the article.

Finally, it is worth observing the missing voice from this text – that of the baby’s father. The reader is informed that Amy does not know his name or whereabouts so obviously he is unable to speak for himself in this environment. Nevertheless, it is a salient point that he is absent – a situation

described as being prevalent in many of the young pregnancy and parenthood discourses.

4.2.2.1 Child as a parent discourse

One of the frequent concepts that occurs within the young pregnancy/parenthood discourses is that of the child as a parent (Family Planning Association 1994). This is the concept that until a certain age people are children and pregnancy /parenthood does not alter that state. The discourse developed in this text can be seen to support this concept on two occasions. The first has been mentioned already in the quotation above by Amy's mother where she states "Amy is just a girl."

It occurs again when the author describes Amy's craving during her pregnancy for sweets. This is cited as an example of her immaturity. However, this construction could be challenged on the grounds that pregnant woman of all ages are known to crave all manner of foodstuffs and craving sweets is unlikely to be confined to only young women. In most instances this would be determined as a "normal" consequence of pregnancy and nothing to do with maturity.

4.2.2.2 Blaming discourse

Earlier reference was made to the concept of blaming the victim (Ryan 1972). Throughout this text there seems to be a covert discourse taking place about who might be responsible for this situation.

In this text two people are constructed as being the key agents responsible for Amy's situation – her mother Rose, and Amy herself. Whilst stating the obvious it is worth remembering it takes two people to conceive a child. In this text little mention is made of either the role of the father of Amy's child,

or that or her own father, as discussed. This may be in part due to a reflection in cultural changes to family structures. Equally, it may be an example of mother blame (Woollett and Phoenix 1991) whereby an emphasis is placed upon the mother's role in any adverse effects of their child's development.

4.2.2.3 Young pregnancy as a tragedy discourse

Another discourse that features regularly amongst those on young pregnancy/parenthood is the one that constructs it as a tragedy for those involved (see 2.13). This can be seen to be a feature of this text. In paragraph 16 the pregnancy is described as "the end of Amy's childhood." Subsequently "She can no longer play sport or even go to school with her friends."

These statements are presented as facts. However, it is unclear what this means. It is difficult to determine the exact point at which childhood ends and adulthood begins and as has been discussed in 2.5. It is an area of little consensus. Whilst acknowledgment is made of the various official criteria's in place to define this transition, it can be argued that the passage is a gradual process which occurs at various times and over varying durations thus to state Amy's childhood as over, is a dramatic over simplification of her place in an indefinable process.

It is stated with equal finality and drama that Amy can no longer play sport or go to school but it is unclear why this should be the case. Many pregnant women continue to play sport throughout their pregnancies and for those who have to stop, it is generally a temporary situation. The reason for Amy's inability to attend school is not given either. Again, many women continue to work during their pregnancies. Likewise, where facilities are available younger mothers are able to continue their education. There are examples of

such faculties operating across the United Kingdom (Dawson 1997). Furthermore, the need for such facilities has been demonstrated and is seen as a feature of New Labours policy on social inclusion (Social Exclusion Unit 1999).

The rhetorical construction of Amy's situation as a tragedy has an element of sympathy provocation running through the text. Thus the statement "she's throwing half her life away" is bolded up and centred in the article as a sub-heading. Amy is located as a victim of circumstance. Implicit to this is the notion that being a mother is a waste of a life. This resonates with the argument presented in chapter two recognising the devaluating of motherhood. It also constructs Amy as an impassive agent in the construction of her life. The ways in which these situations are presented reinforce the tragedy of Amy's situation.

It has been demonstrated that there are a number of discourses operating throughout this text. When combined they all work together to form a negative construction of young pregnancy and parenthood.

4.2.3 Linguistic analysis

This stage of the analysis the focus is upon the tone of the text and the way the use of individual clauses; phrases and words work together to form the discourse.

4.2.4 Tone, clause and word analysis

The tone of the article is established by the headline and sub-headline. The headline, which runs alongside a large photograph of Amy, states, "This girl is 12 and pregnant by a boy of 15 whose name she cannot recall." This is

preceded by a sub-headline of “I don’t mind, I don’t have to go to school, says mother-to-be.”

The tone of these headlines sets out to foster a sense of moral outrage in the reader – they are written to shock and incite the reader to pursue the text. This tone continues throughout the text. Many of the facts about the situation are constructed in a way that seems to want to shock, or appal, the reader. This is done in a subtle fashion and it is only by examining closely the construction of the text that the techniques can be elicited. For example, in the first paragraph a seemingly factual statement is made “Amy Crowhurst is four months pregnant. She is also just 12 years old.”

One small word – “just” – is enough to alter the way in which the reader receives the issue. There are two ways this statement can be interpreted. It could mean she has recently become 12 years old. Alternatively, it could mean she is only 12 years old inferring that 12 is a particularly young age at which to be pregnant. This is a matter of opinion, the arguments for which have been rehearsed earlier in this thesis. The use of the word “just” alters the construction from being a fact to one of a value judgement. This facilitates the subtle emission of values about young motherhood.

This value-based tone continues to permeate the text. Amy is described as “admitting” she was stupid to get pregnant. To admit suggests a wrongdoing. This represents the way in which the author has constructed Amy’s telling of the situation – an interpretation of a moral understanding.

Many of the sentences/clauses presented about Amy’s scenario would seem to be “facts.” Individually the statements are not that powerful but placed in a sequence, they seem shocking because each statement suggests something

slightly extreme, or “different,” about the Crowhurst family and their situation. These facts have been described earlier in this discussion and include:

- Amy’s appearance - her piercings
- The details surrounding the conception of Amy’s child
- Amy as “one of Britain’s youngest mothers-to-be”
- Rose’s relationship and child bearing history
- Amy’s knowledge of “condoms and that”
- The family’s financial and housing situation

Ryan (1972) describes this process as one of pathologising society’s victims. By constructing them as different to the majority, the victim becomes less like the rest of society – an outsider. Such differences can be seen in their physical, psychological or moral manifestations. This process separates the victims and gives those pathologising a justification for the others deviancy. The representation of Amy can be seen to follow this construction.

In the previous section I have described the way in which the text upon occasion also applies a sympathetic tone to Amy’s situation. There are relatively few of these clauses. Paragraph sixteen describes “the end of Amy’s childhood” and its sequel is the one in which is described her inability to play sport or attend school. It is interesting to note that they are placed approximately half way through the text, after the presentation of the majority of the more extreme, potentially shocking and negatively constructed facts. In doing this the authors formulate a complex scenario. Having created a picture of Amy as a deviant they can then pity her – the next stage Ryan’s describes in his process of blaming the victim.

CDA has been applied to a media generated example type of text regarding teenage pregnancy and parenthood. The analysis has demonstrated another facet of the discourse. It has demonstrated a number of features that epistemologically position the Daily Mail as being based upon values that espouse:

- Economic independence as a pre-requisite for childbearing and rearing.
- Motherhood as a less valuable lifestyle option

Within this framework young pregnancy and parenthood is constructed as a negative phenomena. The concept of “Blaming the Victim” is demonstrated.

This negative construction of young pregnancy and parenthood is consistent with the findings of the analysis of the Teenage Pregnancy Strategy foreword (Social Exclusion Unit 1999).

The next part of this analysis will focus on a third example of text.

4.3 Analysis of BBC Radio 4 debate on motherhood

Earlier in the thesis (see 2.7) I discussed the concept of a right time for motherhood. This concept stems from the notion that by saying there is a wrong age at which to become a mother (thus far, the definition has focused upon being too young) there is equally a right age at which to become one. To support this argument I will now analyse a further example of media text that applies this age construct. Using Fairclough’s (2001) definition of text as any type of semiotic material this analysis will be applied to a radio broadcast transcript. The transcript is taken from a BBC Radio Four

Women's Hour feature entitled "Pregnancy – are we leaving it too late?" (Murray 2004).

4.3.1 Text

As with the previous two pieces of textual data I will begin by analysing the textual content of this example of data. This will focus upon representation, values, relations and identities portrayed within this text allowing us to deconstruct the resultant formed discourse.

4.3.1.1 Representing – women and mothers

In terms of the representations made by the text let us look at the use of the actors involved. Jenni Murray, the key host of BBC Radio 4's Women's Hour, leads the interview/debate. Two interviewees participate in the discussion – the first is introduced as Eva Partridge aged 71, who had her children in her early twenties. The second is Joanna Briscoe, aged 40 who had her two children within previous last four years. The choice of interviewees is pertinent because the opinions they express will be based upon their life experiences. These will be unique to them and composed of many complex factors. The same would apply to any one chosen to participate in such a situation. Nevertheless, the choice of Eva and Joanna as interviewees is relevant as it is the way they have experienced coming to motherhood which shapes the entire landscape of the discussion. A different choice of interviewee could have led to a very different discussion.

No criterion is given for the rationale leading to the choice of Eva and Joanna. Little is presented about how either of them came to motherhood. Here is the information we are given:

- Eva had her two children when she was in her early twenties.

- Eva's children were born forty to fifty years ago
- Joanna had her two children whilst she was in her late thirties
- Joanna's children have been born within the last five years
- Eva has a degree
- Joanna was/is "established" in her career
- Eva was divorced by the age of 30
- Joanna is in a committed relationship

The discourses generated by Eva and Joanna needs to be framed within the context of their lives. Thus their work in contributing to a discourse of motherhood includes their experiences that motherhood was something undertaken within the context of a relationship. They both came to motherhood from a background of education and/or employment.

4.3.1.2 Representation of discourses of parenting

Whilst the title of the discussion placed an emphasis on leaving motherhood too late, a parallel discourse seems to be generated during the discussion that revolves around the notion that there is a right age at which to become a mother. Eva begins this construction by talking about the way she decided to have her children almost as if by default. She states her reasons as not pro-active choices but rather more as if why not have children:

"Because there really wasn't very much choice I mean love and marriage seemed to go together like a horse and carriage and there was no birth control available unless you were very wealthy and you only got inadequate birth control after you had a marriage certificate and er actually one of the reasons I had my children so early was I was bored cuz there was no career prospects, I had a degree but that didn't take you anywhere in those days so I er thought the natural thing was to have a baby" Eva

However, Eva then goes on to describe this as being a mistake and something she did not want her own daughter to repeat.

The presenter of the broadcast suggests that the older mother, Joanna, had “the best of both worlds” by having a career and then her children at a later age.

This argument is counter-balanced by Joanna. She describes herself as “lucky” although takes some effort to describe how she had a difficult birth which she attributes to her age. She then describes how she perceives the situation of many of her contemporaries who have waited until a similar age to her to have children, only to find their fertility in some way compromised, thus requiring medical intervention.

These opposing constructs lead to some debate about the right or a “good” age at which to have children. The two interviewees agree upon this as being somewhere around the early 30’s:

“by the time they are 30 they are much more likely to make a good mature choice and by that time they are thinking I ought you know I want to start a family whose a suitable mate” Eva

“Well exactly I think around 30 is a good age or early 30s is a very good age its just that a lot of us are leaving it a lot later than that and I think there is a middle way here and that’s probably it” Joanna

4.3.1.2.1 Valuing

Fairclough’s (Fairclough 2001) method of text analysis also asks that we explore the values contained within. Analysis of this broadcast extrapolates the following values.

4.3.1.2.2 Employment as a superior life choice to motherhood

As well as the physical argument proposed, the right age at which to mother is also constructed around an employment rationale. Hence, Eva felt unable to gain employment so she may as well have children, whereas Joanna was too busy establishing her career to think about them. This represents a particular set of values being espoused. The inference is that employment is rated more highly as a lifestyle choice than motherhood.

4.3.1.2.3 Mothering as a negative phenomena

The concept of employment as a more valuable contribution may be exacerbated by the presence of another value being espoused by the text – that of mothering as a negative phenomena. Throughout the text a number of references are made to the concept that to mother is boring and of no great enjoyment. For example Joanna says, “I think we just think babies would wreck our lives, and we want to carry on the fun, and just can’t we can’t imagine fitting babies in somehow.”

Similarly, Eva describes the fear her generation lived in of getting pregnant because there was “no way out”

Neither statement represents motherhood as a positive lifestyle choice. This is a value construct and represents only one opinion.

4.3.1.2.4 The role of partners

Traditional concepts of parenting as a dual role requirement are evident during the discussion. These values can be illustrated in comments such as “I think one of the important factors that you haven’t mentioned so far is um finding a good partner.” Eva

4.3.1.2.5 The price of equality

The combination of these various values and representations equate to a covert discourse operating within the broadcast. To remind ourselves the title of the debate was “Pregnancy – are we leaving it too late?” However, twice (once rhetorically, once directly to one of the interviewees) the presenter asks questions about later childbearing being an inevitable consequence of emancipation and equal opportunities. This assumes the position that one of the reasons women are leaving pregnancy later might be to do with employment and equal opportunities. This is a move away from the titled subject of the debate. The emphasis changes alters from a position that questions whether we are leaving motherhood too late to one that states we are, with the underlying assumption being made that there is a connection between women’s perceived emancipation and choices about the age at which women come to motherhood. This can only be asked hypothetically but needs consideration.

The host raises the question “is it a natural consequence of equal opportunity that women should chose to mate, late?” Jenni

This assumes the position of women having gained equal opportunity(ies). This issue remains highly contentious.

In her reiteration of the question, the host narrows her definition of equal opportunities to emancipation and education. Thus “is it though Eva, an inevitable consequence of emancipation and education that women will leave having children later?”

This suggests there is something in the process of being educated that may lead a woman to want to postpone motherhood. This can be seen to be supported by the current policy discourse on young pregnancy and parenting which makes a connection between poor educational aspirations and young motherhood. One of the “solutions” to the “problem” of young pregnancy/parenthood is to raise standards of education and employment opportunities. This reinforces the afore mentioned value judgement that motherhood is second best to employment as a lifestyle choice.

The above analysis has demonstrated the overt and covert values being expressed in this example of text.

4.3.2 Interdiscursive analysis

The next phase in the analysis is to explore the differing discourses and genres found in the text and to consider how they operate together.

Two distinct genres, which are defined as the type of speech event being employed (Cameron 2001), can be found to operate through this piece of text – which is typical of the format used in similar radio broadcasts. A scenario is presented (leaving motherhood too late) as are given real-life examples from two seemingly opposing experiences to illustrate and illuminate the debate. To demonstrate this point, the first genre is represented by Eva who had her children when relatively young, whereas Joanna, representing the second genre had hers at a later age. Less obviously, reference is made to the amount of choices available to both women when it came to making their decisions about becoming mothers – Eva is constructed as having few

“Because there really wasn’t very much choice I mean love and marriage seemed to go together like a horse and carriage and there was

no birth control available unless you were very wealthy and you only got inadequate birth control after you had a marriage certificate and err actually one of the reasons I had my children was I was bored cuz there were no career prospects...” Eva

Eva’s experience is constructed in opposition to Joanna who had choices in terms of her career and the control of her fertility.

The third genre that is apparent throughout the text is that taken up by the presenter. It is her choice of language and tone that creates the shape of the text. She begins the presentation by setting the scene – placing the issue within its statistical and historical context. She then takes us superficially through the experiences of Eva and Joanna. These are then linked together to present the question of whether the situation is a direct consequence of emancipation and education. Analysis of this process reveals the way in which the issue of late motherhood comes to be presented as a problem. This construction may be challenged. Likewise, why is a link made between emancipation and education? This is a key feature of the debate yet it excludes many of the other reasons why women may be postponing motherhood. Allowance must be made for the nature of the broadcast – time restrictions would not allow for a fuller discussion incorporating the entire gamut of issues. Nevertheless, the choice of which issues to include is pertinent and must be seen to be of relevance in shaping the way in which the debate was constructed – and therefore, in turn, the way in which the phenomena also is constructed.

Another, less obvious, genre that permeates the text is the issue of the professionalisation of pregnancy and parenthood (Ambert 1994) that represents an authoritative genre. This phenomenon has been described in chapter two (see 2.7). There are several examples of this within the text,

including the medicalization of pregnancy as well as the issue of childcare as it relates to a mother's ability to undertake paid employment. In one paragraph Joanna addresses both these issues:

“I’m surrounded by people who are undergoing IVF not just simply being simply not being able to get pregnant, having miscarriages you know its an epidemic it really does feel that this is standard amongst my contemporaries the whole IVF thing and a lot of grief you know and at the same time there is very little support for women having babies and careers you know I just don’t blame the individual women you know the state has to wake up on this one” Joanna.

This marks the first time the actual question posed as the title of the debate (Pregnancy – are we leaving it too late?) is addressed within the text. It comes only after there has been some discussion on the reasons why women are leaving it later. There is no discussion about what exactly is meant by the question are we leaving it too late. Too late for what might be asked? There are a number of possible answers to this. The responses generated will once again be representative of certain values based upon the life experiences and opinions of those holding the debate. Therefore, Joanna is concerned about the issue of women’s biological fertility and its natural decline, as associated with age. In the light of this she talks of the medicalisation of this process in terms of currently available medical treatments and their limitations (see previous citation).

4.3.2.1 Absent voices

The choice of which voices to include in a text say a great deal as has been described. Equally important are the absent voices. I have described the way in which Eva and Joanne’s experiences were described to present contrasting experiences. However, in some respects they represent similar backgrounds – both had a high standard of educational and/or employment background and both had partners at the time of their children’s births. Missing from the

text therefore, are the voices of women from backgrounds of no employment, lower educational attainment, there is no suggestion or acknowledgement of cultural or religious differences in relation to the phenomena. Another missing voice is that belonging to the person constructed as being the “ideal” aged and positioned mother – the thirty year old with a partner who is economically independent. This voice would seem critical to the debate, as this is the idealised situation yet, as with young mothers in the young motherhood discourse, the voice is notably absent. And finally, there is very little mention of the role or experience of the father in the text. This resonates with the minimal role played by the father(s) in both the analysis of the media text and the policy text in this chapter. Once again, it is important to acknowledge the limitations of the broadcast but I re-iterate the statement made above regarding the way in which the choice of what to include, and not include, shapes the construction of the phenomena in debate.

4.3.2.2 Blaming Discourse

The above-cited paragraph is an important one in terms of the interdiscursive analysis because it highlights several of the operative discourses. In addition to that discussed above it can also be used to illustrate the use of a blaming discourse. Once again, we are reminded of the title of this debate – “Pregnancy – are we leaving it too late?” I have demonstrated how this concept is constructed as a problem. It follows if there is a problem, so someone, or something must be to blame. Joanna chooses to place some of the responsibility with the state, whereas the presenter is more focused upon making a connection between education, equal opportunities and later motherhood.

Despite a number of complex issues (fertility, financial, employment, relationships, equality) being briefly touched upon during the debate the

issue of postponing motherhood is quickly summarised as a problem with a seemingly simple solution:

“I think what we need and I think society is moving towards it is much more flexible working umm its already happening as people are working at home with computers and it has be recognised its not only important for women but for their families in this situation and that once one isn't sort of tied down to a 9 – 5 job, 50 weeks of the year and all that kind of thing and it is recognised that woman can work part-time, or work from home or partly from home or whatever umm this will change” Eva

Eva's statement suggests that the solution lies in flexible work patterns and

“Well I totally agree with Eva I think the crux of it is that we don't have enough childcare we don't have enough flexible working and there are slight changes you know the flexible working that came in April that people can request flexible hours for children under 6 I think that is the answer and then maybe women will be able to have them in their early 30's if they want to” Joanna

Using interdiscursive analysis I have demonstrated a number of differing discourses and genres operating throughout the text. These operate separately and combine to form a discourse of pregnancy and motherhood based on a problem, that has a cause (and a blame), which can be solved. This will be further supported by the linguistic analysis.

4.3.3 Linguistic analysis

To begin with I will look at the structure of the text. As described already, it begins with a question posed to two interviewees. The meaning of this question is never made explicit. Indeed, initially no attempt is made to answer it. Instead, possible reasons for the scenario are discussed which in turn leads to a discussion of some of the consequences of the phenomena in

question. The format for the text is typical of such a broadcast, with the presenter asking questions of the interviewees in turn. The presenter structures the interview in such a way that the interviewees then have the opportunity to offer an idealistic situation, as opposed to the problematic one in question and to offer a solution to the problem.

The interviewees are presented to the listener as two women of opposing experiences, spanning thirty years in difference. However, as described earlier the women have more in common than may first appear. Their inclusion in the debate removes others, resulting in a limited scope to the breadth and depth of the argument.

The use of specific clauses can be used to illustrate the construction of the issue as a problem. For example:

“Now you you Joanna had the best of both worlds I mean to get pregnant twice at what 37 and 39 without any real problems I guess is kind of lucky” Jenni

Here the expression “best of both worlds” infers that getting pregnant at a later age and experiencing no problems was particularly fortunate with the use of the word “lucky” reinforcing this as something unusual or again, fortunate. If this is the case for Joanna, then the remaining majority, who don’t experience getting pregnant in such a way, are constructed as having a more problematic experience.

Equally, there are a number of clauses and sentences that can be analysed as representing motherhood as a negative construct. This supports the analysis made in the text section (see above). To illustrate “I think we just

think babies would wreck our lives, and we want to carry on the fun, and just can't we can't imagine fitting babies in somehow" Joanna.

In this extract Joanna uses the first person plural "we" which creates a stance of speaking for others, instead of owning and taking responsibility for the way in which she constructs these feelings and experiences. The clause "babies would wreck our lives" is a powerful image about the perception Joanna has of the impact a baby makes upon life thus she can't imagine "fitting" them in. This presents another powerful image suggesting choice and control over fertility – a relatively recent phenomena in reproduction.

This stage in the analytical process has demonstrated a "right time to mother" discourse weaving through the debate. This discourse is placed within a framework of relationships and money. The acts of conceiving and giving birth and the subsequent undertaking of the role of mother are constructed as negative phenomena.

4.4 Chapter summary

This chapter has demonstrated an application of CDA to three types of text – the foreword by Tony Blair to the SEU Teenage Pregnancy Strategy (Blair 1999), an example of media text about a young mother-to-be (Sherry and Price 2002) and a transcript from a BBC Radio 4 broadcast discussing the issue of leaving motherhood too late (Murray 2004). In this study these texts have been chosen to represent an aspect of the contexts within which young mothers live out their experiences. These texts operate constructively and constitutively so not only are they active in shaping the experiences and subjectivities of young mothers, but the discourses of young mothers shape them. There is a multiplicity of discourses within. These construct young pregnancy and parenting as a negative phenomena. The concept of

mothering too late is discussed in relation to this which leads to an underlying discourse that suggest there is a right time at which to mother. Equally, there is “right” framework in which to mother. This has been discussed as being within the parameters of a relationship and economically independent. Mothers operating outside of these parameters are constructed as “bad”. A discourse of “Blaming the Victim” is then demonstrated leading to a discourse of discrimination.

This analysis provides an examination of the context that forms the backdrop against which young mothers enact their experiences. Their voices have been notably absent thus far. This analysis provides a gateway into the next stage in the analysis – an exploration of the experiences of young mothers as constructed by themselves.

CHAPTER 5

The Good Bad Mother and Maternal Ambivalence

The previous chapter demonstrated a CDA analysis of data providing a context shaping for the issue of young pregnancy and parenthood. The purpose of this chapter is to demonstrate the DA applied to the data gathered during the process of interviewing a group of eleven young mothers and pregnant young women aged 15-19 years at the time they first gave birth or were due to give birth, as described in Chapter Three. This chapter begins with a thematic analysis of the interviews. This leads into the second level of analysis that demonstrates the central discourses permeating the interviews, which are the discourse of the Good-Bad mother and the maternal ambivalence discourse. Details of this process can be seen in Chapter Three. The aim of the analysis is consistent with the research method that systematically is consistent with the research aims of which it is helpful to remind ourselves at this point. They are:

1. What are the lived experiences of young mothers – as constructed by themselves and placed within a policy and media context?
2. What are pervasive and significant concepts held and used by young mothers to guide, justify or explicate their experiences?

The process of data analysis is evolutionary and dynamic. The first level of this analysis involved combing the transcripts in search of themes common throughout the interviews. The following figure details the themes elicited at this stage.

Theme	Issues
Getting pregnant	Choices, decisions, intent
Family	History, reactions to pregnancy
Support	Practical help, childcare, emotional work, financial support
Coming to terms with parenthood	Changes, rationalisation of process, acceptance
Fathers / partners	Their role, present or absent, division of labour
Public and media	Images, portrayal, stereotypes, prejudice, tolerance, acceptance
Money	Access to, survival, benefits, management, quality of life
Work	Previous, plans, childcare
Accommodation	Suitability, challenges, services, quality of life
Professionals	Attitude, support, provision, "the system"
Right time to become a parent	Too young, too old, decisions, choices, attitudes, stereotypes, prejudice
Childhood issues	Mental health, sexual and physical abuse, drug and alcohol use
Becoming pregnant again	Plans, choices, aspirations
Relationships	Past, present and future, difficulties and enjoyments

Figure 5.6: Themes and issues at first level of analysis

The next stage in the analytical process involved searching for the central discourses in the interviews. Once I had extrapolated the above themes from the data the subsequent stage in the analysis was to revisit the interview transcripts. In keeping with the process of Discourse Analysis I read and re-read the transcripts searching for emergent concepts and discourses.

As a result of this process two inter-related key discourses were elicited from the data. These will now be demonstrated and discussed, using textual examples and analysis.

5.1 The Good-Bad Mother

The first of the concepts involves the binary discourse of the good-bad mother. The women in this study positioned themselves as mothers within this binary construct. The following textual analysis will demonstrate the way in which this concept was reached. This will be discussed prior to a discussion of its engagement with the second analytical concept of maternal ambivalence.

The following list was elicited from the data as a list of attributes of a “good” mother:

- a good mother does not become a mother for personal gain
- a good mother provides for her children
- a good mother puts first the needs of her children
- a good mother has a partner
- a good mother copes
- a good mother plans her pregnancies
- a good mother has her children at the right time

These attributes will now be individually discussed.

5.1.1 A good mother does not become a mother for personal gain

The reason behind the motivation to have a child has been researched (Gerber, Pennylegion et al. 2002; Speizer, Santelli et al. 2004)] and forms one of the major themes in the literature on young pregnancy (Ferguson and Woodward 2000; Tabberer, Hall et al. 2000; Arai 2003b). In Chapter Two I have discussed the concept of young mothers becoming pregnant in order to obtain social housing. This is an example of the type of “personal gain” referred to in this situation.

Some of the women I interviewed lived in social housing, others in a variety of alternative types of accommodation. I did not raise the issue of this stereotype with the women but several of the women made reference to it:

Extract 1

372. Hayley: Um I think basically its right towards some people, some
373. teenagers, it's like my sisters friend she got pregnant just so she
374. could get a flat off the council and just so that she couldn't work
375. basically I find that very wrong, very wrong

Jo went on to express some sympathy toward such women:

Extract 2

575. Jo: But what the government says that doesn't bother me that's
576. just their opinion at the end of the day but I suppose what
577. they're trying to put across is that they you know are paying
578. money for all these benefits and things like that which is true,
579. you know, cuz there are lot of young women out there having

580. babies that need council flats and things like that and I
581. suppose that's why they get annoyed cuz they just go out there
582. getting pregnant. That's the only little thing I agree with but I
583. suppose I would be the same if I was in a council flat you know
584. but

In line 575 Jo denies being bothered by what the Government says stating, "that's just their opinion." Jo is dismissive of the importance that can be attached to her understanding of the governmental positioning on the issue thus securing her position as equal to, or superior to it. She then goes on to give the statement some credibility by dismantling what she thinks it is saying and by reinforcing it with the use of the words "which is true" (line 578). Having done this she is then in a position to agree with the construction. Whilst Jo agrees with the idea that the Government penalise young women who get pregnant to acquire state housing she trivializes the importance of this discourse with her description of it as "little" (line 582). In defining it as a "little" matter she seeks to position herself not as being a close supporter of the Government or those who critique young mothers for becoming pregnant in order to obtain social housing, as in doing so she would be betraying her own social position and her peer group.

One of the attributes of a bad mother is that of the one who becomes a mother for her own gain. Jo justifies her position and locates herself as a good mother by separating herself from such a type of behaviour. The following extract elucidates the selfless element in the binary of the good-bad mother construct:

Extract 3

395. Jo: And now I think if I've got like £2 spare and I see something
396. I like or something that would look nice on her I always buy
397. her stuff but you don't really see that on, you see that on some

398. mums but on others it's like it's theirs

The use of the conjunction “but” in line 397 has the effect of subordinating the second clause of the sentence. This locates the actions of “others” in a negative vein so the interpretation of these mothers keeping money for themselves is perceived negatively.

In the following extract Jo locates herself as a good mother.

Extract 4

59. Jo: am young but he is really, really loved do you know it's not
60. as if he gets pushed to the side I don't go out every weekend.
61. Like I've been out once since I had him he's was 2 months old...
62. Well exactly, I don't think it matters about your age. What I don't
63. agree with is girls going out there, getting pregnant and thinking
64. that they can have baby, pass it on to their mums and still go
65. out here clubbing every night I'm not boasting but I am
66. responsible you know I don't mind not going out and I'm not
67. giving him to my mum and all that all the time and things like
68. that I just don't agree with mothers like that that just go out
69. there saying they really want a baby and then when it comes
70. they find it so hard they like give it to their family you know I
71. think that's just not responsible

Jo immediately positions herself here as a young mother. Her use of the conjunction “but” (line 59) to link the statement suggests she constructs being young as a negative matter. She then positions herself as a good mother demonstrating this by describing the qualities she perceives herself to have in common with a “good” mother those of loving her child, not pushing him aside. She continues this theme with a description of her placing her son's needs generally before her own (this is one of the criteria for a “good” mother and as such the following piece of this extract is removed from here to be discussed in extract 11). Her statement in line 65 is strong and could

be constructed as defiant. So as to reposition herself as a good mother she makes a statement about what she defines as unacceptable in young mothers and disassociates herself from this practice by reassuring me that she doesn't behave in such a way. Her use of the word "girls" here adds emphasis to her moral order as the same judgement could be applied to mothers of any age. This positioning may be because she perceived me as older or as having particular views about young mothers and she wanted to engage my sympathy.

5.1.2 A good mother provides for her child(ren)

In this attributive concept provision may be seen as supplying the materialistic and/or psychological needs of the child.

Extract 5

34. Jo: I'm not one of those like when people look at you being a
35. young mother thinking oh I bet she really struggles I thought I
36. don't I've been out there and worked its, not as if I've never
37. worked, you know so P he works really hard 6 days a week
38. brings home the money we're fine. So like really if I put myself
39. across the way I am now people wouldn't think I was a young
40. mum do you know what I mean?

Jo's final sentence (lines 38-40) in this extract demonstrates that she has a clear image of a young mother. She does not construct this image from physical appearance alone. If she did she would recognise that she probably does look like a young mother in the narrowest definition given her appearance corresponded approximately with that of her age (18 years). As in extract 4 then Jo seems here to disassociate herself from what she constructs as the stereotypical image of the young mother. Instead she positions herself as a good mother by telling how she has worked and that her partner works hard, a point she emphasises with the word "really" (line

37). Thus the implication is that as a good mother Jo, and her partner, are economically able to support their child. In distancing herself from the opposite to this she creates the binary construct of a bad mother as one unable to do so.

Extract 6

383. Hayley: I don't really care what other people think actually as
384. long you know as long as I look after my little girl. She gets
385. clothed and watered and all that sort of thing I don't neglect her
386. or anything

Hayley's position is either particularly defensive or could suggest she has self-actualised in the sense that she is confident in herself and her abilities in this situation. She defines herself as a good mother in terms of being able to provide for her child in a physical capacity.

5.1.3 A good mother is self-sacrificing

Some of the women described a conflict in needs as being an issue for them. They had their own needs that at times came into conflict primarily with the needs of their children and sometimes with those of their partners. The notion of the good mother as selfless fed this conflict, as the women felt guilty at meeting their own needs instead of devoting themselves entirely to their children. An example of this conflict was the issue of going to work as described here by Caroline:

Extract 7

199. Caroline: So I can't really see my life without her now but
200. sometimes I get annoyed because I really do feel as if my brain is
201. just going to turn to mush being in my flat twenty-four, seven. I
202. mean I always try going for a walk you know like twenty minutes
203. every day just to get out of the flat, just to get a bit of fresh air
204. but you know your brain isn't like ticking over I mean there's

205. only so much baby language you can take so I do understand
206. mothers that stay at home and say I want to go back to work, I
207. want to go back to work, but on the other hand I wouldn't have
208. missed out what I've missed with her so far I mean her first roll,
209. her first crawl you know she's just started to say like dada or
210. baba or stuff like that its things like that I mean I just don't
211. want to miss that out with the first one or anything

In line 199 Caroline is taking stock of her situation and summarising the changes she has made in her positioning in life. She is unable to fully embrace her new life though as she describes her frustration at her lack of mental stimulation that she associates with not going to work. This links to the good/bad mother discourse that holds the good mother stays at home to raise her children, thus sacrificing her needs, in this case for mental stimulation. Caroline aligns herself with stay-at-home mothers who want to go to paid employment. She is ambivalent however; as she acknowledges the pleasure she has received from watching her daughter develop. She expresses her desire clearly in line 207.

Stacey described the work/stay-at-home conflict less acutely:

Extract 8

200. Helen: And do you enjoy going to work?
201. Stacey: No. I do sometimes, to get away, you can be like yourself,
202. be Stacey for a little bit
203. Helen: Yeah
204. Stacey: Like I find if I didn't go to work it's the same as having a
205. break I then go back and enjoy them more being at home. If I
206. was at there all the time I can't wait to be home again

This is illuminative. Initially Stacey responds negatively to my asking if she enjoys going to work. This may be because she didn't feel able to affirm such an idea – as the good mother in this construct puts her needs after those of

her children – and going to work in the second part of Stacey’s answer is described in relation to her self-identity with “you can be like yourself” (line 201). The inference is that her persona as mother is in some way different to her self-identity. In line 204-205 Stacey then contradicts her earlier response to my question by stating that going to work is like “having a break” which enables her to increase her enjoyment of her time at home. She continues that she would not like being at home all the time thus suggesting she does gain in going to work.

A conflict for Donna was between her child’s needs and behavioural pattern and her personal, preferred structure for sleep:

Extract 9

117. Helen: Are there any bits that you find difficult?
118. Donna: Getting up. He gets up at 5 o’clock every day
119. Helen and Donna: laughter
120. Helen: Does he sleep through the night?
121. Donna: Yeah. From 7. So it’s not too bad but its just 5 o’clock
122. Baby I moves to look at the tape recorder
123. Helen: So I guess you do get really tired
124. Donna: No, I do try and get early nights and I sleep in the
125. weekends when he goes to sleep in the day time I catch up

My question in line 117 makes the assumption that there are aspects of parenting that might be termed “difficult.” This is based upon my personal experiences as a mother when there are times I find aspects of mothering difficult. In response to this assumptive question Donna describes her difficulties with getting sufficient rest and her coping strategies. Later in the interview Donna described the support she received from her foster parents:

Extract 10

134. Donna: well I'm allowed 4 hours a week out without him so I go

135. out in the evenings, like studying whatever
136. Helen: that's allowed by the foster carers?
137. Donna: yeah
138. Helen: (to baby I) lets turn the tape recorder toward mummy,
139. she's much more interesting than me, laugh. Yeah, so you get
140. some time out, and what do you tend to do with it?
141. Donna: well, lately I've just been getting course work done and a
142. little bit of studying, sometimes I got to my friends house and we
143. just get a curry or a video and chill out really

The use of the word “allowed” in line suggests that Donna perceives time away from caring for her small son as a privilege. This allowance facilitates Donna’s meeting of her needs, whilst her foster carers attend to those of her son.

Similarly, Jo described her need for time to be herself:

Extract 11

288. Jo: I think the first time we went out was when he was a month
289. old and we went out just for a couple of drinks but I needed that
290. because I hadn't been out for ages and I hadn't had a proper
291. drink and I suppose I just wanted to just feel like a woman again
292. you know when you get yourself dressed up, do your hair and I
293. think, you know, I really needed to let my hair down but now I've
294. done that I'll stay in I really don't mind you know. My other half
295. he likes going out a lot more than I do and I say to him I'd rather
296. just stay in and watch a film and things like that

In lines 289 and 293 Jo uses the word “needed.” This is a way of emphasising the necessity of her desire to go out which can be seen to justify it. That Jo needs to justify her leaving her son in order to have an evening out suggests she feels guilty about doing so. She struggles to position herself as a good mother and to legitimise her decision to go out – this can be seen by the repeated use of the word “need” as in she had to do it as opposed to simply wanting to do it. A “good” mother would place the needs of her child

first and thus negate her own. In this situation Jo feels she has placed her own needs before those of her son. As if to compensate, she adds that having done it she'll stay in thus repositioning herself as a good mother.

Charlene describes her need for time out as coming into conflict with the same needs in her partner.

Extract 12

134. Charlene: but I think he should spend some more quality time
135. with him, he comes in from work "I've been working all day I just
136. want to sit down" and all that sort of thing well I've been working
137. with K all day with K all I want to do is let you take over let me
138. relax but I just feel like S doesn't sometimes give enough to K,
139. maybe last few weeks have made S realise how hard it is looking
140. after K

Here Charlene can be seen to negate her needs for a break from her days work in favour of her partner's needs after his day "out" at work. She is not only faced with meeting her child's needs, but those of her partner, before she can think of her own. She uses her desire for her partner to "give" to K to justify her need for a break. This places the needs of the child as being of greater importance than her own. Her belief may be that her partner will support this and relieve her thus meeting her need for a break thus compromising her feelings of guilt at not placing her child's needs first. Charlene describes her perception that her partner should spend more "quality time" with their son (line 134). This perception reveals Charlene's acceptance of dominant psychological theories of parenting that suggest there exists such a concept as quality time, as opposed to non-quality time. The idea of quality time stems from the ideology that places the needs and demands of the child over the demands of everyday life, such as housework. (Walkerdine, Lucey et al. 2001) describe the process whereby mothers walk a

tightrope in attempting to meet these conflicting and impossible demands. Charlene recognises the needs she and her partner have to relax after their day's work (lines 135-138) yet she feels conflicted by her need to provide more and better for their son which she perceives relaxing together, or taking individual time out, would provide.

5.1.4 A good mother has a partner

A feature of the good mother binary construct is that she is in a stable relationship. Ideally, this is with one male partner, preferably to whom she is married. Jo describes this scenario.

Extract 13

439. Jo: See I've got a friend, she's just had a baby, well I suppose
440. about ten months old now with one father and she's like 2
441. months pregnant now with another father and I think like what
442. are you doing

Jo uses a short story to illustrate her feelings. She locates her argument by stating the first child's age. The clause "she's just had a baby" infers it is very young that she then qualifies with its approximate age. She then details the second pregnancy. The inference is that these children have been conceived within a short time space. During that time frame the mother has changed partners. The conjunction "and" is used (line 440) which co-ordinates the clauses as being of equal value thus Jo's question (what are you doing?) becomes of equal importance to the story. Jo can be seen to be taking a judgmental position without actually declaring that she thinks what the friend is doing to be morally wrong. The structure is crafted in such a way that she could be questioning the woman's decision to have her children at such a close age thus allowing an escape route should her moral judgment be challenged.

Such were her fears about being a single mum Caroline cited them as one of the reasons she contemplated having her child adopted:

Extract 14

188. Caroline: I don't think it was a case of wanting to give her up it
189. was a case of that feeling oh my god, I'm all alone And I
190. originally felt that I was going to be put on the shelf as well, that
191. I was always going to be a single mum I was never going to find a
192. partner and stuff like and then one of my best friends in college
193. introduced me to his cousin, this is the guy I'm with now. He's
194. 23 so he's a little bit older than me so he's got like 8 nieces and
195. nephews so he's always been around kids so he absolutely
196. adores her and I'm just in the limelight constantly with kids I
197. mean I think them two when they are playing with each other
198. you know I mean 6,7months ago I would never have thought I'd
199. have that.

In line 189 Caroline describes how she was so overwhelmed by the responsibility she felt as a person facing the possibility of parenthood alone. In telling this part of her story she then tells of her fear of always being single. This statement positions Caroline as feeling that a partner is something she strongly wants. She reinforces this strength of feeling with her use of two expressions in lines 190-191, the vernacular "be put on the shelf" and "never going to find a partner". Caroline then describes her introduction to her current partner. She lists his credentials to be a good father in terms of his experience as an uncle in order to justify her choice in him as a partner. The final lines (198-199) give a dream comes true tone to the story and can be seen to warmly draw it to a conclusion.

Charlene describes her feelings and experiences:

Extract 15

738. Charlene: I think that yeah you are probably going to find it a
739. little bit easier when you're older than when you're younger cuz
740. people do discriminate they all think that if we walk around on
741. our own without our boyfriends there they assume you're a
742. single parent or that our children haven't been planned when
743. they have, that annoys me cuz I know that I made a point of
744. telling everyone that J was planned cuz you know not that you
745. should be embarrassed if your children come along accidentally
746. but its just the whole stereotype that goes with it
747. Helen: Really, and you have experience of people thinking that?
748. Charlene: Yeah, yeah. I walked down to the shop and there's this
749. old dear the other day and "it's really nice that you're coping
750. really well" and I said, "well thank you". "You don't need a man
751. do you?" "No not really" "you're coping really well" "well yeah
752. alright then I'll just take all responsibility," you well may be a
753. single parent round here, they treat you like one
754. Helen: But people just assume that's
755. Charlene: Yeah they just assume everyone that's a pushchair
756. and a young mum is a single parent mum and most of them are
757. not and most of them around here have got partners

Initially, Charlene speaks for the group she identifies with – young mothers – using “we” and “our.” She then goes on to describe how she disassociates herself from the group as she doesn't want to be connected with the stereotypical image of the young mother (line 746). She continues by telling a story to illustrate her point. This pronoun usage pattern can be seen again in extract 21.

In this extract Charlene is at pains to position herself as separate to the image of young mothers as single mothers. This supports the concept that a good mother is one with a partner.

5.1.5 A good mother copes

This construct concerns itself with the idea of coping. This is about the ability to take responsibility for a situation and address it, regardless of external factors.

Extract 16

975. Charlene: I'm glad I didn't have him any younger cuz I don't
976. think I could've coped financially or mentally and stuff but I do
977. think I'm coping quite well with him, mentally and financially
978. you know we might not be going on holiday every day but you
979. know he does get all the best of everything and if I cant give him
980. something physically you know I give him love, that's it, time,
981. love.

Extract 16 is clearly inter-related with the good mother provides construct. Charlene constructs coping as being able to provide mentally and financially for her child. In lines 979-980 she places greater value on the provision of "physical" things as she describes how, when she's unable to provide these, she can provide the concepts of time and love. Here coping is providing.

Jo describes how she perceives asking for help as not coping:

Extract 17

102. Jo: I must admit you do get people like for example, like my
103. mum, she was like you want to do it when you're a bit older, this
104. was before I had B, she loves him to bits, she goes oh you do
105. want to have your life first and all that like. And I went no I
106. really want to have a baby but when I had B I could see where
107. other people are coming from like sometimes I wish I still had my
108. life all my friends are still going out, I think you know I wish I
109. could still have my life again but I've got B now. Which I don't
110. mind but I can see where adults are coming from you know, you
111. should wait. Cos Ill probably say it when I'm my mums age I'll
112. probably look at my son or daughter and say oh just wait, I don't
113. know

114. Helen: So you can see the reality of it, it is really hard work, it
115. does take over your whole life
116. Jo: Definitely. You just can't do what you want, you just don't
117. get 5 minutes to yourself you know
118. Helen: So you can see why people say its nice to have your time
119. to yourself and be able to do those things but equally you've got
120. B and you're really happy
121. Jo: I am really happy. And anyway its not as if I'm on my own
122. I've got my family that help me, Ps'mum only lives round the
123. corner from us so if I was ever to be really struggling all I have to
124. do is ring her up. I had a bug a couple of weeks ago and his
125. sister had him for the day I've just got help and that you know
126. Helen: So that really helps
127. Jo: Yeah definitely. You know not that I need it all the time. I
128. cope quite well.
129. Helen: Its just nice to know its there if you need it. So your mum
130. reacted, she was a little not sure when you said you were
131. pregnant or
132. Jo: Umm well actually I remember the first time I fell pregnant I
133. was only 16,17 I think I sort of called her up to my bedroom, I
134. called her in and I said "I've got something to tell you" she said "I
135. know you're pregnant" I said "how did you know" she said "its
136. the way you said it to me the way I've got something to tell you."
137. see cuz I had P sat next to me and she said "what you going to
138. do," I said "I'm going to keep it," and she said "that's fine," she
139. said that you want to think about how young you are first, she
140. said its not easy you know. But apart from that, now I got B she
141. just loves him she said, "I couldn't imagine life without him
142. really." I think sometimes she still thinks I'm a bit young but she
143. knows I'm coping and I hardly ever ring her up you know for
144. help or anything so I think that she knows I'm coping fine you
145. know

The focus of this extract is Jo's search for evidence that she is coping as a mother. "I am really happy" line 121 is an assertive statement about her position. The use of the words "and anyway its not as if" are reassuring words, the implication being that things could be worse, she might be alone. It is interesting that despite her initially strong statement about being happy, Jo needs to reassure herself and me, that this is so suggesting she is not as confident about her happiness as she first stated. She is keen to assure

herself and me that she doesn't need the help often (line 127), the implication being that to do so would be a sign of failure on her part. In order to re-strengthen her position she states that she copes "quite well" (line 128). An exception to this is being able to ask for help when she is ill (lines 123-125).

My statement in line 129 attempts to sum up Jo's feelings about the help available to her. In retrospect, I would have liked to pursue the issue of coping and explored Jo's construction of it in more depth.

As can be seen by my next question I directed the dialogue to focus upon her mother's reaction to Jo's pregnancy. I was interested in exploring this in the light of the comment Jo made earlier in the interview. Jo responded to my question with a story about how she told her mother of her pregnancy. The salient statement in this story is the reply her mother gave her to the news, whereby in line 139 Jo tells us she pointed out how young Jo was and that being a mother is not easy. Jo then discursively positions herself within this its not easy dialogue as being able to cope.

Much of Jo's dialogue is concerned with constructing herself as a good mother in terms of the various described criteria. In this extract from later in the interview Jo further validates her decision to become a mother:

Extract 18

604. Jo: that's what really annoys me when people look down at me
605. and think you're only young, I think I'm in a good relationship,
606. I've got money behind us you know we're really good parents, we
607. are, you know

Here Jo describes her annoyance with people she perceives as looking down upon her. She clearly lists the criteria she feels compromise good parents.

5.1.6 A good mother plans her pregnancies

In this extract Claire demonstrates her acceptance of the concept that a good mother is one who has planned her pregnancy:

Extract 19

292. Claire: because if you're young people assume that its not, it
293. wasn't planned and you're on your own which yeah for some
294. people they don't agree with because you're going to be
295. scrounging off the state or things like that but once you sit down
296. and tell people they're more understanding its just the fact that
297. you don't want to stop everybody

Claire constructs the concept that people judge young parents unfavourably if they see their pregnancy as unintentional. She assigns this concept in particular to young parents. She also perceives people as making the implicit assumption that young parents will access state support.

Charlene also made reference to this concept as seen in extract 20

Extract 20

742. Charlene: or that our children haven't been planned when they
743. have, that annoys me cuz I know that I made a point of telling
744. everyone that J was planned cuz you know not that you should
745. be embarrassed if your children come along accidentally but its
746. just the whole stereotype that goes with it

Charlene constructs herself as rebelling here in her decision to tell everyone that her pregnancy was planned. In line 744-745 she says that you shouldn't be embarrassed if you experience an unplanned pregnancy yet she has just described how she is at pains to disassociate herself from this "stereotype"

(line 746). Charlene does not wish to take up the position of the stereotypical teenage mother.

5.1.7 A good mother has her children at the “right” time

Earlier in the thesis (see 2.7) I have discussed the concept of there being a right, and therefore by default a wrong time at which to become a mother. The women interviewed were familiar with this discourse and positioned themselves within it. I did not directly ask any questions relating to this issue. However, it is important to acknowledge that the women were aware that a part of the agenda for my research was to explore the construct of young pregnancy as a problem. They will therefore have assigned me a position within the discourse as I have also done. This may be the reason the women all offered some form of opinion on the issue. The following extract demonstrates their discourse.

Several of the young women described their perceptions of how others perceived them as young mothers. These were negative images of young mothers based on those constructed by the media.

Jo described a recent experience:

Extract 21

89. Jo: And you think what do we look like, we're not that young you
90. know the this women must have thought that young girl with
91. the a baby, you know and I thought for gods sake cuz you know
92. when they look at you and they look at you up and down.
93. Specially when you're pregnant and I was with my dad there's
94. women in town looking you up and down I don't mind if they
95. give you a little smile and say ha she's pregnant you know not
96. when they look you up and down as if to say look how young
97. you are do you know what I mean?
98. Helen: And you really felt that's how people were judging you?

99. Jo: Definitely. Not everyone. Just a few you get now and again
100. but you know

In this extract Jo has used various pronouns to position herself within her account of one experience. In the first line of this extract (89) she identifies herself as “we”, then as “you” (line 92). She identifies once as “I” (line 93) before reverting again to “you” (line 94). In identifying as “we” Jo is positioning herself within a group, young mothers, and speaking on their behalf. Her tone in line 89 is defensive. She then changes position and identifies as “I” to describe an incident in which she perceives herself as being judged about her age and pregnancy when she was with her father. She is unable to stay in this position however, as she describes her response to her construction of the incident, and reverts to taking less responsibility for her feelings by using “you.”

Heather talked similarly:

Extract 22

Heather: some people I think, maybe do, they do look down on

673. you although not I haven't seen it at first hand really but I am
674. aware that it could be happening. I think my dad might look
675. down upon me actually laughs. But I am aware that it's out
676. there and I hate going, I really hate going to the DSS to pick up
677. forms and standing in the queue there because I just look like
678. such a stereotype laughs standing in a queue at the social
679. security with a baby in the pram I really hate that

Heather positions herself as “I” and in doing so takes responsibility for her statement. In line 674 she makes a bold statement about thinking her father may look down upon her. At the end of this statement she laughs. This can be interpreted as an attempt by her to disguise her discomfort at this revelation. She then reverts to the previous tone of dialogue. She recognises

the stereotypical image of the young mother and recounts her hatred of having to locate herself within it.

Despite this hatred of the stereotype Heather is clear about her decision to become a mother. Her use of the pronoun “I” throughout the following extract shows that she is willing to position herself as fully responsible for her situation.

Extract 23

605. Heather: like there was one on the news about a girl who was 13
606. or something and those kind of stories make the headlines you
607. see that on the local news but you don't see about the norm, the
608. people that are getting on with it and sorting it out and stuff like
609. that. I think I was a bit more conscious when I was pregnant
610. before I had D, that people would see me when I was out
611. shopping by myself and think oh look at her she's got herself up
612. the duff and stuff like that, when at the end of the day it was
613. planned I was with my partner, it was what we wanted to do and
614. that's what I think a lot of people don't realise, is that not every
615. teenage pregnancy is a mistake. I mean I know about
616. contraception, I know about how to use contraception I was on
617. the pill before I came off it, I actually came off it to have D

Donna provides a clear description of being verbally abused in public:

Extract 24

239. Donna: Um just like when I was pregnant I used
240. to get a lot of abuse in the street and that
241. Helen: really. What kind of thing?
242. Donna: just people calling me a slag and everything
243. Helen: really. When you were pregnant?
244. Donna: Mm
245. Helen: How did you feel about that?
246. Donna: Oh I just took it
247. Helen: Who would do that, young people, older people?
248. Donna: Mostly like older people”

In a sense Donna can be seen to position herself here as a helpless victim in this situation. This is an interesting position when placed within the context of the good mother who has her children at the right time. As a young mother Donna was visibly demonstrating her deviancy. Deviant behaviour can be constructed as active so in polarization to her position within this discursive framework, Donna positioned herself here as the victim of a discourse that evaluates her behaviour in such a way that strangers feel in a position to pass verbal and public judgement upon her.

Donna describes a scenario in which she is clearly being judged as a person. In the extracts prior to this the women are less able to be specific in their description of being judged as their experiences relate more to a perception. Whether they were being judged is impossible to tell, as there is no way of accessing the thoughts of the other participants in the situations.

In extract 25 Stacey initially takes an opposing stance by describing how she constructs the other women's descriptions of experiencing prejudice as owing to their paranoia. Later in her interview however, she contradicts herself by stating that she too has heard comments being made:

Extract 25

239. Stacey: I think its them, they're being paranoid, people say that
240. people look at them but I think its more paranoia than anything
241. paranoia more than anything you know you can think people are
242. looking but they're not actually. I held my head up high and I
243. don't care what anyone says cuz I'm you know with my kids so.
244. It's more paranoia if you're sitting there like that oh my god
245. everyone's looking at me cuz I'm a young mum then people are
246. going to look at you
247. Helen: That's really interesting so you've never experienced
248. anyone looking at you in that way or passing comments about

249. you being young?
250. Stacey: Mmm, you hear people saying things but I don't care its
251. up to them to say what they think

This latter statement alters Stacey's construction of the situation from being one about other people's responses to a situation, to being about how she personally reacts – effectively an attitudinal difference. She positions herself, using “I”, as fully responsible.

In the light of their perceptions of being negatively judged the following statements describe how Asha and Jo recognize their age as being within the current definition of a young mother. They then both seek to justify their situations.

Asha says:

Extract 26

148. Asha: Maybe if I was like if I fell pregnant at 14 then I would've
149. considered it more but I think it's the right time really I mean I'll
150. have done my GCSE's and that ...like there's loads of people who
151. have situations like this. I mean at least I'm 16, I'm the legal age
152. to have a baby I know I'm still young but at least I haven't come
153. to her at like 14 or 15 and stuff like that

Asha is justifying her position by locating it within educational and legal frameworks. She cites the fact that she is one of many young women to become pregnant at such an age to support her decision. She positions herself as superior to women who conceive at a younger age than she in line
153.

Extract 27

598. Jo: well yeah we've been together bout three years now so I was still
599. at school really when I got with P but umm he's brilliant that's what
600. I'm saying I wouldn't get pregnant with a man that I know would
601. leave me as soon as I was pregnant. I made sure I knew P; we were
602. together 2 years before I had B anyway. Its not as if I've gone out
603. there and got pregnant you know and that's what really annoys me
604. when people look down at me and think you're only young, I think
605. I'm in a good relationship, I've got money behind us you know we're
606. really good parents, we are, you you know, but that's what I mean I
607. wish they'd ask instead of just judging first you know

Jo is positioning herself here as responsible. She tells a story to illustrate this point. She locates herself in the context of the qualities she sees as characteristics of a good mother in line 605 "in a good relationship" and in the same line with "money behind us." She takes the qualities as examples of how she can illustrate her statement in line 606 that she and her partner are good parents.

Some participants offered opinions on what constitutes the "right" age at which to become a mother. The following demonstrates how their criteria varies:

For Heather it is a matter of psychological maturity:

Extract 28

636. Heather: but it's difficult for everyone. At the end of the day it
637. doesn't really matter you know it just doesn't matter
638. Helen: so do you think it would have been any easier had you been
639. older or do you, you know it just doesn't matter
640. Heather: I don't think it would've made a difference um it might
641. have made a difference in the way that maybe it wouldn't have been
642. Q and that has made me more needy and that might have affected it
643. a bit it might not have Q who was the father but I don't think it
644. would've been any easier or any more difficult being older. I think its

645. exactly the same but there again I wasn't a lot of people when they
646. get teenage mums they are still living with their family and stuff but
647. I was already living with Q so I think that's probably why it was
648. easier for me cuz there wasn't two things that I had to adjust to I
649. didn't have to adjust to moving in with somebody and having a baby
650. cuz I'd already done the moving in bit. We'd already worked out all
651. our problems
652. Helen: sure, so you'd got that extra bit of maturity if you like
653. Heather: yeah cuz I know when we first moved in we just argued
654. constantly about everything laughs. I think if I had to deal with that
655. and a new born baby at the same time that would have been
656. difficult but because we'd already done that first it was a lot easier

For Charlene the "right time" criteria include financial security in addition to maturity:

Extract 29

735. Charlene: Possibly easier when you're older cuz you'll have had
736. more life skills you'll have had more time to save more money and
737. when you're older you feel more mature within your relationships,
738. probably yes. I think that yeah you are probably going to find it a
739. little bit easier when you're older than when you're younger

Jo depicts the ideal time in terms of personal freedom:

Extract 30

270. Jo: and you think oh you know I should have waited at
271. least till I was about 21 at least so as I could go out a
272. little bit more but mind you I started going out earlier. I
273. started going out up the town when I was 14 so I feel
274. like I have had a bit of a life anyway so its not as if I'm
275. hard done by you know

In this extract Jo seems to be reassuring herself that she does not miss going out in the way her childless peers are doing at their age. She comforts herself in the statement "I feel I had a bit of a life anyway." Upon reflection, it would

have been useful to ask in response to this statement if there is a suggestion in that statement that Jo no longer feels she does have a life.

Asha challenges the traditional sequencing of life activities for women and reconstructs it thus:

Extract 31

486. Asha: I don't think it matters cuz the way I see it you're doing
487. things backwards, you're starting early and once the child's
488. old enough you can get on with your life then. Whereas
489. some people choose to get on with their life first then settle
490. down and have kids

Asha describes having a life for herself in a way that doesn't seem to operate in concurrence with having a child – once the child is old enough you can have a life (line 488). This is expressed similarly by Jo in extract 30 in line 274 where she talks about “having a bit of a life” prior to the birth of her son. This concept needs deconstructing. The inference is that having a child is incompatible with having a life. What is having a life? There is something that these women have internalised that says to them that within their world having a child is not having a life. Jo's extract equates a having a life with going out. Asha is less clear about what having a life entails but she introduces the concept of “settling down” (line 489) which occurs in the interim between having a life and having children. This construct is relevant because it stems from the notion that one of the perceived goals of the construct of adolescence is to “go out.” This is in opposition to the goal in later life of being “settled down.”

Stacey positions herself more positively:

Extract 32

254. Stacey: I know that I feel better being a younger mum because
255. there's people that have kids at 40. I'm more active, well
256. I'm a bit more active, I can play with them and I
257. actually run round the house on my hands and knees
258. where you know at 40 years old you're getting older,
259. you're not going to want to do that you're more scared
260. like my mum says I let X do dangerous things whereas
261. if I was an older mum I'd be like oh god get him away
262. from there, he's allowed to do dangerous things...I love
263. em, that's all that matters. I love my kids. What does it
264. matter what anyone else thinks. It's not them that are
265. going home with them its me and so it doesn't matter
266. what they think

In line 254 Stacey asserts her superior position as a young mother in terms of its physical advantages. She locates herself as younger and therefore physically fitter than a 40 year-old mother. She also constructs youth as being attitudinally advantageous (line 254). In the final lines of this extract she defines what for her is the essential quality in a good mother – the ability to love her children.

This section has demonstrated the first of the two key concepts to be elicited from the analysis. This section of the DA has demonstrated the young mothers' construction of the Good-Bad mother binary, and its components. The young mothers are demonstrated to reproduce, contradict, resist and ultimately negotiate their positions within this discourse. The following section will demonstrate the second of the key concepts to emerge from this analysis.

5.2 Maternal Ambivalence

The DA identifies a discourse of maternal ambivalence permeating the interviews with the group of young mothers. Prior to the analytical process

being detailed it is necessary to discuss what is meant by maternal ambivalence. The concept of maternal ambivalence is recognized within the academic community (Rich 1977; Parker 1995; Maushart 1999)] and can be defined as “the experience shared variously by all mothers in which loving and hating feelings for their children exist side by side” (Parker 1995:1). Despite this recognition it is not a concept that many mothers find easy to discuss as for many it is an unacceptable emotion (ibid). Women are socialized into the belief that mothers should love their children at all times, unconditionally and regardless of any internal or external pressures exerted upon the relationship. The acknowledgement that we do not feel that way at all times, or even indeed some of the time, is to fly in the face of accepted culturally and historically specific conventions on what defines and constitutes a good mother. Arguably, this is something few women wish to do. Parker (ibid) argues that it is the rigidity imposed on definitions of mothering that inhibits creativity in the processes of mothering thus disempowering women from relying on their instincts and intuition and instead creating a dependency culture whereby women rely on the increasing amounts of professional guidance available on how to be a “good” mother described as a process whereby “parenting has been successively encoded in religious strictures, then moralised, medicalised, psychologised, psychiatrised, and more recently legalised” (Ambert 1994:530). For Ambert this process represents a form of Westernised masculinist hegemony, a conceptualisation supported by Parker (1995) who argues that it is important to acknowledge that representations of mothering are not only imposed upon mothers, but that we all help in maintaining them.

The following DA demonstrates the women in this study as describing their feelings of maternal ambivalence although it was never named as such by them. Simplistically, it could be explained by the absence of such

terminology in the women's vocabularies. Speculatively, they may not have felt comfortable exploring the issue in the context of this interview. Alternatively, it may be that for these young mothers the feelings are too unacceptable to voice particularly when framed within their identified need to position themselves as "good" mothers within the Good-Bad mother binary.

The following section demonstrates, with the use of extracts and analytical commentary, the analytical process leading to the development of a maternal ambivalence discourse in the young mothers trajectories. The presence of maternal ambivalence can be experienced at any stage in the journey that is parenthood. In the following extract Asha describes its occurrence at an early stage in her journey to motherhood:

Extract 33

73. Helen: And so how did you feel when you found out (about being
74. unintentionally pregnant)?
75. Asha: Um, I was really sad at first. My boyfriend didn't know
76. what to say either. He was like shocked. And my mum wasn't
77. happy cuz I told her over the phone and that and she kicked me
78. out for two weeks

Despite these feelings and circumstances Asha went on to explain her decision to proceed with her pregnancy:

Extract 34

136. Asha: umm, well what I've always said is um if I ever fell
137. pregnant I would always have an abortion but it's not as easy as
138. I mean I did I wanted to keep it when I did it

At the time of her interview, Asha was in the latter stages of her pregnancy. She describes her unborn child as "it." This is a common dialogical feature of pregnancy, when the gender of a child is unknown. It is interesting to

observe the point at which this pronoun changes to one that is gender-specific.

Asha did not share with me her reasons for her decision to keep her pregnancy. Retrospectively, I feel this would have been an interesting area to explore whilst recognising that Asha may not have “known” the reasons she proceeded with her pregnancy.

Jo describes her feelings of accepting the changes brought to her life by the recent birth of her son. Early on in the interview she states that:

Extract 34

58. Jo: I really, really want a baby now I'm really glad I've got one
59. now

This relatively short extract demonstrates how important it is for Jo to reinforce to herself and me that she is happy with her position. She situates this position in the present emphatically by twice using the word “now” (line 58 and 59). This suggests that she did not feel this way until “now.”

Later she describes her journey to a position of acceptance.

Extract 35

221. Jo: and I thought oh god I've got to do this all by myself now and
222. like you know it wasn't B, he's such a good baby, he only cries
223. when he wants a feed, but I think it was where I was stuck in I
224. thought all my friends are, out I haven't got a life anymore and I
225. was really crying all the time and I think when the HV came
226. round one day I think that was it I had to tell her you know
227. because I was just so upset, I dunno what's wrong with me, I'm
228. just crying for no reason, but I just feel like I couldn't get 2
229. minutes to myself you know I was with the baby all the time. I
230. started getting into a routine after that, I started going out a
231. little bit more, seeing all my friends with babies, cuz a lot of my

232. friends have got babies and they're all my age and I don't know
233. its nice to talk to people I think and I was fine after that

In line 221 Jo positions herself first as the person with sole responsibility for her position, despite the fact that she has a partner and support available from her family. She describes her feelings of maternal ambivalence as being her responsibility, making it clear from the use of her description of her son as a good baby in line, that he is not at fault. She constructs being at home all day with a baby as not having a life (line 224). She then goes on to tell a story about how this situation came to be resolved. It is constructed in a polarised fashion – it was awful, then it was fine. This resonates with the previous extract (34). There is a sense of wrapping up and making good as if the difficulties she encountered are behind her for good.

The following excerpt illustrates that her journey continues at times to be a struggle as Jo attempts to reconcile her pre-motherhood life with the new:

Extract 36

106. Jo: And I went no I really want to have a baby but when I had B
107. I could see where other people are coming from like sometimes I
108. wish I still had my life all my friends are still going out, I think
109. you know I wish I could still have my life again but I've got B
110. now. Which I don't mind but I can see where adults are coming
111. from you know, you should wait. Cuz Ill probably say it when I'm
112. my mum's age

Line 111 of this excerpt (“you should wait”) can be seen to contrast with the first excerpt (34) used in which Jo affirms her gladness to have a baby now. Jo is able to acknowledge the reality of her situation and take responsibility as she constructs it at this stage in her life – that it was not the ideal time for her to have a child but equally she is glad she did. In line 109 her

ambivalence is expressed most strongly with the statement “I wish I could still have my life again but I’ve got B now.” This statement is particularly powerful suggesting she feels her life is over or that it has been taken away. Jo makes a similar statement in extract 30. The differing positions Jo uses during her interview illustrate her ambivalence is difficult to articulate for example, she says she “doesn’t mind” having her baby which is countered by the knowledge she has gained in becoming a mother demonstrated in line 111 when she says “I can see where adults are coming from, you should wait.”

Becky describes her changing feelings as her daughter grows and becomes upon occasion, more demanding:

Extract 37

174. Becky: At first like XX when my little one was just 2 months it
175. was brilliant then cuz they behave, they don’t do anything
176. wrong. She’s just well sometimes she’s just horrible, she wants
177. my attention all the time, I can’t go to the toilet by myself, I can’t
178. go in the bath. It’s nice but (lowers voice) it gets on my nerves
179. sometimes.

Becky starts this extract by positioning herself, as she perceives it, alongside Jo. She constructs an image of being happy then and explains why that was. In the next clause she hesitates before articulating her feelings that she locates within her daughters behavioural manifestations. The use of “but” (line 178) as a conjunction locates the second clause of this statement as negative. The lowering of Becky’s voice that suggests she was less comfortable with making this feeling heard supports this. This illustrates the concept that expressing such feelings is not entirely acceptable.

Whilst it has been suggested that acknowledging maternal ambivalence is perceived to be negative (Maushart 1999) Bailey (1999) has demonstrated that this may not always be the case. She researched the effects of maternal ambivalence during pregnancy. Her study found that “those who acknowledged that their pregnancy was poorly timed seemed to rally and do their best to provide good child care.”

The following extract from Caroline supports this theory. Caroline’s pregnancy was unintended. She believed herself to be using adequate contraception and views her pregnancy as a result of its failure. She did not become aware that she was pregnant until she was five and a half months so (prior to this time she had experienced her menstruation cycle as normal) at which point she was outside of the legal time criteria for a termination. She planned therefore to place the child for adoption. However, once her baby was born Caroline changed her mind and decided she would keep her daughter. She describes her thought processes and ambivalence during that time:

Extract 38

188. Caroline: I don’t think it was a case of wanting to give her up it
189. was a case of that feeling oh my god, I’m all alone

Later Caroline went on to describe how she currently constructed her position:

Extract 39

318. Caroline: If I could turn the clock back then I would and I would
319. not have got pregnant, I would have made sure I used
320. contraception as well as being on the pill, I mean really when I
321. thought about it but you think being on the pill, presume you’re
322. alright.

Line 318-319 explicitly illustrates Caroline's ambivalence toward her pregnancy – she would and she would not do it. In this section of the interview she elaborates upon the way in which she would go about not getting pregnant, not upon why she would get pregnant. This weighting suggests not getting pregnant would be her preferred choice.

Again, Caroline's feelings of ambivalence are clear as she describes the pleasures and pains of parenting:

Extract 40

552. Caroline: I mean my mums going round to schools at the
553. moment, she's asked me to go round with her and speak to a few
554. people who have piped up and said look I want to have a kid um.
555. Helen: Really?
556. Caroline: Yeah, I mean I don't mind doing it but they've got it set
557. in their head, you know I want a kid, its this bundle of joy, its
558. going to look at you, its going to smile then you think its going to
559. be sick on you, its going to be ill, you've got to change smelly
560. nappies, you got to get up at 3 in the morning, you got to give up
561. your Saturday, your Sundays, your Friday' s. You've got to give
562. up so much. And you cannot be selfish; you have to learn to
563. share when you've got a baby. And I was never selfish anyway
564. but I was always like that's mine and now you know I have a
565. packet of crisps and she'll look at me and you think there you go
566. you can have mine as well so you have to learn to share and
567. communicate with them all the time...The world just looks
568. totally different you know. It's a really weird feeling as well ooh
569. she's mine you know and you're so happy, and people, I went to
570. a party a couple of weeks ago, my friends engagement party, and
571. none of them had met her before, its all work friends I hadn't
572. seen for a couple of years, and it was like she's so beautiful, I
573. didn't see her she was gone. I had so many phone calls and texts
574. and that's my baby they're all talking about she is, she's all
575. mine, and I thought its weird to think I actually made that you
576. know I think
577. Helen: So you're really proud. But equally there are times when
578. it's been really hard work
579. Caroline: Oh yeah, I mean she was ill last week and I think that

580. was a real test for me because my patience with her then really
581. was bad because I hadn't had any sleep for 48 hours. I'd had
582. like twenty minutes when she was having a nap, but like you're
583. nodding off and you think oh god I can't go to sleep cuz if she's
584. sick and chokes then you're conscious in your mind so then that
585. was real test for me

In lines 556 – 566 Caroline constructs a story, using extreme case formulation, of how she perceives motherhood. She presents this initially as the way in which she perceives some young people as creating their fantasy of parenthood; see “they’ve got it” line 556. Caroline does not state that she has asked these young people if that is how they perceive parenthood so it useful to ask from whence this construction came. It may have been her own ideas of motherhood before she experienced the reality. She then starts to describe this reality, with the use of one phrase “you think” (line 558). Caroline’s use of the pronoun “it” to describe the baby during this description of parenting, which could be described as negative. It suggests Caroline is not willing to accept responsibility for this statement as reflecting her experience. She feels unable to position herself as having these feelings thus supporting the concept that certain feelings connected with motherhood are unacceptable.

In line 561-562 she states, “you’ve got to give up so much” which she suggests she feels she has given up so much yet by using “you” rather than “I” she doesn’t have to take responsibility for what may be constructed as a negative statement. The same happens in the following sentence but in the next she assumes responsibility with the use of “I.”

Lines 567-568 are an example of Caroline’s attempt to generate theory about her position – her world looks totally different.

In lines 569-576 Caroline employs another story to illustrate the more joyful aspects of parenthood. She uses several binary oppositions in this story. The friends whom she had not seen since before her pregnancy represent her life before motherhood, whilst she introduces them to her new life in the form of her daughter. The congratulatory phone calls, and her reflections upon them, symbolize Caroline's joy and pride in her daughter that contrasts with her earlier more negative, representation of motherhood. Throughout this clause of the analysis Caroline refers to her daughter as "she." This is when she is describing more positive, acceptable emotions associated with motherhood. This is in contrast with her calling the baby "it" when describing the negative aspects.

The construction of this story and the pronouns used illustrate the aspects of motherhood with which Caroline is happy to be located and those she is not. She aligns herself within the earlier defined domain of the "good " mother. She does not find it easy to truly acknowledge her ambivalence.

In line 579 Caroline uses another story to illustrate the extreme pressure that she has been under as a mother – in this instance when her daughter was ill. Caroline recognizes the challenge this posed in light of her own exhaustion and anxiety. She constructs this as a "test" (lines 580 and 585) that she seems to have survived. In this way Caroline is able to describe the way she understands motherhood to be very difficult at times.

Toward the end of our interview Caroline summarises her feelings of ambivalence thus:

Extract 40

789. Helen: So, how would you say to sum it up, has having H

790. affected your life?
791. Caroline: Drastically laughs, drastically. All my friends' careers
792. are just kicking off. And you know I think you know they haven't
793. got what I've got and I haven't got what they've got but I've still
794. got time to get what they've got, and they may never have a
795. baby, you know, they may never meet someone you know. You
796. never know.

In this extract Caroline uses another short story to summarise her experience. She creates another binary opposition (career and motherhood), locating herself at one extreme and her friends at the other. She then seeks to reassure herself of this by effectively positioning herself as more fortunate than them – lines 792-795 say, “I can have what they've got but they might not get what I have.”

As with Caroline, Hayley's pregnancy was also unintended. She describes her feelings about becoming a mother thus:

Extract 41

33. Helen: So you'd been at the unit until then?
34. Hayley: yeah, cuz um they put me on the council list then but
35. they said it would be awhile before I could get somewhere I could
36. afford to um, rent privately. So I moved back to my mum. And
37. um that was going all right until she met her new boyfriend who
38. she's got now who is an alcoholic and he um tried pushing me
39. and B down the stairs one time. So we just upped and left and
40. she just obviously chose her boyfriend over us. And I wouldn't
41. move back there so I went to Ms, my other half's mum and dad
42. for a while and like we were going to rent privately together but
43. um he doesn't earn a lot and I wasn't working and um and then
44. this council flat came up and I know I shouldn't, I'm a bit upset,
45. for just taking it straight away but I really had nowhere else to
46. live so I just took that flat and its top floor flat and its not got a
47. lift. Its really hard carrying her buggy, her bag and I do regret
48. taking it, you know the first option cuz you are allowed two and I
49. did ask for a ground floor flat in the first place but I was
50. basically homeless so I couldn't say no really, beggars cant be

51. choosers as they say. And then this one we're having now is
52. planned but we're not living together as yet. We're um we were
53. planning on living together, renting a place together but we
54. worked out that we can't really afford it so he's just living at his
55. mums and I'm basically on income support and hopefully we're
56. going to actually rent a place together but he comes round every
57. day to see B. But its just a bit hard how they expect, the council
58. expect a lot really, I get housing benefit at the moment. It's just
59. really hard at the moment. I think if I had a ground floor flat
60. from the council it would be really nice because obviously you
61. don't have to carry everything up the stairs but I've had my cuz
62. like we get little sheds down the bottom. I started putting her
63. buggy down the bottom in the shed thinking it would be easier,
64. but that got broken in to before this new buggy we've got now,
65. her buggy got stolen so I have to basically run up the stairs you
66. know with the buggy, all the shopping and B. Being pregnant
67. now I still have to do it now there's no one that can really help
68. me so and it like 4,5 floors with stairs up so like one time I
69. actually had to leave her in like the flat so I could run further
70. down because now I'm like just getting really like bad back pains
71. so that's not exactly helping so it's a bit of a struggle. I just wish,
72. no offence, I wouldn't change her for the world now I know we do
73. use precautions but obviously and um, I just wish now that we'd
74. actually you know been a bit more careful, if I had the chance to
75. go back I probably would cuz I've basically got nothing, a lot with
76. my mums boyfriend being really nasty, living on the streets and
77. this moving. I think that's why she's a bit mummified now
78. because we've been on the move all the time and I've been living
79. at that place since last July and that's the only time you know
80. she's actually known it as hers. I just wished we'd have waited.
81. But it's a bit, a bit sorted out now, I'm hoping to exchange or
82. something but not many people want a top floor

This extract tells us about Hayley's feelings about motherhood, although as can be seen in line 33 that is not the question I asked. Instead, she continues her on-going dialogue in the form of a story that consists of an autobiographical construction of how she comes to be at present.

During this dialogue Hayley expresses a number of regrets – first of all is that she accepted the first choice of council accommodation she was offered (line 45), which has subsequently turned out to be unsatisfactory. She describes the practical and physical effects of living in this environment to set the scene for her next regret – that she hadn't waited before having her first child and then conceiving again (line 74). This is a difficult thing for Hayley to say. This can be demonstrated by analysing the way in which she does so. She begins by making a wish. Instead of saying the wish immediately she prefaces this with the words "no offence." She feels therefore, that the statement may offend me and/or that she finds it offensive. This means that Hayley constructs the idea of her wish, irrespective of any circumstances, as being offensive. She further softens the impact of her wish by expressing her love for her daughter using a commonly used phrase (line 72 "I wouldn't change her for the world now). Although at this point Hayley still has not actually expressed her wish, she then feels the need to reposition herself by saying (line 73) "I know we use precautions" so as to position herself again as a responsible/good person. She continues by reiterating what she said earlier but softening its impact with the use of the word "probably" (line 75). Finally she states her wish "I just wish now that we'd actually you know been a bit more careful, if I had the chance to go back I probably would." She completes this statement by justifying it in terms of what she constructs herself as having – "nothing" (line 75). This is reinforced in practical terms in the following statement (line 76). Having taken such pains to bring herself to make such a difficult statement she repeats it, much more clearly and explicitly: "I just wished we'd have waited." The next statement seems to be an attempt to soften the impact of the previous one, upon herself as she seeks to reassure herself the situation is improving. The conjoiner "but" tells us that it doesn't carry the weight of the first half of the sentence and that therefore, she doesn't fully accept this.

Hayley's feelings of ambivalence about her situation are clear. Yet she finds it unacceptable to say so. She describes a situation in which she finds it difficult to live from a practical and physical perspective. She expresses her love for her daughter in this extract in the interview, and at other points. Yet, she does not find it easy to say me that she sometimes regrets her position. It is impossible to know how much this would be affected were she existing in different circumstances.

It is important to recognise that maternal ambivalence is not confined to mothers of children resulting from unintended pregnancies. It can also be an issue for those who positively chose to become a mother. From some perspectives the feelings may then be constructed as less acceptable given that the mother feels that as she wanted and planned the baby she has less “right” to feel any “negative” feelings about her situation.

Charlene's baby was planned. Here she contrasts her feelings about her expectations of parenthood, prior to becoming a mother, with her feelings about the reality:

Extract 42

574. Helen: Yeah, it's hard. Let me take you back you just said that
575. what you wanted for J has changed and you know you've got
576. different thoughts and you talked a little bit about what you
577. thought motherhood would be like, when you had this baby and
578. how it would be? Is it what you thought it would be when you
579. were pregnant or before you had him or is it very different?
580. Charlene: Its very different umm I'd expected to be up endlessly
581. every single night, screaming baby and er pause I expected it to
582. be harder than it is but I I think it is harder than I what I dunno
583. what I imagined to be was really, really hard but it's not I dunno
584. how to explain it really but I know now its different and its hard

585. to relate back to. Basically it's not as hard as I imagined it to be
586. but then again if I'd imagined it to be really really hard I dunno if
587. I'd had've gone through with it but no I mean you can only take
588. one day at a time you can only do your best basically

In this extract Charlene is beginning to make sense of her feelings about motherhood. Line 582 shows that she is finding it difficult to articulate these feelings as she contradicts herself by saying she expected it (motherhood) to be harder "but I I think it is harder". The statement "its hard to relate back to" suggests the way she felt prior to the birth of her child now seems remote. This is followed by another contradiction – "its not as hard as I imagined it to be" and another expression of indecisiveness "but then again..." Clearly, Charlene is finding it difficult to position herself in this discourse. Instead, then of making a firm response to my question she addresses it with a philosophical statement (line 587-588).

The following extract continues this theme.

Extract 43

613. Helen: So what you are saying is, from what I can hear, you are
614. saying certain things are hard but not the things you thought
615. would be difficult and the things that you thought would be
616. difficult actually haven't been as hard
617. Charlene: Yeah cuz you think about it when you're pregnant and
618. stuff you think that you can play with all these children we can
619. go to all the time in reality there just is not enough time they
620. might be ill, they might be grumpy, you think oh my god, you
621. don't think of these things every day life things but I can
622. honestly say that my life had improved and bettered since K
623. come along, its made me more aware of myself, wanted to be
624. more educated, things like the Duke of Edinburgh and stuff and
625. also like a better person

Charlene disassociated herself from her next statements using the pronoun "you", as opposed to taking responsibility for her responses by using "I". She

constructs a story to illustrate the change in her feelings ante and post natally (lines 618-625). She then resumes responsibility with “I” as she positions herself as a “better person” since the birth of her son. The dialogue continues:

Extract 44

628. Helen: In what way?
629. Charlene: As I said I used to be a little cow yeah as a teenager I
630. don't know how my dad really coped but then again, yeah I
631. mean now I don't think I'm actually a perfect person cuz S can
632. get on the bad side of me, but um the thing is with kids when
633. your younger you get that laughing feeling you know when your
634. laughing and it hurts that sorts of goes later in life especially
635. when your 18 and stuff. But then children, your own children
636. come into your life and you find stupid things like they do so
637. funny and er that makes I mean K can just sit there and do
638. something so silly, I'll be cracked up I mean he's just so funny
639. and I hope that will go through everything with him because he
640. is such a little joy I do think. Saying that like when I was little,
641. that would be so stupid little words like joy but in the end he's
642. bought joy to me

Charlene presents herself as a “little cow” before she had her son and then constructs a story telling how she finds joy and humour in her role as mother. In line 641 the clause “but in the end” is a summarising statement that moves into a positively toned conclusion. This analysis demonstrates an example of maternal ambivalence.

This section has demonstrated the way in which the young women interviewed describe their feelings of maternal ambivalence.

5.3 Chapter summary

The research questions asked if there are any pervasive and significant concepts held and used by young mothers to guide, justify or explicate their

experiences. This chapter has demonstrated the application of a DA approach to the data obtained from interviewing a group of young mothers the analysis of which has demonstrated the emergence of two key discourses from the data that are the binary construction of the Good-Bad mother and maternal ambivalence. Young mothers self-locate within the Good-Bad mother discourse at times seeking to distance themselves from the Bad mother polarisation, at other times attending to their need to be identified within the Good mother polarisation. The polarised binary serves as an exacerbatory factor in the way maternal ambivalence is experienced as will be discussed further in the following chapter. These findings will be discussed in the following chapter.

CHAPTER SIX

Discussion

Chapters Four and Five presented a CDA and DA applied to two types of inter-discursive data sets. Having discussed the discourses and issues arising from the data separately, the purpose of this chapter is to discuss the analyses holistically. This will reveal some of the tensions and dilemmas that exist in the broader social context of the young mothers lives and that impact directly on their experiences. The chapter will draw together the literature review, the CDA and the DA to address the contribution made by this study to the body of knowledge relating to young pregnancy and parenthood.

The research questions seek to understand the lived experiences of young mothers. The theoretical framework for this study takes the approach that there is a dialectical relationship between young pregnancy and motherhood and the situations, institutions and social structures that frame it. Therefore, the experiences of young mothers can best be understood by analysing them and placing this analysis within a contextual analysis. Moreover, the theoretical framework recognises the power of discourse thus a CDA and DA approach is suited to the research aim that seeks to reveal the pervasive and significant concepts held by young mothers to guide, justify or explicate their experiences.

In this chapter the discussion focuses on the findings of a contextual analysis that begins with the conceptual framework that begins by contesting the assumption that young pregnancy and parenting is a negative phenomena. The analysis identifies motherhood as seen to be negative unless

practiced within certain ideological parameters including being in a “steady” relationship and being economically independent. A blaming the victim discourse is attached to young mothers who are stereotypically depicted in these discourses, the result of which is discrimination against them. Mothers are polarised within the Good-Bad mother binary when they locate themselves outside of the dominant discourse that defines a right time and a right framework for motherhood, which includes being within a steady relationship and being economically independent.

Chapter Four demonstrates a CDA applied to three texts - the foreword by Tony Blair to the SEU Teenage Pregnancy Strategy (Blair 1999), an example of media text about a young mother-to-be (Sherry and Price 2002) and a transcript from a BBC Radio 4 broadcast discussing the issue of leaving motherhood too late (Murray 2004). A multiplicity of discourses is shown to be operative within these texts. Discourses are constitutive, constituting and interwoven. The discourses will be discussed as they relate to the young pregnancy and parenthood literature corpus.

This chapter begins with a discussion of the context within which influences and shapes the experiences of young parents. The chapter continues with a discussion of the two key discourses elicited from the application of DA to interviews with young mothers. These concepts are the Good-Bad mother and maternal ambivalence.

6.1 New Labour and a right framework in which to mother

The CDA has demonstrated the existence of a set of criteria that constitute the right framework in which motherhood should be practised - these criteria include motherhood taking place within the context of a permanent relationship, ideally marriage, within the parameters of economic

independence and when a woman is of the “right” age. This represents New Labour’s ideology of the family and reproduction that is embedded in historically and culturally specific discourses of class and respectability and demonstrates that whilst New Labour claim to be embracing life politics, defined in the introduction, as responding to a “world in which tradition and custom are losing their hold over our lives” (Giddens 2000:40) these discourses suggest otherwise. In the literature review I have described one of the political functions of motherhood as attending to the transgression of state ideologies (Phoenix, Woollett et al. 1991). This process is demonstrated occurring in the DA whereby the women identify the concept of the Good-Bad mother for whom a criterion is developed including not becoming a mother for personal gain, providing for her child(ren), putting the needs of her child(ren) before her own, having a partner, coping, planning her pregnancies and having her child(ren) at the right time. These criteria demonstrate the way in which the young mothers have internalised dominant psychological and political discourses about mothering and positioned themselves within these discourses as either good mothers when they meet the criteria, or bad mothers when they don’t.

In the introduction and literature review I discussed the Third Way, as the ideological rationale for New Labour, which promotes a message of social inclusion by drawing attention to issues that result in social exclusion. The concept of young mothers as socially excluded places an emphasis on them, as agents operating outside of the prescribed ideological criteria for “good” mothers. Their exclusion is reinforced by emphasising young mothers contested dubious motivations in the creation of their situation instead of focusing upon the external circumstances that contribute to it including issues of class, poverty and gender (Walkerdine, Lucey et al. 2001; Kidger 2004). The issues of gender and class specifically have been described as

being absent from New Labour discourses and policies (McRobbie 2000; Skeggs 2004) with gender inequalities being reduced to a series of individual problems (Lister 2001) which can be addressed with the help of government policies presupposing that there is nothing wrong with contemporary society that government policy can't address through being more inclusive thus detracting from the old emphasis on inequalities and conflicts of interest perpetuated by capitalism (Fairclough 2000). The individualization of subjectivities or identities is influenced by the work of Beck (2000) and Giddens (Giddens 1998; Giddens 2000). Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (2002) have described the institutions of class and the family as "zombie categories" meaning they are the living dead thus whilst the family remains valued, as a concept it is changing dramatically because of individualization which is liberating people from their traditional roles so allowing new and greater potential for the re-interpretation of roles. The theory of individualization and in particular the work of Giddens (1998; 2000) is relevant as it informs New Labour government. Skeggs (2004) demonstrates using Bourdieu's (1988) analysis of class formation and intellectual knowledge that individualization and discourses of mobility are tools for effacing class whilst simultaneously institutionalising middle-class habitus in government policy, as demonstrated in education policy (Gewirtz 2001) and I would argue in current social policy as it addresses young mothers.

Attributing young women's desire for pregnancy and motherhood to the personal gain motivation of the acquisition of state housing and welfare, or to a lack of sexual knowledge, or finally depicting it always as a "mistake," fails to recognise that some young women positively chose to become mothers because they desire motherhood (Arai 2003b), in the same way as older women. Inherent in the conceptualisation of motherhood as an undesirable lifestyle choice for young women is the contested value judgment that

economic productivity is of greater importance than motherhood and one that discounts full-time mothering as a valid option (Kidger 2004). Whilst it is argued that the promotion of paid work is to be applauded as it represents the main route out of poverty there is danger in prioritising it as the only citizen responsibility over other forms of work including care and voluntary work (Lister 2001). To counterbalance this Williams (2001) suggests a “new political ethics of care” that reconceptualises our use of time and space in a way that recognises people’s work/life needs within three inter-connected areas of their lives. These areas are personal time and space, care time and space and work time and space. Restructuring lives using this model would allow much greater scope for prioritising opportunities to give and receive care and “to normalise responsibilities for giving care and support and needs for receiving care and support” (Williams 2001:489). Most importantly, this model could begin to balance the fixation with the ethic of work with one of care in an egalitarian fashion. Moreover, this model would support the need for greater numbers of carers and workers if the UK is to be in a position to reconcile the widening disparity between the overall decline in the population and the specific increase in the number of elderly people that as described in the introduction as a cause for social and economic concern (see 1.1).

The above describes the way in which social policy provides a context by prescribing discourses of motherhood and subjectivities which enshrined in legislation, regulates women’s lives (Carabine 1996) and informs the two discourses that this study demonstrates as key features of the experiences of the young women interviewed. The young women in this study positioned themselves in relation to the binary construct of the Good-Bad mother and described the concept and their experiences of maternal ambivalence.

6.2 The Good-Bad Mother and Stigmatisation

The mothers I interviewed described the concept of a good and/or bad mother and positioned themselves within this binary in accordance with their definitions and those they perceived others to hold. One of the images depicted was that of the young mother as a bad mother because of the age at which she had become one i.e. outside of the current politically and socially constructed definition of the “right” time. Multiple factors influence a woman’s ability to parent, not solely chronological age. There is no, and can be no universal consensual agreement as to what constitutes a good, and by default, a bad mother. So why does the construct of the Good-Bad Mother binary exist? Put another way what purpose does it serve? Asking this question is consistent with the model of CDA applied in Chapter Four whereby Fairclough suggests as the third stage in a CDA analysis we consider whether the social order “needs” the (young pregnancy and parenthood) problem (Fairclough 2001). In order to answer this we must first consider the effects of constructing young pregnancy and parenthood as a social problem.

The defining of young pregnancy and parenthood leads to a number of different responses, the axis of which is the stigmatisation of the problems “victim”. Goffman (1963)] describes society as establishing a means of categorising people based upon normative expectations. A person is identified as having a stigma when they deviate from the way in which they were anticipated to be experienced thus “it constitutes a special discrepancy between virtual and actual social identity” (ibid p. 3).

In the case of young mothers the “differentness” from what is anticipated refers to the discrepancy between the age of the young mother and that of the stereotypical image of contemporary political and social ideology of the good

mother – a woman of the right age, which currently is neither “too young” nor “too old”, and is relative to historical and cultural contexts. Goffman (1963) offers a typology of stigma. This includes “abominations of the body,” character blemishes and tribal stigmas. Young mothers are positioned within each of these categories – when pregnant they freely demonstrate the fruits of their sexual activity in the physical form (abominations of body) of stigma. The character blemishes (being amoral, unambitious, lazy and so on) are made frequent reference to, particularly in the media (as in the case of Amy in Chapter Four). Finally, young mothers are homogenized to create a tribe thus permitting the transmission of the stigma through lineage – in this way we understand and accept the notion that young mothers are more likely to have young daughters who also become young mothers.

Goffman describes people who do not depart negatively from societal expectations as “normals”. He declares the rationale for the construction of a stigma ideology by “normals” as their way of explaining a person’s inferiority and as a justification for discomfort at the danger they pose to the “normals”. This can be seen to be reflected in the way in which young mothers are depicted as inferior in multiple ways – in their life choices and ways of being, the enactments of which are also constructed as negative. So, for example, their choice of motherhood over the decision to earn a paid living is seen as an inferior life style choice. The danger posed by these women is constructed as being the cost they afford society, themselves and their children but this construct has been challenged as demonstrated in (see 2.9). It is necessary here to make an observation about terminology as it relates to the use of young women’s’ “choices.” The notion of choice suggests a liberal bourgeois, reflexive, mobile subject who is able to choose as featured in contemporary discourses of self-actualisation, self-transformation, will power and choice so in this situation young mothers are depicted as exercising a choice to become

a mother, and a choice to pursue motherhood over employment. Skeggs (2004) argues this choice is limited by class and gender and leads her to conclude

“Those who suggest that choice is universal betray the social position from which their perspective emerged. Choice is a resource, to which some lack access and which they cannot see as a possibility; it is not within their field of vision, their plausibility structure” (Skeggs 2004 :139).

Thus, for Skeggs the women have only limited choice in their decisions of when and how to mother. This understanding is not considered when the real threat posed by these young women is concerned with their breaking away from what has come to be constructed as acceptable in terms of values, aspirations and behaviour (Ward 1995). These are based on a predominantly bourgeois and androcentric epistemology that is consistent with an ideology that sees sexual activity as taking place within defined age parameters and marriage or a committed relationship. Young motherhood represents the embodiment of young women defying these conventions, a conceptualisation that resonates with the way in which what Douglas (1996) terms “pollution ideas” can be enlisted to support moral values whereby young pregnancy and parenthood represents a form of sexual pollution where the

“physical crossing of a social barrier is treated as a dangerous pollution...The polluter becomes a doubly wicked object of reprobation, first because he crossed the line and second because he endangered others” (Douglas 1996:140).

In the case of young mothers the physical crossing is represented in their pregnancies and subsequent children, and the social barrier they have crossed is the acceptable parameters, described above, in which motherhood is prescribed to occur as described by Douglas as the use of pollution ideas

enlisted to bind women and men to their allocated roles. Returning to Fairclough's earlier question regarding the social orders need to have the problem of young pregnancy and parenthood this section has demonstrated that it does in order to govern the lives of women and to facilitate mothers in their role of governing children in fashioning them into responsible and useful citizens (Smith 2003) through the discourse of the Good-Bad mother.

6.3 Responses to stigmatisation

Having constructed the deviant as stigmatised some "normals" may then attempt to change or better the "deviants" situation. This results in the formulation of two discourses that are a "blaming the victim" discourse and a "charity" discourse.

The "Blaming the Victim" discourse has been discussed in the literature review (see 2.17). It is an:

"ideological process, which is to say that it is a set of ideas and concepts deriving from systematically motivated, but *unintended*, distortions of reality" (Ryan 1972:11).

This definition links with Goffman's conceptualisation of stigma as a discrepancy between virtual and actual social identity. Goffman and Ryan understand the effect of stigmatisation, or adopting a blaming the victim discourse, as resulting in benevolent social action that results in unintentionally reducing the "victims" life chances. It is unintentional because a social problem is only a problem to those outside of the problem who construct it as a problem, those experiencing the stigma do not automatically feel it necessary to change or remove the stigma, moreover it becomes the attitudes of others toward it that necessitates change. This resonates with some of the stories of the young mothers in this study, many

of whom did not construct their motherhood per se as a problem. Far more immediate for these young women were issues such as relationships, money, housing, child-care all of which are interrelated and impact upon the way in which they are experiencing motherhood. The benevolent bourgeois find it difficult to accept that their efforts to help young mothers are unwelcome. Despite all the good advice and preventative educational strategies young women continue to get pregnant resulting in an alternative manifestation of victim blaming whereby young mothers are constructed as deviant or bad mothers.

The young women in this study listed criteria that define a good mother (not becoming a mother for personal gain, providing for her child(ren), putting the needs of her child(ren) before her own, having a partner, coping, planning her pregnancies and having her child(ren) at the right time), including a discussion about the age at which a woman becomes a mother, and positioned themselves within the binary of the good-bad mother. From the perspective of the young mothers, women in their position require understanding and a fair hearing, as described by Jo “we’re really good parents, we are, you know, but that’s what I mean I wish they’d just ask instead of judging first.” Application of the stigma discourse pre-empts the ability to judge a situation individually thus stereotyping all young mothers as bad. This discourse is demonstrated in the CDA of the Daily Mail article (see 4.2) where the young mother being discussed is portrayed negatively and multiple facets of her lifestyle called into question, a process whereby we “impute a wide range of imperfections on the basis of the original one” (Goffman 1963). This process is further seen in examples of politicians’ speeches where they condemn young mothers for getting pregnant in order to jump the social housing queue or to access social security benefits. This aspect of victim blaming seeks to justify our anger, manifested in the vilification of young mothers when the victim fails to live up to that which we

unreasonably and unrealistically demand of them (Goffman 1963). Several of the young mothers interviewed described their experiences of this vilification in the form of being verbally abused about their status by strangers in public.

Blaming the victim is consistent with a MUD (Moral Underclass Discourse) rationale of young pregnancy and parenthood (Levitas 1998). Levitas describes the key characteristics of this discourse, all of which are features of the young pregnancy and parenthood trajectory, thus:

- it presents the socially excluded or the underclass as culturally distinct from the mainstream of society
- it places an emphasis on the behaviour of the poor, instead of focusing upon the structure of society which facilitates poverty
- it suggests the receipt of welfare is unhelpful to the beneficiary, and encourages dependency
- it is a gendered discourse
- unpaid work is not acknowledged
- whilst women's economic dependence on the state is regarded as a problem, it is to be encouraged if their dependence is upon men

(Levitas 1998:21).

A MUD approach to young motherhood enables and rationalises a blame the victim approach that has complex and conflicted messages ranging from sympathy and support to persecution of the victim. The sympathy discourse is described here as the "Charity" discourse.

The "Charity" discourse is consistent with aspects of contemporary social policy on young pregnancy and parenthood as evidenced in the CDA of Tony

Blair's foreword to the Teenage Pregnancy Strategy (Social Exclusion Unit 1999). The discourse overtly and covertly suggests we feel sorry for the young women who find themselves in such a position. These trajectories construct the young mother as victim of various evils (men, low self-esteem, poverty, low educational aspirations, falling moral standards) over which they are unable to exert control. Their pregnancies therefore, are beyond their control, a symptom of their inferiority (Goffman 1963). Those espousing this discourse are in a position to "help" these young mothers who are unable to help themselves. This resonates with the aspect of the SEU strategy that aims to provide better educational support and support for young mothers in terms of helping them into paid work. It is also consistent with a SID (Social Integrationist Discourse), as described in 1.1, that tends "to reduce the social to the economic" (Levitas 1998:26) and "narrows the definition of social inclusion/exclusion to participation in paid work" (ibid). At one level this kind of recognition and help must be welcomed. At another it is patronising and further reinforces the notion of young women's inability to make choices for themselves. Once again the victim is blamed instead of looking at the situation from an alternative perspective which might include considering the notion of young mothers as responsible agents and society as being somewhat narrow in its definition in its ideology of "good" mothering. The SEU message is ultimately prescriptive. The help available emanates from the value base of education and employment as the desired goal for women thus devaluing motherhood as opposed to addressing the inequalities between paid and unpaid workers, and relating this to the issue of gender.

Throughout the thesis, (in particular, see 3.3.2) a theoretical emphasis is placed upon discourse as a social practice, which recognises the dialectical relationship between young pregnancy and parenthood and the situations, institutions and social practices that frame it. The analysis has demonstrated

two central discourses that are blaming the victim and the charity response which form part of the dialectical relationship between the context and the lived experiences of young mothers. Ultimately, the effect of the blaming the victim and the charity responsive discourses are the same - young mothers and their children are problematized and pathologized (Ward 1995). This legitimates the right of professionals from many spheres to influence and control the lives of young mothers and their children. Control may be exerted in a number of ways - contemporary policy exerts control by placing pressure on mothers to return to paid employment thus dictating one way in which women's and children's lives are shaped. Certain moral values are reinforced, particularly those relating to young women's sexuality. This impacts on the experiences of young mothers who are stigmatised. Society is slowly becoming aware of the effects of stigmatisation on marginalized groups (e.g. people of racial minorities, people with disabilities). We understand it to be divisive and destructive. In certain fields such as disability, legislation is in place to reduce the effects of such stigmatisation and discrimination (Department for Work and Pensions 1995). Until very recently, there has been little recognition of this concept in relation to young mothers with the exception of the afore mentioned (see 2.19) recent campaign launched by the YWCA (2005).

6.4 The acceptability of stigmatising young mothers

It is acceptable to practice the stigmatisation of young mothers. The task now is to answer the question: how is it that it is acceptable to practice discrimination against young mothers?

The age of young mothers makes them particularly vulnerable to discrimination. The literature review describes adolescence as a social construction (see 2.5) that is culturally and historically specific. Young

people find themselves in a kind of no mans land – too old to be defined as a child and afforded protection and yet not an adult with the subsequent rights and responsibilities. Young people under the age of 18 are predominantly within the legal custody of their parents or guardians. This places them in conflict as they progress into the adult world (Morrow and Richards 1996). Adolescents are neither children, nor adults, both of whom have prescribed and accepted boundaries of behaviour. Instead, adolescents must leave behind childhood and actualise as adults. It is in the process of developing their adult identities that young people are at increased risk of discrimination. Young people are caught in between the childhood and the adult parameters with conflicting guidelines about their behaviour as described in the literature review (see 2.3). Adolescence is stereotypically constructed as a particularly traumatic period during which young people behave erratically and temperamentally due to the influx of hormones as the physical changes start that lead to puberty. Young people are an easy target for discrimination as they operate within a system that seeks to disempower and regulate and that affords them little respect or autonomy. Young mothers subjectivities are influenced then by a discourse of ageism, in addition to discourses of class and gender.

Adolescent sexuality is an area fraught with difficulty as it constructed within the legal framework of the age of consent and changing and conflicting moralities. Young mothers make explicit their operation outside a framework that places acceptable sexuality within the confines of marriage or a monogamous relationship. Moreover, the literature review has described sexuality as being imbued with a “special status” (Jackson and Scott 2004). It is within this framework that young mothers are stigmatised according to Goffman’s (1963) second in his list of three types of stigma that relates to the blemishes of an individual’s character such as weak wilfulness or immoral

behaviour. This conceptualisation relates in particular to women whose sexual behaviour is regulated and controlled in ways different to males (Ward 1995).

The core of the rationalisation of the stigmatisation of young mothers lies in the epistemological positioning of androcentricity and middle-class ideology that views women's role within the narrow parameters of marriage and child-care. These parameters legitimate the regulation and control of women's bodies and actions (Ward 1995). Women deviating from this model are a danger and a threat, the antidote to which is their disempowerment achieved by discriminating (practised consciously or subconsciously) against them.

6.5 Maternal ambivalence

The young mothers in this study described their ambivalence toward their children and their role as mothers as one of the guiding concepts for their lived experiences. Maternal ambivalence is a recognized phenomenon in the psychoanalytic community (Rich 1977; Parker 1995). The recognition and acknowledgment of maternal ambivalence has been described as one of the steps in an unending series of transformations that women experience when they come to motherhood (Parker 1997). Mothers of all ages and from all backgrounds have described feelings of maternal ambivalence (ibid). Nevertheless, it remains a difficult emotion for mothers to express and to understand and rationalize. Placing this within the context of the Good-Bad mother we can begin to understand why. The women in this study are able to describe their ambivalence towards their children and their role as mothers yet their willingness to position themselves within the Good mother discourse, and to disassociate themselves from the Bad mother discourse, reflects their discomfort at not complying with the narrowly defined construct of a Good mother as someone who feels only love for her child and is selfless

in its expression. Young mothers who express their ambivalence are once again expressing “an undesired differentness from what we anticipated” (Goffman 1963:5). Therefore, they are placed at greater vulnerability of stigmatisation and discrimination.

I would suggest that if maternal ambivalence is difficult to express for those who mother within the societally rigidly defined “good” mother construct, how much harder it must be for those who exist outside these parameters. The effect of finding ourselves unable to express feelings of ambivalence to children and roles is problematic (Parker 1995). It stifles women’s sense of self, is fundamentally dishonest and results in personal incongruence. The inability to express feelings of maternal ambivalence limits women to attempting the impossible feat of mothering within the narrow maternal ideals created and sustained by others, among them professionals and the media. The effect of this is to inhibit the process of maternal individuation defined as follows:

“an ongoing process in which ambivalence, coupled with the wish to experience the well-being of mother-love, pushes a mother into discovering ways of mothering which are congruent with her particular capacities and desires, rather than measuring herself against maternal mythologies.”(Parker 1997:25).

Parker describes the process of maternal individuation as the coupling of ambivalence with desire to feel mother-love, as facilitating the creation of individually appropriate and acceptable ways of mothering, as opposed to competing with the mythological good mother. The inability for a woman to maternally individuate at best, limits the potential of the mother-child relationship, and at worst, leaves open the opportunity for damaged or impaired relationships. This has particular implications for young mothers who may be, although not automatically, operating under already difficult

circumstances, including poverty, which may already inhibit the potential development of some relationships. It is vital to recognise that some of the young mothers in this research existed in conditions far from suitable and conducive to child rearing.

6.6 The way forward

This thesis has demonstrated the way in which young mothers lives and subjectivities are affected by dominant discourses of gender, class and motherhood with the effect that they experience discrimination influencing their personal trajectories that feature the Good-Bad mother binary and maternal ambivalence. A key motivation for social scientists employing CDA is to contribute to what is, how it has come to be and what it might become (Calhoun 1995; Chouliaraki and Fairclough 1999)], which interfaces with a central aim of feminist methodology that seeks to end female oppression (Kelly, Burton et al. 1994). An obvious question at this stage then is what can, or should be done, about young pregnancy and parenthood or what is the way forward? This section will consider some of the alternatives to the approach suggested in the Teenage Pregnancy Strategy that has been discussed throughout this thesis and is summarised as being of limited scope in its aims given its foundation of contested assumptions and its episteme.

In their account of mothering and class Walkerdine and Lucey (1989) discuss the way in which the working class is constantly produced and reproduced as “necessary, different, disgusting” which they connect with discourses of female sexuality that regulate, exploit and oppress women. They argue that whilst mothering is pleasurable, that pleasure is produced and regulated thus limiting women (and men) to practice “mothering” within narrow confines that are described in this thesis as limiting the creative potential of

mothers to address their maternal ambivalence thus facilitating the process of maternal individuation (Parker 1995). Despite the regulation of mothering, the young mothers in this study are attempting to redefine their subjectivities and to find a way to exist within dominant discourses of motherhood and sexuality whereby they create their own discourses, which once heard, are powerful. Likewise, the voices of young fathers must be heard and their discourses of patriarchy deconstructed to enable them to become more accountable as fathers (Nyland forthcoming).

It is understandable that feminists have expressed discomfort and dilemmas around young pregnancy and parenthood given that the idea of young motherhood represents to some feminists a “narrowing of options that they have fought to enlarge for women” (Davies, McKinnon et al. 2001:97) however, it is important to listen to what young women want and accept that for some this will be motherhood. In this vein, a further suggestion has to be a reconsideration of sexual regulation. Jackson (1982) argues sexuality is not an isolated aspect of life but a political as well as personal issue. This is demonstrated by the way in which the advent of HIV/AIDS has forced a public dialogue of sexuality, in particular, homosexuality. Young mothers experience discrimination in a similar way to that experienced by people affected by HIV (Chapman 1998) but this has been arguably addressed by policy and awareness raising of the issue. Part of the process of destigmatisation and re-evaluation of sexuality will need to address the issue of abortion that has been identified as needing destigmatisation (Lee, Clements et al. 2004) whereby it becomes accepted as a part of sexual and reproductive health. This is particularly salient in light of recent campaigns and debates centring on the reduction of the gestation limit for termination in the UK (see Baker 2005; Edwards 2005).

The role and construction of mothers and mothering (by this I refer to the understanding that children have needs to be met, the role of mothering attends to this but it does not need to rely on the gender based construction of the role to be fulfilled) needs reconsidering. A clear paradox is represented by policy that encourages mothers to join the workforce whilst simultaneously encouraging them to spend time with their children (Dawson forthcoming).

These discussions and re-evaluations are not easy processes to work through as they involve emotive and economic arguments. As such the social question remains unsettled and ensures that the “the formation of a new relationship between the state and the public will remain embattled – and unstable” (Clarke and Newman 1997:155). This represents the process that is change, which is not about new discourses replacing old, but about the coexistence of the old and new which results in the contradictions in our positionings, practices and desires and our subjectivities (Hollway 1998). The UK is beginning a third term with New Labour in government, with promises from the Prime Minister, Tony Blair, that he has listened to, and learnt from, the people (Directgov 2005) following the election result that saw New Labour lose its previous large majority. This thesis has demonstrated the need for policy makers and practitioners to listen to the voices of young mothers.

Chapter summary

The literature review demonstrates the literature as evolving from the themes of the negative effects and outcomes of young pregnancy and parenthood, motivational factors in the process of becoming a young parent and methods for preventative strategies in the field. The fourth theme provides the conceptual framework of this thesis that begins by questioning the contestable assumption that young pregnancy and parenthood is a negative

phenomena. The literature review reveals a limited body of research that seeks to understand, or illuminate the experience from the perspective of young mothers themselves. This thesis attends to this omission by seeking to understand and demonstrate the lived experiences of young mothers, as constructed by themselves and placed within context.

In order to understand the lived experiences of young parents we must first understand something of the contexts within which they live their lives. The theoretical underpinnings of this research recognise the role of discourse and its powerful effects in shaping the subjectivities and lived experiences of young mothers. The analysis generated the discourse of media and policy as being particularly powerful in the social process of young motherhood. The CDA of media and policy texts has demonstrated the dominant discourse permeating these structures as one that places motherhood within a right time and a right framework. These discourses have been discussed in this chapter as leading to the demonstration of a discursive formation of discrimination against young mothers, the effects of which have been discussed with consideration paid to the potential effects this may have upon young mothers and their children.

The use of CDA and DA theory leads to the conclusion that the discursive construction of young pregnancy and parenthood as negative inter-relates with, and informs, the lived experiences of young mothers. In this study the voices of young mothers describe their experiences of maternal ambivalence that is informed and exacerbated by the Good-Bad mother construct.

This chapter drew together the analysis of the inter-related stands of this study by discussing the dominant discourses as they inter-relate and impact upon the lives of young mothers. A discussion of way forward concludes the

chapter. This leads to the final chapter of the thesis that will complete the research trail by drawing together the research question, the analyses and the conclusion.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Research Conclusions

The purpose of this chapter is to draw together the research questions, analyses and the conclusions of this research. The chapter will begin with a summary of the research framework incorporating the research question and the methodological approaches of CDA and DA. The research findings will be stated and discussed in relation to the research questions. It will be accompanied by a discussion of the issues based on the current body of literature, the analyses demonstrated in this study and the subsequent new findings that contribute to the advancement in the young pregnancy and parenthood field. The chapter will conclude with a discussion of the research limitations and implications for further areas of research.

7.1 Research summary

This study was concerned with developing an understanding of what it is like to be a young mother of today in the UK. The literature review of the young pregnancy and parenthood corpus highlighted areas thus far neglected in particular an absence of an analytical understanding of the experiences of young mothers. This led to the development of two key research questions:

1. What are the lived experiences of young mothers – as constructed by themselves and placed within a policy and media context?
2. What are the pervasive and significant concepts held and used by young mothers to guide, justify or explicate their experiences?

The epistemological underpinnings of this study uphold a feminist perspective (Harding 1987). A key aim of feminist research is to understand

and eliminate the processes that facilitate female oppression (Kelly, Burton et al. 1994). By seeking to understand and analyse the lived experiences of young mothers this research seeks also to understand the processes that lead to the oppression of young mothers via the processes that lead to their construction as bad mothers who are then discriminated against.

The research questions combined with the epistemological underpinnings of the study determined the methodological choice of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and Discourse Analysis (DA) (Crotty 1998). It was considered helpful to separate the research questions into two areas. The first of these, as stated in question 1, was to explore the political and social context in which young mothers live out their experiences. The second area, as stated in question 2, was to understand the experiences of the young mothers themselves. Two distinct but inter-related theoretical and methodological approaches were used in addressing these questions. The work of Fairclough (Fairclough 1989; Fairclough 1995; Fairclough and Wodak 1997; Fairclough 2000; Fairclough 2001; Fairclough 2003) who, among others (Wodak 1996; van Dijk 1997; Mills 2004), has been instrumental in the development of CDA, provided an appropriate analytical framework to address the contextualisation of the lives of young mothers. The second research question focused on analysing the experiences of young mothers in their own voices. DA was selected and utilized as the most appropriate methodological approach to facilitate an understanding of the constructed nature of young mothers' experience of pregnancy and motherhood as it facilitated an understanding of the way in which young mothers locate themselves within the discourses that they interrelate with.

Three types of data pertaining to the question, the investigation of the social and political context of young pregnancy and parenthood in the UK, were

selected for the application of CDA. These texts were the foreword by Tony Blair, Prime Minister to the Teenage Pregnancy Strategy (Social Exclusion Unit 1999), an article from the Daily Mail newspaper about a young mother-to-be (Sherry and Price 2002) and a BBC Radio 4 Woman's Hour broadcast featuring a debate on the issue of leaving motherhood too late (Murray 2004). These texts were analysed using an interpretation of Fairclough's five-stage framework for CDA (Fairclough 2001).

The semi-structured interview was employed as the research tool for the examination of the young mothers experiences. Interviews were undertaken between November 2002 and May 2003 with 11 pregnant women and mothers aged 16-20 years. The ages at which these women had first given birth ranged between 15-19 years. A DA was used to analyse these interviews.

7.2 The lived experiences of young mothers

This study has demonstrated the application of CDA to three types of contextualising texts. These texts, including the foreword by Tony Blair, Prime Minister, to the Teenage Pregnancy Strategy (Teenage Pregnancy Unit 2005), an article from the Daily Mail newspaper about a young mother-to-be (Sherry and Price 2002) and a BBC Radio 4 Woman's Hour broadcast featuring a debate on the issue of leaving motherhood too late (Murray 2004) were chosen to represent an aspect of the contexts within which young parents live out their experiences. The texts operate constructively and constitutively, informing and being informed by multiple inter-related discourses, including those of young mothers. The analysis demonstrated a multiplicity of discourses within the texts. A dominant discourse is the construction of young pregnancy and motherhood as a negative phenomenon.

A text that discusses the discourse of mothering “too late” is analysed in relation to this conceptualisation which leads to the establishment of an underlying discourse which suggests there is a right time at which to mother. Equally, a discourse is identified that features a “right” framework in which to mother. This framework represents a set of parameters within which motherhood should ideally be practiced. These parameters focus primarily upon the idealization of motherhood within the framework of marriage and/or the position of economic independence. Mothers who operate outside of these parameters are constructed as “bad” mothers. Mothers positioned outside of these idealised parameters are subject to the application of the “Blaming the Victim” discourse that results in discrimination toward young mothers.

7.3 The Good-Bad Mother and Maternal Ambivalence

A DA approach to the data obtained from interviewing a group of young mothers demonstrated the emergence of two key discourses from the data – firstly, the young mothers experience and locate themselves within the binary construction of the Good-Bad mother. Secondly, they experience maternal ambivalence. The Good-Bad mother discourse serves as an exacerbatory factor in the way maternal ambivalence is experienced whereby “good” mothers are not able to surface their destructive emotions toward their child(ren) as these are understood as unacceptable. Young mothers are automatically positioned by their context as “bad” mothers thus increasing their personal need to compensate for this by positioning themselves as “good” mothers. The desire to be a “good” mother exacerbates the pressure on young mothers to deny or suppress their feelings of maternal ambivalence.

Fairclough's five-stage model of CDA (Fairclough 2001) was described in Chapter Three. Stage four in the analytical process proposes a shift in focus from the analysis of data to a consideration of the potential for change in a situation or the social problem being analysed. The research has undertaken this by considering the "incompletions, gaps, paradoxes and contradictions" (ibid) in texts that relate to young pregnancy and motherhood. Fairclough (ibid) proceeds with the suggestion that the potentials for addressing these gaps and removing the obstacles to change lie in the texts themselves. This framework provides a useful entry point in determining the implications of this study as it bases the answer to the issues within the texts themselves thus allowing the situations and subjectivities to speak for self-determine outcomes instead of imposing them externally.

7.4 Research implications

The following section will discuss the discourses of a right time and framework for motherhood, the blaming the victim discourse, the Good-Bad mother binary and the maternal ambivalence discourse and summarises potential ways to reconceptualise the social "problem" of young pregnancy and motherhood.

7.4.1 Education Implications

The conceptualisation that there is a "right" time and a "right" framework in which to mother reflects an over-simplification of the complexities of motherhood. Perceptions of what constitutes the "right" time and framework are historically and culturally specific. The women in this study described the gravity of the implications to their lives resultant from their becoming mothers. It is clear there is a need for people to be in a position to make informed choices that enables evaluation of their desires and circumstances

as they relate to potential parenthood within a framework of insightfulness and knowledge. Education has a role to play in the process of enabling young people to make informed life choices by providing all young people with a space in which to explore the realities of parenting. This process should be undertaken in a way that recognises the contexts of the lives of the young people being worked with because, as demonstrated, these will shape the subjectivities of all. Such educational programmes need to recognise and reflect the power inherent in media discourses that represent motherhood as a luxury lifestyle option whereby babies and children are seen as a type of fashion accessory whose purpose is to enhance the glamour capital of the bearer. The reality of parenting, specifically motherhood, is personal whilst also being simultaneously shaped by the dominant political and psychological discourses of mothering. It is therefore impossible to facilitate a fully informed decision to become a mother as the concept can arguably only be understood from a position of experience. In response to the multiplicity of discourses of mothering there is a call for women to share their multiple realities of the experience of motherhood and to claim the power inherent in this gained knowledge (Maushart 1999). As demonstrated the experiences of young mothers is particularly missing from this body of knowledge and whilst this research goes some way to readdressing this imbalance there is a need for the further gathering of, and analysis of, the experiences of young mothers, which will extend and illuminate the experiences of young mothers so they, and their children's, needs can be better understood and addressed. The dissemination of this knowledge through educational programmes will serve two purposes. Firstly, it will facilitate more women, of all ages, to make their own decision about what for them constitutes a right time and a right framework for motherhood. Secondly, it may serve as a tool in the process of empowering young mothers.

A major consideration in the educational facilitation of informed choice making regarding parenthood are the discourses of sex and relationships. Jackson and Scott (2004) have described discourses of sex as being imbued with a “special status” whereby sex is constructed as something extraordinary to be treated differently whilst Monk (1998) has drawn attention to the nature of contemporary sex education policy, which when combined with the legal framework for sexual activity, results in a conflict between the desire to repress and to regulate young peoples sexual behaviour. These conflicted and controversial discourses must be examined and reconsidered if sex and relationship education is to be effective in the previously stated goal of facilitating young people in the making of informed choices regarding their sexual health including decisions about potential parenthood.

The final educational implication involves young people who have already become young parents. The Teenage Pregnancy Strategy (Social Exclusion Unit, 1999) makes a number of recommendations about ways in which young parents should be supported, particularly with regard to education and employment. These recommendations need to be addressed by all education authorities. The issue of education and employment was raised by many of the young women interviewed for this research (see figure 5.6). Some of the women described a strong desire to “better” themselves in order to provide for their child(ren) but equally felt anxious about the conflict they perceived between being a mother and going to work. They also expressed concerns about the availability, reliability and affordability of childcare. These concerns must be addressed and the needs of young parents listened to, if the Teenage Pregnancy Strategy is to realise its goal of better support for young parents.

7.4.2 Family Implications

The literature review (2.15) suggested that the role of the family in the process of young pregnancy and parenthood, has been under represented yet it has also been described as being central [Aarvold, 1999] in its influence over the decision making processes if and when a young women conceives, and the sequelae to the situation.

This research has implications for the families (used here in the most encompassing sense) of all young people. In the first instance this relates to the role of the family in the issue described above whereby the assignation of a special status to sex is removed. Children and young people need to be able to discuss sex and relationships in an open fashion with adults they trust and with whom they have an enduring relationship in order that they might revisit the issues as part of an enduring, normalised and dynamic discussion. This process underpins and locates the role of education described above.

7.4.3 Policy Implications

In considering the policy implications evolving from this research first must be considered a dominant discourse with policy that is the contested assumption of the issue of young motherhood as problematic. This research has demonstrated the complex nature of the ways in which young women become mothers and experience motherhood. It has discussed the journey to motherhood as a process that for some young women is a conscious and positive lifestyle choice (Davies, McKinnon et al. 2001; Arai 2003b). Policy needs to recognise and reflect this by not only propositing to support young mothers but by recognising its role in the construction of discriminatory and excusive discourses against young mothers as has been demonstrated in this analysis. A blaming the victim discourse is identified that places the

responsibility for young pregnancy and parenthood with young mothers, instead of looking at the processes that lead to the situation, which in turn results in discrimination against them. The focus of the Teenage Pregnancy Strategy (Social Exclusion Unit 1999) as inclusion has paradoxically achieved the opposite in spheres such as education, welfare and public perception, with the result being the exclusion of young mothers. A discourse that results in discrimination against young mothers should be subject to the same regulatory practices as other discriminatory practices such as racism and sexism which the European Commission has sought to address via instrumentation of policy that “prevents people from being discriminated against in any way due to their racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation” (Directorate General for Employment and Social Affairs 2004). This could be incorporated into the areas of Equal Opportunity and could also form part of the anti-ageism lobby.

Policy needs to recognise the significance of the contexts in which all women mother whereby circumstances of class and socio-economic background are meaningful and powerful (Walkerdine and Lucey 1989). This recognition can be demonstrated in a number of ways. Firstly, policy makers need to examine the body of research evidence that demonstrates young pregnancy and parenthood is a class issue and consider the implications of this particularly as it relates to educational expectations and aspirations which have been described as central in the decision making process when a young women is pregnant and considering a termination [Lee, 2004]. Secondly, in recognising that for some young women motherhood is a desirable choice, policy needs to examine its locale when constructing the position of all mothers. Finally, at a practical but crucial level, the lives of many young mothers and their children could be made considerably more manageable if they were to receive adequate financial support when required. When considering the provision of

welfare to young mothers policy makers should consider the research evidence that demonstrates the longitudinal picture of young mothers as being similar to older mothers in economic productivity terms albeit in a different pattern [Noble, Smith et al. 1998]. Furthermore, the provision of practical housing is essential in promoting physical and psychological health in young mothers and their children. This was exemplified by a young mother in this study who had been housed by the state in a fifth floor flat with no lift so, because of the weight and bulk, was having to carry her child up stairs to the flat first before leaving the child unattended to return to collect her pushchair and possessions resulting in a potentially dangerous situation and a chronic back problem for the young woman.

The role of young fathers must be considered in policy. The literature review identifies an absence of data relating to young fathers (3.7.2). The needs of young fathers, like those of young mothers, need analysis and understanding from their perspectives in order to facilitate an egalitarian approach to young parenthood.

7.4.4 Implications summary

This research has generated complex and contraversial implications that require a shift in attitudes as well as policy toward the interrelated issues of sex, gender, relationships, class and destiny underpinned by the understanding that the polarisation of mothers within the binary of the Good-Bad mother which is based on contestable value judgements is destructive and divisive. Such a discourse fails to recognise the enormity of the experience and the depth and breadth of all that *parenthood* entails. It contributes only to the devaluing of motherhood. Furthermore, maternal ambivalence is experienced on a spectrum, manifesting as tolerable to intolerable, creative to destructive. In removing the Good-Bad mother

continuum and replacing it with the acceptance of mothers as “real” dissipates the strength of maternal ambivalence thus allowing its use as creative and energising (Parker 1995; Parker 1997). The development of the above implications would contribute in a small way to this huge process.

7.5 Research Scope

The following states the scope of this research and acknowledges its limitations in keeping with the fifth analytical stage of Fairclough’s model of CDA (Fairclough 2001) and seeks to elucidate the limitations of this study.

Whilst this process has been informed by multiple influences, not least the input of my university supervisors and peer group, as such this study represents one person’s analysis of the issue of young pregnancy and motherhood. The data represents textual examples and the voices of a group of interviewed young mothers. The data gathered was specific to the time and place and as such could not be collected in the same way again.

The epistemological positioning of the research is based upon the multiple influences that continually shape the on-going evolution of me as a researcher. To this point I have been influenced by among others, my academic experiences as a student, my personal experiences as a wife, mother and white woman from a working class background, and by the multiple constituents that shape me as an individual. I see these attributes as strengthening the study because they afford me a passion and empathy toward young motherhood, and whose existence requires acknowledgement with regard to the perspective they afford as they inform the way in which I understand the issue.

7.6 The Contributions of the Research

This study has employed CDA and DA in studying young pregnancy and motherhood. It analyses the context of young pregnancy and parenthood and the lived experiences of young mothers. CDA is useful in the analysis of young motherhood as it recognises discourse as a form of social practice, taking the position that there is a dialectical relationship between young motherhood and the institutions and social structures that frame it, hence in this study an analysis of contemporary policy and media discourse both of which provide a framework for young motherhood. CDA provides an appropriate research method for the exploration of the context in which young mothers live their experiences. DA is concerned with understanding concepts of self identity so it provides a way of understanding the way in which young mothers come to construct their lived experiences. This approach elicited guiding and justifying concepts held by the young mothers. The application of a dual methodological approach to the investigation of young pregnancy and motherhood strengthens the findings of the study by recognising the issue of young pregnancy and parenthood as being comprised of multiple interrelated factors and seeking to understand some of these.

This study has demonstrated the young mothers operative contexts of the “right” time and “right” framework, blaming the victim and the Good-Bad mother within which they experience maternal ambivalence. It suggests young mothers are subject to discrimination by aspects of contemporary social policy, by representations in the media and by public perception. The analyses demonstrate the discourse of a right time at which to mother. These discourses inform the generation of the good-bad mother binary within which young mothers position themselves. This binary exacerbates the feelings

described by the young mothers of maternal ambivalence. This analysis contributes to, and extends, the body of knowledge that relates specifically to young motherhood and motherhood in general and therefore is applicable to education, health and social science theory. The research has implications for these fields that need to consider issues such as the notion that some young women want to become young mothers. These young women have a right to have their needs heard and to be supported, not excluded, thus education policy needs to seek ways to address the educational needs of young mothers in a non-discriminatory way, that recognises the needs of young mothers and their children. Sex and relationship education has an important role to play in ensuring young people have information and skills to enable them to make informed choices about pregnancy and parenthood. This education must allow consideration for the constituting and constitutive discourses that shape our subjectivities, thereby recognising the needs of young people as individuals. To facilitate a more constructive sex education programme, sex needs to become less “special” and more normalised through a process of investigation that enables understanding of the way in which discourses of sex and sexuality are enacted (Jackson and Scott 2004). This thesis contributes to this process.

7.7 Suggestions for further research

This study has provoked a number of questions and issues warranting further research. Firstly, a comparison of the findings of this study with those from a group of older mothers. Are young mothers different to other mothers in their experiences of the good-bad mother binary and maternal ambivalence? The research could be conducted using the same methodological approaches employed in this study. Through understanding the ways, if any, in which young mothers differ to their older counterparts, we could further deconstruct the notion of young mothers as different and

therefore progress the way forward to their genuine social inclusion afforded through understanding not stigmatisation and discrimination. Secondly, an exploration of the influences that affect a persons ability to parent placing this within the framework of current policy that has been described in the discussion (see 6.6) as being paradoxical in its demands to see parents employed whilst simultaneously acknowledging the need for them to spend time with their children whilst not providing the means to achieve both, particularly for the working class who are even less likely to be able to access or afford child-care. Lastly, further research to demonstrate the level and extent of discriminatory practice against young mothers. Establishing this would provide a theoretical grounding for the introduction of legislation to prevent such practice. This could potentially form part of the anti-ageism discourse that is compliant with the Equal Opportunities Scheme that promotes recognition of diversity and seeks to eliminate discrimination on the grounds of sex, race, disability, sexual orientation, age and religion (Equal Opportunities Commission 2005).

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APPENDIX 1

Letter of Introduction and Participant Consent Form

Helen Holgate
Coruisk
The Ridge
Woodfalls
Salisbury
SP5 2LW
Email: holgate@totalise.co.uk

Dear

Letter of Introduction and Participant Consent

I am writing to formally introduce myself to you. I am a PhD student and Researcher at Brunel University. I am undertaking research into teenage pregnancy and parenthood.

Thank you for taking the time to hear about my work.

What do I want to do?

I wish to learn about young parent's experiences – how is life as a young parent? I am going to use these experiences to put real voices to the images we live with of teenage parents.

How will I do it?

I will do this by talking with young parents about their experiences. I wish to audiotape these interviews. I will also take notes. I will then transcribe the interviews.

What are my rights in this research?

You have the right to:

- Say no to participating in the research
- To withdraw from the research at any time
- To refuse to answer any questions
- To ask to have another person with us in the interview

- To read the transcript of the interview
- To remove, or change, any part of the transcription
- Confidentiality – all names and identifying details will be changed in my work
- Check out what I am doing with my university supervisor, Professor Roy Evans (tel: 0208 891 0121)

In accordance with ethical guidelines for research, I respectfully request your written agreement to participate in this research. If you are willing to contribute please read and sign this form at the bottom. Please return it to me and I will provide you with a copy.

Thank you for your time and your interest.

Helen Holgate
PhD student

I have read the Letter of Introduction and Consent. I consent to take part in this research.

- Signature.....
- Print name.....
- Date.....

APPENDIX 2

**Submission to Education Department, Brunel
University Ethics Committee**

Submission to Brunel University Department of Education's Ethics Committee for Ethical Consent to undertake research

Name: Helen Holgate

Award: PhD

Supervisor: Prof. Roy Evans

Working title: Teenage pregnancy – a young parents perspective

Date: October 2002

Outline of research

For sometime, the issue of teenage pregnancy / parenthood has been attracting a great deal of attention from the media and politicians. It is claimed the UK are experiencing an epidemic of such pregnancies, supported by statistical evidence which locates the UK's rates of teenage pregnancy and parenthood as the second highest in Europe.

A study by The Social Exclusion Unit was commissioned by the new Labour government to examine the nature of the “problem” and to explore its implications. In the light of the findings the government have funded a ten-year project, located within the Department of Health whose aims are:

- Better prevention of teenage pregnancy / parenthood
- Better support for teenage parents

A synopsis of the literature review

A review of the literature pertaining to the issue demonstrates a lack of available data which can be seen to explore the issue from the perspectives of those most involved in the teenage pregnancy “scene” – the young people themselves.

Research question

In the light of the above the aims of this research are:

- To understand the experiences of young parents – as constructed by themselves
- To humanize the stereotype of the teenage parent
- To explore the psycho-social worlds of young parents
- To reveal pervasive and significant concepts held and used by young people to guide, justify or explicate their actions

Methodology and research tools

It is planned to undertake the research using ethnographic and feminist methodology. Research tools will include the use of field notes and semi-structured interviews that will be audiotaped.

Sample

I aim to undertake the study with approximately 8 – 12 young parents' aged 13 – 18. I aim to conduct the semi-structured interviews within a year of the young people becoming parents. I intend to access the young people via youth groups, young parent support groups and via other professionals working with young people such as teachers and health care professionals.

Ethical considerations

The issue of ethics is one that threads its way throughout the thesis, whose implications are not simply confined to the methodology chapter [Ely, 1991 #226]. The aim of the exploration of ethical questions as they relate to a piece of research is to ensure that the research poses no risk to the research participants [Fowler, 1993 #227]. This is itself a questionable aim and it may be preferable to alter it to the notion that all risks to participants are minimized.

I have attempted to categorize the ethical issues as they relate to this study as follows:

1. Issues relating to power
2. Issues relating to researcher and participants safety
3. Issues relating to confidentiality
4. Issues relating to young people

I will now discuss each of these areas individually

1. Issues relating to power

It is important to acknowledge the power dynamic between the researcher and the participant. The participants in this study will have a degree of power over the researcher as they control the information provided and the research is quite simply non-existent without participants. However, once the information has been supplied the researcher can be seen to take control of it. It will be primarily within my control what becomes of the information in terms of how I analyse it and collate it as data. What happens to the data thereafter (in terms of publications etc) will also be within my jurisdiction. Issues relating to the use of data and power is a theme explored in depth by some feminist writers [Roberts, 1981 #197] and their discourse will provide an area of some debate in my thesis.

I am aware that some of the information I am seeking from participants may be of a sensitive nature (for, example I hope to explore feelings towards pregnancy and parenthood that may evoke all manner of emotions). I am therefore in a position of power to raise emotions, be it directly or indirectly, in participants that may leave them feeling vulnerable. I am ethically bound to be aware of this and to have considered possible consequences. As a Sexual Health Counsellor (qualified as M.Ed Guidance and Counselling 1996 with nine years experience) I am used to addressing such issues and plan to use the skills I have gained from this experience, if required. However, I am also aware of my boundaries in my capacity as a researcher and to this end will promote more appropriate support mechanisms in the form of youth workers, support workers, counsellors etc, if required.

Written consent will be sought from all participants prior to interview (see attached). This will illustrate the participant's rights that will include

- the right to withdraw from the research at any stage,

- to refuse to answer any questions they wish
- to request the presence of another person during the interview.
- to read the transcript of their interview
- to change, or withdraw, anything they wish in this transcript

2. Issues relating to researcher and participant safety

This describes both physical and psychological safety.

Physical - this means in terms of the need to be aware of the possible risks being taken by the researcher and the participant as two (relative) strangers meeting, possibly on unfamiliar territory. Safety measures will need to be taken. These will include meeting at a community venue (wherever possible) where other people are present (although the interview will be performed in a private area to protect the confidentiality of the participant), ensuring both parties leave contact details with someone, carrying mobile phones etc.

Whilst it is preferable the interviews be conducted on community territory, there may be the rare occasion upon which it has to occur in the participants home. In this event, the researcher will attend the interview with another person, who will remain close at hand outside the building. Should the interviewer not leave the premises within the previously agreed time span, the second person will attempt to contact the researcher by mobile phone. In the event of no response or difficulties the alarm may then be raised.

Psychologically – I have made some reference to this earlier. I am aware that I may be raising difficult feelings for my participants. This in turn may be difficult for me – personally and professionally. I believe it is important to surface these difficulties and to be prepared by both parties having a safe place to debrief as

necessary. I have described these mechanisms for the participants. In my case I am able to seek support from my supervisor and also from fellow research students.

3. Issues relating to confidentiality

Confidentiality is of vital importance to every research study. This is particularly so for this study given the small number of participants, the sensitive nature of the information I hope to obtain from them and the depth of this information. There are a number of routine steps that I will be able to take to ensure participants confidentiality including:

- A discussion about confidentiality with participants prior to the audio-taping of any material
- Limiting the number of people who hear any audiotapes of interviews to myself and to my supervisor, if necessary.
- Changing of all names and any possible identifying factors in the thesis to broad categories (e.g. pseudonyms, age, sex, geographic area instead of specific details)
- The safe storage and ultimately the destruction of all audio-tapes acquired during the research process

4. Issues relating to young people

As stated earlier, I hope to conduct my study with younger mothers of the age 13 – 16 age group, although practicalities may necessitate those in the 16 - 18 age group also. In the past research with young people / children has raised a specific set of ethical questions regarding their ability to offer informed consent to participate in research, their right to protection from inappropriate questioning and subsequent possible exploitation and so on. The guidance and literature available on this topic is patchy, at best. Societal institutions (health, education, the legal system) vary in their definitions of what constitutes a young person and at what age they become “responsible” and therefore, capable of taking

responsibility for their actions, thus including the ability to form consent. It is therefore difficult to ascertain clear guidelines on how to protect a potentially vulnerable component of society. The most helpful guidance I have found is that provided by Barnados [Alderson, 1995 #189] who reminds us that

“children is used as the only term which includes everyone from babies to people in their mid to late teens who are in many ways young adults.....
Many adults are nervous and vulnerable, and many children are articulate and confident.”

The document goes on to provide a very comprehensive discussion of what constitutes ethical research with children (and I would suggest, with all participants). It features a list of ten topics in ethical research (see attached) with an intense exploration of the issues relating to each of these. The questions posed by this exploration are all ones I can ask of my research in an attempt to ensure maximum protection of my participant’s interests.

Conclusion

I have demonstrated a number of ethical questions and concerns that may arise from my proposed research. I have also described ways in which I will attempt to minimise harm to any research participants. I will be happy to discuss these matters further should the panel feel it necessary.

Helen Holgate
October 2002

APPENDIX 3

Foreword to The Teenage Pregnancy Strategy by Tony Blair

(Blair 1999)

FOREWORD BY THE PRIME MINISTER

Britain has the worst record on teenage pregnancies in Europe. It is not a record in which we can take any pride. Every year some 90/000 teenagers in England become pregnant. They include nearly 8,000 who are under 16. Some of these teenagers, and some of their children, live happy and fulfilled lives. But far too many do not.

Teenage mothers are less likely to finish their education, less likely to find a good job, and more likely to end up both as single parents and bringing up their children in poverty. The children themselves run a much greater risk of poor health, and have a much higher chance of becoming teenage mothers themselves. Our failure to tackle this problem has cost the teenagers, their children and the country dear.

What is even worse is that the high rate of teenage pregnancies is not inevitable. While the rate of teenage pregnancies has remained high here, throughout most of the rest of Western Europe it fell rapidly.

As a country, we can't afford to continue to ignore this shameful record. Few societies find it easy to talk honestly about teenagers, sex and parenthood. It can seem easier to sweep such uncomfortable issues under the carpet. But the consequences of doing this can be seen all round us in shattered lives and blighted futures.

That's why I asked the Social Exclusion Unit to study the reasons for our record on teenage pregnancies, and to develop a strategy to cut the rates of teenage parenthood.

The report reveals the scale of the problem we face in this country and the cycle of despair in which many teenage parents are trapped. It also shows how too many teenage mothers -and fathers -simply fail to understand the price they, their children and, society, will pay.

It sets out just how poorly informed many British children are about sex and parenthood, contraception and sexually transmitted infections, **It** makes clear that while more than two-thirds of young people do not have sex before their 16th birthday, too many of those who do lack the knowledge or confidence to say no, or not yet.

Let me make one point perfectly dear. I don't believe young people should have sex before they are 16. I have strong views on this. But I also know that no matter how much we might disapprove, some do. We shouldn't condone their actions. But we should be ready to help them avoid the very real risks that under-age sex brings. The fact is that unprotected sex at any age is dangerous.

But the report is not just about what has gone wrong. It sets out how we can put it right. It contains a package of measures to help dramatically reduce the rate of teenage pregnancies in Britain and to tackle social exclusion among young parents and their families.

It sets out what we are doing to improve education and job opportunities. Most teenagers who are likely to become pregnant come from poor areas, and from disadvantaged backgrounds. Often they feel they have nothing to lose by becoming pregnant. They badly need help at school and support to find jobs and follow a career.

It calls for a concerted campaign, involving all the different agencies and including religious leaders and the media to give a clear and consistent message to teenagers about the real impact of pregnancy and parenthood on their lives. It shows how we can and must improve education on relationships and sex for teenagers. We must give teenagers the confidence and the information so they don't feel compelled to have sex. No one should become pregnant or contract a sexually transmitted infection because of ignorance.

It highlights, too, the importance of ensuring that teenagers are aware of the real. Responsibilities of being a parent, including the financial responsibilities of being a father. That means a bigger role for the Child Support Agency to ensure that all fathers, including teenage fathers, cannot simply walk away from their children.

We must also do more to support teenagers if they do have a child. They should, be strongly encouraged to complete their education and keep in touch with the jobs market. Young mothers should not be isolated in flats on their own. So we want to encourage teenagers either to stay with their own parents or to move into supervised accommodation.

This is a comprehensive programme of action which we will put into practice straight away. Our ambitious goal is to halve the rate of teenage pregnancies in ten years.

It will not be easy. It will mean putting aside prejudice and embarrassment to engage in a mature debate. But we owe it to today's and tomorrow's teenagers to get this right at last.

Tommy Blair

APPENDIX 4

Daily Mail Article

(Sherry and Price 2002)

This girl is 12 and pregnant by a boy of 15 whose name she cannot recall

By **Kate Sherry**
and **Richard Price**

AMY Crowhurst is four months pregnant. She is also just 12 years old.

Her child was conceived in a one-night stand at the local youth club with a 15-year-old boy. She does not know his surname or where he lives.

'I know I was stupid to get pregnant but I'm not that bothered really,' she admitted yesterday. 'Of course I wish it had never happened but it's too late now.'

Amy, one of Britain's youngest recorded mothers-to-be, spoke to the Daily Mail after we were invited into the family home in Crawley, West Sussex.

This consists of two council houses knocked into one - to accommodate the still growing family of Amy's 42-year-old mother Rose.

She has given birth to nine children by two different fathers. The children's ages range from 21 years to just four months old.

Three years ago Amy's father walked out on the family and set up home with another woman. Since then her mother has had a number of relationships.

The most recent of these resulted in the birth of Amy's youngest sibling, a boy called Momodou whose father has since returned to his wife and children in the Gambia.

Speaking with her mother's approval Amy - who smokes, and has had her nose, ears and belly button pierced - said: 'I don't really mind because I don't like school anyway and now I don't have to go any more.'

'I don't need to go to ante-natal classes because nobody knows more than my mum about bringing up children.'

Two weeks ago a doctor confirmed that Amy was pregnant. At first she had been reluctant to tell her mother, but suspicions were aroused when Amy began putting on weight and fainted.

She had confided in her mother that she was missing periods.

'But I put that down to smoking,' said Mrs Crowhurst, who knew her daughter was already a regular smoker. 'When she kept putting on weight I went out and bought a home pregnancy kit, which was when we found out the truth.'

The child's teenage father does not know about the pregnancy. Amy's mother knows only that he is 'a Jamaican boy from London' who visited Crawley for a night out.

Amy claims to have had sex with the boy only once. The result of that meeting has been the end of Amy's childhood.

She can no longer play sport or even go to school with her friends. After missing several weeks of school her own personal tutor visited her at



Growing family: Amy and her mother Rose yesterday

home for the first time yesterday.

Mrs Crowhurst said she had been surprised by her daughter's pregnancy because 'she knows all about condoms and that'.

She added: 'I don't think she realises the magnitude of what she has done yet.'

'She thinks it's all exciting being pregnant and having a baby, but she is throwing half her life away. She's

'She's throwing half her life away'

really just a girl herself. She is still a giggly little 12-year-old at heart. But she's mature for her age and I'm sure she'll be a good mum.'

The family lives on £185-a-week benefits, as Mrs Crowhurst has given up her job as a dinner lady to care for her clan.

Amy's father, Peter Crowhurst, a 47-year-old maintenance engineer, was unavailable for comment yesterday but is said to have 'reluctantly' accepted his daughter's intention to go through with the pregnancy.

He is understood to be 'deeply concerned' that Amy, who wears his wedding ring on a chain around her neck,

is racing towards motherhood when she is still so young.

Amy said: 'I am worried about the actual birth because I'm so small and I know it's quite painful.'

'But I know I can cope. I've had lots of practice with my brothers and sisters. I know all about feeding, bathing and changing.'

She rejected talk of an abortion after seeing a scan of her unborn child. Nevertheless, claims of maturity pale into insignificance when the 12-year-old reveals that her only craving during pregnancy is for sweets.

Social services have visited the family. 'But they said everything was fine and they haven't made any arrangements to come back,' said Mrs Crowhurst.

A spokesman for West Sussex social services said: 'We produce an individually tailored package of care and support for the child and family.'

'This is arranged in close consultation with them, with colleagues in the education department and with the health service.'

Britain's youngest mother is believed to be a girl of 11, who fell pregnant when she was just ten. The world's youngest recorded mother was an eight-year-old from Arkansas in the U.S., who had twins in 1994.

k.sherru@dailymail.co.uk



APPENDIX 5

BBC Radio 4 Broadcast Transcription

(Murray 2004)

TRANSCRIPTION OF WOMENS HOUR BROADCAST
RADIO 4
7 JANUARY 2004

JM: Jenni Murray -Presenter

JB: Joanna Briscoe -interviewee

EP: Eva Partridge -interviewee

JM: 29 is now the average age for a woman to have her first child and the age is rising all the time its commonplace for her establish herself in a job or career before, deciding to start a family. That was not of course an option for our mother generation, they tended to marry young have children in their early twenties and then perhaps come back to work once their kids were up and gone. Well is it a natural, consequence of equal opportunity that women should chose to mate, late or does it have real risks that it may be left too late. Well Eva Partridge whose now 71 and had her children in her early twenties, Joanna Biscoe whose 40 and has a three year old and a baby, Joanna why would you say your generations putting off having children is is just establishing having a career?

JB: No I think it is it is obviously partly to do with that but I think there's this kind of culturally licensed refusal to grow up laugh amongst us lot you know we are this vast, demographic swathe you know 40 is the new 30 and all the kind of stuff and I think we just think babies would wreck our lives, and we want to carry on the fun, and just can't we we can't imagine fitting babies in somehow. So it's not just about career

JM: But why Eva did you have yours so young in your early 20's?

EP: Because there really wasn't very much choice I mean love and marriage seemed to go together like a horse and carriage and there was no birth control available unless you were very wealthy and you only got inadequate birth control after you had a marriage certificate and er actually one of the reasons I had my children so early was I was bored cos there was no career prospects, I had a degree but that didn't take you anywhere in those days so I er thought the natural thing was to have a baby um but then of course I found myself divorced at the age of 30 with two children and no means of support and determined to teach my daughter that she must not do it this way she must find a career first and then have her children

JM: Now you you Joanna had the best of both worlds I mean to get pregnant twice at what 37 and 39 without any real problems I guess is kind of lucky how about your

JB: Well it is lucky but I also had for instance a very difficult birth and I think there were some age related consequences small laugh of me doing it like this but I'm

surrounded by people who are undergoing IVF not just simply not being able to get pregnant, having miscarriages you know its an epidemic it really does feel that this is standard amongst my contemporaries the whole IVF thing and a lot of grief you know and at the same time there is very little support for women having babies and careers you know I just don't blame the individual women you know the state has to wake up on this one

JM: Was that something you were aware of when you were young that there were fertility problems amongst your contemporaries Eva?

EP: laugh Absolutely I mean my generation got hysterical if you were a day late laugh because you were always frightened of getting pregnant because there was no way out there was no abortion on demand you know so that was the anxiety

JM: What about the energy and enthusiasm that people talk about in having children when your young was it actually a good age to have them and cope with them?

EP: Physically it was a good age I mean my children's generation are always tired and they had their children in their thirties and they're always exhausted and I cant remember any of that I mean you know when ones in ones twenties one just bounces out of bed unless ones problems are to do with childcare, money I think one of the important factors here that you haven't mentioned so far is urn finding a good partner and if you marry young its likely to end in disaster like mine did umm, obviously the younger generation now have the opportunity to experiment sexually to live with one partner, leave them have another partner and by the time they are 30 they are much more likely to make a good mature choice and by that time they are thinking I ought you know I want to start a family who's a suitable mate ermm if they leave it any later there wont be any mates available

JB: Well exactly I think around 30 is a good age or early 30s is a very good age its just that a lot of us are leaving it a lot later than that and I think there is a middle way here and that's probably it

JM: Did it ever cross your mind Joanna that you were taking a real gamble in leaving it as late as you did?

JB: Urn well I was born wanting children so it's strange that I left it so late but no at 30 I wasn't even really considering it I think you know at 33 I was starting to get a little bit worried urn but not really cos we just weren't taught that obviously that there was this looming fertility crisis and it just wasn't an issue when we were growing up and I think there had been a bit of a wake up call recently but no I didn't I didn't really think about that

JM: If you had to make the choice today Eva what would your choice be?

EP: My choice would be to do what my children have done which is to establish a career find a partner who is going to be for life not necessarily of course the first one and have my children at about the age of 30

JM: Do you feel that you are kind of safe and secure in bringing up children because you've left it so late?

JB: Er safe and secure in what way?

JM: in the relationship, in the family that you've established

JB: oh err yes I do and if think I'm very lucky but as Eva said I mean I'm exhausted laughs I am tired all the time working and having children urn so yes I feel happy and very lucky but its not without problems and you know I'm the first to say I was lucky to be alright you know really a lot of others aren't

JM: What about the contemporaries you weretalking about having problems have they placed their trust in medical science and the IVF industry

JB: Mm I think there is absolutely an automatic thought that IVF is this er safety net and it hasn't really been questioned enough so there is some kind of faith in that yeah and then there's usually disappointment and shock you know I think a lot of people are just going through a lot of shock at the moment about this I really do

JM: Is it though Eva an inevitable consequence of emancipation and education that woman will leave having children later?

EP: Err no I don't think it is I think what we need and I think society is moving towards it is much more flexible working umm its already happening as people are working at home with computers and it has be recognised its not only important for women but for their families in this situation and that once one isn't sort of tied down to a 9- 5 job, 50 weeks of the year and all that kind of thing and it is recognised that woman can work part-time, or work from home or partly from home or whatever umm this will change but urn and I think the er urn love affair with sex as a kind of toy for pleasure has worn off because now with HIV and stuff like that people have got disillusioned

JM: Er its often said there isn't an easy way around Joanna what would be your answer to the whole question?

JB: Well I totally agree with Eva I think the crux of it is that we don't have enough childcare we don't have enough flexible working and there are slight changes you know the flexible working that came in in April that

people can request flexible hours for children under 6 I think that is the answer and then maybe women will be able to have them in their early 30's if they want to

JM: Well Joanna Briscoe and Eva Partridge thank you very much for being with us don't forget we'll be continuing this debate in tomorrows phone in and if you want to have your say do contact us

APPENDIX 6

First sample interview transcription

INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTION WITH STACEY

7 April 2003

Interview conducted in presence of Ss two children

H: So can you just start by telling me a little bit about um er how you came to have your son, what the situation was

S: Well er I was with my boyfriend, I was with my boyfriend two months, I always wanted a baby anyway since a young age I didn't care if I had a bloke or not but when I told my boyfriend I wanted babies as well I decided to have one and that's it, we just had one

H: So you met your boyfriend, you'd already decided before that you wanted to have babies (Background noise of baby becoming unsettled) for some peculiar reason, laughs, and you met your boyfriend and he was up for it as well and so it was a planned pregnancy?

S: It was planned yeah. But we lied and said it wasn't to my mum cos she didn't want me to have one. I said I was on the pill and I had an accident with it, it was planned (baby settling but wheezing)

H: So how did you so you were really pleased about it if it was planned presumably

S: Yes, yes I was

H: So what made you feel that you wanted to have babies before that?

S: I always wanted a baby I don't know maybe its just me, I always wanted a baby, I played with dollies like quite grown-up, late 11, 12 cos I wanted a baby. It was always something I wanted you know like people want really good jobs I never wanted really good job I wanted a baby instead, instead of anything else I wanted a baby, I didn't want a house or a car I wanted a baby. It sounds really stupid but

H: It doesn't sound stupid. What was it about a baby that you wanted though? Can you focus it down at all?

S: Something of my own its my own thing no-one else can say its theirs cos its mine, I know its someone else's as well but its yours. Its sort of a cuddle you know that it's going to love you, someone there to love you and give you a cuddle as well.

H: Yeah. So you felt really strongly about that and then you found your partner and that's what happened so was little one planned as well?

S: He was planned as well; we wanted a playmate for him

H: So how do you cope with the business of being a mum now that you've got the reality of it as opposed to that dream, you know how is the reality?

S: I love it. I love being a parent. When I walk down the road with my pushchair I love it, I love people looking at me and seeing me with my children. I think that's great I don't think you should let it worry you. I love it

H: Really. It's really interesting. You don't get bored with it?

S: I do but like people say to me aren't you missing out life I never I get to go out but I don't enjoy it as much as being at home with these two I'd rather sit at home with these two watching a video or something rather than going out

H: Really. So why do you think you enjoy it so much what is there that you enjoy?

S: Its watching them grow up its so funny their funny characters they've both got their different characters from a baby you're watching them do their little things and saying things its if you didn't enjoy it, you'd miss things if I'd miss all their little funny stages and characters. Their characters are funny as well; even though they're annoying they're funny

H: Yeah, absolutely. So you find it really enjoyable. Is there any part of it that you don't enjoy?

S: Dirty nappies, laughs. I don't even mind them though, its not too bad, you only get one a day well two a day with these two

H: Its good so you find it really enjoyable. Do you get much support?

S: I get a lot of help from my mum, she's got lots of children as well so she's like please let me have them so

H: Do you think that makes a difference?

S: I think that makes a difference because I do get down cos when he's ill, she'll have him for a night so it makes me feel better to have him in the morning I'm like I want him back now if I had him 24 hours all the time then I'd be like get him away but

H: Sure, so yes a bit of support really makes a difference. And what about your partner, does he do a lot with them?

S: He's really good with them; he's a normal bloke though. He'll sit with them for a few hours to let me have a little sleep and that's it he wont put

out their food or anything like that. J no more or I'll smack your bum. Put them back then, put them back, I'm going to get you

Short distraction whilst G attends to J

H: And um can I ask you a little bit about how you said your mum didn't approve to start with? What was that all about?

S: I think she was worried about my age cos like I was only just 16 I was only just 16 when I found out so I think she was worried about my age thinking that I wanted a house or. She was more worried about me and like she says now that most of her reason for being angry was to see if I really did want to get rid of it if I was strong enough to say no I did it and I really wanted that baby because if I'd have gone oh well better get rid of it because mums telling me to then I wouldn't have wanted that baby I'm listening to someone else I'm not strong enough

H: Yeah, yeah. So she was almost testing you really to see how really into it you were. Oh are you alright with that (child pulling over light)?

S: (to child) Listen away from that, come on

H: So when did you change her mind about it?

S: It wasn't until after she'd actually saw, she was there for the labour, so she so when she actually saw him be born and yeah. I think she actually thinks they're sort of her children as well so. She's really good with them

H: Have you got brothers and sisters?

S: I've got two sisters and one brother

H: And have they got children?

S: They're younger than me but my brothers girlfriends pregnant so

H: So she's probably a similar age to you

S: She's 16 as well

H: How's your mum about that?

S: She's fine because its not, its her mums position to say but she's happy now, because she knows they've been together like three years so she's been expecting like a baby so

H: And to some extent she's been through it with you

S: I get the first bit and everyone else gets it all good

H: Yeah, that's the joy of being the eldest. I know that one laughs. So you get some support from your partner although he won't change dirty bums and get up in the night at all. And you get support from your mum. Who else gives you support?

S: They'll hold the baby when their there but no-one else actually does anything else for it.

Interrupted by Ss mobile phone and baby asking to play

H: Right. And can I ask you how you cope financially, for money and that cos that's one of the things most parents worry about, its tough financially?

S: We've got my wages that are coming in before S wasn't working, when he was at home we got family tax credit then but now he's gone to work so we don't really know how that's going to work with the family tax credit

H: Right, what's he going to do?

S: He's working in a factory so

H: And you work how much?

S: No, I only work one day a week

H: And what do you do with the children?

S: He looks after them or my mum has them so. Me and my mum works at the same place as me so they put us on opposite shifts just in case

H: Oh that's good isn't it

S: Yeah

H: And do you enjoy going to work?

S: No. I do sometimes, to get away, you can be like yourself, be Gerry for a little bit

H: Yeah

S: Like I find if I didn't go to work it's the same as having a break I then go back and enjoy them more being at home. If I was at home all the time I'd find it horrible being at home when I'm not there all the time I can't wait to be home again

H: Sure, sure. It gives you a nice balance doesn't it? So you've got, you know, a reasonable amount of money coming in, how do you feel you cope on that?

S: It pays the bills and gives us a little extra anyway so

Children getting increasingly noisy

H: And what's your flat like. Is it OK?

S: Yeah it's nice. Its just horrible being up in the sky

H: Oh are you

S: Yeah up in the tenth floor. We locked all the windows up cos he's a little climber he is, so bit worrying

H: Yeah sure. So what do you think, you know you said earlier on you walk along with your pushchair and feel really proud and I was just wondering sometimes some young mums feel quite stigmatised, that its quite looked down upon, maybe

Distracted by baby's breathing difficulty. S dealt with it swiftly

H: Yeah so some people feel being a young mum is not a good thing. What do you think about that?

S: I think its them, their being paranoid, people say that people look at them but I think its more paranoia than anything because you can be any age and people will look at you. Its just paranoia more than anything you know you can think people are looking but they're not actually. I held my head up high and I don't care what anyone says cos I'm you know with my kids so. Its more paranoia if you're sitting there like that oh my god everyone's looking at me cos I'm a young mum then people are going to look at you

H: That's really interesting so you've never experienced anyone looking at you in that way or passing comments about you being young?

S: Mmm, you hear people saying things but I don't care its up to them to say what they think. I know that I feel better being a younger mum because there's people that have kids at 40. I'm more active, well I'm a bit more active, I can play with them and I actually run round the house on my hands and knees where you know at 40 years old you're getting older, you're not going to want to do that you're more scared like my mum says I let X do dangerous things whereas if I was an older mum I'd be like oh god get him away from there, he's allowed to do dangerous things

H: So you can see some advantages to being a young mum instead of waiting until you're older. And you've not experienced anyone being unkind you just think its some times in peoples imaginations?

S: Whatever you look, its like wearing a short skirt, if your confident wearing a short skirt your going to feel good in it if you're not people are going to look at you

H: So if you feel OK with the situation you're in then

S: Its you, its you people only look at you if you're down and not feeling good about it

H: And you sound like you're really really proud and don't give a damn about what anyone says. It takes a lot of courage

S: I love em, that's all that matters. I love my kids. What does it matter what anyone else thinks. It's not them that are going home with them its me and so it doesn't matter what they think

H: And er you know you can see advantages to being a young mum, you're fitter your perhaps more able to cope with the exhausting side of it. You said a little bit about maybe sometimes getting a little bit bored with it or

S: No, not bored with it. Its just, if you get away, like go to work one day a week or something you come back glad to come back that's all I get not bored

H: OK, so any regrets at all about doing it at the age you've done it?

S: No I've got not regrets at all

H: OK. You talked about your mum, can I ask about your dad. Is he about?

S: Yeah. My dad's about.

H: But not with your mum?

S: He is with my mum

H: He is with your mum. So what's he had to say about it all?

S: My dad was excited all the way through so he's fine. My dads never actually said he's proud of me and then when I had J he went "I'm really proud of you G going all through that" so that made me really chuffed that I, so that was the first time he ever said he was proud of me, I never actually said to him that but I will never forget him saying that as well

H: So that really meant a lot?

S: yeah

H: So he's been really supportive all the way along and he's still the proud grandfather. What age are your parents?

S: My dads just turned 40 and my mums 39

H: Oh so that's quite interesting cos you can see your mum and dad and how they would be cos they could still become parents, there's plenty of people

S: That's what like mum was going through an age when like she wanted a baby again cos I think women do go through that age of wanting one at that time and that for me to have one, now she realises that's her way of having one, she prefers it cos she has the kids when she wants to but she's got that break from it

H: She's got the best bits

S: Yeah. She realises, she's so proud she didn't try for another one cos she's got the best bits of having them, she doesn't have to tell them off, she doesn't have to do anything to them, she just cuddles them basically and spoils them

H: All the fun and not the hard work, yeah, yeah, good that's interesting

S: She tells everyone that's her age you shouldn't have done that you should've waited until your kids had em its much better, tells everyone

H: Laughs, that's brilliant, they are so supportive. Are they nearby as well?

S: Yeah they're just up the road from us so that really handy

H: Did you say your partner was S? What about his parents?

S: His parents are split up, one lives over ZZZ and one lives over MMMM

H: And how are they about things?

S: They are fine about things. We see his mum about once a week so. Its like they smoke so they can't have my kids overnight so but they would if I would let em but I don't

H: That's understandable with little ones breathing problem

S: Yeah. They are good with them they would have them overnight but I'm like no. Even though they don't smoke in front of them with me now I keep thinking but what if they have a fag overnight thinking oh G wont know

H: It's a difficult one isn't it?

S: Yeah and where they don't see them every day they don't know what he's like, like he's not allowed to cry or anything. I get scared people will let him cry

H: Really what happens if he cries?

S: Its just really bad crying he's not allowed to do not just crying, but real bad crying cos his airway might swell cos I've read it in magazines

H: So how do you cope with that, cos that must be quite scary?

S: It is scary but we're used to him now, you can tell when he's getting worse so as soon as he gets worse I'm straight up the hospital with him

H: And there's nothing they are going to do, they're just going to wait and see if he grows out of it

S: They are hoping he'll grow out of it it just depends if he's going to be in and out of hospital a lot. If he goes in quite a lot then he'll have to have an operation on his airway

H: Right I see

H: I should have asked you actually what age is S

S: He's same age as me

H: Is he so he was the same age as you when you had the baby?

S: No he was 17 cos his birthdays April

H: So does he enjoy it all?

S: He does love being a dad as well cos when my brother he's 18 and his girlfriends 16. At the moment he's going through doubts at work cos everyone's telling him he should be out more but he's never been that kind of person no he shouldn't he'll enjoy being a dad so S like really arguing the point cos S loves doing it. S loves being a dad. That's all he talks about at work one of my mates was like all he ever goes on about is his kids and you, he really dotes on you

H: And you said he wanted babies from when you first got together. Do you think that's unusual?

S: I don't know, he's a from a family that like they gave love but not like in the same way like cuddles and that so to me more he wanted babies for a cuddle and someone to love him cos he didn't come from but my family are all cuddles anyway so it wasn't anything to do with that but his wasn't as close as our family so I think he wanted to be, cos he lived in our house so he knew that's that we were, and that's what he wanted a close family and er

H: But you already came from a close family so you wanted to do that for yourself as well, you wanted to carry that on. So you don't see any real bad points to it at all by the sounds of it

S: No

H: What do you think then, you know you have such a positive attitude toward it from what I hear, so what do you think when you see in the papers or all those things that you read in the magazines that say teenage mums are just

S: I get really annoyed with it like it was on This Morning, one time, I think it was this morning about the young mums and that and their children on there saying I didn't want to get pregnant and I didn't think it would happen to me it really bugs me cos to me, most people plan it, they know their going to get pregnant I bet every single one of them children like we did really want it cos there's like no way you're going to get pregnant if you didn't really want it I don't understand it I'd love to go on there and just say the opposite cos what it is their mums sitting there with them their scared to say I really wanted this baby in front of their mum. It really bugs me id love to be able to go on there and tell em

H: Because we just done ever hear anyone hear what you're saying

S: I do think people lie though because they don't want people thinking you know why do they want that baby at their age and

Distraction from baby

H: So what you're saying is people say oh it was an accident but what you're saying is

S: I think most girls want a baby anyway, that's what they want they say when they say an accident

H: It wasn't that much of an accident?

S: Yeah, if they didn't want that baby there is abortion so if you really, really didn't want that baby why should you have it. Why should you put that baby through? I cant understand how they can say that anyway

imagine if your kid saw that on the telly that you didn't want em, and I'd never ever tell either of these two that I didn't want them cos that is nasty, that is the worse thing

H: So do you think its true when you read the stuff that says they got pregnant so they could get a council flat or you know to get money or whatever else it the papers say,

S: You know, I don't know about those thongs cos my mum put us up, I don't know but I wouldn't have done it for house reasons

Baby crying

H: Were you living at home when you found out you were pregnant?

S: Yeah, I lived at home until he was a year old

H: With your mum and your dad

S: Yeah

H: Was S with you?

S: Yeah he was with me at home as well

H: Really. So how was that?

S: It was a bit over crowded but it was nice sometimes Id rather be back at home cos it is nice being at home and you feel a bit rich there as well

Interruption from children, crying

H: So you quite enjoyed being at home with your mum and dad when the baby was little

S: Yeah, you've got someone running down in the bedroom all the time cos they had my sisters there and all so they'd run down in the bedroom and get him out really early in the morning. **B**ut I've put my sisters off for life having kids laughs

H: Really is that what they say? Why?

S: I think it my other sister she's a year younger than me, she's a totally different person to me, she likes going out, she likes having a different boyfriend on her arm and we're totally different people so

H: Sure

S: And she's still enjoying all the things like that

H: And that's the thing its about being different people, what suits one person doesn't suit the next

S: See like my sister she could've gone out and got herself pregnant like accidentally but because she doesn't want it she hasn't done that so I don't understand when she's slept with so many different boys she could've got pregnant but she hasn't cos she's not a person to want children

H: Sure. So its really um, its really amazing listening to you cos you're so positive about it and er and you do read all these terrible stories and I have talked to young mums who find it much more difficult than it sounds like you find it. Why do you suppose some people find it harder than you are, what's the difference there?

S: I don't know, pause, when they're crying you know it is hard when they're crying but you just sort em out they never cry for that long so long as you help em so say you're stressed out cos your baby's crying its your fault if the baby's crying if you calm down and stop the baby crying you're not going to get that stressed with it are you. Its like when they have a paddy there's a different way you sort it out they've had a paddy for a reason if you sort it out a different way he's not going to have a paddy much longer you're solving the problem so you cant get that stressed out

H: What would be the other things that people get stressed out with?

Distracted by child

H: OK, so where do you see your future going from here what would you like for the future?

S: I think I would like more children

H: Laughs. How many more would you like?

S: Laughs. I would like loads more but I think I'm going to stop with another two, I might stop then but I don't know

H: Soon?

S: No I'm going to wait a year and then try again

H: Right and S's fine with that?

S: S's fine with that. I think where I've come from a family of four its nice cos you've always got someone different to play with cos you can get like if I was playing with my sisters or something I'd get bored with them and

start an argument but then I'd go and play with my brother for another little bit and you've got someone to

H: Yeah, you have different people to bounce off. So another couple of kids and any other great plans or anything else you'd like to achieve?

S: Not much I can think of

H: No. You're just happy with that lot. That's fantastic. So is there anything else, so if this was your moment on This Morning and you could say whatever you wanted to say about being a young mum, what would you say?

S: I think its great, its really fun. I don't understand how anyone can say its not fun cos it is fun. Watching them is so fun, its amazing what they do, from not being able to do anything for themselves, like watching him doing things and telling me stuff, I can have a little conversation with him and its

H: So it's really enjoyable, the tiredness, the sleepness nights and no money, it's not a problem

S: No cos even though you've got no money, I've got no money at the moment we always find something to do we'll walk down the park and see the horse, there's always something for us to do with no money, we don't care if there's no money

H: OK, you're amazing. Lets stop the tape. Thankyou

APPENDIX 7

Second sample interview transcription

Transcript of interview with Heather

20.01.03

H: So H can you tell me a little bit about your situation at the moment

Hr: Yeah it's just me and I live with my daughter in our own flat. We were living with her father but he moved out just over a week ago um. So it's just us now umm laughs. She's a good girl anyway so she'll be easy to cope with

H: And you've got another one due in two weeks time

Hr: Yeah, two weeks yesterday

H: Can you tell me a little bit about the circumstances leading up to your daughter's birth?

Hr: Yeah, well I was already living with my partner then um coos we'd been living together for a year, she was planned, she wasn't like an accident. We were living together um in a privately rented place but when she came along I had to give up work um so then we couldn't afford to privately rent so then we moved into a council estate over here, cos we needed a bigger place obviously cos she had one bedroom and now we've got two bedrooms

H: So she was a planned pregnancy, so what age were you when you had her

Hr: I was 18 er I'm 19 now laughs

H: laughs yeah I do that all the time

Hr: I've got an excuse I'm pregnant

H: yeah quite, I haven't laughs, so you were 18 when you had your daughter and she was planned and you were living together and is that when you were working at the petrol station then

Hr: No I was actually working as a head cashier then but the company went bust so I never went back. It actually went bust when I was on maternity leave so I never went back

H: and can you tell me about what led you to want to have a baby

Hr: yeah well I never wanted children and then I met my partner and then we moved in together and we were just discussing it and we thought it would be good to start before we and stuff like that so afterwards, first of all I said I wasn't going to have another one but then after a couple of weeks we talked about it

again we thought it would be nice just to have one more. Which is why I'm pregnant now

H: yeah so what age was your daughter when you got pregnant with this one

Hr: about 4, 4 and a half months

H: so you have your hands full, you work very hard. So how are you coping with it all?

Hr: yeah fine she's the easy part laughs `

H: what are the difficult parts then?

Hr; Life in general

H: can you say a bit more about that

Hr; well I've had depression for a lot of years so I haven't been doing anything about it I've been sorting alot out myself but then when my partner left me I couldn't cope with it anymore so now I'm on medication for it so that's better now. It did get really hard for a while

H: yeah, that's an on-going thing, that stems back along time does it

Hr: Why; yeah its been bad for about, well I've been aware of it for about 4 years but they reckon that it might have started when I was younger, when I was about 7, but I just didn't realise it cos I was so young cos I was abused when I was younger by my babysitters child so they think it could've stemmed from that but it just took a while to bubble up to the surface

H: sure, so you were abused when you were about 7. Sexually abused?

Hr: yeah

H: and was that something that you talked about at the time or has that only just recently come out?

Hr: no, no, nobody knew about it really a lot of people, my parents still don't know. The only people that know are like my other half, and the counsellor that I spoke to

H: are you still seeing your counsellor?

Hr: no, I only saw then a couple of times just because I didn't know what was going on basically so I just saw them a couple of times but then I started just like hurting myself cos my partner but its sorted now

H: it sounds very hard

Hr: yeah. Its weird cos I thought I was dealing with it but then it comes back but its not that that sets it off I mean I don't even see a link between that and the depression cos I dealt with it cos it happened when I was young and I dealt with it and I got over it and I got it sorted so I don't even really see a link between that and the depression just that's what they think it came from

H: the counsellor

Hr: yeah, the counsellor said that's where it came from even though it doesn't seem like it to me it's probably where I've been locking it up but I don't know it don't seem like it to me but then they're professionals, they should know

H: What do you think it's about?

Hr; I don't know I just think its like sometimes I just don't deal with stuff properly and I'm aware of it now cos I can see other people I can look at my mum and see how she copes with things cos she's been on anti depressants for the last 15 years and I've seen the way she deals with things and that's how I used to deal with it and its not a good way of dealing with it so I think it was just me blaming everybody else and shutting away my problems and that's what caused it

H: right, so that's what you learned from your mum

Hr; yeah so I can see it with her and now I can see when I'm doing it and now I can stop it

H: right so that's how you're dealing with it, you're looking at the patterns and saying right that's it I'm not going to do that

Hr: yeah, yeah sometimes I just think things like I used to try and manipulate people into doing things like my partner used to come around and I'd want him to do something I wouldn't just ask him I'd try and manipulate him and that's what she use to do and also my step-mum as well that's what she used to do, she used to be really bad at it manipulating people so that's why I think I picked it up from and because nothing used to go my way I just used to put on a little laugh and I just used to bottle it up and it would go on all inside my head but now I can see what I've done and now I'm not doing it anymore its sorted. It's just a shame that it took me so long to do it

H: you're still very young, there's still plenty of time to make amends

Hr; mm

H: so it sounds like you've had quite a hard time. You had the abuse but you got into a good relationship and you were together quite a while and decided to have a child

Hr: together two years

H: then had your daughter

Hr: yeah

H: and then obviously got pregnant with this one and you and your partner have just split up

Hr: yeah, two weeks ago and he moved out a week ago

H: do you mind me asking what happened there?

Hr: um, I think it was because I was depressed and I was taking it out on him and I was blaming him for a lot of things that was not his fault and I just kept having a go at him for no reason. He smokes and I was trying to get him quit smoking, first of all it was because I didn't want to lose him I didn't want him to die of cancer and stuff like that so that's why it started and then it got so it got out of control it started to be like a mission I had to get him to do it and then he started lying to me about it and then that just brought up loads of old problems, so it was mainly because I couldn't admit when I was wrong and just let him get on with his life I was trying to control him too much so. And then I say things that I don't mean like when I got upset with him cos I found out he was lying and I basically told him to bugger off but I didn't mean it I was just having a mood swing and he had enough and he actually went and that's what woke me up to what I was doing and hats when I went to the doctors and started getting help

H: right so you've been to the doctors in this last week

Hr: yeah, started on the medication about a week ago

H: Feels like that must be you know I'm conscious that must be quite painful for you. I don't want to upset you by dragging it all out so. How do you feel you're going to cope now cos obviously that's going to be quite hard now

Hr: it is hard, but I'm going to sometimes I think that its going to be alright that he's going to come back and I sometimes I don't know and I sit down and think I just don't know how I'm going to cope but it depends, depends what mood I'm in but he's still being a good dad he sees D every day and stuff like that. I think that's good that he sees her and everything and he's not being awkward like some people are when you break up in a relationship, he's not demanding this and demanding that and saying oh no I'm taking all this and stuff like that, he's being more reasonable which also in a way makes it a bit harder

H: mm because you've got nothing to be angry with him

Hr: yeah, at least if he'd been horrible to me I could hate him laughs

H: yeah, absolutely, sure, sure. So I guess you must feel quite vulnerable now. What do you think will happen now? I mean it sounds like you would like him to come back

Hr: yeah I want him to come back but I don't think he will

H: mm

Hr: He's still not, he's still speaking he's saying that he doesn't know what he wants to do, whether he wants to come back or not but at the end of the day he's moved out he's got a new place, he's looking actually looking for another place with a mate and he's got all the phone lines transferred we had two phone lines and he's got one of them transferred to his new address and he's taken all his stuff like his computer and stuff so I'm just thinking if it was a break then he wouldn't have done all that

H: So it sounds like he was quite serious about it

Hr: yeah. But he hasn't said for definite but

H: mm and you've got the link of D and this baby as well. Have you thought what will happen in terms of the baby, the new baby?

Hr: I don't know I think that will be really hard cos I want him to bond with the baby properly, like he did with D, but I'm scared that he's going to push it away because he's not going to want to get too attached to it. Cos I mean with D he was really, really good with her, especially the first couple of weeks he was there all the time he never moaned about changing her nappy in the middle of the night an stuff like that so I'm scared that he's not going to be like that with the new one because he doesn't want to let go. We went out like a month after she was born cos it was his birthday and the whole night all he kept saying was I wonder how D is, I wonder what she's doing and stuff like that I thought it was supposed to be me who did stuff like that but it was him so I'm scared that he's not going to have that bond with the new baby. And also like that I'm scared that I'm going to get worse cos ill get post-natal depression, ill get that because I'm by myself so I am scared that I'm going to resent the baby as well thinking you know that's something that we planned together and now we're not together and that I'm going to try to push the baby away, I don't think I will, I think ill be alright as soon as I see it

H: How were you after the birth of D?

Hr: I'm fine, no I didn't even get the baby blues or anything laughs, no I was brilliant I got a bit depressed before, before the birth but then after it I was fine it

was like a whole weight was lifted off my shoulders cos I couldn't do anything when I was pregnant last time and I just felt faint the whole time but then after she was born it was just wonderful laughs

H: you felt really happy

Hr: yeah, to be able to do things again, yeah and I didn't feel trapped in with having her cos I didn't want to go out, I wanted to stay in with her so yeah, it felt fine

H: well, that's a positive sign then if you weren't depressed with her there's no reason to suggest you would be this time although obviously circumstances are different but you've not got a history of post-natal depression and also in some ways you're addressing it now, you know you're aware of it, you've been to see your GP about things anyway so, you're already looking and being prepared for that and I think sometimes that really helps you know so long as you're on the ball, you know its when you're not looking for things you know they creep up on you and you don't realise

Hr: Or you do what I do and think about things too much laughs

H: there is that one, sure. So what other kinds of support do you have around you if Ds dad isn't going to be around quite so much, can I just ask what age is he actually?

Hr: he'll be 20 on Saturday

H: Right if he's not going to be around so much have you got any other sort of back-up

Hr: well I've got S here, she's my friend. I see her like outside of XXXX as well. She's been really good for the last week or so, her and her partner have been really nice. My mum doesn't live round here but to be honest with you she's not really that good at support anyway cos she's got her own problems with like depression that she's not dealing with very well. She's got a 10 year old, my little brother and he's a little rat-bag, laughs, so she tends to be more involved with him. Qs mums around a lot. She has D on a Saturday sometimes. She used to have her when I was working so she said she'll still keep having her so I can have a break and stuff like that so she's there. That's about it though laugh

H: Your dad?

Hr: No I don't speak to my dad since I left cos I moved out of my dads house to move in with Q. And he didn't agree with that, he thought I was too young, cos I gave up college. Cos I wasn't, well I didn't know what I wanted to do basically so I gave up college and he didn't agree with that so I don't really speak to him

H: so what were you doing, O levels

Hr: yeah, I was just doing AS levels and A levels, but I didn't know what I wanted to do with them, I just felt like I was there cos it was like the next step and I just took subjects cos I did well in them at GCSE's and I just didn't understand what I was going to do with them when I got out so I didn't see much point in me being there

H: Right, so you left an that was when you made the decision to move in with Q. So you went from you dad to that. And your dad didn't approve

Hr: and my step-mum didn't approve laughs so that means my dads not allowed to laughs

H: right, right so you've not had much contact with them since

Hr: no I mean he sends me card on my birthday and Christmas and stuff but that's it he's not a proper relationship, I haven't spoken to him for about a year and a half

H: so he's not seen D

Hr: No

H: right, so there's not much back up there and you mum isn't much support

Hr: No she tries but, laughs but she's not much use

H: What did she think about your decision to move out with Q

Hr: yeah, she didn't mind. She was alright basically. I moved out of my dads house and then I had to stay with her for a while before me and Q found somewhere and I think she was glad to get rid of me laughs when I moved down here it was a bit of a different story but she has mood swings really, really bad one minute she'll be fine he next she'll be saying get out of this house and stuff like that so it took a bit of pressure of having me not there anyway

H: so you had actually moved in with your dad and his wife before that. When was the last time you lived with your mum?

Hr: well I lived with my mum up until I was about 6 then I moved to my dads, laughs, lived with my dad um until maybe about 11 and then I moved back to my mums, laughs and lived there until I finished school. And then my mum kicked me out and then that's when I moved back in with my dad cos I had nowhere else to go cos I was I slept rough for a couple of nights but then the police found me so I moved back in with my dad and then I stayed there up until um 2000 I think it was, and then I moved out to live with P

H: it doesn't sound like it was a very settled childhood

Hr: No not really laughs. No but everywhere's got good and bad, it's just different. I mean like my mum had good points I get on with her if she's in a good mood but if she's in a bad mood then you just can't speak to her and my dad, my stepmums a control freak laughs so

H: speak your mind laughs right that wasn't easy and it was a nice decision for you to move in with Q and you'd said that you had no real sense of what you wanted to do in terms of a career so, in some ways you didn't really know what you were doing at school, or in terms of a career, as I've just said so it seemed like a good idea at that time to think about having a baby cos you and Q were settled

Hr: yeah I was working, he was working we were financially stable, we had our own place so its not like it was an accident, I went out one night got drunk, got pregnant you know laughs. And when I had got pregnant it was brilliant and everything and we got engaged and everything looking to the future looked pretty good

H: yeah

Hr: and now I when I became pregnant I knew what I wanted to do with my life so I started looking into that. That was good

H: what sorry what were you thinking there that you wanted to do

Hr: I wanted to be a midwife but I didn't get into uni this year, which kind of was a good job really cos I wouldn't have been able to do it anyway. But I'm thinking about going back to college at nights to get some more qualifications but at least now I know what I want to do so I've got something to aim towards whereas before I might have had the qualifications but if you don't know what you want to do with them then that's pretty useless

H: so you've got a sense now of the future and that's still what you'd like to do

Hr: yeah it might take me a few years longer though

H: sure, sure it won't be easy with 2 children, things never are but if you've got a goal its something to work towards isn't it. So how do you see the future, is that sort of what you've got planned

Hr: that was what I'd got planned up until a few weeks ago now I don't know how things are going to work out. Can't really look forward any more than tomorrow in a way

H: sure and you feel quite vulnerable at the moment as there are quite a lot of things to be worrying about right now and that's understandable. Do you talk with people here in terms of a bit of support?

Hr: not really. I have before when I was depressed one of the people that normally works in this group but she's not here at the moment, she's a counsellor so I have spoken to her before but um not recently no

H: Do you think it might be worth speaking with her again

Hr: yeah it might do. Sometimes it feels good to talk to other people but other times its like I can talk as much as I like its still not going to solve anything laughs. But I try to speak to Q about it but he just listens and doesn't really offer any advice so, I'm not even sure if he's listening actually, might just be shutting off

H: sometimes people just don't know what to say. It's a big one to get your head around, some of the issues you have, sometimes people just feel completely lost with it

Hr: it is hard cos he's like the person I used to talk to the person that I used to trust. He's my best friend and now he's not there

H: I'm sure it is, I'm sure it is. How do you feel I mean we've talked a bit about how you're going to cope with things you're anxious about but how do you think you're going to cope just practically and financially

Hr: Financially I don't think ill actually be that bad. I've looked into it and stuff I mean at the moment I have to claim income support I don't really want to but um laughs I think that there's a stigma attached to it, where I'm from there's a stigma attached being on the council and claiming income support and stuff like that so I'm still aware that stuff like that might be in the back of my mind I'd like to get of it as soon as possible and get my own place as soon as possible but for the time being its all I can do really but financially I should be more or less, well probably actually better off because he did have quiet a lot of debts, like credit cards debts and everything like that and he wasn't that good with money, pretended to be, you know if there was something he'd want then you tend to forger about the bills for the month so financially I'll probably be better of cos he is going to help me out as much as he can he doesn't have a brilliant job but um. I mean my rent and everything will be sorted

H: the council will pay that

Hr: yeah, yeah the council will pay my rent for me so that's the main issue, food and stuff I don't eat a lot, D doesn't eat a lot so that's not a big issue and the bills Qs going to help me with so financially I'll probably actually be better off

H: And you get your income support. Is that the only benefit you get at the minute?

Hr: At the moment I only get child benefit so I've just applied for income support but I haven't received any more information on it yet so um and incapacity benefit because I don't qualify for maternity benefit because I didn't work for enough weeks, you have to work for 26 weeks, I only worked for 24 weeks. So I didn't work enough weeks to get my maternity benefit so um I'm waiting for a decision on my incapacity benefit as well

H: right

Hr: I've sent off all the forms

H: so financially you should be able to manage all right and in the long term you've got support from Q but you see yourself getting back out to work

Hr: yeah definitely. There's nothing to do, especially now my nice big TVs gone and my DVD player laughs

H: oh. Yeah Do you, how do you find motherhood just the day to day

Hr: Yeah that's fine its just something that you do um

H: do you think it's boring?

Hr: no, not really. It did get for a while it was like when she was a newborn, I loved her and everything and I was really attentive to her but still it was like is this all they do laughs, er sleep, it was a bit of a shock but now she's like walking now and stuff. I do find it hard to enjoy her at the moment because I feel like Q should be there witnessing it with me but I think if I didn't have her then I'd actually find it harder to cope cos then I'd have nobody, at least she gives me a reason to get up in the morning and to do the washing and stuff like that because I know that she needs me to do it so I think that's she's actually helping me

H: yeah, you've got to do it when you've got children and she keeps you going in some ways

Hr: and I sit and play with her rather than just being, cos if I didn't have her I don't know what I'd do

H: so you get a lot from her really

Hr: I just hope I can give her it back

Pause

H: you talked a little bit then about stigma, attached to income support, can you say some more about that

Hr: Well, I was brought up not like in, I was not brought up in a posh family but my dad was always well off and my step mum was well off and we'd never lived in a council place or anything like that and our place was always privately owned or stuff like that. And my mates through school were the same as well. Where I went to school there was like, the mingers laughs, the people that you didn't associate with and they were all the ones that, who were in council houses and stuff like that and on income support and benefits and didn't really do anything all day and stuff like that. And that is what I didn't want to end up like. I mean I don't think I am like that um its just ZZZZZZ seems weird. Everybody in ZZZZZZ just seems to think that you get on the council and you have kids and they move you into a house and things like that when I found out I was pregnant the second time and I told Qs mum the first thing she said was oh hopefully it will be a boy and then the council will give you a house and that's not the way that's not the attitude I've got its not like I was having another kid so then they'd give me a house or increase my child benefit and stuff like that

Knock on door and interrupted briefly

Hr: But um that's the thing I don't want people to think that's my kind of attitude towards it because at the end of the day what I want is, I want everything to be mine, I want to go out and work, I want to have a mortgage and my own house its just getting there

H: yeah sure its hard and I think that some of the images we've talked about you know people being set up as um, scummy, for want of a better word you know when they're on income support or whatever that's what's often attached to young mums. Um what do you think about the images the media has of young mums?

Hr: I think most of it is very stereotypical and I think that's wrong cos they seem to stereotype them as just gone out had a one night stand got a baby, doesn't really look after it, but passes it around to everybody, you know goes out at the weekend has a good time. Um that's mainly the kind of images that you see um mainly the stories that you see on the news, like there was one on the news about a girl who was 13 or something and those kind of stories make the headlines you see that on the local news but you don't see about the norm, the people that are getting on with it and sorting it out and stuff like that. I think I was a bit more conscious when I was pregnant before I had D, that people would see me when I was out shopping by myself and think oh look at her she's got herself up the duff and stuff like that, when at the end of the day it was planned I was with my partner, it was what we wanted to do and that's what I think a lot of people don't realise, is that not every teenage pregnancy is a mistake. I mean I know about contraception, I know about how to use contraception I was on the pill before I came off it, I actually came of it to have D

H: so the image is that you know teenage mums are promiscuous

Hr: yeah irresponsible

H: and that the reality is that there probably are some that are like that but there are probably some older mums that are like that too

Hr: yeah exactly

H: but also that there are young mums who are very responsible, who get on with it and make conscious decisions to have their babies and do a good job and its difficult but

Hr: but it's difficult for everyone. At the end of the day it doesn't really matter about your age it's your mental age, if you're mentally able to cope

H: so do you think it would have been any easier had you been older or do you, you know it just doesn't matter

Hr: I don't think it would've made a difference um it might have made a difference in the way that maybe it wouldn't have been Q and that has made me more needy and that might have affected it bit it might not have Q who was the father but I don't think it would've been any easier or any more difficult being older. I think its exactly the same but there again I wasn't a lot of people when they get teenage mums they are still living with their family and stuff but I was already living with Q so I think that's probably why it was easier for me cos there wasn't two things that I had to adjust to I didn't have to adjust to moving in with somebody and having a baby cos I'd already done the moving in bit. We'd already worked out all our problems

H: sure, so you'd got that extra bit of maturity if you like

Hr: yeah cos I know when we first moved in we just argued constantly about everything laughs. I think if I had to deal with that and a newborn baby at the same time that would have been difficult but because we'd already done that first it was a lot easier

H: yeah sure. I think we've talked about everything but is there anything else you would like to say?

Hr: no not really, I wish the stereotypes would change but

H: mmm do you think you get a hard deal cos of the stereotyping

Hr: some people I think, maybe do, they do look down on you although not I haven't seen it at first hand really but I am aware that it could be happening. I think my dad might look down upon me actually laughs. But I am aware that its out there and I hate going, I really hate going to the DSS to pick up forms and

standing in the queue there because I just look like such a stereotype laughs standing in a queue at the social security with a baby in the pram I really hate that

H: how do they treat you?

Hr: fine, normal but, it's just

H: it's just how you feel

Hr: yeah, it might be in my head still its there. Q used to take my forms down I hate doing it

H: and how about coming here is this a useful place

Hr: yeah, yeah definitely if I didn't come here I wouldn't have met S and S the one whose helped me through the last couple of weeks so I think I'd still be completely alone like I was during, well when I first moved here I just sat at home all day and didn't have anything to do and got completely bored out of my mind min so if I didn't come here that would probably still be happening now so

H: so that support of knowing other people what your age, in a similar position that's really helpful

H: yeah definitely. Again I think that's true for all mums it doesn't matter what age, I don't know what I'd do without my friends

Hr: it doesn't matter what situation you're in you need somebody like alcoholics need to be able to talk to other alcoholics and stuff like that, everybody needs somebody that they can talk to and relate to what they are saying

H: yeah that's right. So how would you sum it all up in terms of you know do you think you've done a good thing having your children when you had them or

Hr: no I think it was a good thing. Yeah, even though I've spilt up with Q I still wouldn't go back and change it cos I love D to bits and she's the best thing in the world and hopefully I'm going to feel like that with the new baby, it might take a couple more weeks for it to sink in but at the end of the day he's a good dad and he still see's her. I think it was definitely a good thing

H: thankyou

