Baby Love: Self-evaluation processes of young mothers

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Abstract

This thesis addressed how young women make sense of their experiences of becoming a mother against a background of societal negative attitudes towards 'teenage mothers' and focused on social psychological processes which may mediate the impact of such negative attitudes on the self-concept. Research comprised of three empirical studies exploring the lives of young mothers through the eyes of the macro context as portrayed in the national press, from the perspective of the young women themselves and from the perspective of a micro context. This work draws on the literature of stigma theory to examine the processes involved in maintaining a positive sense of self. It explores sources of self-evaluation including the categories that young mothers invoke and the meanings that they attach to these categories. Findings are discussed in relation to theories of stigma and self-categorisation.

Study One examined conflicting images of motherhood, including teenage mothers, within the national press during a randomly chosen 2 week period and employed qualitative content analysis. Findings suggest that the media constructs a broad range of categories of motherhood, including good and bad mothers, with teenage mothers in the latter category.

Study Two was based on semi-structured interviews with 30 homeless young mothers during pregnancy and early motherhood. Data was analysed in two parts using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) and showed that having a baby provides some young mothers with a motivation to change their lives and behaviour.

Whilst young mothers were aware of negative labels applied to teenage mothers, they did not believe them to be appropriate to them. By identifying the positive attributes shared with the category of good mothers they were able to position themselves within this category. Analysis also focused on the role of self-efficacy and findings suggest that by taking the decision to continue with the pregnancy the young women took responsibility for their lives and thereby created a sense of self-efficacy.
Study Three examined categories invoked by Youth Workers in the young women’s micro environment and employed IPA. Findings suggest that the Youth Workers draw on similar categories to the young mothers. However they appeared to position the young mothers within the category of ‘good teenage mother’. It is argued that placement of young mothers within this category may have implications for the autonomy of young mothers.

This research examined the experiences of young mothers in terms of both the macro and micro context. Findings suggest that categories are dynamic and constructed within interactions; this allows for the individual to negotiate and renegotiate category memberships. As such it would appear that there are processes that may have an ameliorating effect on stigma and as such stigma may not always result in negative outcomes. In the case of young mothers it appears that having a baby may provide some young women with the opportunity to take control of their lives and can provide a catalyst to turn their lives around and re-engage with education.
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Chapter One

Introduction

1.1 Focus of the study

Over the last thirty years there has been an increased awareness of the problems associated with early motherhood. However the end of the last century saw a marked increase in this phenomenon. It appeared that, despite an apparent drop in the teenage pregnancy rate in Great Britain over the last 30 years, this country still had the highest rate in Western Europe (UNICEF, 2001). In a bid to tackle this issue the British Government launched an initiative called the Teenage Pregnancy Strategy. The main purpose of this strategy was to address the problems that are believed to be associated with early motherhood, in particular the problem of social exclusion.

As a result of this raised awareness there has been a vast amount of research conducted in this area. The majority of the work focuses on the practical issues for young mothers, and the costs to society, and as such early motherhood tends to be presented as a problem that needs solving, with young mothers cast within the negative stereotype of the ‘teenage mother’ and their children as being at risk of negative outcomes (Phoenix, 1991). The dominant representations of teenage mothers in psychological and education literature appear to be “babies having babies” or young women who intentionally enter early motherhood (Ineichen, 1986). Consequently young mothers are variously seen as “agents of social disruption” (McDermott & Graham, 2005), a ‘leech on society’ (e.g. Clark & Coleman, 1991; Brughes & Brown, 1995; Hopkinson 1976; Clark, 1989), a “burden on the state” (Phoenix, 1991), and on the “road to social death” (Whitehead, 2000). Teenage motherhood has been variously presented as a problem to be solved (Forsyth & Palmer, 1990) and an epidemic that needs stemming (Scharf, 1979., Whatley & Trudell, 1993).

It has been argued that the early stages of motherhood are often perceived as an isolating experience, and for a young mother, or a mother that is a member of a group that is perceived as being outside the ‘normal parameters of motherhood’ such as
young mothers, this experience is heightened (Letherby, 2002; Phoenix, Woollet & Lloyd, 1991). Letherby (2002) maintains that pregnancy and early motherhood for young mothers is complicated by the effects of stereotypes and prejudice. Within this representation of early motherhood, young mothers are seen as passive victims of circumstance or manipulative young women (Musick, 1993), “at risk” members of society, or a “risk to” society, (e.g. Duncan & Edwards, 1999; McRobbie, 2000). Because of these conflicting representations Letherby (2002) contends that young mothers live their lives within a “damned if you do, damned if you don’t” context and will always be found wanting in society.

However, more recent findings suggest that this may not always be the case. From the available literature it would appear that despite a predominant view that early motherhood ‘ruins’ a young woman’s life, young mothers do not see their situation in quite the same light.

There is a small body of research that questions this negative view of early motherhood and suggests that many young mothers do not perceive their situations in the same negative way as society. Far from “ruining their lives” some young women see motherhood as an opportunity to rewrite their life scripts with a more positive ending. Many young mothers believe that early motherhood has provided them with the opportunity to redefine their lives and re-engage with education (e.g. Smith-Battle 2000; Kirkmand, Harrison, Hillier & Piyett, 2001). It has been argued that young women’s lives are both complicated and strengthened by becoming mothers (Stiffman & Davis, 1990; Harrison, Hillier & Piyett, 2001). However, what is not clear from the literature is how this might be happening. There does not appear to be any evidence for how they are able to construct and maintain a positive sense of self in the face of this stigma.

1.2 Theoretical background and concerns of the thesis
Stigma theory is based on Erving Goffman’s book “Stigma: Notes on the management of spoiled identity” (1963). In this he refers to stigma as “an attribute that is deeply discrediting” that sets the individual apart from others. Others have tended to draw on more vague terms such as “a mark of disgrace” (Stafford and Scott, 1986). In this traditional view, stigma theory suggests that once a person acquires a negative label
they will suffer the negative outcomes that are associated with that label such as lowered self-esteem, status loss and discrimination. In this a label is like a mental template that carries information about the person. In the case of the stigmatized label, such as ‘teenage mother’, the definitions are negative and carry with them an expectation of someone whose character or morals are devalued within a particular society.

This theory is derived from symbolic interactionism’s concept of reflected appraisals. Both Cooley’s (1902/1964) and Mead’s (1934) argued that one’s sense of self-belief develops through interactions with other people; that we learn about views and attitudes from those around us and these beliefs become internalised in the form of the “generalised other”. Cooley’s “looking glass” theory suggests that the individual lives in the minds of others and that self-belief is based upon the views that they believe others hold about them. He likens the developing sense of self to looking in a mirror; the individual only begins to see himself, when he sees how others see him. Mead also highlights this concept of awareness of other’s views and argues that a sense of self develops from the dynamic relationship between a person and their social environment. He suggests that consciousness is not a given, but can only emerge through interactions.

It is this awareness of how others might view the individual that is of prime importance to stigma and labelling theory. It has been argued that when the individual acquires a label they are able to see how others might possibly perceive them and it is this awareness of others’ possibly negative views and stereotypes that can lead to self-fulfilling prophecies and lowered self esteem. In other words the labelled individual will use this awareness of other people’s views as a possible catalyst for self-appraisals and future action.

This view of stigma is exemplified in Link, Cullen, Struening, Shrout and Dohrenwend’s (1989) Modified Model of Labelling Theory (MLT) which suggests that regardless of the strategies adopted to avoid these consequences, there will be negative outcomes for the labelled individual. In this view, the young women have the stigmatized label of ‘teenage mother’ attached to them and should therefore be suffering from the negative consequences associated with their stigmatized identity.
As such it has been argued that people derive self-esteem from reflected appraisals.

However what is of particular note here is that the small body of findings within the literature surrounding teenage motherhood seem to call into question this deterministic view. It would appear that despite being ascribed the negative label of ‘Teenage Mother’, some young mothers do not appear to be suffering from the expected negative outcomes.

More importantly what is also of note is that within the body of literature surrounding stigma theory there is a similar small body of work that also questions the negative effects of stigma (e.g. Crocker & Major, 1989; Finlay & Lyons, 2000). This more recent work appears to recognise the multifaceted and contextual nature of stigma and as such prefers a more fluid definition of stigma such as: “stigmatised individuals possess or are believed to possess some attribute or characteristic that conveys a social identity that is devalued in a particular social context.” (Crocker, 1998, p.505).

In this Crocker recognises that very few circumstances of stigma are the same. Experiences of the stigmatised can differ greatly according to context and situation.

It has been argued that the introduction of self-report measures of self-esteem provided a means of comparing differences between stigmatised and non-stigmatised groups, therefore testing the looking glass hypothesis. However, these tests provided conflicting results. Crocker and Major (1989) noted that despite wide application and testing there appeared to be only little support for this hypothesis. This, they contended, was due in part to the researcher’s assumptions that stigmatised individuals internalise negative evaluations, which would have an effect on the stable aspects of personality, in particular self-esteem.

This focus on the effects of reflected appraisals presents a deterministic nature of the development of self, suggesting that the stigmatised individual is merely a victim of circumstance. It appears to centre on the notion that the construal of self is dependent on what we believe others to think of us. However Turner (1968) maintains that “...the sense of self is not discovered in quiet reflection, but in the course of vigorous effort, especially when the effort brings the individual into rivalry with other
persons...the sense of self arises in connection with active striving in the face of obstacles" (p99). In this view Turner maintains that the notion of reflected appraisals was only one of many processes involved in the construction of the self. This view presents a more dynamic construal of the self which is in constant negotiation with their environment and others’ views.

Crocker (1999) contends that there are differences in the extent to which the individuals will base self-evaluation on reflected appraisals. It is only those who tend to rely on such reflected appraisals that are exposed to the threat of low self-esteem. Therefore, it has been argued that it is not so much that “stigma” affects self-esteem, rather that self-esteem affects the extent to which one feels the effects of stigma (Wright, Gronfein & Owens, 2000). As such, Camp, Finlay and Lyons (2002) suggests that negative outcomes may not be the case for all members of a stigmatised group and that low self-esteem is not an inevitable consequence of stigma. They found that although the women they interviewed were aware of the negative representations held by other members of society about their conditions, and the possible effects that this might have on their lives, they did not feel that these representations were relevant to them and therefore rejected them. They put forward the idea that individuals engage in a variety of processes that protect self-esteem and ameliorate the effects of the label (e.g. Crocker & Major, 1989; Finlay & Lyons, 2000).

However what is not clear from this work is what these processes might be. It has been suggested that both social comparison theory and self-categorisation theory may play a role in the amelioration of the negative effects of stigma.

Social comparison theory argues that the formation of the self-concept and perceptions of self-competence are dependent upon the social comparisons which people engage in when they are constructing their identities (Festinger, 1954; Turner, Haslam and McGarty, 1994). It has been suggested that individuals come to define themselves through their memberships of social groups and the subsequent social comparisons that are available to them and, as such, social comparisons may be a source of distress for stigmatised individuals when forced to compare themselves with a member of non-stigmatised others.
However, self-categorisation theory (Turner et al, 1987, 1994) contends that whilst the self is inherently comparative it does not reflect absolute fixed properties of the individual and others; that the comparative properties are relational and need to be seen in the context in which they occur. It has been argued that categorization is fundamental to understanding and explaining prejudice and discrimination, and that stigmatised individuals are defined merely by virtue of the groups they belong to, whether or not their group is stigmatised. As such, categorization is defined as the process of ordering the world, by grouping together individuals, event or objects, according to perceived similarities (Tajfel & Fogas, 1981). However work in this field has traditionally tended to adopt a fairly deterministic stance and examined categorization in terms of the processes involved, rather than the content and meaning of the category and the possibility of overlapping attributes. It is important to remember that individuals are members of many different groups and categories, and not all of these categories are stigmatised. It is arguable that the stigmatised individual does not draw on the stigmatised category as a source of self and as such it is important to examine the factors that make a particular category salient.

From this small body of work it would appear that despite a traditionally held view that stigma ruins lives, there is evidence to contest this view. Research has shown that despite living with a stigmatised identity the individual can maintain a positive sense of self. Through social and temporal comparisons and self-categorisation, the individual can create and maintain healthy levels of self-esteem and a positive sense of self.

What is of particular note from both bodies of work is the similarity of findings. Both bodies of work appear to share an underlying assumption of negative outcomes and yet both provide results that dispute such deterministic conclusions. However it would appear that there is a wealth of work surrounding the effects of stigma, and yet there appears to be a dearth of work that directly relates stigma theory to teenage mothers. Within the body of work surrounding teenage motherhood there is a strong assumption that young mothers are stigmatised for their situation. This is of interest to stigma theory as it has been argued that there are two main dimensions on which stigma may vary; visibility and controllability (Crocker, Major & Steele, 1998). Visibility relates to the notion of how easily a stigmatised attribute may be concealed
and in terms of young mothers this may vary across time dependent on where they are in pregnancy and after birth. However it is controllability that is particularly pertinent to young mothers. Controllability relates to the idea that individuals can be perceived as being responsible for the acquisition and the elimination of their stigma (Brickman et al, 1982). It has been argued that what is particularly important about controllability is not only the effect it has on others’ perceptions of the stigmatised, but how the stigmatised perceive themselves and how they construe others’ reactions to them and ultimately the impact this will have on their self-esteem (Weiner, 1988; Crocker & Major, 1994). This is important to young mothers as there is a strong representation within the available literature that suggests that people believe that young women choose to become pregnant in order to obtain benefits and state housing. Even if it was not seen as a deliberate step to obtain financial advantage, they were still perceived as having choice in that they could have used contraception and could have chosen to terminate their pregnancies.

However most of the work within stigma is centred on issues of mental illness where issues of controllability are not quite so clear cut. Mental illness is a broad term that covers a wide range of situations from mild depression, to severe psychopathology and drug and alcohol addictions. Definitions within the category of mental illness appear to vary according to specific conditions and the public appear to discriminate within this group and attribute controllability accordingly. Conditions such as Schizophrenia are considered fairly low on controllability and as such it is arguable individuals might be able to draw on this element of control as a means of maintaining a positive sense of self, as it is not their fault and therefore they are not responsible for their situation. Whereas another group, such as teenage mothers, who are perceived as highly controllable, may not have this argument at their disposal and would therefore suffer from the negative affects of the stigma. However findings do not seem to suggest that they are suffering from the negative effects which suggest that there are also other processes at play. This makes young mothers an interesting population in which to examine the effects of stigma. Therefore, it is the aim of this thesis to examine early motherhood within a framework of stigma theory in order to explore the possible self-evaluation processes of teenage mothers that may ameliorate the effects of stigma.
1.3 Epistemological underpinnings of the research

It has been argued that the starting point for any investigation should be the epistemological position of the research, as it is this which underpins and shapes, not only the research questions, but also the methods employed. In this way epistemology is central to understanding research (Smith, 1996b).

The term “epistemology” refers to the branch of philosophy that relates to the nature of knowledge. What is knowledge? How do we come to know what we know? What is reality? And perhaps more importantly, what is truth? The epistemological stance of the research, and subsequent research method chosen, provides a means of looking at the world and answering a question about that world.

Traditionally the social sciences have been dominated by the ‘positivist’ model of research methods, which adopts a hypothetico-deductive method. A positivist view of the world suggests that there is a reality out there to be discovered; there is something to be known and proven. However, there has been a growing dissatisfaction with the restrictions of this model and in recent years there has been a swing from the passive view of knowledge towards a more adaptive and active view (Heylighen, 1993) with an emphasis on more naturalistic research. This view sets psychological enquiry within the ‘real world’ in which it occurs, utilising an iterative-inductive process (Smith, Harré & Langenhove, 1995). This shift in methods reflects a shift from the ‘modern’ essentialist view of the world, where the role of science is to discover the ‘truth’ that is ‘out there’, to a ‘post modernist’ view of the world that posits that there is no ultimate truth to be discovered, but there is a process of ‘knowing’ (Mathers & Rowlan, 1997). Within this view the role of research is to identify the variety of ways that social realities are constructed within society.

What is of particular note within both bodies of research surrounding both teenage mothers and stigma is that the majority of work comes from a positivist position and attempts to measure the effects of stigma e.g. Link et al (1989) where the extent to which the individual experiences the negative effects of stigma is measured on a Likert scale. This is a third person model that includes such statements as:-

“Most patients would willingly accept a former mental patient as a close friend.”
This means that statements are based on how people might react to a “mental patient”. Answers to questions such as these may vary greatly according to whether the respondent was answering with the prototype of a mentally ill person in mind, or the person they believe themselves to be. A young teenage mother may believe that others would discriminate against a “teenage mother”, but that does not mean that she believes that she is discriminated against, as she may not see herself in this role.

It is arguable that it the methodology adopted that has produced this discrepancy in findings, particularly when it is borne in mind that these conflicting findings appear to be dependent on the perspective taken. It would appear that positive outcomes are more likely to occur within work conducted from the insider’s perspective.

It is important to recognise that the concept of insider versus outsider perspective appears to be defined differently within different fields of research. In terms of the stigma literature, the insider perspective is used to refer to the stigmatised individual; that is how they perceive their lives to be e.g. Finlay and Lyons (2000). However within the field of teenage motherhood research it appears that this term also encompasses those within the young mother’s micro context; the people that have a direct influence on the lives and decisions of the young mothers. Letherby (2002) refers to this as a “continuum of ‘outsider’-‘insider’ positions.” In this definition the ‘outsider’ is deemed to be anyone outside this domain; people that do not have direct contact with the young women and are less likely to have an informed view of the situation, e.g. the general public and in some cases the policy makers (e.g. Letherby, 2002).

This is an important point as it is this nuance of definition that highlights the intricacies of this issue. Not just in terms of the many levels of influence that the young mothers are subject to, but the differing views of how they might be coping with their situations. It is essential that research not only acknowledges these different levels, but also examines this phenomenon on all levels.

Therefore it is important to view this phenomenon not just through the eyes of the young mothers themselves, but also their experiences of society and the context in which the young mothers live their lives. This allows the researcher to understand
how young mothers might see their lives and measure success within their experiences. It could also allow for exploration into how a young mother might determine the available dimensions on which they draw as measures of success.

As such, because it was felt that it was important for this research to examine how young mothers experience their situation, it was the aim of this research to adopt a weak social constructionist stance and the research was based on a phenomenological approach. It was decided that a strong constructionist approach such as discourse analysis would be inappropriate as it takes the view that text is an expression of the variety of discourses that are available to the individual. In this view the individual uses these discourses to construct events.

Phenomenology is based on the philosophical branch of psychology which is concerned with the way in which an individual will gain knowledge of the world around them. Husserl, a main proponent of this view, rejected the presupposition that there will inevitably be something ‘underlying’ or ‘behind’ the experience that the researcher needs to access, as he maintained that it was the experience itself that was of importance. He maintained that research can transcend bias or presupposition and as such the aim of psychology within this branch is to ‘bracket’ the researcher’s assumptions or preconceived ideas about a population in order to present a view of the world as experienced by the participant. In this view it is argued that we should not see objects and subjects as independent, but as part of the experience as they all ‘mean’ something and their manifestation is part of the ‘reality’ at that time. This is important in the case of young mothers as the majority of the research available in the field of teenage motherhood comes from a quantitative methodology and as such, appears to presents a deterministic and reductionist account of early motherhood. There is a strong image that suggests that early motherhood can be a blight on a young woman’s life and that teenage mothers are ‘unfit’ mothers.

In order to examine the young women’s lives from their perspective it is essential that this work starts with a clean slate; by this, it means that research should attempt to start with as few assumptions as possible about teenage motherhood or should acknowledge that these assumptions exist. It would appear that within the majority of the body of literature the criteria for ‘outcome’ variables are defined by the researcher
rather than the young mothers themselves; therefore the positive and negative dimensions of the outcomes are defined by others and, as such, it is arguable that they may not be relevant to the young women. This thesis is not attempting to dichotomise these conflicting findings, allocating them into positions of right and wrong or disproving one or other position, but to explicate these different positions and examine how they might both represent different realities.

In this research we are searching for the ‘realities’ of different groups, recognising that they are relative to the individual and their experiences. As already highlighted phenomenology reflects the aims of this research to identify the variety of ways that teenage motherhood is constructed within society, whilst exploring how and under what conditions these constructions are utilised and the effects that these constructions might have for the individual, in particular the young mother.

1.4 Structure of the empirical chapters
In summary it would appear that research into the issues surrounding young motherhood predominantly show that becoming a young mother is likely to have negative outcomes for the young mothers. These negative outcomes are conceptualised as resulting from either young mothers’ acceptance of societal negative representations or the material circumstances often associated with young parenthood.

However there is also a small body of work that contests these findings. This work suggests that some young mothers do not experience early motherhood in quite such a negative light and find it a catalyst to examine their lives and re-engage with education. More importantly this thread of work fails to provide an explanation of why this might be happening. There is no in-depth investigation into processes that might lead to such outcomes. Therefore it is the aim of this thesis to take a weak social constructionist approach in examining early motherhood within a framework of stigma theory in order to explore the possible self-evaluation processes of teenage mothers. It is particularly important to recognise the flexibility of self when exploring the effects of stigma on the sense of self and the processes involved in managing identities, and as a result this work will address theories of stigma and self-evaluation
processes within both the macro and the micro context and from the perspective of young women themselves.

This work draws on the literature of stigma to form some working hypotheses as to what these processes might be. As such it will examine 1) the categories young mothers invoked to make sense of their experiences and what meaning they attach to these categories, and 2) sources of self-evaluation and relevant dimensions of self-evaluations. This research looks at the categories and meanings that are available to the young mothers through print, media and social interactions with youth workers and the categories that young mothers use themselves. The research focuses on three empirical studies.

Study One - In order to understand the disparate experiences of young mothers it is important to set them within the broader context that this phenomenon inhabits. Therefore this study focuses on the macro context examining attitudes towards young motherhood and motherhood in general as represented within the national press. This work is based on the assumption that not only does the media reflect representations of the world, but also is part of the construction of these representations. It employs Qualitative Content Analysis to explore the cultural frames of reference as presented by the national press, examining the range of categories available to the young mothers.

Study Two and Study Three address the issue of young motherhood from the perspective of the young women themselves and examines both self-esteem and self-efficacy in relation to stigma theory. This study was based on one to one interviews with three groups of young mothers and young mothers to be. It was decided to use three groups as there were no a priori reasons to believe that their experiences would be similar.

The final study, Study Four, examines the role of the micro context in relation to the stigmatised individual. In this the micro context relates to those people who are in regular contact with the young mothers and considers the possible effects that these potentially influential people might have on the lives of the young mothers. This study focuses particularly on Youth Workers that the young mothers are in daily contact
with and explores the use of categories and the possible effects of category choice for the stigmatised individual.

The latter three studies all employed Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) as a means of understanding the lived experience of the individuals involved in the research. In a study such as this it is important to ensure that participants are allowed to construct their own voices and be seen in terms of their own worlds and when choosing a qualitative research method it is important to choose a method that reflects these criteria and participants’ experiences and allows issues to emerge from the data such as Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA).

IPA is a fairly recently developed methodology which aims to understand the individual’s experiences; “the approach is phenomenological in that it is concerned with an individual’s personal perception or account of an object or event as opposed to an attempt to produce an objective statement of the object or event itself” (Smith, Jarman & Osborne, 1999. p. 218-219). In this, IPA is based on the assumption of an absence of objective reality and that experiences will be interpreted differently by different people and consequently recognises the role of the subjective experiences of the individual. The purpose of this method is to explore and understand how the individual makes sense of their experiences and situations.

1.5 Summary of Chapters
Chapter Two discusses the background to the perceived ‘issue’ of teenage motherhood. It examines the issues that are believed to predispose a young woman to become a mother and the possible negative outcomes for both the young mother and her baby. This chapter then goes on to explore conflicting findings within the body of available research, which suggests that such outcomes are not always inevitable for the young mother.

Chapter Three examines the theory of stigma in relation to teenage mothers. This chapter explores the reasons why, historically, young mothers may have been stigmatised and then goes on to relate these issues to theories of stigma, including a discussion of appraisal and labelling theories, and the potential impact on the stigmatised individual. It will then go on to explore empirical work which suggests
that stigma does not necessarily lead only to negative outcomes for the individual, discussing factors and processes that may account for these conflicting findings. Finally, it will discuss existing literature on the effects of becoming a young mother and it will argue that stigma may be a useful framework for examining and understanding this phenomenon.

Chapter Four explores the issues surrounding the choice of methodology and methods in this thesis. It summarizes the research strategy and the methods chosen for each study. The final section in this chapter examines the need for ensuring good practice in qualitative methods and outlines the way in which this has been handled.

Chapter Five explores the phenomenon of early motherhood and motherhood as represented within the macro context, specifically as constructed within the British national press. This chapter examines the evidence that suggests that young mothers are stigmatised and explores the range of possible cultural discourses that are likely to be available to the young mothers to help them make sense of their lives.

Chapters Six and Seven examine this phenomenon from the perspective of the young mothers and explore how young mothers are able to construct and maintain a positive sense of self. Both chapters are based on interviews with young women in the later stages of pregnancy and early motherhood. Chapter Six examines the issues of self-esteem in relations to Link et al's (1987) model of modified labelling theory and Chapter Seven focuses on the effects of self-efficacy for the stigmatised individual.

Chapter Eight is the final empirical chapter and examines early motherhood from the perspective of one of the young mothers' micro context, that of the Youth Workers who are in daily contact with the young women. This chapter explores how the Youth Workers utilise categories and the range of possible categories that they might invoke. It then goes on to explore the effects that the choice of category can have on the stigmatised individual.

Chapter Nine provides a summary of the main findings and conclusions. This chapter offers suggestions for further theoretical development in regard to stigma and
labelling theory. It then goes on to discuss problems and limitations of the research and the possible practical implications of this work.

In conclusion this research seeks to further develop our understanding of the impact of stigma on the individual; in particular how the individual constructs and maintains a positive sense of self in the face of stigma. More importantly this work seeks to deepen the debate and raise awareness of the surrounding issues and possible positive effects of young motherhood.
Chapter Two

Teenage Motherhood

2.1 Background

Despite an apparent drop in the teenage pregnancy rate in Great Britain over the last 30 years, this country still has the highest rate in Western Europe and teenage mothers are still perceived to be a societal problem (UNICEF, 2001). In 1999, the British Government launched The Teenage Pregnancy Strategy as a means of trying to reduce the level of teenage pregnancies in Great Britain. In the Social Exclusion Unit's launch document the British Prime Minister, Tony Blair, is quoted as saying, “Our failure to tackle this problem has cost the teenagers, their children and the country dear.” He further contended that, “We can't afford to continue to ignore this shameful record... the consequences of doing this can be seen all around us in shattered lives and blighted futures.” (Social Exclusion Unit, 1999 p.4). This quote highlights on the one hand the perceived importance placed on this issue by politicians and on the other hand the negative meanings often attached to young mothers.

There has been a vast amount of research conducted in this area. Most of the research has focused on the costs to society and the negative consequences for young mothers. However there is a small body of work that questions this outcome, suggesting that young mothers do not see their situation in the same way as others might do. It is the aim of this thesis to examine the experiences of the young mothers themselves and examine how they construct a sense of self in the face of societal stigma attached to early motherhood.

This chapter discusses the background to the perceived 'issue' of teenage motherhood. It examines the factors that are believed to predispose a young woman to become a mother and the possible negative outcomes for both the young mother and her baby. This chapter then goes on to explore conflicting findings within the body of available research, which suggest that such outcomes are not always inevitable for the young mother.
It is important to point out at this stage the negative meanings that are assumed to be associated with the label ‘teenage mother’. It is important for research to be conscious of the labels that are applied and the possible connotations that may be attached to them. The negative connotations associated with this term serve to marginalise an already marginalised group and as such it is important to apply labels that are as value free as possible. Therefore within this thesis teenage mothers will be referred to as ‘young mothers’ or ‘young women’. Where the term ‘teenage mother’ is used within this thesis, it is used to emphasise a point or to signify the negative image.

2.2 What predisposes a young woman to become a mother?
In a society that values the role of higher education and freely educates young women about the consequences of early sexual relations and contraception, it is arguable that there is no reason for young women to embark on motherhood until they are perceived to be ‘adults’. However, this is not a straight forward matter and there is a wealth of issues surrounding why young women still become young mothers. This section explores the large body of literature which examines the perceived correlates of young motherhood.

2.2.1 Family. It has been argued that teenage mothers are more likely to have a mother that was a teenage mother herself (e.g. Seamark & Pereira, 1997). Within contemporary discourses of teenage motherhood it seems to be a widely accepted view that history repeats itself, that young women whose mothers were teen mothers themselves are more at risk than those of later childbearers, (e.g. Seamark & Pereira, 1997).

In addition Skinner (1986) examined the relationship between mothering style and the likelihood of becoming a young mother. He identified two contrasting types of mothering styles that had a strong influence on their daughters:

- The distant mother - who showed little interest or concern in her daughter’s welfare.
- The very close mother – who showed great interest in and was the main confidante of the daughter.
The majority of the teenage mothers in Skinner's study were raised by “distant” mothers. There appeared to be a distinct lack of communication within the relationship and they were the least likely of the group to have discussed any aspect of sex with their mothers. This absence of communication meant the young women were more likely to have left home at such an early age that they were ill equipped to survive in an adult world. Also Birch (1987) contended that where young women have a good relationship with their mother, they are less likely to have early sex.

2.2.2 Victims of abuse. It was revealed that of teenage mothers in receipt of welfare in Washington USA, over half had been sexually abused and 10% physically abused (Roper & Weeks, 1993; Boyer & Fine, 1992). This link between teenage motherhood and abuse appears to be a circular argument as Herrenkohl, Herrenkohl, Egolf & Russo (1998) posits that teenage pregnancy is linked to severe neglect and/or physical abuse which can lead to low self esteem. In turn low self-esteem and low self-respect can lead to both teenage pregnancy and physical abuse (Caldas, 1993, Herrenkohl et al 1998). It has been suggested that this link exists because teenage mothers are emotionally needy; nearly 24% experience some form of involuntary sex (Alan Guttmacher Institute, 1994). Butler and Burton (1990) argue that this is because victims of sexual abuse are more likely to succumb to unwanted sex and are more likely to have wanted a baby as a teenager. Musick (1994) suggests that many young women believe that motherhood can protect them from further abuse.

2.2.3 Poverty. From the research available it would appear that pregnancy rates in the UK seem to be related to economic deprivation in the immediate environment (Babb, 1993; Smith, 1993; Wilson, Brown & Richards, 1992). Adolescents who live in communities with higher rates of poverty, single mother households and reliance on welfare, are at higher risk of early pregnancy and it would appear that many young mothers are homeless at the time of birth (Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 1995). The Alan Guttmacher Institute (1994) claims that 60% of adolescents are living in poverty at the time of birth. Research in Scotland found that the pregnancy rates in the under 16’s were three times higher in deprived areas than in more affluent societies. Adolescents from lower income families are not only more likely to get pregnant than those from higher income families, but they are also more likely to start having sex at
a younger age and are less likely to use contraception. Also if they do become pregnant they are less likely to seek termination. Young women in affluent areas who did get pregnant were more likely to terminate their pregnancies (Alan Guttmacher Institute, 1994).

Thus is would seem that there is some evidence suggesting that young women from poorer backgrounds are more likely to become pregnant and keep their babies. It also is worth noting that some researchers attempted to explain this phenomenon by painting a negative image of young mothers. For instance Smith (1993) argues that one of the main issues with poverty is that it is harder to provide the sort of upbringing that the media leads teenagers to aspire to. In lower income areas there is no available money to provide the sort of entertainment they are led to expect, and would ideally like, and teenagers are left to find their own entertainment and as such are more likely to be involved in early alcohol and drug use (Mauldon, 1998). There is evidence that suggests that drug and alcohol use has been linked to starting sex at an early age (Horwitz, Klerman, Kuo and Jekel, 1991; Paikoff, 1995; Peterson and Crocket, 1992; Urdy, Kovernock & Morris, 1996) as has early involvement in crime (Botting et al, 1998).

2.2.4 Education. Until fairly recently most studies on teenage motherhood concluded that adolescent pregnancy is associated with reduced lower educational attainments and therefore, because of this, lower earnings potential (e.g. Irvine, Bradley, Cupples & Boohan, 1997; Moore & Waite, 1977). However, how much of the educational shortfall is due to teenage motherhood would appear to be debatable. There is evidence to suggest that there are other factors that may have an effect on educational attainment which are not considered within these studies (Hoffman, Foster and Furstenberg, 1993; Hotz, McElroy & Sanders, 1997; Moore et al, 1993). It has been argued that young mothers are more susceptible to dropping out of education because they are less academically competent and therefore less committed to education. However, it has been argued that these young women might have dropped out regardless of whether or not they had become mothers (Hofferth & Moore, 1979; Rindfuss, St-John & Bumpass, 1984). Research suggests that a large number of young women had already dropped out of school even before they were pregnant and of those that remained in school only 5% stayed until they gave birth (Mauldon, 1998;
Maynard, 1995). Indeed, there is evidence to suggest that low academic ability may account for both early childbearing and low career achievement (Mauldon, 1998). Research has shown that young women who have effective reading scores by the fourth grade (8–9 years of age) are more likely to avoid ‘bleaker’ outcomes and that young women that scored in the lowest fifth of the class in maths and literacy tests were 5 times more likely to become pregnant within the two years following the tests than the top fifth of the class (Pittman & Govan, 1986).

The body of research mentioned above appears to present young mothers as victims of circumstance, driven by the strictures of their environments. The problem with this image is that by presenting early motherhood as an almost inevitable outcome, it is denying the young women agency. Bandura (1990) contends that if the individual believes that they are not the agent for their action their actions may be deemed beyond their control and responsibility. This displacement of responsibility can have the effect of lessening restraints over the individual’s behaviour and weakening social concerns (Tilker, 1970). Moreover, it is possible that the negative perceptions of early motherhood that exist within society are not as a result of the age of the young women, but their circumstances, e.g. poverty and / or other associated characteristics.

More importantly, when the literature relating to the outcomes for young mothers is examined there is a notable similarity to the above findings. As most of the studies presented above employed correlational designs, what is not clear is whether these factors relating to early motherhood are causes or effects of the issue.

2.3 What are the potential outcomes for teenage mothers?
This section examines the possible outcomes for young mothers in relation to education, poverty, parenting skills and mental health.

2.3.1 Education. Teenage mothers are less likely to complete their education (Botting, Rosato & Wood, 1998). Teenage mothers are more likely to have no qualifications by the time they are thirty and are likely to earn less than their peers (Department of Social Security, 1996/7).
Chapter Two

However, there is a link here to the family experience that can have an effect. It has been suggested that if education has not been experienced within the family, there may not be an expectation of continuing education, or even basic education may not be encouraged. The development of recent methodological techniques has allowed researchers to attempt to separate the differences in background characteristics and the effects that they may have; for example, some studies have compared the outcomes of sisters (e.g. Geronimous & Korenman, 1992), whilst others have used fixed regression techniques as control for unmeasured differences between the family backgrounds of the young women used (Hoffman, Foster & Furstenberg, 1993). The negative effects of early motherhood on education and poverty were still significant, but substantially smaller than first thought. Postponing childbirth to after 20 increased the total of educational attainment by only 0.38 years (Geronimous & Korenman, 1992; Hoffman, Foster & Furstenberg, 1993).

2.3.2 Poverty. Young mothers are believed to be at a greater risk of social deprivation (Smith, 1993; SEU 1999; Bradshaw & Finch, 2001). They are unlikely to own their own homes (Botting et al, 1998). They are more likely to rely on state benefits (Duncan, 1984; Jacobson, Wilkinson & Pill, 1995) and consequently to have reduced living standards (Dept of Health, 2002). They are likely to suffer from greater social isolation (Department of Social Security, 1996/7 Weinmann, 2005) and, as a result, young mothers are more likely to suffer from poorer health in later life (Welling, 1996). Although this body of literature implicitly assumes that poverty is a consequence of early motherhood there is no clear evidence that the environment of the young women who have children early in their lives actually deteriorates.

2.3.3 Quality of mothering skills and the effects on offspring. It has been suggested that young mothers are merely “children raising children” (Pearce, 1993). Most critics argue that the young mothers are too young to be good mothers because they are too self-centred and immature to be responsible for a child. The young mother’s behaviour and attitude is likely to result in less positive parenting (Kotogal, 1993) and they are at higher risk of being neglectful in their parenting (Zuravin & DiBlasio, 1992). Research suggests that children of young mothers are not only more likely to experience behavioural difficulties (Broman, 1981; Ferguson & Lynskey, 1993; Furstenberg et al, 1987; Wadsworth, Taylor, Osborn & Butler, 1984) but they are
more likely to experience cognitive disadvantages resulting in educational underachievement (Brooks-Gunn and Furstenberg; Fergusson & Lynskey, 1993; Luster and Dubow, 1990; Wadsworth, et al 1984). However, whilst teenage mothers are less likely to provide a stimulating environment for their babies (e.g. Luster & Dubow, 1990) and talk less to their babies, it has been shown that they are just as warm towards their offspring as older mothers (Culp, Appelbaum, Osofsky & Levy, 1988).

What is not clear from this body of literature is whether this difference in findings is due to the age of the mother or the relative poverty in which the young mothers tend to live. It has been argued that many of these studies fail to take adequate consideration of the background and socio-economic differences between older and younger mothers. When these issues are taken into consideration, and controlled, the previous differences are reduced significantly, but not totally (E.g. Benasich & Brook-Gunn, 1996; Chase- Lansdale, Brooks-Gunn & Zamsky, 1994, Klerman, 1993).

2.3.4 Health and mental health. It has been argued that young mothers are less likely than older mothers to go to their doctors during the first two trimesters (Simms and Smith, 1984) and experience higher incidents of complications during pregnancy and maternal morbity (Botting et al, 1998).

Also teenage mothers are more likely than older mothers to suffer poor mental health during the first year after birth (Wasserman et al, 1990). Deal & Holt (1998) suggest that young mothers may be up to twice as likely to suffer depression and it has been argued that young mothers that suffer from depression are at greater risk of suffering depressions in adulthood (Horwitz, Bruce, Hoff, Harley & Jekel, 1996).

However as Birkland, Thompson and Phares (2005) point out there is no specific theory of postpartum depression amongst young mothers. It would appear that there are only general indications / links. What is of note, within this body of literature, is that although research suggests that younger mothers are more prone to depression within the first year of birth, no account appears to be taken of whether these young women were depressed before giving birth.
It is also worth bearing in mind that it has been suggested that teenage girls are more likely to suffer from depression than boys (Kandel & Davies, 1982; Kashani, Rosenberg, Beck, Reid & Battle, 1987; Petersen, Kennedy & Sullivan, 1991) and some of the links to depression in teenagers, such as parental divorce (e.g. Sarigiani, 1990), family conflict (e.g. Carlton-ford, Paikoff & Brooks-Gunn, 1991), dysfunctional parent–child interactions (Burge and Hammen, 1991), and poor academic achievement (Schulenberg, Asp & Petersen, 1984) are all factors linked to the issue of early motherhood as well. It has also been argued that young women who are depressed are more likely to suffer from low self esteem and feel worthless and unloved which is again linked to early motherhood (Achenbach, 1991a, 1991b, 1991c). Consequently it has been argued that it is these factors that may explain the increase in pregnancy amongst depressed teenage girls (Horwitz, Klerman, Sungkuo & Jekel, 1991) and arguably higher rates of post natal depression.

This begs the question to what extent is depression linked to teenage pregnancy? From this it is arguable that depression is not simply an outcome of early motherhood, but maybe a possible precursor. However there does not appear to be any work that directly addresses depression in both the pre-natal and post-natal stages.

Studies of depression in teenage mothers appear to compare teenage mothers with older mothers. However if, as suggested, young women that are depressed are more likely to experience early motherhood, then it is arguable that there would be a higher predisposition for them to have depression in the post natal stages as well. There does not appear to be any work that directly compares levels of depression before and after birth and what the affects of early motherhood might have on depression in young women. From these findings it is hard to assess whether depression is a cause or an effect of early motherhood, or merely a correlation.

This final point raises an important concern about the literature surrounding early motherhood. From the available research there appears to be confusion about the extent to which causes and effects can be separated out. From the above review it would appear that there is great overlap between the causes and effects. At best such findings can only be observed as connections with early motherhood.
It has been argued that it is not only the differences in sample that can affect results, but the actual measures used. Coley & Chase-Lansdale (1998) contend that many of the studies quoted involve samples of single parent, low income, minority families (Brooks-Gunn & Furstenberger, 1986). The measures used are developed and normed on married, middle-class, white samples and it is possible that the subsequent results may not accurately capture the assumed behaviour and constructs (Benasich & Brooks-Gunn, 1996). Consequently Coley and Chase-Lansdale argue that more work is needed on the applicability of measures across different populations.

Smith-Battle (2000) argues that it is essential to contextualise parenting. She suggests that the views of young mother as incompetent and problematical is unjustified, citing the ethnographies of impoverished black families by Stack (1974) and Ladner (1971) that claim to dispute these opinions. Smith-Battle contends that parenting is not a “rational, cognitive activity, rather, parenting is fundamentally a highly relational, situated and arational practice in which parents non-reflectively take up and modify family and cultural norms and practices.” (p.35). Variations in family background and experience profoundly shape the manner in which a teenager will experience motherhood.

2.4 Summary of findings

The findings cited above are an overview of some of the issues associated with teenage pregnancy and motherhood that previous research has focussed on. They provide mixed evidence for why young women become pregnant, possibly why they choose to continue with the pregnancy and some of the likely outcomes. However, more importantly, regardless of whether the findings are contested or not, a common theme within this literature appears to be that teenage motherhood is constructed as a societal problem and pathologises the experiences of young mothers.

The dominant image of teenage mothers in psychological and education literature appear to be “babies having babies” or young women who intentionally enter early motherhood (Ineichen, 1986). Consequently young mothers are variously seen as “agents of social disruption” (McDermott & Graham, 2005), a “leech on society” (e.g. Clark & Coleman, 1991; Burghes & Brown, 1995; Hopkinson 1976; Clark, 1989), a “burden on the state”
(Phoenix, 1991), and on the “road to social death” (Whitehead, 2000). Teenage motherhood has been variously presented as a problem to be solved (Forsyth & Palmer, 1990) and an epidemic that needs stemming (Scharf, 1979., Whatley & Trudell, 1993).

What is also of particular note is that young mothers appear to be presented as a fairly homogeneous group. However, it would appear that young mothers are either seen as passive victims of circumstance or manipulative young women (Musick, 1993), “at risk” members of society or a “risk to” society, (e.g. Duncan & Edwards, 1999; McRobbie, 2000). Because of these conflicting representations Letherby (2002) contends that young mothers live their lives within a “damned if you do, damned if you don’t” context and will always be found wanting in society.

However of prime importance within this body of work is an underlying assumption that teenage mothers are a stigmatised group. Letherby (2002) says “young women’s negative experiences are compounded by the stigma of teenage pregnancy. Furthermore, young women in this situation do have specific needs and are subject to specific risks. The stigma attached to their experiences coupled with their often ‘unequal’ relationships with partners and parents means that young women are sometimes at greater risk emotionally, physically and medically than other pregnant women / mothers” (p.4.).

This quote highlights the possible negative effects of stigma. It could be argued that the effects of stigma on the development of the individual has far reaching implications and is an important aspect of how young mothers make sense of their situation, and yet there is very little work that directly addresses the issues of stigmatisation and teenage motherhood. Fessler (2005) acknowledges that young mothers experience their status as a stigmatised identity, but does not fully explain the effects that this ‘status’ might have on the young women’s lives. Whitehead (2000) suggests that the stigma that a young mother is subject to can have an influence on the amount of emotional and psychological trauma that young mothers experience and can lead them on the ‘road to social death”. Most of the research available suggests that early motherhood is a class issue and paints a bleak picture of the shattered and stigmatised lives of teenage mothers.
However, there is another strand of work within the body of literature surrounding teenage motherhood that proposes that the outcomes for young mothers are not as bleak as suggested. The next section explores the findings that contradict this negative view of the young women’s lives and examines the ways in which young mothers believe that their lives have improved as a result of having a baby.

2.5 Is this the whole story? - Positive outcomes

Whilst early motherhood is linked to greater health risks for both mother and child (Botting et al, 1998) there is also evidence to suggest that early motherhood can also have protective health effects, e.g. early motherhood can be linked to better obstetric outcomes for both mother and child than older motherhood (Wolkind & Kruk, 1985). It would appear that such findings are rarely included within reviews of teenage motherhood, the focus mainly being on the negative outcomes.

More recently there is also a small but significant body of data appearing which suggests that young mothers do not see their lives and experiences of motherhood in quite the same way as society. Mauldon (1998) contends that some young women see motherhood as a positive move, because it gives them more standing and opportunities in society. It can also be seen as a route into adulthood, whilst still being allowed to be dependent on family and the government. It has been argued that this is similar to the effect of young women from higher income backgrounds, who use college or university as a stepping stone to independence.

Mauldon further suggests that motherhood generates an opportunity to create new relationships with the baby, and an opportunity to renegotiate their roles within the family and peer groups (Benoit 1994). It has also been argued that babies can provide “unconditional love” and the mothers finally receive the much needed attention that they desire (Chetkovich, Mauldon Brindis & Guendelman, 1996, cited Mauldon 1998). Quinlivan (2004) suggests that young mothers are more likely to idealize pregnancy and often consider it “the single most exciting and positive event” to have occurred in their lives and found their children to be a source of pride and pleasure (Kirkmand, Harrison, Hillier & Piyett, 2001). Young mothers also believed that
motherhood provided an opportunity to reconnect with their own families (Williams, 1999).

It has been suggested that teenage motherhood is an adaptive strategy that provides an alternative to the accepted life course of traditional middle class views of education, career and marriage. Smith-Battle (2000) maintains that motherhood "reverses the downward trajectory of their lives" enabling them to reorganize their identity around the care of their babies, forming new priorities in their lives. One group of young women interviewed in this study referred to the "empty pre-pregnant lives" that were transformed by becoming a mother. They had the opportunity to redefine their identities in terms of their past, present and future lives, providing the young women with the opportunity to re-evaluate their lives and behaviours. They are able to distance themselves from previous bad behaviours and the influences of those that encourage that behaviour, with young mothers reporting a withdrawal from drugs and alcohol. Research suggests that some teenage mothers showed higher self-esteem and lower incidences of conduct disorders than a sample of sexually active adolescent non-mothers. It has also been argued that young mothers are motivated to return to school and do better than they had anticipated. Their plans appear both complicated and strengthened by becoming mothers (Stiffman & Davis, 1990; Harrison, Hillier & Piyett, 2001).

However, despite evidence that suggests that young mothers can be good mothers (Smith-Battle, 2000), society continues to draw on negative stereotypes of young mothers as bad mothers and their children as being at risk of negative outcomes (Phoenix, 1991). The early stages of motherhood are often perceived as an isolating experience, and for a young mother or a mother that is a member of a group that is perceived as being outside the 'normal parameters of motherhood' this experience is heightened (Letherby, 2002; Phoenix, Woollet & Lloyd, 1991). Yet many young mothers do not perceive their situations in the same negative light as society. Far from "ruining their lives" some young women see motherhood as an opportunity to rewrite their life scripts with a more positive ending.
2.6 Concluding remarks

Letherby (2002) maintains that pregnancy and early motherhood for young mothers is complicated by the effects of stereotypes and prejudice. However, these more recent findings suggest that this may not always be the case. From the available literature it would appear that despite a predominant view that early motherhood ‘ruins’ a young woman’s life, young mothers do not see their situation in quite the same light. Many young mothers believe that early motherhood has provided them with the opportunity to redefine their lives and re-engage with education. What is not clear from the literature is how this might be happening. There does not appear to be any evidence for how young mothers are able to construct and maintain a positive sense of self in the face of this stigma.

Of note within the later strand of research is that these findings go against traditional theories of stigma and add to a growing body of literature which examines processes and factors which may ‘protect’ a positive sense of self. In terms of traditional stigma theory young mothers are stigmatized and should therefore be suffering from the negative consequences associated with their stigmatized identity (e.g. Goffman, 1963). Plummer (1975) contends that “groups may reject societal definitions, but they cannot wish them away or remain unaware of them, you cannot steal, murder, rape, be blind, deaf or mentally ill without being aware that you are violating some publicly held norms”. Accepted theories of stigma (e.g. Link, Cullen, Struening, Shrout and Dohrenwend, 1989; Scheff, 1966 & Goffman, 1963) suggest that once a person has a stigmatised label applied to them, their lives will be ruined and yet this later work appears to be contradicting this view.

One of the major gaps within this area of literature is the lack of research that examines the phenomenon of teenage motherhood from the perspective of the young women themselves; most work appears to come from the perspective of the ‘outsider’. However, it is important to view this phenomenon through the eyes of the young mothers themselves, in order to understand how they see their lives and how they measure success within their lives. It is important not only to determine the available dimensions on which they draw as measures of success, but also their experiences of society and the context in which they live their lives. It has been argued that it is vital
to examine this issue in more holistic terms and to understand the role of pregnancy and motherhood in the young women’s lives (McKee, 1999).

The following chapter examines the theories of stigma in more detail, particularly in relation to the experience of teenage motherhood.
3.1 Introduction
This chapter will examine the theory of stigma in relation to teenage mothers; it will explore the historical antecedents of this phenomenon, examining theories of stigma including Goffman’s (1963) original formulation. It will consider the variety of definitions of stigma and discuss appraisal and labelling theories, and the potential impact on the stigmatised individual. It will then go on to explore empirical work that suggests that stigma does not necessarily lead to negative outcomes for the individual, discussing factors and processes that may account for these conflicting findings. Finally, it will discuss existing literature on the effects of becoming a young mother and it will argue that stigma may be a useful framework for examining and understanding this phenomenon.

3.2 Historical development of the stigmatised young mother
Before examining theories of stigma it is important to understand why a young mother might be stigmatised. For centuries stigma has been attached to unmarried mothers. It would appear that stigma was not just the domain of the young mother, age did not seem to be the important factor, but marital status was paramount. Early Christians believed women to be inferior to men both physically and morally and therefore potentially dangerous temptresses (Russell, 1976). Unmarried mothers were strictly against the teachings of the Christian church. They challenged the doctrines of sexual relationships outside marriage and provided threats to the institution of marriage. It was believed that unmarried mothers were evidence of blasphemous and immoral behaviour and were therefore perceived as “blameworthy”.

In some instances the church could maintain the right to try unmarried mothers. They were ordered to appear before Ecclesiastical Courts and tried for various charges in the
same manner as those charged with sexual offences. Unmarried mothers were forced to undergo penances that usually involved some form of public humiliation, e.g. young women convicted of “bastardy” were ordered to attend their parish church barefoot and barelegged and to stand in front of the pulpit before the congregation (Helmhox, 1975).

In 1567 the Poor Law was brought in to attempt to address the problems of illegitimacy amongst the poor. The main purposes of this law were to:

- Demonstrate the disapproval of others in the parish,
- Strengthen the public image of marriage and the family,

and most importantly:

- To reduce the cost of unmarried mothers to the parish.

Punishments were enforced to penalise parents who failed to support their illegitimate offspring. Punishments took the form of fines and whippings (Gill, 1977).

The Poor Report of 1909 provides an illustration of how attitudes towards single mothers had developed over the centuries. This report argued that there were three main types of single mothers:

- The Feeble minded – women who could not help themselves and were likely to continue giving birth to illegitimate children.
- The Depraved – women of dubious morals, who made a convenience of the workhouse and handouts available. Depraved mothers were detained in suitable institutions. They were only released once they had “regained their respectability”.
- The Unfortunate – these were mainly younger girls having their first child.

Treatment took the form of being cared for in “homes”. Unfortunately most of these homes were “callously punitive and exploitative” and girls were subjected to long hours of drudgery (Middleton, 1971).

During the World Wars the plight of the unmarried mother came to the fore as a result of the rising number of cases and the soaring costs of caring for them. However, even after
the war those in receipt of benefits from the government were still stigmatised. Beveridge went so far as to say that single parenthood was not a suitable case for this type of income support (Beveridge Report, 1942). However what is not clear from this is the age of these women. It would appear that it was not the age at which a girl had a child that was the issue, rather what was considered important was whether they were married or not.

It would appear that stigma has become an umbrella term for a range of prejudices from vague dislike to aversion, fear and repulsion. It is one thing to be stigmatised because of the consequences of someone’s birth, but to be stigmatised because of what someone does has very different repercussions. It has been argued that to be deemed different because of one’s morality is putting one’s status within society at risk. As Harvey (2001) points out “morality is uncompromising. Where there are social norms, there is a social division: those groups, which are within the moral code, are distinguished strictly from those, which are not.” It seems that society maintains that immoral conduct requires explanation. Individuals are responsible for their behaviour and must accept the consequences. Further to this Harvey maintains that teenage pregnancy has been seen as “evidence of a personality disorder”.

3.2.1. Poverty. However it is not just the issue of morality that young mothers are possibly stigmatised for. As already mentioned, it is also possible that young mothers are stigmatised as a result of their dependence on benefits and consequently their potentially impoverished status. For over a century people who claimed poor relief were the object of a policy that was set up in order to deter them from seeking help and would mark them as different from others. Even when the Poor Law was abolished the stigma attached still remained (Stevenson, 1973). In Britain today people still believe poverty to be attributed to laziness or “lack of willpower” (Riffault, Rabier, 1977). George Orwell wrote about the unemployed saying that “in their circumstances, it was inevitable, at first, that they should be haunted by a sense of personal degradation” (Orwell, 1937p 86). It would appear that the stigma of poverty is seen as a personal flaw; to be poor apparently reflects the individual’s personality. Those that are in receipt of welfare are seen as “in need”, but
not deserving, and therefore rejected by society, suffering a loss of status. It is important to note that the individual’s status provides society with a set of roles and expectations. Dependent on their position within the hierarchy, the individual is ascribed a role and others will react to that role.

Those that are in receipt of welfare are assigned a label to which others respond. “Social welfare” is meant to be concerned with the maintenance or promotion of social well-being (Butterworth & Hollman, 1975). This “catch all” definition covers anything that could be argued good for society; “all collectively provided services are deliberately designed to meet socially recognised needs” (Titmuss, 1955) as decided by society. Unfortunately these views are the views of the majority and fail to take into account the psychological needs of the minority. It is widely believed that the stigma of poverty damages the reputation of the individual and undermines the individual’s dignity. Single mothers found their experiences of social welfare “humiliating and degrading” (Richards, 1989).

It has been argued that stigma is entirely dependent on social, economic and political power; and that it takes power to create stigma. However it could be argued that without stigma there is no power. Once the label of stigma is ascribed to a group or an individual, there is an automatic connotation of “us” and “them”. The stigmatised are deemed different and separated from society and other groups (Morone, 1997; Devine, Plant & Harrison, 1999). In the extreme, the stigmatised person is thought to be so different as not to be really “human”. Incumbents are thought to “be” the thing that they are labelled, e.g. people are viewed as Schizophrenics or Downs Syndrome, rather than people who happen to have that condition. By linking individuals and groups to undesirable attributes it encourages the belief that stigmatised people are fundamentally different from “us” and therefore lesser persons. This further defines the politics of power and as Pinker points out “the imposition of stigma is the commonest form of violence used in democratic societies” (Pinker, 1971 p175). However Harvey (2001) contends that powerlessness is not so much a cause of stigmatisation as a consequence of it.
3.2.2 Adolescence. However, teenage mothers may not just be stigmatised because they are single mothers or reliant on welfare. Zebrowitz and Montepare (2000) suggest that stigma may be associated with age; that a person can be “too old” or “too young” and that society has developed stereotypes of what it is to be an adolescent or an elderly person. They contend the devaluation associated with being “too old” is fairly obvious; the elderly are commonly characterised as “hags”, “geezers” or “old fogies” (Neussel, 1982). There are fewer elderly role models and the value of their experience is seen as minimal and often derided.

However the devaluation associated with being “too young” is subtler and not as well defined. Adolescence is typically defined as the ages from 13 – 21 years and Lewin (1959) drew an analogy between this stage of development and marginality in society. Adolescence is commonly seen as a time of turmoil and trouble, with teenagers being belligerent and moody. So strong is this stereotype that in the United States 146 out of the 200 major cities enforce curfews for this age group. Some (e.g. Anna Freud, 1958) believe that a troublesome transition to adulthood is normal and to be expected, and that an untroubled adolescence is in some way “abnormal”.

O’Malley and Bachman (1983) link the stigma of adolescence to the prevalence of low self esteem in this age group. Neugarten (1968) found that middle-aged men and women believed themselves to be the “norm bearers” and decision makers in society; their views and beliefs were to be upheld. In fact Ahammer and Baltes (1972) found that middle-aged adults were more likely to hold stronger stereotypes about both adolescents and the elderly, than either of these groups hold about middle age.

However research in this area is, as yet, scant and with mixed results. There are still many questions about stigma and adolescence that remain unanswered. Zebrowitz and Montpare (2000) question whether adolescents are “devalued because they deviate from accepted norms, or do they deviate from accepted norms because they are devalued?” (p.360). The same question is true of young mothers. Have they deviated from the accepted norm because they are devalued already, because of poverty, low educational
attainment, or merely being adolescent, or is it because they are teenage mothers that they are devalued?

From this it would appear that there are several reasons why a young mother might be stigmatised including a perceived lack of morals, including single motherhood, the fact that they are reliant on benefits and likely to live in poverty, and possibly because they are adolescents. However how do these findings relate to theories of stigma?

3.3 Background to stigma theories
Erving Goffman’s work on stigma “Stigma: Notes on the Management of spoiled Identity” (1963) has inspired a vast variety of work in this area. According to both the records of Psychinfo and Medline there has been a rapid increase in research related to stigma. Work has included conceptual elaborations, refinements and repeated demonstrations of how the lives of victims are blighted by stigma (Link and Phelan 2001).

This increase in research has included such topics as mental illness (Angermeyer & Matschinger, 1994, Corrigan & Penn, 1999, Phelan et al, 2000), unemployment (Walgrave, 1987), welfare receipt (Page, 1984), physical disabilities, including wheelchair use (Cahill & Eggleston, 1995), urinary incontinence (Sheldon & Caldwell, 1994), debtors (Davis, 1998), lesbian mothers (Causey & Duran-Aydintung, 1997), exotic dancing (Lewis, 1998), leprosy (Opala & Boillot, 1996), cancer (Fife & Wright, 2000) and step-parents (Coleman, Ganong & Cable, 1996). More recently the work has tended to focus on the domain of social cognition as psychologists attempt to explain stigma in terms of the processes used in category formation, and how people construct categories based on stereotypical beliefs (e.g. Crocker et al, 1998).

3.3.1 Defining stigma. What is of note within the broad spread of literature is the language used. Most are full of deeply emotive language, deeming the person to be “spoiled”, “flawed” or “devalued”, insinuating that their lives are ruined by the stigma that others attach to an aspect of their social worlds. This is apparent from the variety of
working definitions used within research into stigma. Stafford and Scott (1986) suggest that most of the earlier researchers tended to make use of vague dictionary definitions such as “a mark of disgrace”. Of those that did attempt to pin down a definition most returned to Goffman’s view (1963 p.3) of stigma being “an attribute that is deeply discrediting”.

Stigma has subsequently been variously defined as:

- A link between an “attribute” and a “stereotype” – a “mark” relates a person to a “stereotype” and therefore an undesirable characteristic (Jones, Farina, Hastorf, Markus, Miller, & Scott, 1984)
- “A disreputable person, group, activity, occupation or location.” (Page, 1984)
- “The negative perceptions and behaviours of so called normal people to all individuals who are different from themselves” (English, 1977 p.162).

One of the main problems with trying to provide a succinct definition of stigma is the vast spread of applications that it is meant to serve. Titmuss (1974) comments that “the concept itself is as elusive and complex as other key concepts like, class, alienation, participation, democracy, poverty and so forth” (p.44). However, Crocker (1998) provided a definition that attempts to capture this elusive nature. She contended that:

“Stigmatised individuals possess or are believed to possess some attribute or characteristic that conveys a social identity that is devalued in a particular social context” (1998 p.505).

In this she recognises that very few circumstances of stigma are the same. Experiences of the stigmatised can differ greatly according to context and situation. There are vast differences between being born and bred in a stigmatised situation (e.g. race or physical deformity) than to suddenly find yourself thrust into a situation, not necessarily of your own making (e.g. after accident, pregnancy, poverty etc.).
Traditionally stigma is attached to members of a group that possess "an attribute that is deeply discrediting" (Goffman, 1963). There appears to be a broad range of attributes that a person can be stigmatised for: from material possessions (or lack of), to physical features that might be ignored by most people. However, what is unclear from this is why some of these features or attributes may be perceived to be more important than others and might potentially signal someone as "different" or "tainted" in some way. More importantly, each "difference" or "attribute" may be conceived in a different way dependent on the situation and consequently it has been argued that the context in which the stigma occurs is essential to understanding its nature. From this it would appear that stigma might be attached to anything that is seen as deviant from the "norms" of society.

Goffman identified "three grossly different" types of stigma, which exist in contemporary society. Firstly, abominations of the body: by this he means physical deformities. Secondly, blemishes of individual character, i.e. those who are weak willed, dishonest or who have 'unnatural' passions, e.g. thieves, homosexuals or alcoholics. Thirdly tribal stigma that is transmitted through lineage and equally contaminates all members of a family: this can include race, religion and so on.

Posner (1974) extends this theory by suggesting that it is not just groups with particular characteristics that are likely to be stigmatised. He contends that everyone has potential to be stigmatised: not just those that fail to live up to a particular norm but also those that exceed these levels of expectation, "Those who personify it or go beyond it may at times feel uncomfortable, guilty and stigmatised" (p.143).

So far this chapter has discussed the various reasons as to why a young mother might be stigmatized. This chapter has also looked at the background to stigma theory and the variety of working definitions that exist within the body of literature. However, what is noteworthy is that within the majority of this work there is an apparent underlying assumption of a homogeneously negative experience of stigma.
3.4 Public responses to stigma

Goffman outlines two ways in which stigma is carried by the individual or group. Either “discredited” which means that individuals possess a visual stigma that is immediately obvious to others, or ‘discreditable’ which means that the individuals possess a stigmatised characteristic that is not immediately obvious to others, e.g. deafness or homosexuality. Further to this he maintains that the amount of blame attached to a stigma will vary according to the type of stigma, e.g. those with a tribal stigma are viewed more favourably than those with blemishes of individual character. This is because a tribal stigma is something you are born with. It is an accident of birth and therefore individuals are not personally responsible for this, whereas blemishes of individual character are seen as signs of moral lassitude. Individuals are held personally responsible for their errant ways, in that they have chosen to behave in unacceptable ways.

Jones et al (1984) suggested that there are six dimensions on which stigma can vary:

- Concealability – the degree to which the condition is invisible to or can be hidden from others
- Course – How stigma will change over time
- Strain – the effect that stigma can have on interpersonal relationships
- Aesthetic qualities – the extent to which the stigma affects personal appearance
- Peril – perceived danger to other people that is associated with the stigma
- Cause – how the stigmatised condition is acquired i.e. congenital or self inflicted.

More recently these dimensions have been condensed into two main features of stigma; visibility and controllability (Crocker, Major & Steele, 1998). Visibility relates to the dimension of concealability, whereas controllability, as with the dimension of “cause”, relates to the idea that individuals can be perceived as being responsible for the acquisition and the elimination of their stigma (Brickman et al, 1982). It has been argued that what is particularly important about controllability is not only the effect it has on others’ perceptions of the stigmatised, but how the stigmatised perceive themselves and how they construe others’ reactions to them and ultimately the impact this will have on their self-esteem (Weiner, 1988; Crocker & Major, 1994).
Weiner’s (1988) attribution – emotion model of stigma suggests that if the stigmatised condition is perceived as beyond the individual’s control they will be more likely to be pitied and to receive help. However, if the individual is believed to be directly responsible for their stigma this can lead to anger and resentment in others. Weiner suggests that individuals with perceived controllable stigmas were considered to be “morally weak and not exercising their freewill not to initiate the exhibited or inferred behaviour” (Weiner, 1988 p. 742). This is closely linked to beliefs in a just world (Lerner, 1980) and the Protestant work ethic (Weber, 1904-1905) which places strong emphasis on the value of self-control and suggests that only hard work and determination lead to success. In this view victims can only blame themselves for their situations.

This aspect of controllability particularly may apply to young mothers who may be perceived as having chosen to be in their situation. From the available research it became evident that one of the dominant attitudes attributed to young mothers was that they had chosen to become a mother in order to get housing and / or benefits (e.g. Ineichen, 1986). Even if motherhood was not seen as a deliberate step to obtaining a financial advantage they were still perceived as having had ‘choice’, in that they could have used contraception and could have chosen to terminate their pregnancies.

**3.5 Effects of stigma on the individual**

Having established why young mothers might be stigmatised and how others might respond to them, it is important to examine what effect possessing a stigma might have on the lives of the “targets”. When we stigmatise a person we apply a label that defines who and what they are. A label is like a mental template that carries information about the person involved and can be positive or negative. In the case of a stigmatized label, such as “teenage mother”, the definitions are negative and carry with them an expectation of someone whose character or morals are devalued within a particular society. The label is “deviant” in that it implies a violation of the “norms” of society. According to labelling theory (e.g. Scheff, 1966) once a stigmatized label is ascribed the individual will suffer from negative outcomes and consequently lowered self-esteem.
3.5.1 Reflected appraisals. The notion that stigmatised individuals would suffer from low self-esteem is derived from both Cooley’s (1902/1964) and Mead’s (1934) arguments that one’s sense of self-belief develops through interactions with other people; that we learn about views and attitudes from those around us and these beliefs become internalised in the form of the “generalised other”.

Based on work by William James (1894) Cooley’s “looking glass” theory suggests that the individual lives in the minds of others and that self-belief is based upon the views that they believe others hold about them. In this view Cooley opposes the Cartesian tradition that posits a sharp distinction between self and society, believing the self and society to be “twin born”. Cooley likens the developing sense of self to looking in a mirror; the individual only begins to see himself, when he sees how others see him. He refers to this awareness of another person’s view of the self as ‘sympathy’ for the other.

Mead also highlights this concept of awareness of other’s views and argues that a sense of self develops from the dynamic relationship between a person and their social environment. The individual partakes in a series of ‘joint enterprises’, which serve to form and shape the mind and each person makes a contribution to this process. From this view consciousness is not a given, but can only emerge through interactions.

Both theories are encapsulated within “symbolic interactionism” (Blumer, 1937), which is based on three central tenets: meaning, language and thought. Meaning suggests that the individual acts towards others on the basis of the meanings that they ascribe other people or things. Language, they argue, is the source of meaning and meaning is not inherent within the object or people, but can only arise out of interactions with others. It is only through interactions with others that we can ascribe labels to ‘objects’ and these labels become a symbol that have both meaning and value. In this view meaning is negotiated through the use of language. The final tenet is thought; this refers to the individual’s interpretation of the available symbols, the meaning of which can only be
constructed and modified through thought. Subsequent actions will be based on these thoughts.

It is this awareness of how others might view the individual that is of prime importance to labelling theory. When the individual acquires a label, they are able to see how the generalised other might possibly perceive them and it has been argued that it is this awareness of others’ possibly negative views and stereotypes that can lead to self-fulfilling prophecies and lowered self esteem. Scheff (1966) referred to this awareness of stereotypes as the “guiding imagery for action”. In other words the labelled individual will use this awareness of others views as a possible catalyst for self-appraisals and future action.

3.5.2 Labelling theory. Labelling theory (e.g. Scheff, 1966a) has its roots within symbolic interactionism and suggests that people form conceptions of what it is to be a member of a stigmatized group long before they themselves become members of that group. In other words individuals create a prototype of what a teenage mother is from various sources around them, e.g. the media, friends, family etc., long before they become mothers themselves. However, once they become a member of this group these beliefs take on a new relevance. What seemed like harmless views have now become meaningful to the self. Becoming aware of their stigmatized role affects their self-perceptions and consequently their self-esteem.

In its original formulation the focus of labelling theory (Scheff, 1966a) appeared to be the factors that lead to an individual being labelled and the consequent outcomes (Cullen & Cullen, 1987). In 1989 Link, Cullen, Struening, Shrout and Dohrenwend proposed a Modified Model of Labelling Theory (MLT) based on Scheff’s original model. The core concepts for this model came from a two-part definition of stigma that suggests that stigma is a “mark” (label) that:-

a) Sets the person apart from others and

b) Links the marked person to undesirable characteristics (Jones et al (1984).
Chapter Three

Step 1

Societal Conceptions of what it means to be a mental patient: Perception of devaluation and discrimination

Step 2

Labelled: societal conceptions become relevant to the self

Step 3

Labelled Individual’s response – e.g. Secrecy, withdrawal, education

Step 4

Vulnerabilities to new disorder or to repeat episodes of existing disorder

Not Labelled: Societal Conceptions are irrelevant to self

No consequences due to Labelling – Negative effects attributable to psychopathology or to social and psychological factors unrelated to labelling

Figure 1 Diagramatic representation of the Modified Labelling Approach (taken from Link et al 1989, p. 402)

In this model they propose that either an individual is not labelled and consequently has no negative outcomes or that they are labelled and therefore suffer negative outcomes. They suggest that once an individual is labelled, societal perceptions / expectations become relevant to them (Step 2). This can either result in the individual modifying their behaviour in line with the perceived role of this label or adopting one of several strategies to manage the stigma (Step 3). However, regardless of the strategy adopted, all efforts to ameliorate the effects of stigma will end up with negative outcomes (Step 4). However what this model fails to take into consideration is the different ways an individual might respond to such labelling. There appears to be an assumption that a label will be meaningful to each person and therefore have the same effect. It is arguable that an individual has many labels applied to them and whilst a negative label might be applied, it may not necessarily be deemed as important to them, as they may garner self-esteem from other labels that are applied to them.

However, as a consequence of these supposed negative outcomes Goffman argues that individuals will respond to stigma acknowledgement in one of two ways, either acceptance or rejection. ‘Acceptance’ suggests that individuals believe that the response
of others is an accurate reflection of their situation. This can lead to some individuals feeling forced to remove themselves from their situation, e.g. moving house, changing jobs etc. Whereas ‘rejection’ can take several forms, as in ‘passive rejection’, which suggests that although they reject the notion of inferiority they fear further reprisal and are unwilling to commit themselves to more active forms of protest; or ‘active rejection’, which suggests that individuals and groups choose to draw attention to their stigmas and draw attention to their plights by confronting stigma both privately and publicly.

Goffman also suggests that there are two other ways in which individuals deal with stigma: passing or covering. “Passing” suggests that individuals attempt to pass for “normal” during social interaction. This is most often only possible for discreditable stigma, whereas those with physical and tribal stigmas would find their stigma harder to conceal. “Covering” suggests that individuals attempt to reduce tensions during social interaction by covering, attempting to make the stigma as unobtrusive as possible.

Link, Cullen, Struening, Shrout and Dohrenwend (1989) extended these to include three other possible methods: withdrawal, secrecy and education. “Withdrawal” is where the individual withdraws from the wider society into a group with those that possess a similar stigma or those that are sympathetic to their stigma. “Secrecy” is where the individual seeks to conceal or cover their stigma, and “education” is where the individual endeavours to educate members of an unstigmatised group about their situation. According to Link, et al, all these are “unhealthy” methods, which will ultimately lead to negative consequences for the stigmatised individual. This presupposes that the individual is aware of why other may have negative views, i.e. they will attribute others’ negativity to the stigmatised attribute. Also that the target perceives the other’s views to be accurate and legitimate. Other researchers have discussed alternative strategies that the stigmatised individual may use to manage the stigma. These will be discussed later in the chapter.
3.6 Potential impact on the stigmatised individual

It has been argued that there are a variety of consequences for the stigmatised individual. However the most commonly held view is that stigmatisation leads to discrimination and status loss which can result in stress and loss of self esteem.

3.6.1 Status loss and discrimination. Goffman argues that some people have such an acute reaction to their stigma that the stigmatised attributes achieve master status and become the central core or feature of their identity. As a result of stigma the individual experiences status loss and discrimination. Link and Phelan (2001) contend that it is this component (status loss and discrimination) that is missing from current definitions of stigma and that without this element stigma cannot hold the meaning that we currently assume it to mean. They argue "an almost immediate consequence of successful negative labelling and stereotyping is a general downward placement of a person in a status hierarchy". They contend that stigmatised groups are automatically at a disadvantage when it comes to life chances like income, education, psychological well being etc.

Those experiencing stigmatisation may feel that their whole identity is "tarnished" because of this attribute and that all other characteristics that they may hold are devalued by the "master status" of the assigned label (Suchar, 1978). As a result there can be a marked increase in social distance, which, in turn, can result in isolation of the stigmatised individual. This effectively bars them access to any advantages that may be offered by normal social contact (Spicker1984), which can eventually lead to them to being denied access to certain roles, high status or influence.

Loss of status and discrimination can have many negative consequences to stigmatised individuals and has been linked to many social behavioural outcomes (Crocker 1989, Steel, 1997). For example stigma may result in strained and uncomfortable social interaction (Link, Struening, Neese-Todd, Asmussen & Phelan, 2001), fewer social networks (Link et al, 1989), unemployment and loss of income (Link, 1987; Link, 1982), and therefore fewer life opportunities (Rosenfield, 1997).
3.6.2 Stress. Miller and Kaiser (2001) suggest that as a result of these negative situations the stigmatised are subject to excessive stress and that it would be more helpful to conceptualise stigma as a stressor, considering stigmas in terms of the stress that it causes the stigmatised individuals. They contend that by viewing stigma in terms of stress, and coping, would encourage greater consideration of the effects of stigma on the individual in terms of psychological, social, and biological effects and that it would draw attention to the importance of the individual’s cognitive appraisal in the experience of stigma and the resulting stress.

They argue that these individual cognitive processes are essential to understanding the effect of stigma and that, in comparison with other stressors, stigma is associated with more acute effects of stress, in that it places unique demands upon the individual because it is deeply personal in its nature and the effects of stigma can become all pervasive (Miller & Major, 2000).

3.6.3 Self esteem. Bearing in mind the loss of status and discrimination, it has been argued that stigma would probably have a detrimental effect on self-esteem. Self-esteem is central to psychological well-being. It has a knock-on effect on most aspects of self. It has been argued that the effects of stigma on self-esteem can result in the individual’s sense of self being destroyed. “It is not only one’s social identity in the eyes of others that is spoiled, but also one’s experiences of the self” (Crocker, 1999 p. 364).

However critics of the original model suggested that labelling is not the prime determinant of stable mental illness and went so far as to deny that label-induced stigma has a detrimental effect on lifestyles, employment and self-esteem. Gove (1970, 1980, & 1982) further contended that it was not the label that causes rejection from society, but the behaviour associated with mental illness. It has been suggested that rejection by others is of little importance (Crocetti, Spiro and Siassi, 1974) as there is little evidence to support the notion of overt discrimination due to labelling (Huffine and Clausen, 1979).
Further work by Link and Phelan (1999, 2001) has acknowledged that negative effects can be ameliorated with necessary treatment. However, they also contend that effects are only temporary and weaken shortly after treatment is completed. Furthermore, "The effort to eliminate one bad outcome ironically produces strain that leads to another." (P378). They quote James' (1984) concept of "John Henryism", the tendency for some African Americans to work so hard to dispel the myths associated with their stereotype, that they become ill in others ways, such as hypertension. This paints a bleak picture for stigmatised individuals and suggests that their lives will be ruined by their "condition".

3.7 Positive outcomes
In summary, it would appear that the stigmatised individual faces a bleak future of reduced opportunities and lowered self-esteem. However it is at this stage that the underlying assumption that stigmatisation inevitably leads to negative consequences starts to unravel. Recent research has contested quite such a deterministic negative effect of stigma on self-esteem and suggests that not all stigmatised individuals experience the negative outcomes as suggested by the vast body of literature (e.g. Crocker & Major, 1989; Finlay & Lyons, 2000). Rosenberg (1965) contended that, contrary to popular findings, black children did not suffer from lower self-esteem than white children. These findings appear to conflict quite strongly with assumed negative outcomes of traditional theories of stigma. Rosenberg suggested that this was because it was only the people whose judgements we trusted that really mattered in self-evaluations; their views could help to ameliorate the negative views of others. However, are there also other factors that might account for these conflicting findings?

3.8 Factors and processes which may account for these conflicting findings
As already mentioned the notion that stigmatised individuals would suffer from low self-esteem has its roots in the "looking glass" theory (Cooley, 1956). The individual’s self-belief is based upon the views that they believe others hold about them. It has been argued that people derive self-esteem from reflected appraisals and the introduction of self-report measures of self-esteem provided a means of comparing differences between
stigmatised and non-stigmatised groups, therefore testing the looking glass hypothesis. However, these tests provided conflicting results. Crocker and Major (1989) noted that despite wide application and testing there appeared to be only little support for this hypothesis. This, they contended, was due in part to the researcher’s assumptions that stigmatised individuals internalise negative evaluations, which would have an effect on the stable aspects of personality, in particular self-esteem.

Labelling theory’s (e.g. Scheff 1966) focus on the effects of reflected appraisals presents a deterministic nature of the development of self. It appears to centre on the notion that the construal of self is dependent on what we believe others to think of us. Turner (1968) maintains that “…the sense of self is not discovered in quiet reflection, but in the course of vigorous effort, especially when the effort brings the individual into rivalry with other persons… the sense of self arises in connection with active striving in the face of obstacles,” (p99). In this view Turner maintains that Cooley believed that the notion of reflected appraisals was only one of many processes involved in the construction of the self. This view presents a more dynamic construal of the self which is in constant negotiation with their environment and others views. Gecas and Schwalbe (1983) maintains that reliance on the looking glass self ignores this dynamic model of self and highlights that Cooley believed that a theory that relies on this formulation is ‘weak and incomplete’ (Cooley, 1902 p.202). The deterministic focus of labelling theory suggests that the stigmatised individual is merely a victim of circumstance. However, as Gecas and Schwalbe point out, “Beyond the looking-glass self is a self that develops out of the autonomous and efficacious actions of the individual. It is a self that derives its experiential locus not primarily from the imagined perceptions of others, but from the sense of volition or causal agency and its consequences.” (p.79). A sense of self is not just dependent on what others think of us, but also on the individual’s sense of autonomy and control.

Crocker and Major (1989) expand the dynamic nature of self-evaluations, outlining the self-protective properties of stigma. Crocker (1999) contends that there are differences in the extent to which the individuals will base self-evaluation on reflected appraisals. It is
only those who tend to rely on such reflected appraisals that are exposed to the threat of low self-esteem. Therefore, it has been argued that it is not so much that “stigma” affects self-esteem, rather that self-esteem affects the extent to which one feels the effects of stigma (Wright, Gronfein & Owens, 2000). However they suggested that in fact self-esteem was “constructed in the situation, as a function of the meaning it has for the self” (p157). In this, self-esteem is not group bound, but displays vast individual differences. Individual self-esteem will vary according to the situation and how important this domain is to a sense of self. For some individuals self-esteem will remain relatively stable over time, whilst others may fluctuate greatly according the situation.

Camp, Finlay & Lyons’ (2002) work with Modified Labelling Theory and women with mental illness also suggests that a negative outcome is not necessarily inevitable for the stigmatised individual. They found that although the women they interviewed were aware of the negative representations held by other members of society about their conditions, and the possible effects that this might have on their lives, they did not feel that these representations were relevant to them and therefore rejected them. These findings are in line with more recent work on stigma that adopt the insider’s perspective. This work suggests that the stigmatised label may not necessarily have the negative effect that others previously contended. They put forward the idea that individuals engage in a variety of processes that protect self-esteem and ameliorate the effects of the label (e.g. Crocker & Major, 1989; Finlay & Lyons, 2000). However what are the processes that might account for these contradictory findings?

It has been suggested that conflicting findings such as these may be as a result of the individual renegotiating the dimensions for comparison and that they choose dimensions in which they compare favourably to draw comparison with others (Crocker & Major, 1989; Finlay & Lyons, 2000). In order to explore this more fully it is important to examine the theory of social comparisons in more detail.
3.8.1 Social comparison theory. The notion of social comparisons has been in use for many generations and has its roots in classical philosophy. Plato contended that individuals only come to understand who they are through comparisons with “absolute standards”. Who we are, how we perform and how attractive and intelligent we are only gain meaning and value within a comparative context. Rousseau (1984 / 1754) said that inequalities will always exist, but would be of little consequence if people lived isolated lives; it is only through our interactions with others that they take on a meaning. It is only when we compare inequalities with others that we become aware of who we are and how we fit in and it is this knowledge of the successes or failures of others that can lead us to reflect on our own accomplishments (Festinger, 1954). Adler (1927) suggested that striving for superiority is a central human motivation. People need to feel better than others and feeling inadequate or inferior is at the root of “neurotic dysfunction” (Mussweiler, Gabriel & Bodenhausen, 2000).

However Festinger (1954 a & b) was the first to formulate a systematic theory of “social comparison”. He suggested that people compare themselves with others in order to get accurate knowledge about who they are. He also suggested that these were not random comparisons because individuals are aware of who is similar and dissimilar to them and will actively identify those people who are similar to themselves to make comparisons. Within this formulation Festinger highlighted three main dimensions on which comparisons can be made: upward, downward and temporal.

3.8.1.1 Upward comparisons. Upward comparisons refer to comparisons that are made with those that outperformed us in a particular domain. Research has shown that such comparisons can highlight deficiencies in the self (Brickman & Bulman, 1977) and can consequently be painful for the individual resulting in negative evaluations of the self and diminished self-esteem (e.g. Gilbert, Giesler & Morris, 1995).

However further research suggests that upward comparisons can bring a range of emotions both positive, such as inspiration and admiration (e.g. Brickman & Bulman, 1977; Lockwood & Kundal, 1997), and negative, such as resentment and envy (e.g. Crosby, 1976; Folger, 1987). Stapel & Koomen (2000) suggest that most research on
social comparisons are based on the assumption that it is impossible to be exposed to other people's success without reflecting on your own (Gilbert, Giesler & Morris, 1995) and that upward comparisons will be threatening, therefore researchers tend to focus on the contrastive nature of comparisons. However they go on to suggest that upward comparisons are not always threatening. They contend that upward comparisons will only be considered threatening or depressing if the individual's status is likely to deteriorate. Further, people do not necessarily have to contrast their abilities with others; they can choose to assimilate other’s successes into their own sense of self.

Contrast is more likely to happen when the comparison dimension is personally relevant, e.g. if the individual is in competition with a sibling or rival, or if the comparison contains distinct information such as “Michael is rich”. This can trigger “actor like” traits, e.g. it will generate direct performance comparisons, contrasting the “Michael is rich” with “I am poor”. Whereas assimilation tends to occur when individuals associate themselves with the comparative target as a means of self improvement (Taylor and Lobel, 1989), or when the outstanding performance of the target reflects positively on the self (Tesser, 1988), e.g. a footballer may not be the best in the team, but if his team mate is signed with a Premier Club he is then able to bask in the ‘reflected glory”. Also assimilation is more likely to occur if the target’s performance is perceived as within their reach, e.g. the performance of a role model is seen as inspiring or if the performance level appears to be attainable. When someone “ordinary” achieves something, such as a young mother seeing another young mother overcoming the odds, it triggers the response, “I could do that”. Therefore rather than comparing their behaviour and finding themselves wanting, it inspires them to try harder. In this view, upward comparisons can provide positive inspiring role models (Collins, 1996; Taylor & Lobel, 1989).

Also Stapel & Koomen (2000) contend that the context is vital in determining the nature of comparison. The same comparison can instigate different responses dependent on the situation; a job interview is competitive and will therefore trigger a contrastive comparison, whereas a family party is more likely to instigate assimilative comparisons.

3.8.1.2 Downward Comparisons. Festinger’s original theory contended that people will tend to compare themselves with those that are “superior” to themselves. However
further research suggested that people will also choose to compare themselves with those that are worse off than them in order to improve self-esteem and well-being (Wills, 1981; Brickman & Bulman, 1977, Hackmiller, 1966). Kemmelmeier and Oyserman (2001) contended that social comparisons serve people’s needs for accurate self-assessment and that they also provide an opportunity for realistic assessment of potential pitfalls and danger (Trope, 1986) and therefore rather than providing positive comparisons, downward comparisons provide the opportunity for realistic reassessment and a “downward adjustment of one’s own chance of success and failure”. Buunk & Ybema (1977) argue that the more similar the source of comparison the more likely the individual will be to make a downward comparison.

3.8.1.3 Temporal comparisons. To date most research has centred on the motives affecting social comparisons, namely the need for self-enhancement (Helgeson & Mickelson, 1995; Suls & Wills, 1991; Taylor, 1983). However, temporal comparisons maintain that an individual’s sense of identity is not solely based on who they are in comparison to others, it is also based on a perception of who they are over time and how they compare with the person that they were (Albert, 1977; James, 1890/1950). Folger (1986) argues that comparisons are not just made with other people, but with ourselves as well. It has been proposed that the individual may evaluate their current situations by comparing present events with reconstructions of the past, evaluating events and performances in terms of previous expectation and future potential, rather than comparing themselves with similar others.

Albert (1977) was the first to postulate the notion of temporal comparisons. He contended that individuals learn about themselves and are able to evaluate themselves through comparisons with themselves over time. Wilson and Ross (2001) suggest that past selves are “akin to an interconnected chain of different individuals who vary in closeness to the current self.” (p. 573), and are analogous to other people. The individual may compare attributes and achievements with their past and future selves in much the same way that they would with other people. Research has shown that people are impressed by their current selves and typically rate themselves as superior to most of their peers (Baumeister, 1998; Taylor and Brown, 1988). It has been suggested that this is because
people will obtain information over time that disproves earlier assumptions about themselves, earlier actions and decisions that may have been proved to be inadvisable (Armor & Taylor, 1998; Ross & Buehler, 2001). It is arguable that young mothers use temporal comparisons as a means of maintaining a positive sense of self. It is possible that they are able to look back at their lives prior to having a baby and measure what they have achieved since.

3.8.1.4 Strategies for reducing the effects of negative comparisons. Few people, if any, will be lucky enough to escape the experience of comparing themselves with someone who is doing better than they are and, as already pointed out, the majority of research is based on the assumption that this is a painful and depressing experience. However, this is not always so, as social comparisons are multifaceted and flexible in nature. Individuals can utilise this flexibility as a means of avoiding this “pain” and, by adopting various strategies, are able to ameliorate this effect (Wood, 1989; Wood & Taylor, 1991).

Research has shown that there are individual differences between happy and unhappy people in affective responses to social comparisons (Lyubomirsky, Tucker, & Kasri, 2001). For example people with low self-esteem are more likely to improve in mood after downward comparisons (e.g. Aspinwall & Taylor, 1993). People with high self-esteem are more skilled at deflecting threatening feedback; they are more likely to reconstruct comparisons in such a way as to protect their self-esteem than people with low self-esteem. It has been suggested that they are more likely to modify their social identity as a means of protecting the self from threatening social identities. Whereas people with low self-esteem are more likely to shift their identities in line with the target and focus on the similarities that they share, thus “accentuating the negatives.” Alternatively people may choose to redefine the importance of comparative dimensions. The ability to distinguish oneself from an upward target can ameliorate the negative effects. (E.g. Olson & Roese, 2002). It has been suggested that those who were outperformed in comparative tasks will lessen the effect of this threat by lowering the importance of the tested ability (e.g. Tesser, 1998; Tesser & Campbell, 1980.). Also they will exploit the fact that the comparative target is not of real value and therefore less
relevant than comparison with a similar other (Festinger, 1954). In other words people will “move the goalposts”. If they are unhappy with the results of a comparison, they will redefine the importance of a dimension or the target, and choose from one of the many others available. Or they will strategically emphasise another aspect of their identity that will differentiate them from the target, therefore making the basis for comparison less relevant to self-evaluations.

3.8.1.5 Choice of target. For social comparisons to be effective, the target needs to be considered relevant. This is similar to the Peter Principle (Peter, 1969) which likens success to a pyramid. In this view the majority of people would be trapped at lower levels, with only a very few achieving high levels of success. It is assumed that those on the lower levels will always be found wanting and those at the top level will stay there. However it has also been suggested that it may not be as straightforward as that, as the different levels will compare themselves horizontally and only slightly above their level, rather than with people on the top level. We only choose to compare ourselves within dimensions that we feel comfortable with. There need to be enough perceived similarities between the individual and the target and the comparative dimension needs to be considered important enough to be relevant to self-evaluations. In other words if someone is performing better than the individual, it is only important if they are perceived to be similar. If the target scores higher on an exam, the individual may ignore the fact that they are the same age and gender and may focus on the fact that they may have previous experience of this subject or be a major in a different subject. The results will be deemed unimportant if the superior target is perceived as different (Goethals & Darley, 1977). It has been demonstrated that girls shown photographs of beautiful women judged themselves as less attractive, however when they found out that the targets were models this effect disappeared as professional models were deemed an irrelevant comparison standard for “ordinary” people (Miller and Prentice, 1996).

In summary social comparison theories argue that the formation of the self-concept and perceptions of self-competence are dependent upon the social comparisons, which people engage in when they are constructing their identities (Festinger, 1954; Turner, Haslam and McGarty, 1994). Individuals come to define themselves through their memberships
Consequently, it has been argued that social comparisons for stigmatised individuals can be a source of distress; that individuals may experience poor self evaluation in the presence of non-stigmatised others. However, self-categorisation theory (Turner et al, 1987, 1994) contends that whilst the self is inherently comparative it does not reflect absolute fixed properties of the individual and others; that the comparative properties are relational and need to be seen in the context in which they occur.

3.8.2 Self-categorization theory. It has been argued that categorisation is fundamental to understanding and explaining prejudice and discrimination and that stigmatised individuals are defined merely by virtue of the groups they belong to, whether or not their group of category is stigmatised. As such, categorization is defined as the process of ordering the world, by grouping together individuals, events or objects, according to perceived similarities (Tajfel & Forgas, 1981). Wilder (1986) argues that a category provides a representation of a group that serves to organise the environment. Once a category is created it is imbued with associated traits and attributes and as such, any person that is allocated to this group will be associated with these perceived attributes (Tajfel & Forgas, 1981).

Tajfel (1978, 1981) suggested that social categories are useful to the individual because they help the individual to mentally order an otherwise chaotic world. Everyday the individual is bombarded with a constant variety of stimuli and to attend to each person uniquely would not be feasible. Instead, the individual attends to the characteristics that stimuli share, and assign them to relative categories. In this way the individual can make parsimonious judgements about the nature of a person based on the category to which they are assigned.

What is of particular note about categorisation is the number of perceptual biases that underlie categories and inform others’ reactions to a member of that category. Both categorisation and labelling relate to constructing and communicating meaning; what it means to be a member of that category. It has been argued that membership social
categories create expectations about who or what a person will be like. These expectations are usually referred to as stereotypes and typically form mental short cuts when assessing another person (Ashmore, 1981). The result of stereotyping others is an increase in similarity within groups and enhanced differences with other groups. Brown (1988) argues that dividing individuals into groups, not only simplifies the individual’s world, but also helps to define who they are in relation to others. Our sense of self is bound up not only with who we are, but also who we are not.

However, it is important to remember that individuals are members of many different groups and categories, and not all of these categories are stigmatised. Therefore it is important to examine the factors that make a particular category salient. This issue is addressed by self-categorization theory (e.g. Turner, 1985) which suggests that salience of a particular category is likely to be determined by perceiver readiness and both comparative and normative fit (Turner & Haslam, 1991). Bruner (1957) argues that the categories that are most likely to be salient are the ones which are most ‘accessible’ at the time or the most relevant to a given situation. Accessibility in this context refers to the extent to which the attributes of a person fit with the properties of the environment. These attributes are likely to be concepts such as values, motives, tasks and goals that are derived from not only the situational demands, but also the culture to which a person belongs. For example for a young mother the category of ‘mother’ is likely to be salient when she attends a ‘mother and toddler’ group and less likely if she is socialising with friends.

It is also important to point out that the choice of category is not completely arbitrary; it must to some extent represent actual commonalities and differences. It has been argued that there must be an element of ‘fit’ such as certain concurrence of differences and similarities amongst members of a category (Rosch, 1978; Oakes, 1987), or a perceived common fate amongst ‘stimuli’. As such, people who engage in similar activities or live close together, are more likely to be perceived as members of the same category than those that lead more disparate lives (Campbell, 1958).
However, the process of categorising, either oneself or another person, does not take place solely within the individual’s mind, rather it emerges through social interactions and sense making. Self-categorization is a social process which utilises processes that are imbued with values, culture and representations. The way in which the individual labels themselves, and others, will change over time and according to the context in which the labels are used and as a result the meaning of the label may change. (Phinney, 1996). In this, categorizations are a powerful resource for making sense of our worlds as they allow the individual to make connections between categories and members of the categories (Potter & Wetherell, 1987).

3.9 Social comparison, self-categorization and stigma theory

Having examined theories of social comparison and categorization it is now important to consider how these theories may account for the contradictory findings within stigma theory. Crocker and Major (1989) found that stigmatised individuals will maintain a positive self-concept by devaluing those dimensions in which they perform poorly and by placing greater emphasis and importance on those in which they perform well. Oakes et al (1994 cited Finlay and Lyons, 2000) acknowledge the, “practically infinite potential bases for categorisation available, we actively select and attend to a limited sample.” (p.112). The choice and focus of the dimensions that the individual attends to are dependent on their position within the social hierarchy. Their position in the social hierarchy can also affect the actual meanings that they assign to these dimensions. Millward (1995) contends that the individual uses different frames of reference when making comparisons dependent on the status of those with whom the comparisons are drawn, e.g. nurses used different frames of reference when making comparison with doctors and patients. Different aspects of their job were emphasised when comparing with different groups, i.e. doctors and patients. Social comparison literature stresses that the salience of available categories is as a result of flexibility when choosing comparative dimensions.

Most social comparison theories make the assumption that a downward comparison with someone worse off than you provides the individual with an opportunity to make their
own situations look more positive (Brickman and Bulman, 1977, Hackmiller, 1966; Will, 1981). However Kemmelmeier and Oyserman contend that social comparisons serve peoples needs for accurate self-assessment (Festinger, 1954). They could also provide an opportunity for realistic assessment of potential pitfalls and dangers (Trope, 1986) and therefore rather than providing a positive comparison, downward comparison provides the opportunity for a realistic reassessment and a “downward adjustment of ones own chance of success and failure”.

In summary, social comparison theories argue that the formation of the self-concept and perceptions of self-competence are dependent upon the social comparisons which people engage in when they are constructing their identities (Festinger, 1954; Turner, Haslam and McGarty, 1994). However, more recent findings suggest that this may not always be the case, as whilst the self may be inherently comparative, the targets that they choose to compare themselves with are not fixed properties, but are flexible and will change according to the context of the interaction and the environment and as such the fate of the stigmatised individual is not always as negative as presumed.

3.10 How should these factors be further developed to explain why, at certain times, stigma does not result in negative effects?

So far this chapter has examined the contradictory findings within stigma theory and explored the possible ameliorating effects of social comparison theory, however there are still areas that remain unexplained and need further development. What is of particular note here is that most of the work by Link et al is based on an assumption that these labels are meaningful to the stigmatised individual. However, this assumption has been tested on a six point Likert scale that was designed to assess “the extents to which respondents believe that most people will devalue or discriminate against a person with a history of psychiatric treatment” (1989 p.409). However this is a third person model and included such statements as:-

“Most patients would willingly accept a former mental patient as a close friend”

“Most people think less of a person who has been in a mental hospital.”
This means that statements are based on how people might react to "a mental patient". Answers to questions like this may vary greatly, dependent on whether the individual is answering with the prototype of a mentally ill person in mind, or the person they believe themselves to be. A teenage mother may believe that others would discriminate against a "teenage mother", but that does not mean that she believes that she is discriminated against, as she may not see herself in this role. It is arguable that she might believe herself to be a "mother" who merely happens to be young.

It is arguable that it is the methodology adopted that has produced this discrepancy in findings between insider and outsider views. Traditionally, most research in the area of stigma and labelling theory has tended to be quantitative, measuring specific aspects of this phenomenon. However Rosenberg (1986) argued, for instance, the reason African Americans were presumed to suffer from lower self-esteem than European Americans is because researchers were failing to take account of the phenomenological experience of this group and were focusing on measuring aspects of the identity that were irrelevant to them. It is important to remember that identity is not static and we need to examine the agentic processes that individuals actively use to construct and communicate their "claimed identities" (Deaux & Ethier, 1998). It is particularly important to recognise the flexibility of self when exploring the effects of stigma on the sense of self and the processes involved in managing identities.

Also it is important to note that most of this work comes from studies centred on experiences related to mental illness. Is the stigma experienced by the mentally ill substantially different from other groups? Can these findings be related to other stigmatised groups such as teenage mothers?

As already mentioned, it has been suggested that there are two main dimensions on which stigma may vary; visibility and controllability (Crocker, Major & Steele, 1998) and as has already been argued what is particularly important about these dimensions is the notion of controllability. Controllability is particularly pertinent to young mothers as
they are perceived as having chosen to be in their situation. From the available research it would appear that there is a representation that young women choose to become mothers in order to obtain benefits and state housing. Even if it was not seen as a deliberate step to obtain a financial advantage, they were still perceived as having choice in that they could have used contraception and could have chosen to terminate their pregnancies.

However, this notion of controllability is not quite as clear-cut with issues of Mental Illness. Mental illness is a broad term that covers a wide range of situations from mild depression, to severe psychopathology and drug and alcohol addictions. Definitions within the category of mental illness appear to vary according to specific conditions and the public appear to discriminate within this group and attribute controllability accordingly. In the main, drug and alcohol addiction are perceived as highly controllable, whilst Psychopathology is considered moderately so and depression is considered to be relatively "benign" and more in keeping with cancer (Corrigan et al, 2000).

Camp, Finlay & Lyons' (2002) study focuses on participants that have schizophrenia, which is considered to be fairly low on controllability; in other words the onset of the condition was seen to be beyond the participant’s control. From this, it is arguable that the findings of Camp et al are as a result of individuals being able to draw on this element of controllability as a means of maintaining a positive sense of self, as it is not their fault and therefore they are not responsible for their situation. Whereas another group, such as teenage mothers, who are perceived as highly controllable, may not have this at their disposal and would therefore suffer from the negatives affects of the stigma.

From this, it is evident that despite a traditionally held view that stigma ruins lives, there is evidence to contest this view. Research has shown that despite living with a stigmatised identity the individual can maintain a positive sense of self. Through social and temporal comparisons the individual can create and maintain healthy levels of self-esteem and a positive sense of self. However, what is not clear from this work is the effect that control or lack of control might have for the stigmatised individual.
3.11 How might these findings relate to teenage mothers?  
It would appear that there is a wealth of work surrounding the effects of stigma, and yet there appears to be a dearth of work that directly relates stigma theory to teenage mothers. However, what is of note from both bodies of work is the similarity of findings. Both bodies of work appear to share an underlying assumption of negative outcomes and yet both provide results that dispute such deterministic conclusions. Despite a readily accepted view that young mothers are bad mothers and their lives will be blighted by early motherhood, evidence suggests that young mothers can be good mothers (Usher, 2000, Smith-Battle, 2000) and that young women do not necessarily see their lives as ruined by their maternal status. However, it is not just young mothers that experience these conflicting perceptions. It would appear that many stigmatised groups also experience this conflict. Within both bodies of literature there is a focus on competing perspectives. Work in both areas suggests that the conflict in findings could be explained by the perspective taken, whether the research is conducted from the ‘outsider’s’ perspective, i.e. how other people believe the stigmatised individual would feel, or from an ‘insider’s perspective, i.e. how the stigmatised individual themselves feels. From the available literature it would appear that in both sets of findings, both stigma and teenage motherhood, positive outcomes are more likely to occur within work conducted from the insider’s perspective.

The concept of insider versus outsider perspective needs to be defined more clearly, as within different fields of research this issue appears to be addressed at different levels. In terms of the stigma literature, the insider perspective is used to refer to the stigmatised individual; that is how they perceive their lives to be e.g. Finlay and Lyons (2000). However, within the field of teenage motherhood research, it appears that this term also encompasses those within the young mother’s micro context; the people that have a direct influence on the lives and decisions of the young mothers. Letherby (2002) refers to this as a “continuum of ‘outsider’-'insider’ positions.” In this definition the ‘outsider’ is deemed to be anyone outside this domain; people that do not have direct contact with the young women and are less likely to have an informed view of the situation, e.g. the general public and in some cases the policy makers (e.g. Letherby, 2002).
This nuance of definition highlights the intricacies of this issue and not just in terms of the many levels of influence that the young mothers are subject to, but the differing views of how they might be coping with their situations. It is important that research acknowledges these levels, but also examines this phenomenon on all levels.

Phoenix (1999) suggests that to date the view of the ‘outsider’ is given more weight than that of the ‘insider’. This would appear to be reflected in the wealth of work that approaches this issue from the outsider perspective. However, it has been argued that motherhood is viewed differently depending on the perspective chosen. Most work pertaining to young motherhood is presented from the perspective of the health professionals and focuses on the problems that young mothers face and the potential negative outcomes. Yet from the perspective of the young women themselves, it would appear that they perceive the situation differently and as such this view challenges the accepted views and policies pertaining to young mothers (Macmahon, 1995).

Harvey (2001) suggests that the degree to which an individual member of a stigmatised group feels stigmatised is essential to understanding the psychological processes involved in stigma. Hall and Britton (1993, cited in Oyserman and Swim, 2001) contend that those with less power are more likely to be attuned to interactions and they become more aware of shifts in the affective and non-verbal tones of the other person. Therefore, it would be hoped that by adopting an insider’s perspective it is possible to gain greater understanding of whether and how stigmatised group members identify mismatches between their own and the dominant group’s perspective - or indeed whether each group sees and accepts their own perspective as “reality”.

There also appears to be a focus on the role of society in constructing these conflicting representations. Hyde (2000) maintains that the effects of stigmatisation are closely linked to how this phenomenon is constructed in society, how it is reported in the media etc., and how the mothers themselves view their situation and, as already argued in the
previous chapter, motherhood is not just a biological construction but a social construction as well.

It has been argued that there is a prevailing ideological view that suggests “In western society, all women live their lives against a background of personal and cultural assumptions that all women are or want to be mothers and that for women motherhood is proof of adulthood and a natural consequence of marriage or a permanent relationship with a man” (Letherby, 1994 p.525). It is arguable that young mothers draw on this positive view of motherhood as a central aspect of their identity, choosing to compare themselves favourably with ‘good mothers’ and rejecting the label of ‘teenage mother’. Stiles (2005) cites a young mother who states:

“…because most folks, the, like, steal money and all that stuff to take care of their baby – and do drugs and all that stuff, just to take care of their baby.” (p.331)

Not only is this young mother further instilling the negative stereotype of ‘teenage mothers’, but she manages to distance herself from this negative representation through downward social comparisons.

However, Stiles also contends that this quote reinforces the need for young mothers to have control over their own lives. It has been argued that one of the major needs of young mothers has been identified as knowledge. The young women wanted knowledge of issues associated with ‘good parenting’. Young mothers wanted to know how to take care of both themselves and their babies and to be shown about financial planning as they wanted to be able to control their own lives and have the confidence that they were doing a good job.

3.12 Summary
This chapter has examined the role and effects of stigma for the individual’s sense of self. In particular, it has explored how the individual constructs and maintains a sense of self whilst living with a stigmatised identity, examining the background to stigma, including
reflected appraisals and labelling theory. It would appear from the body of available literature that there are conflicting findings that are similar to the effects found within the research surrounding teenage motherhood, whereby there is an assumption that if a person is born with or acquires a stigmatised identity they will experience negative consequences. However, the conflicting findings outlined in this chapter appear to question such an inevitable outcome for the individual and suggest that there are alternative processes available to the individual which may result in the maintenance of a positive sense of self. Therefore, it is the aim of this thesis to examine early motherhood within a framework of stigma theory in order to explore the possible self-evaluation processes of teenage mothers.

3.13 Research Questions
Research into the issues surrounding young motherhood predominantly show that becoming a young mother is likely to have negative outcomes for the young mothers. These negative outcomes are conceptualised as resulting from either young mothers’ acceptance of societal negative representations or the material circumstances often associated with young parenthood.

However these findings are questionable as this literature bases their conclusions on correlational studies. The problem with this type of research is that there appears to be confusion about the extent to which causes and effects can be separated out. Within the available literature there appeared to be a substantial overlap between causes and effects and as such these findings can only be considered as connections with early motherhood.

Also there is a wealth of work that compares young mothers with other young women, but often this work does not take into account the situation of the young women before they become mothers and therefore conclusions about the effects of their motherhood cannot be drawn with certainty. It has been argued that the transition to motherhood creates challenges and demands that can exacerbate pre-existing vulnerabilities (Cowan & Cowan, 1995), especially for young women already negotiating the transition to adulthood. However Leonard (1996) suggests that this is not always the case and that the
transition to motherhood can present a young woman with new ways of coping and new ways of identifying herself within her social context. However it would appear that within the majority of the body of literature the criteria for ‘outcome’ variables are defined by the researcher rather than the young mothers themselves; therefore the positive and negative dimensions of the outcomes are defined by others and, as such, it is arguable that they may not be relevant to the young women.

There is some research using predominantly qualitative research methods which showed that young mothers do not necessarily describe their experiences as negative. From the evidence presented so far it would appear that despite research that suggests that early motherhood can ‘ruin’ a young woman’s life, many young mothers find their experiences of becoming a mother a positive and life changing event. Many are ‘inspired’ to re-engage with education in order to create a better future and consider motherhood as an opportunity to renegotiate their roles within their family and peer-groups. However, within this body of research there is no in-depth investigation into the processes that might lead to such outcomes.

There appears to be a dearth of work that seeks to explain the psychological processes involved in creating and maintaining a positive sense of self for young mothers. It has been argued that there is a link between socio-economic deprivation and teenage pregnancy (Garlick, Ineichen and Hudson, 1993) and that teenage mothers are more at risk from these effects rather than the effects of being a young mother. Jewell, Tacchi and Donovan (2000) suggest that early motherhood is more acceptable for young women from a socio-economically disadvantaged background who evaluate their futures in terms of being a good mother rather than having a career, money and personal development.

What is of note within this study, is that the young women acknowledged the negative views that other people had about teenage mothers, but didn’t believe that they applied to themselves. More importantly they held equally negative views about ‘other’ teenage mothers. Jewell et al suggest that they use derogatory stereotypes as a means of discursively positioning themselves as good mothers (Phoenix, 1991b, 1996; Mitchell &
Green, 2002). Foucault (1976, 1979) maintains that the individual utilises the dominant discourses to create opposing views. With the use of opposing views of motherhood it is arguable that young women may find dimensions on which they are successful. The young women may be able to “carve out a space for themselves” (Lawler, 2000, p.169) within their role as a mother. It is possible that young women are able to use their new roles as mothers as a means of recreating and redefining their identities in terms of the societal expectations. McDermott and Graham (2005) maintain that despite their impoverished circumstances the young mothers are able to create and maintain a positive sense of self and legitimise their position within society. However within the available literature there is little work that comes from the young women’s perspective and which provides an in depth psychological explanation for these processes.

Therefore the present research draws on the literature of stigma to form some working hypothesis as to what these processes might be. As such this thesis examines 1) the categories young mothers invoke to make sense of their experiences and what meanings they attach to these categories, and 2) sources of self-evaluation and relevant dimensions of self-evaluations. This research looks at the categories and meanings that are available to the young mothers through print, media and social interactions with youth workers and the categories that young mothers use themselves. In particular the research addresses the following questions:

Study One

- How are teenage mothers represented within the National Press?
- How are mothers and motherhood represented in the National Press?

Study Two, part one

- Are young mothers aware of the negative representations that other people might hold about them?
- To what extent do they agree with these representations?
• To what extent are the labels that other people ascribe them relevant to their identity?

Study Two, part two

• How do young mothers construct and maintain a sense of self-efficacy?

• What is the relationship between self-efficacy and self-esteem for young mothers?

Study Three

• What are the roles and categories that the “Youth Workers” invoke when working with young mothers?

• What effects can the choice of category have on the outcomes for the young mothers?
Chapter Four

Methodology

4.1 Introduction
This chapter explores the issues surrounding the choice of methodology and methods in this thesis. It summarizes the research strategy and the methods chosen for each study. The final section in this chapter examines the need for ensuring good practice in qualitative methods and outlines the way in which this has been handled.

4.2 Epistemology
It has been argued that the starting point for any investigation should be the epistemological position of the research, as it is this which underpins and shapes, not only the research questions, but also the methods employed. In this way epistemology is central to understanding research (Smith, 1996b).

The term “epistemology” refers to the branch of philosophy that relates to the nature of knowledge. What is knowledge? How do we come to know what we know? What is reality? And perhaps more importantly, what is truth? The epistemologist attempts to distinguish between knowledge and opinion, and good and bad reasoning, maintaining the importance of moving beyond descriptive details of knowledge to revealing what people ought to believe. In this view epistemology explores whether knowledge is viewed as an objective absolute that corresponds to an external reality, and as such separate from the knower, or whether knowledge is viewed as something that is part of the knower and therefore relative to the individual’s environment and experiences. The epistemological stance of the research, and subsequent research method chosen, provide a means of looking at the world and answering a question about that world.

Traditionally the social sciences have been dominated by the ‘positivist’ model of research methods, which adopts a hypothetico-deductive method. A positivist view of the world suggests that there is a reality out there to be discovered; there is something to be known and proven. As such, knowledge is accepted as an observable
Chapter four

phenomenon (Gantley et al, 1999). The role of research within this view is to provide an unbiased objective knowledge of the world and to establish general laws that are both retrospective and predictive.

However, there has been a growing dissatisfaction with the restrictions of this model and in recent years there has been a swing from the passive view of knowledge towards a more adaptive and active view (Heylighen, 1993) with an emphasis on more naturalistic research. This view sets psychological enquiry within the ‘real world’ in which it occurs, utilising an iterative-inductive process (Smith, Harré & Langenhove, 1995). This shift in methods reflects a shift from the ‘modern’ essentialist view of the world, where the role of science is to discover the ‘truth’ that is ‘out there’, to a ‘post modernist’ view of the world that posits that there is no ultimate truth to be discovered, but there is a process of ‘knowing’ (Mathers & Rowlan, 1997). This model operates within a relativist framework, suggesting that most human interaction ‘realities’ are the result of prolonged and intricate processes of construction and negotiation that are deeply embedded within culture. As Bruner argues, if culture forms minds and minds make value judgments, then some form of relativism will be inevitable.

Constructivism is set within a relativist view of the world and suggests that all knowledge is ‘constructed’ within experience and the environment. In this view there is no singular objective knowledge, but many knowledges that are contingent upon our culture, history and language. Within this view the role of research is to identify the variety of ways that social realities are constructed within society. If one were to see epistemological philosophies as a continuum, positivism or objectivism and constructivism would be seen as opposite extremes. Constructivism provides a counterpoint to positivism.

Within the constructivist branch of philosophy various types of constructivism have emerged and in its extreme form, radical constructivism maintains that there is no direct or objective truth and as such the individual’s only way of ‘knowing’ is when their constructions of events fail. In this view, the emphasis on the validity of human perception is replaced with an emphasis on its viability. “Constructivism, thus, does not say there is no world and no other people, it merely holds that insofar as we know
them, both the world and the others are models that we ourselves construct” (von Glaserfeld, 1995a, p. 137). However, critics of this position claim that it is relativist to the point of verging on solipsism, in that it posits that no account can take precedence or is privileged over another; each reality is equally valid.

However an alternative to this extreme relativism is phenomenology which is based on the philosophical branch of psychology which is concerned with the way in which an individual will gain knowledge of the world around them. Husserl, a main proponent of this view, rejected the presupposition that there will inevitably be something ‘underlying’ or ‘behind’ the experience that the researcher needs to access, as he maintained that it was the experience itself that was of importance. He maintained that research can transcend bias or presupposition and as such the aim of psychology within this branch is to ‘bracket’ the researcher’s assumptions or preconceived ideas about a population in order to present a view of the world as experienced by the participant. In this view it is argued that we should not see objects and subjects as independent, but as part of the experience as they all ‘mean’ something and their manifestation is part of the ‘reality’ at that time.

This section has outlined some of the different forms of epistemology; highlighting various ways of viewing the world and ‘reality’. However, before deciding on a methodology, it is important for the researcher to consider these epistemological issues in relation to the phenomenon under consideration, i.e. teenage motherhood and the aims of the research.

4.3 What is our goal?
The majority of the research available in the field of teenage motherhood comes from a quantitative methodology and presents a deterministic and reductionist account of early motherhood. There is a strong representation that suggests that early motherhood can be a blight on a young woman’s life and that teenage mothers are ‘unfit’ mothers. What is of note with the majority of this work is that it comes from the perspective of the other people, such as health workers, teachers and political bodies etc., and what they believe a young mother’s life is like. In this work little consideration is given to the experiences of the young mothers, as it appears to be based on an assumption of how young women might experience their lives and goes
on to find evidence that seeks to support this assumption. However, when this issue is considered from the perspective of the young women themselves it would appear that they see their lives and experiences in a very different light. It is the aim of this work to explore these conflicting findings and to attempt to examine some of the self evaluation processes that might be in operation. In order to do this it is essential that this work starts with a clean slate; by this, it means that research should attempt to start with as few assumptions as possible about teenage motherhood or should acknowledge that these assumptions exist. This thesis is not attempting to dichotomise these conflicting findings, allocating them into positions of right and wrong, or disproving one or other position, but to explicate these different positions and examine how they might both represent different realities.

Therefore we are searching for the ‘realities’ of different groups, recognising that they are relative to the individual and their experiences. As already highlighted phenomenology reflects the aims of this research to identify the variety of ways that teenage motherhood is constructed within society, whilst exploring how and under what conditions these constructions are utilised and the effects that these constructions might have for the individual, in particular the young mother.

4.4 Research Strategy
It has been argued that qualitative analysis lends itself to fields of analysis where little is known and there is not enough information to formulate meaningful hypotheses. However, it is arguable that this is also useful within a field of work where the population under investigation is overexposed or hyper-visible, such as with teenage mothers, where there has been a vast amount of research already conducted and there are many strong stereotypes that exist within society. The notion of visibility in terms of marginalized groups is an important part of psychological research, however with groups such as young mothers, where there is a large volume of images, texts, and ideas about what a ‘teenage mother’ is, there is a danger of an over-proliferation of the stereotype of a ‘teenage mother’ and as such, the main body of research appears to be located within this dominant representation of the negative stereotype of ‘problematic behaviour’ (Luttrell, 2003).
Pillow (2004) argues that hyper-visibility not only "masks gaps in our knowledge about teenage mothers, but also reproduces such gaps, structuring what is intelligible about the subject" (p.5). She questions how research can manage to create and construct experiences that do not fit within existing structures.

One of the problems with trying to construct an 'accurate' representation of teenage mothers is that there is no such thing as 'accurate', as it is relative to the experiences of each individual young mother. Another problem is that there are a multitude of strong representations of teenage mothers that already exist, with young mothers being presented as either 'at risk' or 'a risk' to society. Ex-president of the United States of America, Bill Clinton went as far as to say that "teenage pregnancy is just plain wrong". It is attitudes such as these that have been the basis of a wealth of research both in Britain and abroad. However by adopting this approach, young mothers are immediately examined within a framework of 'failure' and 'deviance'; young mothers are perceived to deviate from the norms of the society and are consequently examined as such (Becker 1986).

The consequence of framing teenage motherhood in this way is that young mothers are examined through the lens of deviant behaviours and, as such, the question that tends to be asked is 'why would young women do this'. Within this there is an assumption that they have perhaps chosen to do this and that there are psychological reasons to explain these choices (Luttrell, 2003). Quantitative research only serves to compound such underlying assumptions and does not allow for the vast variety of idiographic explanations and differences.

Gergen (1984) takes the view that the traditional empirical search for an objective reality is misguided as this would assume a measurable objective reality. Social psychology does not operate within a reified universe and since there is no ultimate knowledge or truth, the best that researchers can do is to try and achieve a neutral representation and to understand. It has been argued that social psychology must turn into a kind of historic project, taking into consideration the individual and ideological influences, such as "theories of social psychology are rarely, if ever, chaste scientific productions, they usually gear into the prevailing political and social atmosphere" (Allport, 1969)
This thesis aims to dislocate existing hegemonic views of young mothers by exploring the range of available influences and experiences from the perspective of the young mothers. By adopting a qualitative approach this research avoids focussing on specific pre-ordained issues and allows the issues to emerge from the data in their own terms, by examining what it means to be a member of that group, and what it means to be influenced by the ideologies of the culture that the participants are born into.

Therefore, this thesis will explore the experiences of young mothers, examining this phenomenon from the perspective of the young women, the micro context of the youth workers with whom they are in daily contact, and the broader society as represented within the national press and as such will adopt a phenomenological stance and will utilise qualitative research methods.

4.5 Qualitative research methods

Qualitative research methods are a “unified set of techniques or philosophies and indeed has grown out of a wide range of intellectual and disciplinary traditions” (Mason, 1996, p.3) and within this paradigm the role of the researcher is to be a facilitator or co-participant within the research process (Lincoln, 1992), as opposed to a quantitative approach where the role of the researcher is to control and manipulate concepts and variables.

Hayes (1997) highlights several ways in which qualitative research differs from quantitative methods such as the setting; qualitative research tends to occur within a naturalistic setting, quantitative research is usually nomothetic in that it makes claims about individual cases from large scale studies, whereas qualitative focuses on the ideographic approach that centres on individuals and small groups.

Most research within a qualitative framework is based on analysis of words as data, and unlike quantitative research, qualitative research is not designed to test a hypothesis but explore a set of explanatory concepts that aid interpretation of a phenomenon (Silverman, 1993). As Medewar (1985) argues, it is not to science that we should ‘look for answers’. Psychology needs to give up the search for absolute truths and concentrate on pragmatic questions.
Having decided to employ a constructivist approach to this research, it was decided that qualitative research allowed this research to address the issues of interest. As such it is important to understand the methodological implications for this choice. As already highlighted different approaches to research make different assumptions about the nature of knowledge and the ways in which discovery is perceived, (e.g. Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Within this framework, it is assumed that knowledge is, and can only be, inferred within the context in which it occurs, which begs the question how do we explore this? There are several methods available within qualitative research that are concerned with meanings, and how the individual makes sense of their world, however each method has a subtly different epistemological stance. Such a difference will have an impact on not the type of question that will be asked, but how that questioned is answered; this affects not only the analysis, but also the status of the data.

Kvale (1996) maintains that it is important to consider the relationship between the participant and the transcript of their interview. In other words what does the interview transcript represent? It has been argued that there are many different ways of construing the representation of the transcripts. It could be seen to be representative of the interviewee’s world, or unconscious desires, or it may even represent the interviewee’s attempts to unconsciously deny responsibility for the event.

Acknowledging the status of the data is important as this will dictate the method of analysis, for example, ‘Grounded Theory’ is located within the empiricist approach and as such sees the data as a verbal expression of the participant’s psychological process. Whereas ‘Discourse Analysis’ takes the view that text is an expression of the variety of discourses that are available to the individual. The individual uses these discourses to construct events.

However, within the phenomenological branch of psychology the basic premise is concerned with how the individual gains knowledge of their world and as such provides a framework for exploration. In this view, subjects and objects can only be understood within the framework of their experience; such an object is relative to the perceiver and will vary dependent upon the context, location and 'mental
orientation’ (Willig 2001). It is within this approach that the following studies are located.

4.5.1 Study 1. In order to understand the disparate experiences of young mothers it is important to set them within the broader representations that exist. Therefore the first study is a media study exploring the representations of teenage mothers and motherhood in general within the national press. The study rejects the notion that the media merely represents or re-presents what is ‘out there’ as this would assume that there is a ‘reality’ that exists and is knowable. This work is based on the assumption that not only does the media reflect representations of the world, but also is part of the construction of these representations.

Quantitative content originates within a positivist framework of objectivity. Analysis has been defined as an instrument for “objective and systematic account of the manifest content of written and electronic communication and focuses on the visible characteristics of texts” (Bereleson, 1952). In this, text is analysed in terms of surface characteristics such as particular words, metaphors, clichés etc., but Kracauer (1952) maintains that this technique forces classification in order to reveal dichotomous dimensions.

However, qualitative content analysis addresses and seeks to understand the latent dimensions of texts, exploring texts for implicit interpretations such as attitudes about self and others, meanings and inferences, as well as seeking to verify theoretical relationships (e.g. Kracauer, 1952). Qualitative content analysis consists of continual reflexive movement between concept development and the data. The role of reflexivity within this approach is essential at all stages of the data collection, coding, analysis and interpretation, and it is important when using this method to be systematic. Krippendorf (1980) maintains that it is essential to address several questions when undertaking analysis:

What is the data to be analysed?
How is it defined?
What is the population in which it is located?
What is the context relative to the data to be analysed?
What are the boundaries?
What is the target of inferences?

Unlike quantitative content analysis that utilises a priori codes that are located within existing theories and established before analysis, qualitative analysis allows the codes to emerge from the data.

4.5.2 Studies 2, 3 & 4. As already argued, when working with a hyper-visible population it is important to ensure that participants are allowed to construct their own voices and be seen in terms of their own worlds and when choosing a qualitative research method it is important to choose a method that reflects these criteria and participants’ experiences and allows issues to emerge from the data. Therefore for these studies Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) was chosen as the method of analysis.

**Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis**

IPA is a fairly recently developed methodology which aims to understand the individual’s experiences; “the approach is phenomenological in that it is concerned with an individual’s personal perception or account of an object or event as opposed to an attempt to produce an objective statement of the object or event itself” (Smith, Jarman & Osborne, 1999. p. 218-219). In this, IPA is based on the assumption of an absence of objective reality and that experiences will be interpreted differently by different people and consequently recognises the role of the subjective experiences of the individual. The purpose of this method is to explore and understand how the individual makes sense of their experiences and situations.

This method is based upon a ‘modest realism’, in that IPA allows for hypothetical constructs such as self and identity to emerge. It would be easy to structure teenage mothers within the existing discourses of ‘problems’, ‘victims; ‘troubled teen’, or ‘young women overcoming the odds’, but it is important to let the participants speak for themselves. However, if this research is to serve a purpose it needs to locate these findings within an existing theory, to explore what the findings may or may not tell us about the psychological processes involved in constructing and maintaining a sense of self? How do young mothers evaluate themselves? The question is not just what are
their evaluations, but how do they evaluate themselves? Do existing theories allow for such evaluations and can they accommodate such diversities. That is why this work is using IPA, which allows themes to develop at their own pace, but also incorporating it within a more structured analysis. Smith (1996b) maintains IPA permits the researcher to ‘open a dialogue’ with existing literature, which can allow for elucidation of theory. Within this study, it was felt that it was important to strengthen this dialogue with existing theories.

4.5.2.1 The interview process. The method of data collection chosen for these studies was semi-structured interviews. The use of semi-structured interviews is important within IPA as it allows for flexibility, allowing the interviewer and the participant to expand areas of significance or interest, whilst remaining within a framework of enquiry and ensuring that all participants cover certain pre-determined areas of interest. The advantage of this method is that it allows for and encourages a rapport between researcher and participant and consequently a deeper level of disclosure.

It is important to note that whilst one of the main strengths of IPA is that it permits the issues to emerge from the data, IPA is always undertaken with fundamental assumptions in place (Willig, 2001). With semi-structured interviews the researcher starts with a set of predetermined questions designed to introduce the participants to certain areas of enquiry. However, within this process the researcher has to remain open and sensitive to the participant, allowing the interview to be guided rather than dictated by the interview schedule. This is because with IPA it is important to enter, as far as possible, the psychological world of the participant and what is deemed of importance to them.

4.5.2.2 Process of analysis. First transcripts are read and re-read to allow the researcher to thoroughly acquaint him/herself with the data and to construct a holistic picture of the transcripts. During this stage of the analysis the researcher also starts to make notes about anything that appears to be of particular interest within the transcripts, this could be anything that is perceived to be of concern or significant. Then the researcher establishes a series of codes that attempt to reflect and capture the essence of the data. These emergent themes are then listed and reviewed for possible links and connections. Connected themes are then clustered together within a super-
ordinate theme. Themes are then organised within a framework and provide the basis for producing written analysis.

IPA is an iterative process and throughout this process researchers refer back to the transcripts to ensure that themes and super-ordinate themes are representative of the participant's account. The main advantage of this method is that it allows the researcher to maintain an open mind and to learn about the experience from the individual's perspective without pre-ordained expectations and biases shaping the nature of the research. It also allows for the potential influence of the cultural context to be considered.

An important point to remember about IPA is that the researcher takes an active role in the analytical processes. In the early stages the researcher presents the themes highlighted by the participants. However, in the later stages of analysis the researcher engages directly with the data. At this stage it is important that the researcher remains aware of the role that they play in interpretation and is careful to self-monitor. It is also important to ensure that the research represents the participants' experiences and does not allow interpretation to become skewed by the researcher's expectations. Throughout the process an independent 'auditor' and/or the participants are available to ensure that representations are checked and concur with the data.

4.6 Ensuring good practice in qualitative research methods

Earlier critics of qualitative research suggested that this is a 'soft science' and that these methods were simply impressions that lacked structure and credibility and were therefore deemed to be merely precursors to quantitative research (e.g. Greenhalgh & Taylor, 1997). As a result there is a strong onus on the qualitative researcher to be conscious of, and to maintain, meticulous regard to the validity of the research by demonstrating good practice.

As already argued, qualitative research is located within the social constructivist tradition which locates both the researcher and the participant within the world, not as mere recipients of experience but as actors that actively shape and are shaped by their environments. In this, each individual experiences their environment differently and consequently multiple truths and realities exist (Hammersley, 1995). As such the
value / quality of the research cannot be judged by the same dimensions as used in quantitative methods. Within quantitative research there are recognised criteria for demonstrating good practice that are established within the positivist tradition of objectivity, reliability, validity, representativeness and generalisability which, it has been argued, are not meaningfully applicable to qualitative data (e.g. Willig, 2001).

When conducting qualitative research it has been suggested that good practice should be demonstrated by more meaningful criteria that allow for its idiosyncratic nature and creativity, whilst still ensuring rigour. There have been many suggestions as to how best to demonstrate this, including the importance of fit, integration of theory, reflexivity, documentation, theoretical sampling, sensitivity to negotiated realities (Henwood & Pidgeon, 1992) and owning one’s perspective, situating the sample, providing credibility checks etc., (Elliott, 1999). However, the problem with applying these standards is that they are generated with a specific methodology in mind, such as Henwood and Pidgeon, who located their standards within Grounded Theory. It has been argued that as there is no unifying qualitative research paradigm and different methods are based on different assumptions; the criteria for assessing it should be tailored to the particular method it is meant to assess.

Social constructivism suggests that there are certain principles that can be used to assess the value of competing accounts. Through rigorous attention to data and self reflection of the research, conclusion may be drawn. Therefore, in terms of this research it was decided that the following criteria should be applied.

**Accountability and Anonymity.** In any research it is important for the researcher to be accountable to their participants. This is perhaps even more important in the case of young women who are perceived as ‘vulnerable’ and ‘impressionable’. It is important for the researcher to be aware of the possible effect that such explorations might have on the participants and any sensitive areas that might be touched on. As such, ethical permission was sought and granted through the University of Surrey ethics board. All participants were fully briefed prior to the interview and informed that they could withdraw at any stage of the interview if they were uncomfortable with the questioning. During this briefing session participants were reassured that their identities would remain anonymous and any issues raised during the interview would
remain confidential. All names were changed and where quotes were included within the findings a pseudonym was used. Also participants were debriefed after the interview and the researcher ensured that the participants were comfortable and happy with the way the interview had been conducted.

**Grounding in examples.** Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis maintains that the generation of themes are as a result of the interpretative research role. In this, the emphasis is on the researcher to represent the participants’ experiences and it is important that the findings are not determined by the researcher’s own expectations and experiences. This is also important within qualitative data analysis and therefore, throughout the research, quotations from the transcripts are used to illustrate the themes and how they represent the wider account.

**Providing credibility checks.** As already mentioned above, it is important for the researcher to be mindful of the potential there is to misrepresent or misinterpret the data, therefore it is vital in ensuring good practice that credibility checks are constantly carried out. In the case of this thesis an independent ‘auditor’ i.e. the supervisor, was available to ensure that representations are checked and concur with the data. Also copies of all data, i.e. the interview transcripts and the original newspapers are available on request.

4.6.1 **Positioning the researcher within the research and issues of empowerment.** Of note, within the literature surrounding good practice in qualitative data, is a universal acknowledgement of the importance of reflexivity. There appears to be a consensus of opinion that for a qualitative study to be of value it needs to maintain constant reflexive vigilance and an awareness of the role that the researcher can play in shaping and influencing the voice of the participants. In this the following issues were deemed of particular importance for this thesis.

**The role of the researcher when representing the ‘other’.** It is important to highlight IPA’s hermeneutical approach to interpretation, which suggests that an understanding of the participants world and experiences can be reached through the researchers interpretation of the participant’s narratives; in this the researcher takes an active role in all aspects of the research processes. As a researcher the role is to present an
individual's or groups' culture and experiences, the groups' 'shared' beliefs, values and shared experiences of their world.

However an issue with this type of research is the role that the researcher can play in constructing or reconstructing these representations. It is possible that during this process the individual's experiences may be reduced down to 'core traits', so essentialising the group and their experiences. As a result, it is possible that participants are represented as the 'other' in society; a group that is outside of the main culture.

It has been argued that an inevitable aspect of 'othering' a person is that it is embedded within power relations (e.g. Brittan and Maynard, 1984). In this, the 'other' is presented as a dichotomous position, which does not reflect diversity within the research, but oppositional roles; such as adult and child, expert and novice. This is particularly important to consider when working with groups that are stigmatised and are, as such, already 'othered' by society, but also with young mothers where there are possibly negative oppositional roles such adult and child.

Therefore, it is important to understand the role that the researcher can play and question their stance and voice, not just in the representation of findings, but within the entire process, from the choice of questions included within the interview to the roles taken within the interview. What are the power dynamics at play during an interview? It is arguable that there is an implicit assumption that the researcher is in control as they are the one asking the questions. However, this effect could be further exacerbated when other variables such as age, education, experiences etc., are taken into consideration. In this thesis the participants are young women who do not share the same education and possibly language / knowledge. More importantly, the researcher is older and the mother of teenage children. The use of the word 'children' is of note because within this context it is used to infer the relationship between the researcher and her own offspring. However, the use of the term 'children' can also imply a power differential between a child and an adult, plus expectations about their experience and abilities. Therefore it is important for the researcher to explicate their position and remain as neutral as possible at all times.
It is also important to bear this in mind, during the analysis, with regard to how this might affect the participants 'voice'. Do participants respond to the researcher as an 'authority figure' and consequently change the responses? Also, when presenting the findings it is important to self-monitor and not present findings in relation to the researchers’ worlds or experiences, or to structure the participant’s experiences within the researchers existing structures and expectations.

**Applying labels to participants.** The possibility of representing a participant as the 'other' is also present within the labels that are chosen to represent various groups within the research. In the case of young mothers it is essential to create labels that are as value free as possible.

Quantitative methods start with an assumption of testing a theory, which means that certain aspects are focussed on within the research. The main body of research into early motherhood appears to be based on an assumption of 'problematic behaviour' with young mothers being variously presented as 'problems to be solved', 'victims', 'troubled teens' or 'young women overcoming the odds' (Luttrell, 2003). It is important not to assume that there is only one representation of the world. We make sense of the world by structuring and categorising events and experiences, however the structures and categories that we call on to make these judgements come from our own experiences and how we make sense of the world. They are not preordained and individuals do not all draw on the same categories. Therefore it is important for the researcher to be conscious of the labels that are applied and the possible connotations that may be attached to them.

By applying labels either explicitly or implicitly assumptions are being made about whom or what these groups in society are. As already argued in Chapter 3, when a label is applied to an individual they are placed into a category that provides others with a template of who they are. The contents and the valence of the category creates an expectation of who the individual is and how they might behave. Therefore, it is important within this thesis to apply labels to the participants that can be perceived as 'neutral'. In this, labels should merely provide a short hand reference and not a value statement about the individual or the groups that they belong to.
In the case of the young mothers, it is important not to assume the 'blame' or 'deviance' stance, but to remain neutral and as such it was decided to refer to them as 'young mothers' as the term 'teenage mother' is associated with the stigmatised stereotype of the 'unfit mother'. Where the term 'teenage mother' is used within this thesis, it is used to emphasise a point or to signify the negative representation as offered by its source. Also for similar reasons it was decided to use the term 'young woman' as opposed to 'girl' or 'teenager'. Both the latter terms carry connotations of being a child or immature plus they may also imply a power dynamic between researcher and participant.

Also, within the final study it was decided to use the term 'Youth Worker' to incorporate the older women who are in daily contact with the young mothers. The term Youth Worker refers to anyone that is in paid or unpaid employment with young people.

Therefore this thesis aims to explore teenage motherhood in impartial terms. It is not the aim to simply dispel existing myths and replace them with new fixed interpretations of young mothers’ lives, but to explore a framework for understanding what and how they experience their lives themselves.

4.7 Summary
For the purposes of this research it was decided to adopt a phenomenological position, except in the case of the media study, where qualitative content analysis was employed. This enables the issue of teenage motherhood to be examined in terms of the young women’s experiences and places them within the culture and society in which they exist and as such it was decided to utilise qualitative research data and methods. The main method used in this research is Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis, however Qualitative Content Analysis is also used in Study 1, as this provides a means of analysing newspaper data in a way that allows the researcher to understand the latent dimensions of texts, exploring texts for implicit interpretations, such as, attitudes about self and others, meanings and inferences, as well as seeking to verify theoretical relationships.
The final section of this chapter explores the importance of maintaining good practice and outlines the methods chosen for this.
Chapter Five

Media Study: The phenomenon of motherhood, including early motherhood, as portrayed within the British national press.

5.1 Objectives
The first study reported in this thesis examines how the categories of motherhood and young motherhood are constructed in sections of the British national press. This study aims to explore the range of possible cultural shared meanings that are likely to be available to the young mothers to help them make sense of their lives.

5.2. Introduction
In Chapter Three it was argued that social categories are important to the individual as they provide a means of ordering their world, by grouping together a plethora of stimuli into smaller, more manageable segments or categories, according to shared characteristics or attributes. In this way the individual is able to make parsimonious judgements about the character or abilities of a person based on the category to which they are assigned.

Of note concerning the use of categories is the number of implicit biases that are contained within them which inform the individual’s attitude and behaviour towards a member of that category and, as such, it has been argued that categorisation is fundamental to understanding and explaining prejudice and discrimination.

In the opening chapters of this thesis it was suggested that within the large body of research into early motherhood there is an underlying assumption that young mothers are a stigmatised group and on the “road to social death”. Further the majority of the research available suggests that early motherhood is a class issue and paints a bleak picture of the shattered and stigmatised lives of young mothers yet, as has already been considered, there is very little work that directly addresses the issues of stigmatisation and teenage motherhood. Thus this study aims to provide us with further evidence as to whether young motherhood is a stigmatised category and perhaps some of the reasons why young mothers may be stigmatised. It may also
provide us with some insight as to the processes involved in the maintenance of a positive sense of self by young mothers.

However, as already argued, individuals are member of many different groups and categories, and not all of these categories are stigmatised. For example, it has been argued that young mothers are stigmatised for their situation and yet motherhood appears to be considered a normative adult role (Raeff, 1996). It has been argued that "The potential for motherhood is always inside us – not only women’s bodies, but their psychologies too." (Oakley, McPherson and Roberts 1984. p. 191).

From this it is important to remember that motherhood is not just a biological construct, but is situated firmly within the historically and culturally ascribed context (Bassin, Honey & Kaplan, 1994; Glenn, 1994). Current British culture purports to support a pronatalist view, "Pronatalism is the attitudes that exalts motherhood (and parenthood) in general and assumes or encourages parenthood for all. It is found in nearly all of the institutions in society: churches, schools, advertising, media, law and medicine – and of course families. Pronatalism can be as direct as the question “when are you going to start your family?” or as subtle as income tax exceptions for children.” (Monach, 1993, p45).

It has also been argued that "When a woman has a child, she confirms for herself and for others that she is a complete woman, fertile and capable of the biological task of creating and perpetuating life.” (Ashurst & Hall 1989, p97).

Rogoff (1990) maintains that individuals construct their identities through the appropriation of cultural expectations and images. This is similar to the symbolic interactionist’s theory of reflected appraisals, mentioned in Chapter Three, which posits that the individual’s sense of self develops through a dynamic relationship between a person and their social environment. In this view appropriation could be defined as the individual interpreting and adjusting cultural expectations in terms of their own schemata. Young mothers make sense of their situation in terms of activities and experiences of being a mother. Raeff (1996) argues that in such circumstances it is possible that young mothers de-emphasise or even reject the dominant cultural expectations. It is only through such rejections and reformulations that there is a possibility for cultural changes and adjustments in self-concepts. Therefore it could be
argued that the only way to fully understand the young mother’s experiences of motherhood is not just to examine them within the context of their lives, but also within the context of the broader cultural context in which they are mothers and raise their children (Raeff, 1994; Wasserman, Brunelli, Rauh & Alvarado, 1994).

The image of motherhood is subject to constant revision and it is arguable that young women are influenced in the way that they construct themselves by the linguistic / semiotic constraints of their historical moment, i.e. only within the shared meanings that are available to them. The present study examines what meanings different sections of the British press attach to the categories of motherhood and teenage motherhood.

Traditional images appeared to suggest that a ‘woman’s place was in the home’ with the father as the ‘head of the household’. Women did not appear to have a voice and were therefore bodies onto which symbols and identities were mapped. However The Feminine Mystique (Friedan 1963) supposedly marked a turning point for women away from the pressure to fulfil the traditional role of homemaker and gave them choice. Nevertheless it seems that women were still being presented in a passive role. Women in the 1970’s and 1980’s were still seen as submissive, self-subordinating and dependent on men (e.g. Kaiser, 1979; Kalisch and Kalisch 1982a).

Even at the turn of this century women were still unlikely to be portrayed as, for instance, “employed”, and more emphasis still appeared to be placed on their marital and parental status (e.g. Signorielli and Kahlenberg, 2001) or women being portrayed as more helpful and affectionate than men (e.g. Glascock, 2001).

In 1994 Letherby argued that despite the array of opportunities that were available to women they were still caught within the traditional roles, “In western society, all women live their lives against a background of personal and cultural assumptions that all women are or want to be mothers and that for women motherhood is proof of adulthood and a natural consequence of marriage or a permanent relationship with a man” (p. 525).
However Dilapi (1989) suggests that even within the shared meanings of motherhood there is a hierarchy of abilities and suitabilities and any mother that falls outside of the societal norms, such as a teenage mother, is deemed less than worthy as a parent. This conflict of identity within motherhood was highlighted by Ryan (2002) who contended that mothers are either "idealised or demonised" by the Press.

Ryan argues that newspapers provide an insight into the complex and multifaceted nature of attitudes and opinions and it has been argued that this form of analysis is also particularly pertinent to the examination of the lives of young women as young people who “use media and the cultural insights provided by them to see both who they might be and how others have constructed or reconstructed themselves... individual adolescents...struggle with the dilemma of living out all the “possible selves” (Markus & Nurius, 1986), they can imagine” (Brown et al, 1994. p.814).

In this way the newspaper serves as a source of cultural analysis, which allows the researcher to examine the way in which the media appears to shape the available images, which consequently foster and perpetuate the stereotypical roles that are available to women (Friedan 1963). As Grodin & Lindlof (1996) suggest, “With the flip of the television channel or radio station, or a turn of the newspaper or magazine page, we have at our disposal an enormous array of possible identity models.” In this view it is arguable that the media, in this case the newspapers, acts as the ‘generalised other’ within reflected appraisals, creating impressions of how others might perceive themselves within the roles available to them.

Therefore this study examines the various portrayals of motherhood, and in particular teenage mothers, which are created within the national press, and how the media constructions might provide young mothers with a repertoire of shared meanings which they can use to create and maintain a positive sense of self in the face of stigma.

The research questions are

Research question 1: How are young mothers portrayed within the National Press?
Research question 2: How are mothers and motherhood portrayed in the National Press?
5.3 Method

Data collection. National daily newspapers were initially collected during a two week period between November 29th and December 13th 2003. However as there were no apparent articles relating directly to teenage mothers during this period a further time period was included.

In 1999 the Labour Government launched an initiative based on a document from the Social Exclusion Unit, to address the needs of young mothers. This resulted in a period of heightened media awareness about young mother. Therefore it was decided to search the same national newspapers for stories about young mothers during this year. As this search was conducted retrospectively it was conducted through InfoTrac, a computer based search archive for newspapers. As this search was limited to the articles available through InfoTrac, the whole year was considered. In total 115 articles relating to young motherhood and 97 relating to motherhood in general were reviewed.

Choice of Newspapers for inclusion. It is important to remember that although newspapers may claim to be impartial, and merely reporting the news, they can be subject to political leanings, and as such play a key role in not only reflecting the issues, but in actively creating images. Therefore data collection included newspapers known to have a range of political leanings. Newspapers included were :-

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Analysis of data. The data was subjected to qualitative or “thematic” content analysis in order to draw inferences about the way in which motherhood and teenage motherhood are portrayed in the national press. Qualitative content analysis was used to identify and describe patterns of meaning and textual data, such as interview transcripts or newspaper articles, used to make structured inferences in ‘units of meaning’ (Cowie et al, 1998). It is argued that units of meaning allow for interpretation in terms of the individual’s frame of reference (Mostyn, 1985). In terms of newspaper articles it is arguable as to whether the individual, i.e. the author of the article, is reflecting or creating a personal or societal view. However the author is serving to elucidate an image that exists regardless of its origins.

Qualitative content analysis differs from quantitative content analysis in that it reflects the inductive approach of qualitative methodologies. Such analysis adopts an open coding approach so as to avoid the imposing of a priori categories. This means that the data is analysed with as open a mind as possible. Also, unlike quantitative content analysis, there is an active continual process of testing and revising of categories and associations.

Qualitative content analysis. Qualitative content analysis is a systematic procedure employed to analyse texts according to defined rules or stages (Mayring 2000).

Stage One – identification of articles to be included in data.
Drawing on existing literature containing images of motherhood, and teenage motherhood, stories were selected in three ways.

The first layer of analysis examined main articles that were directly related to motherhood or teenage motherhood. This was determined by either the headline mentioning “mother” or “motherhood” directly or the substance of the article referring to these issues.

The second layer examined secondary articles and reader’s letters and problem pages.
The third analysis examined implicit stories about motherhood or teenage mothers. These were articles that, whilst not directly related to the issues at hand, carried implicit messages about motherhood, e.g. stories about famous people who referred to the effect that their own mother had had on their life or articles that referred to the value placed on having children.

Stage Two - thorough immersion in data.
Having identified the articles to be included in the analysis, all articles were read thoroughly several times. During the process of reading and re-reading initial themes were identified.

Stage Three - themes were then examined for commonalities and differences and clustered according to common characteristics and relevance and meaning.

Stage Four - the broader themes were then subjected to further examination in relation to existing relevant literature (Cullen et al 1997, Rappoport, 1960).

Throughout this iterative process there is a constant identification and revision of themes (Mayring, 2000). Also it is important to remember that it has been argued that qualitative content analysis can draw "inappropriate theoretical conclusions" and as such research may be perceived as ineffectual. Therefore in order to guard against subjective bias in the coding and analysis, the qualitative data was subjected to intercoder reliability. For the coding reliability, three coders achieved agreement scores between 92-96%. Where coding disagreements arose that could not be settled the relevant article was placed in a neutral category (Holsti, 1969).

Themes are presented with illustrations drawn from the data.

*Analysis of photographs.* Newspapers do not consist of just text. It has been argued that photographs play an important part in creating an image (Bignell 1997). Barthes (Cited in Bignell, 1977, p.98) claimed that a newspaper photograph is "*an object that has been worked on, chosen, composed, constructed, treated according to professional, aesthetic or ideological norms in which are so many factors of connotation.*" In this he highlights the notion that that the photographs that appear in
the newspaper do not just appear arbitrarily, but are as a result of a conscious decision to illustrate a story in a particular way. As such it was decided to include photographs that appeared with the chosen articles within the analysis.

Semiotics is the science of ‘signs’ which examines how signs relate to each other in order to create a particular meaning. The creation of an image is a process of different stages of meaning. The maker of an image will attempt to Denote (show) something. However by choosing a particular effect e.g. camera angle, lighting and framing etc. an image may be given a series of Connotations (hidden or associated meanings) which the viewer or audience will Decode. Connotation may also happen within the newspaper photography at the editing stage of production, i.e. through the choice of photograph included within an article. It must be pointed out that media texts may be polysemic in that they contain many signals that can have many effects on the viewer and as such cross referencing with a co-researcher is essential.

For the purpose of this research the following aspects of photographic analysis were focused on.

1. What is the photograph meant to represent in terms of the accompanying article.
2. Illustration, overall photograph in relation to the story it is illustrating
3. Setting of the photograph, such as specific background as opposed to neutral
4. Specific signs, such as position of the subject of the photograph, centred, close up, long focus etc
5. Proximity of subjects to each other.
6. Mood of subject e.g. smiling.

Photographs were analysed in three stages

1) Individually as a stand alone image
2) In relation to the accompanying article. Does the image confirm or confuse the message contained within the article?
3) In relation to other photographs. Are images presented in a coherent style and manner? What do differences between images imply?
5.4 Findings

Research question 1 - How are young mothers portrayed within the National Press?

Themes
Language
Creating a false image
Assumptions
   Education
   Free Housing
Reasons for stigma
   Poverty
   Age
   Morals
   Ignorance/stupidity
   Having a baby to fulfil a need
   Having a baby as a designer accessory
Positive comments
Exploding the myths.

Language. One of the most noticeable elements of the articles that were examined was the strong language that the authors used. The majority of articles refer to young mothers as ‘teenage mothers’ and comments about young mothers appear to be either derogatory or emotive, or in the case of apparently supportive articles, implicitly prejudicial. This was exemplified by several articles that appeared during the period about governmental changes in dealing with young mothers. Whilst most of these articles appeared to be championing the cause of teenage mothers there was still an implicit element of stigmatisation.

For instance it was noted that Tony Blair, Prime Minister, condemned the previous government for their “stigmatisation” of teenage mothers and vowed to right some of those wrongs (The Independent, 1/8/98, p.4). However whilst the relevant articles were full of stirring talk, and appeared on the face of them to be a positive move
forward for young mothers, the language used within the articles in fact belied this view. There appeared to be a constant need to apportion "blame" and continual references to the "problems" that these young women caused. The failure of young mothers to find work, for example, was alleged to be a "major problem" (The Independent, 13/6/99, p.6).

Further, the government referred to the "profoundly depressing subject of teenage pregnancies" (e.g. The Guardian, 11/9/99, p.7).

"Failure" (e.g. The Scotsman, 16/6/99, p.13) is also a word that kept cropping up, as in the failure to fulfil potential, and the failure to succeed by societies standards. Authors alleged that the Government's report on teenage pregnancy made "sobering" reading (e.g. The Independent, 13/6/99, p.6) and teenage pregnancy was a "millennial nightmare" as in "Whether caused by the death of shame or the death of hope — through sexual education being too vague or too alluring — the child-parents of Yorkshire are a genuine millennial nightmare." (The Guardian, 4/9/99, p.20). The Independent (28/5/99, p.10) referred to "fears among family experts...this is disappointing and bad news for teenagers".

Creating a (false) image. Many articles made use of statistics that appeared to be inaccurate, such as "In the rest of Europe, rising economic prosperity and greater taboos against teenage mothers have produced a significant drop in numbers. In Britain there has been no such fall, putting us in the unenviable position of being the leading European nation in producing so-called "Gymslip" Mums. " (The Sunday Times, 5/9/99, p.16). Not only was this inaccurate but the article referred to young mothers, critically, as "Gymslip mums". The Independent, (13/6/99, p.6) also stated that "The pregnancy rate among young women has shot up in the past 20 years." This is interesting as at that time the rate had been progressively dropping for the previous 30 years and not rising.

However 3 months later The Independent (23/9/99, p.5) changed the story and stated, "Teen pregnancies 'have not risen in the past 20 years'". This article sought to explode some of the myths that surround the phenomena of teenage motherhood, such as the supposed rise in teenage pregnancy rates quoted previously in the same paper.
Chapter Five

The author acknowledged that the recent drop in rates in other European countries was not because of a fall in the number of teenagers becoming pregnant, but a rise in the numbers of abortions. It was contended that this phenomenon was only an issue because “young parents cannot support themselves and are forced to rely on benefits.” This is interesting because it is one of the few articles to acknowledge that most young mothers are “forced” to go on benefits because of circumstances rather than “choosing” to do so.

Assumptions. From the articles that were examined it appeared that many of them were based on untested assumptions such as, for instance, that young mothers automatically lose interest in, and give up, education or that they have children in order to get a ‘free’ council house.

Education. This theme was highlighted by an article in The Independent, (13/6/99 p.6) which carried the headline

- “Head teachers must not expel girls who get pregnant”

This article stressed, “Becoming a mother is no excuse for abandoning education” This assumption was explored further by The Independent (29/12/99, p.4) with the suggestion that there needed to be changes to the system so that young mothers could “aim to achieve more than a life on benefits with a child.” The assumption within this article was that young mothers aim for this lifestyle - being on benefits was a lifestyle choice. This was linked to the notion that mothers are after a “free ride” at the taxpayer’s expense, including a “free house”.

Free housing. The Times (17/6/99, p.2) reported that “Tony Blair will announce today that teenage mothers aged 16 and 17 will be required to attend job interviews as a condition of getting benefit.” Implicit in this quote is the notion that young mothers would not choose to attend interviews unless they were made to do so. It also implied they would not choose to work and later that they were having babies in order to claim benefits and housing. The article went on to say “In a more controversial move, young mothers will be prevented from living in individual council flats and be required to live in special hostels where they will be taught parenting skills and given help to get jobs.” It is arguable that implicit in this quote is the impression that young
mothers get pregnant in order to get housing. However it also reinforces an image of a system that forces young mothers to conform to the aims of society, and further implied in this is that they need lessons on parenting.

The assumption that young mothers choose to get pregnant in order to obtain housing was addressed in a particularly scathing article about the financial crisis in Britain entitled “Third World Britain; As the Paddington disaster highlights our crumbling public services, a leading social commentator delivers a damning indictment of this country’s shameful spending priorities” (McKinstry, 1999). The author contended that British society is “on the verge of collapse”. He suggested that the problem lies in the way government spends public funds, contending that “almost a third of Government spending, £100 billion, goes on the welfare system, yet much of this money only serves to worsen an endemic culture of fecklessness”. He went on to say “state spending is now being used to prop up a Third World-style underclass of criminality and indolence...why should the demands of scroungers, deadbeat dads, drug users, teenage mothers and bogus asylum-seekers, who contribute nothing to society, be given higher priority than hardworking taxpayers, pensioners, NHS patients and rail passengers?” In this young mothers are not seen as young women who have the right to choose to become pregnant, but the article potrays them as lazy, feckless individuals that deliberately abuse society and are included within a catalogue of ‘undesirables’. This has the effect of further portraying young mothers as deviants.

**Reasons for stigma.** What is apparent within the various articles is that there are different types of stigma associated with being a teenage mother and some articles focus on some more than others.

**Scroungers.** As already pointed out above it would appear that many people believe that young mothers choose their lifestyle and there is an assumption that they choose to have children as a means of getting a council house and benefits. However the theme of “scroungers” is subtly different because it is not just the fact that this assumption exists, but that the resulting label is associated with this behaviour. It would appear that because young mothers have to rely on benefits they are therefore cast as “scroungers” by some members of society and this is seen as a reason to
stigmatise them. This notion was highlighted in The Times "Unmarried motherhood has, by default, become a career option." (The Times, 22/6/99, p.21).

The Sunday Times adopted the same approach “Young girls, bored and dragged down by the poverty of their own ambition, are all too willing to indulge feckless young men. A baby is their route to more generous benefits, a council flat, and, as one girl puts it, "to having someone to love." In fact it means a dead end existence and the perpetuation of the underclass." (The Sunday Times, 5/9/99, p.16).

**Age.** Young mothers appear to be stigmatised for being too young. This appears to be for two reasons. Firstly, they are too young to be engaging in a sexual relationship (and therefore are of low moral standing) and secondly, they are too young to take care of a baby. Impliedly, they are still children and cannot take care of themselves and there is no way that they are ready for the responsibility of being a mother. As the Prime Minister, Tony Blair, is quoted as saying, "fourteen and 15 year olds are still children and children should not be having children." (The Independent, 13/6/99, p.6)

The Independent (9/5/99, p.5) continued this theme of children having children with this headline

- "Teen fathers', pocket money to be docked"

It is arguable that the use of the term "pocket money" infers a father of school age, a child. Within the article the author quotes an 'insider' who said that the report of teenage pregnancy was "pretty jaw-dropping stuff—we have a big issue here."
Morals. "The problem of teenage pregnancies reflects a cocktail of changing sexual morals, perceived lack of opportunity, and a willingness among some to free ride on the back of the state in a way that would once have attracted widespread censure."
(The Sunday Times, 5/9/99, p.16). This quote seems to adopt an underlying assumption that these views no longer exist and that people have learned to accept lower standards and consequently accept teenage mothers. And yet from the articles examined in this study it is apparent that these views are still very much alive and, more to the point, the authors still uphold them.

- "Blair Interview: My moral manifesto for the 21st century: Teen mothers, bad teachers, high tax... Tony Blair has no place for any of them in his model nation." (The Observer, 5/9/99, p.8).

Within the body of this interview Blair is quoted as saying "we need to find a new national moral purpose for this new generation. People want to live in a society that is without prejudice, but is with rules, with a sense of order." This is a conflicting notion, as he appears to claim to want to live in a society without prejudice and yet implicit in this is if someone falls outside the parameters of 'normal' they are a lesser person. The use of the word 'moral' implies that 'moral people' are better people; someone is immoral if they do not fall within the set guidelines. This article goes on to say, "In the bad old days, teenage pregnancy meant social shame. Attitudes have changed". Attitudes might have changed, but it is not clear from this article whether the author thinks this is for the better; he merely acknowledges a change. Also this quote reflects that these opinions are still evident within society.

Ignorance and stupidity. In the Letters / Problem page the Daily Mirror (6/5/99, p.20) ran this headline "We want teen mum sterilised". This is a letter from a couple who had taken it upon themselves to help the daughter of a friend of theirs; a young mother. She was pregnant again and the couple wanted to know if they could have her sterilised. More importantly they suggest that this might be a "good idea for others in similar situations?" The paper published several letters from reader in response to this article. The various responses clearly reflect the many views and opinions that exist within society, such as "My neighbour's niece had two abortions"
and a baby girl by the time she was eighteen and I suspect that she was likely candidate for sterilisation too. But her behaviour wasn’t just irresponsible promiscuity; it came from a desperate need to be loved.” (Pauline Matthews, Cornwall). Within this is a suggestion that sterilisation might be a good idea, but also that there is an image from which the author of the letter appears to want to distance themselves from - that young girls get pregnant because they are irresponsible and morally reprehensible.

Another letter from the same page stated “I brought up my son on my own in the 1960s when unmarried mothers were treated with contempt” (Gillian, London). Again this seems to suggest that views have changed over time and unmarried mothers are now acceptable. However whenever this is mentioned it seems to imply that society had it right in those days and that a return to stigmatising young mothers would ‘sort’ things out. This in itself is evidence that the stigma exists. This author went on to say “most married couples don’t have the time or the money to socialise when they are young parents, yet she was able to have such a good time she’s got pregnant again. Sterilisation would just be another way of letting her do whatever she wanted.”

There are several points raised within this quote. There is the comparison with ‘normal’ parents who have a tough time as first time parents and yet this girl has obviously has had it easy and found time to get pregnant again. Also within this is the implication that she got pregnant for selfish, irresponsible reasons. More importantly this author believes that sterilisation would be wrong, not for moral reasons, but because she believes that this would be rewarding the young mother with sterilisation merely acting as another form of contraception. This again implies that the young mother is irresponsible.

Having a baby to fulfill a need. There is also a impression that young women choose to have babies because they need someone to love or to relieve the boredom of their empty lives. This is exemplified by an article entitled:

- “Teenage sex: The great escape to a life less ordinary; The Americans have realised that young people often turn to sex as a substitute for real
relationships. The same is true in Britain, yet we seem unable to learn the lesson (The Independent 9/12/99, p.2).

The author discusses a Teen Outreach Program that attempts to boost young women’s self-esteem “to discourage them from seeking affirmation and escape through sexual relationships”. This article acknowledges that the teenage conception rate has in fact dropped, but more importantly that a 12 year-old mother is not just “unusual” these days, but “always has been”.

However the notion of a 12 year old mother is raised in several articles in response to a young woman from Rotherham who had just given birth.

- “KIDS WITH KIDS: Young, bored and pregnant: Burhan Wazir visits the Yorkshire estate where another pre-teen girl is facing parenthood.” (The Observer, 5/9/99, p.8).

This article highlights many of the perceived images of teenage mothers. The author introduces the article by painting a bleak picture of a town where teenagers are morally loose and pregnancy is just another thing to do. She refers to the air being “thick with sexual tension” and the graffiti on the walls saying “Sharon sucks cock” next door to a shop selling furniture with an add in the window for a “baby’s cot”. She claims that the issue of the latest 12-year-old girl to become pregnant was “further evidence of urban Britain’s moral freefall.” However in a town where “there is little chance of work, and little hope for the future. A generation of children expect never to have a steady job. Being a mother at least gives young women a legitimate role.”

This article also reflects the opinions of other members of society and a 16 year old boy is quoted as saying “I don’t care that both of them want to keep the kid...these babies should be given away, sent out for adoption. People as young as that simply aren’t ready for becoming parents.” His friend goes on to disagree and claims, “Girls mature quicker than boys”. Others are said to claim that having a baby “has almost become a fashion statement.” They said of the Spice Girls pregnancies “so what if they are older than us...Girls our age think they’re cool, remember.” (This also
highlights the point made by the headmistress who was worried that young girls would try to follow the Spice Girl’s examples – see below.

A similar article appeared in The Sunday Times (5/9/99, p.16) entitled

• “Too much, too young”

The authors open the article with the following words “As Britain’s worst areas for teenage pregnancies are revealed, Richard Woods and Kirsten Sellars investigate the cause of the malaise.” Like the previous article the authors paint a bleak picture of a town where boredom results in sexually overcharged teenagers indulging in sex as a means of providing entertainment. They claim that the north of England has the highest rate of “gymslip mums” in the country and is an area where the “patter of tiny feet is that of a child pushing a pram.”

One young girl is quoted as saying “I’ve never been that lucky with men”, she said with the maturity that comes from watching too much bad television. “I’ve been with three blokes properly, but it was all I-love-you, get-your-knickers-down, I’m-off stuff. I think most men are out for what they can get.” She remains set on having a child, with or without a steady boyfriend. Marriage does not even enter the equation.” Barnsley’s a poor town, and there’s not much going on,” she says. “A baby will change my life a lot. It isn’t like rocket science. You just do the deed, then wait.”

This quote creates the impression of a young woman who has a child because there is nothing better to do.

This is reportedly echoed by another young mother “On Friday afternoon at McDonald’s in Eldon Street, Barnsley, 16-year-old Melanie was having a rest with her one year old son Lee. “I don’t have to see the inside of a classroom ever again, “ she said. “And nor do I want to.” For her, school was of no further interest.”

Yet another very similar article appeared in the Guardian (4/9/99, p.20) entitled:

• “Nightmare in the playroom: the child-parents of Yorkshire are without shame – or hope.”
This headline exemplifies the moral stigma associated with young mothers. The article again adopts a particularly bleak stance on teenage mothers and argues that there aren’t many adults who would contend “intercourse at nine and motherhood at twelve are valid lifestyle choices.” However there is an implicit assumption in this that young women do think that a 12 year old girl might have chosen to become pregnant.

The author appears to relish his cynicism and maintains that “With pre-teen sex, the argument is all about causes. In this regard – and in what is perhaps a sign that the average Briton (like the average American) is becoming instinctively media slick – the parties involved offered perfect provocative sound bites designed to provide fodder for left or right. The 12 year-old mum-to-be in Rotherham confided to her mother, only 26 herself (a distressing but typical arithmetic in these cases), that she had become pregnant in order to have “someone to love her” and who would reliably love her. This pitiful quote attempts to recast the teenage conceivers as social victims rather than villains.”

This quote is full of the negative images that surround young mothers, and there is an assumption that this young girl of 12 is manipulating the press. What is of particular note is the final sentence where the author claims that the young mother is recasting herself as a victim rather than a villain; the assumption being that she is in fact a villain. Of further note within this quote is the suggestion that young women are providing positive interpretations of their decisions, but media and society are not accepting these interpretations are valid. The final quote in this argument sums up the author’s view that teenage pregnancy is a nightmare – “Whether caused by the death of shame or the death of hope – through sexual education being too vague or too alluring – the child-parents of Yorkshire are a genuine millennial nightmare”.

These impressions may be accurate of the young women interviewed, but they may not necessarily be representative of the majority of young mothers. However, whatever the ‘reality’, articles such as these serve to create and recreate a stereotype of teenage mothers as cold, hard and feckless who are either looking for someone to love or to relieve the boredom in an otherwise monotonous life.
Having a baby is a fashion statement. As already referred to above there is also an impression that young women chose to have babies because they see them as a designer accessory. One article highlighted this notion.

- “A head teachers’ leader is predicting a wave of copycat teenage pregnancies because of publicity about the two Spice Girls – Posh and Scary – who are expecting babies” (The Independent, 8/6/98, p.7)

This headmistress claimed to “fear a generation of Spice babies born to teenage mothers.” She went on to say that she blames the government’s focus of educational achievement and contends, “For some, pregnancy might be a way of feeling success.”

Positive comments. However whilst the majority of articles that appeared were fairly damming of young mothers, there were one or two that did appear to try and redress the balance with headlines such as

- “The family: a nuclear explosion; Teenage mothers, gay parents, a bevy of step-children...they’re all in the family now. And maybe we’re the better for it.” (The Independent, 5/9/99, p.15)

- “Why can’t we do the right thing by our children? Children? Girls and boys go out to play, maim and murder; children are having a bad time of it, labelled thugs, vandals, or, at best, causes of extreme stress. It’s about time we gave them a break, says Rosalind Miles.” (The Independent, 2/7/99, p.4)

In this article the author outlined the negative images surrounding the ‘youth of today, “Twelve year olds becoming teenage mothers in a plot to get council houses, unwanted babies born out of wedlock, four-year-olds assaulting carers in the outbreaks of brat rage, violent eight-year-olds excluded from school. If you believe all you read, today’s girls smoke crack and talk dirty, wear Doc Martens to kick hell out of old ladies, embark on group shop-lifting and casual underage sex. All this leads inexorably to the aforementioned early motherhood of dim-witted pregnancy, and the whole dismal cycle repeats again.”
The author believes that it is right to question the old myth of ‘pre-liberation’ where “girls were shunted into maternity without thought or choice”. She also contends that “It was right to challenge the powerful prevailing conviction that biology was destiny, but in offering options (“Maternity is an election, not an obligation” slogan of the French Mouvement Pour La Liberation des Femmes), we have gone too far in stressing the pains and penalties of motherhood at the expense of its joys.”

She further asks, “Why do we insist on accentuating the negative, and deny the positive side of parenting, which for some is life’s greatest adventure and the single most learning experience of life?” She contends that we are trying to measure achievement by a ‘one size fits all’ method. Everyone has to succeed by achieving academic benchmarks. As mentioned above this is also echoed by the headmistress who claimed, “For some, pregnancy might be a way of feeling success.” (The Independent, 8/6/98, p.7).

However whilst she is supposedly supporting young mothers, by repeating (albeit in an ironic fashion) these stereotypes, she is inadvertently proliferating the negative image of the teenage mother.

Exploding myths – positive responses. A letter in the Guardian (6/4/04, p.4) in response to an article on teenage mothers stated, “Whilst concurring with most of what Alexander Chancellor wrote, it is disappointing that he fell into Blair’s trap: ‘the profoundly depressing subject of teenage pregnancies’”. The author contends that “for most teenagers (16, 17, 18 and 19 year olds), it is quite legal and, many teenage mothers are happily married.” This idea that being a young mother can be a good thing is supported by several young women who contend that their lives are the better for their children.

“With three children under five, by the time I was twenty four, all by different fathers, I have to admit my life was a mess. But they were great kids who have grown up to be great adults, caring and kind” (Tricia Mason, Liverpool).

“I got pregnant when I was 15 and although my parents pressurised me into having an abortion, I refused to be swayed...that was twenty years ago and Nan’s dead now but it’s all thanks to her that I was given the chance to bring up my girls and have a
career. Your intentions may be good but you've no right to decide what's best for your friend. I'm so glad my Nan gave me the benefit of the doubt.” (Sue Thomas, Kent, The Guardian 17/12/99, p5). This last quote is from an interview with a young woman who became pregnant at 17. This is a positive upbeat article that seeks to dispel some of the myths of teenage motherhood. In this article the young mother acknowledged that some people do not approve of her situation and said “As I got bigger, I’d get tut-tutting from people around town and sometimes they’d look at me and I could tell they were thinking, she’s got herself lumbered. But I didn’t care.” She believes that her baby made it all worthwhile, “the feeling of love when I held baby Ashleigh is something I can't really explain; it was just amazing. I looked at her and thought: ‘I will do anything for you’. She has made me closer to my mother, too, than I have ever been before.”

Current portrayals of young motherhood - 2004
All of the articles referred to above appeared in 1999 and it is arguable that attitudes towards teenage mothers may have changed recently and might be more positive than they were. Therefore it was decided to examine a random selection of articles about teenage mothers that appeared in the year 2004. However all the themes mentioned above also appeared within the later articles and there was still an apparent negative attitude towards young mothers. One story that particular highlighted these issues appeared in two newspapers with the headlines

- “Single mother of SIX...and she is aged just 20” (The Daily Express, 27/9/04, p.7) Sub heading – “But a free house and £1,120 a month is still not enough.”

- “Too much too young” (The Daily Mail 27/12/04, p.11) Sub heading - “At just 20, this mother gave birth to her sixth child by two fathers. She claims £1,120 benefits a month and will soon be moving to a council house paid for by you. Regrets? Not one.”

Both articles were full-page spreads and both carried several photographs. The first carried a full-length photograph of the young mother without her children. The sub heading read “Some say I have wasted my life and should have worked. But they are wrong.” This article describes a defiant young mother who is greedy and reckless. It
talks about her “flings” and “failed relationships” and claims that “last night she was shamelessly negotiating to sell her story, demanding thousands of pounds and her father claimed that the ‘taxpayers’ money she gets in benefits is not enough”. The second article also appears to compound the negative image of young mothers as leeches on society. There are references to how many benefits she receives. However the young woman’s view of her role is not as bleak as the articles would suggest and she does attempt to explain her life, but this is prefaced by “The single mother, who used some of the cash to take the family to a Butlin’s holiday centre this year, defended her lifestyle.” It appeared as though this young mother was condemned before the reader had a chance to make up his or her own mind.

In this article the young woman allegedly attempts to clarify that what happened to her was her choice; she says “It was my choice to have sex and get pregnant. I was not put under any pressure.” More importantly she claims that she is “prepared to look after all my children and bring them up myself.” However the author is quick to point out “the taxpayer, of course, helps with the task” and in the next paragraph highlights that her father is “Charles, 52, a mechanic on invalidity benefits” implying that the taxpayer is supporting him as well.

This young mother is determined to do the best for her children and says that she intends “to go to college and start a career in childcare when her youngest starts school. ‘I want to train in children’s services to make my children proud of me’ she said ‘When all the kids are at school I don’t want them to see me sitting at home doing nothing.’” Unfortunately any good intentions that the young mother may have are lost in the prejudicial rhetoric of the authors. At the end of both articles the issue of false impressions are still apparent, and both articles end by quoting the ‘fact’ that “over the past 30 years, the number of babies born outside marriage has risen five-fold and the number of single-parents families has trebled”. It is noted that vague statistics are being used and they have reused the notion of a rise in pregnancies over a thirty year period, but do not specifically aim this at ‘teenage’ mothers, but single mothers in general.
It is arguable that this is an exceptional story and these prejudicial attitudes are only relevant to this young woman; however these attitudes are still present across a spread of articles. The Daily Mail (16/3/04, p.7) carried an article of a young mother entitled “The girl of 17 with three children by three fathers.”

The article opens with the words “Courtney Cassidy is adamant that she has been responsible about sex.” The author apparently thinks otherwise. This article carries a picture of the mother with her children and photographs of all three fathers, including a silhouette of the father she ‘does not remember’. The author alleges that “when the baby was nearly six months old. She got drunk and took a stranger home. He left before she woke up. Soon she found she was pregnant again.” He then goes on to examine how each child was conceived. “When her son Lennon was two weeks old, Courtney went clubbing again – and met the third man in her life. She brought him home that night and again had unprotected sex.... luckily the third boyfriend has decided to stick around. Unluckily, he hasn’t managed to find himself a job yet.”

This supports the image of teenage mothers, as young, drunken and feckless with little or no morals. The author also draws the reader’s attention to her reliance on benefits “But the burgeoning family have a council flat and Courtney gets £620 a month in benefits.” It is arguable that this article presents teenage mothers as ‘leeches’ and such derogatory comments about the young mothers are not isolated.

In response to this case one journalist, wrote in The Observer Magazine (28/1/04, p.5) “Courtney seems to be quite enjoying the media attention thank you very much. Never before has a 'scourge of the nation' seemed to be having such a good time”. It is arguable that this implies that they are ‘having a good time” at the taxpayer’s expense. The Sunday Times (21/3/04, p.9) described her home as “The heavy wooden door is unvarnished and has a metal clasp for a padlock: the original was kicked down by the police, who mistakenly thought the flat belonged to a drug dealer.” This article is in a similar vein to the first and heavily emphasises the variety of fathers and manner of conceptions. It focuses again on the attraction of benefits. “The weight of responsibility that bears down on any middle-class couple expecting a baby - already wondering how they'll afford to get their child through university -doesn't figure here. Another baby? More benefit. She and her boyfriend John King currently draw £620 a
month. At the suggestion that she might feel guilty about living on other people's money, she looks blank. It's what everyone does."

The Daily Mail (1/2/04) printed an article about two sisters who were both teenage mothers. Referring to the younger sister the author says. “Soon after Jordan was born Carrie left him to be cared for by her mother and stepfather while she went off with Ryan, smoking cannabis and bingeing on alcohol most days.” (The Daily Mail, 1/2/04, p.31)

Not all the stories were directly about the experiences of young mothers. On the 28th August the Daily Mail also printed a story about a court case concerning a car crash. The headline read

- “Teenage mother guilty of causing A77 death crash.” (The Daily Mail, 24/8/04, p6) “Marion Lithgow, 19, had been seen tailgating other drivers before she lost control on a bend at around 70mph, smashed into a crash barrier before bouncing into her victim's vehicle... Lithgow, who had passed her test only five months before the tragedy on the A77 in Ayrshire on July 31 last year, had her nine-month-old daughter in the car at the time.”

The fact that the driver was a teenage mother is irrelevant to the case. However the author uses this as a means of describing the character of the driver. It is arguable that this creates an impression of an irresponsible mother.

There were also several articles about the general issue of teenage pregnancy and motherhood. The Daily Mail, (3/4/04, p.17) carried a headline

- “Under age girls ‘sterilised’ to cut teen pregnancies”

The article open with “Girls as young as 14 are being ‘sterilised’ without their parents’ knowledge as part of the Government’s attempts to curb teenage pregnancy rates.” It transpires that ‘sterilisation’ is in fact a contraceptive implant that makes them infertile for three years. But the use of the word ‘sterilisation’ creates a stronger image of an issue that is ‘out of control’. This image is highlighted by a full page headline on the front page of The Sun (13/9/04)
• **SHOCK SUN SURVEY**

**TEEN SEX**

**TIMEBOMB**

1 in 4 romps while underage – 60% don’t use condoms – most drink, 42% try drugs.

Again this article refers to Britain having the ‘worst rate of teenage pregnancies in Western Europe’ and how figures have risen over the last 30 years. What is clear from these articles is that the prejudicial views that were apparent in 1999 were still apparent in 2004. There is still an emphasis on the costs to society and low moral standards and outlook that they young mothers have. Unfortunately any positive messages that the young mothers try to get across appear to be lost in the negative maelstrom.

**The use of photographs in creating an impression.** Of further note amongst the latter articles examined was the use of photographs in creating an image of a teenage mother. As Sontag points out photographs make “the entire world available as an object of appraisal.” (Sontag 1978. p.110).

Within the articles examined for the first research question there was a strong image of motherhood portrayed by the photographs attached to the various articles. Mothers appear to be portrayed in the press as happy with their roles. The articles are littered with words such ‘joy’ and ‘delight’ and this is reflected in the pictures that accompany the articles.

In this picture the mother is shown in hospital after giving birth to her baby at the roadside after a car crash. The mother is shown holding the baby close to her chest and smiling broadly.
This photograph is the same story, but in another newspaper. The photograph still shows the mother smiling and holding the baby close, but this time they are joined by the ‘proud’ father. It appears that many photographs of mothers and children also include the father which reinforces the notion of the nuclear family; mother, father and children.

The body language of the couple is also noteworthy. Not only are the parents, in particular the mother, smiling broadly and showing their teeth, they are also in close proximity to their child. They are holding the child very close to their faces and holding tightly. This body language seems to be a feature of the close and happy relationship between mother and child and appears in many other photographs, such as these.
However what is of particular note is that this only seems to apply to 'normal' mothers; those that fulfil the tight criteria for 'good mothers'. It would appear that in the National Press teenage mothers are subjected to different portrayals.

In this fairly typical photograph the young mothers are seen out with their children and the babies in buggies. There are no apparent broad smiles, the young women do not appear to be particularly happy and there is no apparent closeness with their children. This is echoed in the following photograph.
This photograph again shows another young mother out with her baby in a buggy and again not smiling. However this picture also shows a photograph of two young women reading a book.

This article highlights the notion of class and teenage motherhood. It suggests that research shows that teenage motherhood is mainly found amongst the ‘lower’ classes, whilst ‘middle’ class teenagers are more likely to have abortion. The juxtaposition of the photographs seems to suggest education is the alternative to teenage motherhood and that teenage mothers are unlikely to follow the academic route.

The same photograph is again used with another article to highlight the class issue. This time the young mother is juxtaposed with a teenager with a backpack. The teenager appears to suggest she is a traveller, possibly a young woman on her ‘gap year’ between ‘A’ levels and university, indicating a young woman who is still in education.
What is particularly interesting in both these pictures is that the young women who do not have children are happy and smiling whilst the young mother is unsmiling, almost unhappy or sullen. This arguably seems to suggest that early motherhood is not a happy experience.

All the photographs of the young mothers shown so far seem to show a distance from their babies. It is arguable that implicit in this is that they are emotionally distant, if not disinterested mothers. As already highlighted earlier in this chapter part of the image of a teenage mother is an element of apathy. From the articles it would appear that many people believe that young mothers have merely accepted their situation, but not apparently for the right reasons and as such young mothers are portrayed as disinterested and lazy, views like these are emphasised by photographs such as these.

In this photograph the young woman is shown alone, without her child. Apparently this young woman is the single mother of 6 children and yet there is no child to be seen in this picture. She is shown with her hands in pocket nonchalantly leaning against a wall. What is of note is the expression on her face. She is unsmiling and arguably almost appears to be smirking. This is highlighted by the headlines next to her. She appears to be defiant.
This photograph of a pregnant teenager again appears to highlight how unhappy teenage mothers apparently feel. She is shown unsmiling with her head in her hand, it is arguable that this pose suggests an appearance of boredom or apathy.

What is of note about this picture is that the young woman is shown in her school uniform. This clearly sets young woman in the context of a schoolgirl at school which serves to highlight her age. Lindner (2004) found that in photographs (such as advertisements of newspapers) women were more likely than men to be decontextualised, i.e. women were more often shown in locations that aren’t easily identified. However in this picture the young woman is very clearly set in context.

More importantly the photographs of ‘normal’ mothers seem to show them in either a hospital or a domestic setting, or a ‘neutral’ (i.e. no background)
Whereas teenage mothers are pictured as ‘out and about’ with their children in buggies.

However it is important to point out that whilst this does appear to be the main pictorial portrayal of a teenage mother, there were one or two exceptions.

This photograph shows two smiling women and a little boy; mother, daughter and grandson, a happy family picture. All three are smiling happily and show a physical closeness that reflects ‘normal’ motherhood. However this is a picture of a thirty-year-old grandmother and her 16-year-old daughter with her 2-year-old son. Both women were teenage mothers. A first glance this picture appears to buck the trend for
young mothers to be portrayed as distant and unhappy and appears to be a positive view of young mothers. However the copy that is attached to this picture says.

"Three generations, Amanda Stubbings (right) with her two-year-old grandson David and daughter Melissa, now 16. "I know I should have listened to my mum", says the teenager."

Implicit in this is that she has made a mistake. The article alludes the fact that her mother told not to make the same mistakes as her by becoming a teenager mother and yet she has. By saying she should have listened to her mother she is admitting her mistake and as such the view of teenage motherhood as a ‘mistake’ is further compounded.

However there was another article that painted a very positive picture of teenage motherhood.

Of particular note within the stories that appeared at this time was an article about a young woman who took her exams the day after she gave birth. Whilst this picture did
not appear in the regular national newspapers, however it is important to include this in this study as this article appeared in Sugar Magazine. Brown et al (1994) argue, "Individuals actively and creatively sample available cultural symbols, myths, and rituals as they produce their identities. For teens, the mass media are central to this process because they are a convenient source of cultural options". (p.813) Sugar is a magazine specifically aimed at teenage girls and it is arguable that as such might be particularly influential in the development of young women’s views.

In this photograph young mothers are portrayed as ‘normal’ loving mothers. Not only is there a physical closeness, the young mother is actually kissing her baby and demonstrating how much she loves her child. This is reflected in another photograph within this article.

This photograph from the same magazine shows not only closeness between mother and child, but also the proud father. This again serves to dispel a myth about teenage mothers, that all young mothers are single. Here we see the father, not just present, but happy.

This picture shows the young mother at work at her computer with an insert of her new baby. Again this helps to dispel some of the myths surrounding motherhood. Not all young mothers drop out of school; some are capable of juggling the needs of a new baby with their schoolwork.
It would appear that in the national newspapers teenage motherhood is portrayed as a bad thing and to be discouraged at all costs. However, as already pointed out, this magazine is specifically aimed at teenage girls and the message that seems to come across from this article and in particular these photographs, is that teenage motherhood is acceptable. Young mothers love their babies and are able to cope with the demands of school and a family. It would appear that teenage magazines are not portraying mothers in the same way.

5.3.9 Summary. From the findings it would appear that within the national newspaper there is an overwhelming negative image of teenage motherhood. Through the use of language and photography, young mothers are constructed as manipulative and lazy. This image is very similar to those that are drawn upon with the body of literature surrounding teenage motherhood. Also within this portrayal are clear outlines of reasons why young mothers are stigmatised. It would appear that young mothers could be stigmatised for many reasons, such as poverty and moral lassitude etc. These dimensions reflect the different dimensions of stigma outlined in Chapter three.

However not all the portrayals were negative and there did appear to a few articles that attempt to redress the balance. What was of particular note within these positive portrayals was positioning of articles. The most positive article that appeared during this timescale appeared in a magazine aimed at young women and it is arguable that as such it articles such as these that are likely to have the greatest impact on a young woman. Nevertheless, despite this positive portrayal, the majority of articles that appeared within the national press appear to suggest that young mothers are still stigmatised for their situation. It is important to note that there does not appear to be a single reason why they are stigmatised, as the authors of the articles all appeared to draw on different dimensions of the situation that they believes to be a problem. This highlights the point that an individual could be stigmatised for a range of perceived attributes and that the reasons for stigmatising an individual are subjective and dependent on the views of the stigmatiser.
Research Question 2 – How are mothers and motherhood portrayed within the national press?

What is clear in the findings of this part of the analysis is the wealth of apparent tensions within the portrayals of motherhood. The main superordinate themes of the Natural and the Unnatural mother are presented as binary constructions, suggesting that motherhood is either natural in content or not. However within each of these themes are contradictory and conflicting sub-themes that supply a constant state of tensions and flux.

Themes

The Natural Mother

Biological and maternal urges

The Unnatural Mother

Tensions

Miracle of birth
State controlled parenting
Work/Home debate
Professional role at odds with motherhood
Paradox and guilt

Baby makes it right

The lasting effects of the mother

Celebrity mothers

The natural mother. The dictionary defines ‘natural’ as “pertaining to, produced by, or according to nature” and motherhood is seen as a natural state for women. As Ashurst and Hall, (1989) maintain “when a woman has a child, she confirms for herself and for others that she is a complete woman, fertile and capable of the biological task of creating and perpetuating life” (p.7). This image of the natural mother is highlighted by the sub-theme of biological and maternal urges.

Biological and Maternal Urges. In this theme it would appear that within the media portrayals of motherhood there is an implicit, if not explicit, suggestion that motherhood is a biological construct in that women are driven by an innate biological
desire to be mothers. This notion is underpinned by several articles that appeared during the second period reviewed and is exemplified by The Daily Express (4/12/03, p9, 10) which carried a three page spread with the headline

- “Your baby clock is TICKING”

The article starts “For years women have worried about their biological clock, conscious of the fact that if they don’t have babies at a young age, they may miss the boat altogether.”

This implies that women are driven by the biological urge or need to have a baby. This is supported by articles that appeared at the same time in the Daily Telegraph, Guardian and the Daily Mail (12/12/03, p.8) about how it is becoming more common for older women to date and marry younger men. One of the reasons for this trend was that “older women who want children are attracted to younger, healthier males.” (Telegraph 12/12/03, front page) The articles suggest that this is an innate desire to find the perfect mate in order to ensure that older women bear healthier children. From this it would appear that a woman’s choice of partner is determined by her drive to be a mother.

What is of note within these articles is that women are portrayed as so desperate to have a child that they will resort to lying to their partners. According to reported findings from “The National Scruples and Lies Survey” (The Daily Telegraph 4/12/03, p.9) “nearly a third of women say if they wanted a baby and their partner did not, they would lie about using contraception.” This quote emphasises the perceived strength of the maternal urge and the lengths that women will go to have a child. What is also of note within this view of the natural mothers is an apparent lack of agency. This biological determinism as portrayed by the media appears to suggest that women are at the mercy of their bodies and are helpless to fight it. It would appear as though motherhood is a biological presupposition and women are merely waiting to fulfil their roles.

However, as has already been suggested, motherhood is not just a biological construct, but a social one as well. It would appear from the findings that what society believes to be a ‘natural mother’ is not just constructed through their biology,
but through their culture and history as well. This is highlighted within a letter that appeared on the problem page of The Sun (12/12/03, p.58).

"I long for a child so much I can't go shopping without buying baby clothes. I have a lovely fiancé who's doing everything he can to earn extra money so we can have a house and be financially secure. He wants to wait until then before we start a family. I've told him a bit about how I feel but not how badly I yearn for a baby. My parents would kill me if I got pregnant, as I'm only 18. I have a great job but I'd give it up for a child. I know all about the sleepless nights and dirty nappies, but it makes no difference."

This letter demonstrates the desperate longing that some women experience and yet the agony aunt's response agrees with the fiancé and says it would be better to wait. "Feeling this broody is very natural among girls from the teens onwards." At the end she says "You'll be a better mum if you have some experience of adult life" suggesting that although she is biologically ready to have a child, and that her urge to have a child is only natural, she is not 'socially' ready and needs time to mature. This suggests tensions that are evident within the many images of motherhood. Whilst a woman might be 'desperate' to have a child, it may not be perceived as the right time or the right circumstances to fulfil this desire. This appears to suggest that it is natural to want and to have children, but that having children should only happen within fairly strict social parameters. This is demonstrated within an article entitled

- "Another child - we couldn't, could we..." (The Daily Telegraph 10/12/03, p.23)

The sub heading in this article states "I tried hard, I got a dog. But having babies is like a drug". The author claims that she is addicted to being a mother. She outlines all the reasons she should not have a child, but her body is still "screaming out" for one. As she says, "it is hard to justify, for a lot of people it is irrational, irresponsible. But it feels so strong it takes over the logical."

This article is about a woman who is presented as desperate to have another child, but putting her family's needs first. "We already had three children, he was working hard, and I knew I wouldn't cope. But I never accepted it. I just pushed it into a different room". Within this quote she highlights the pressure to conform to societal
norms. She says, “the most difficult thing to deal with was other people’s assumptions that your family was done and everyone was content with that.”

The article appears to contain some fairly strong images of what it means to be a mother and what it means to deny the natural urge for more children such as “The pain that arises from a woman’s decision, for practical reasons, not to have any more children wins little sympathy from those who have fertility problems. It could be viewed as self-indulgent, even luxurious kind of pain. It is none the less all too real for many women who are some years from the menopause, and who feel a sense of unfinished business, but have to accept that the idea of another baby is insane for almost every reason - financial, professional, marital, familial, mental and physical.” This quote clearly sets out conflicting ideals and highlights the paradoxical nature of motherhood. Whilst on one hand this woman can be seen as selflessly ignoring her maternal urges for the greater good of her family, she also recognises that this view could be construed as self-indulgent by some women. She acknowledges the pain that some women who are unable to have children might feel about her comments. This highlights the debate about whether or not to have children and how many a woman should have.

The unnatural mother. So far the findings have demonstrated the images that exists within the media of what it is to be a ‘normal’ or ‘natural’ mother but within this there are tensions and implicit suggestions as to what a bad or unnatural mother might be. The articles reviewed highlight the horror of society, and the media, to an unnatural or abnormal mother. It would appear that one image of an unnatural mother is one who could inflict extreme harm on their children.

It has been suggested that traditionally mothers are perceived as being there to protect their offspring and willing to lay down their lives to save their children (Bassin, Honey, & Kaplan, 1995). This appears to be natural mothering. It is arguable that this is why there was a strong response within the media portrayal of the case of Angela Cannings who was accused of murdering her babies and was appealing against her Jail sentence. This storyline ran over several days and was covered by all the newspapers. Of specific interest is the spread of headlines on the day the story broke.
Chapter Five

- "Would she give birth just to kill her babies?" (The Daily Mail 5/12/03, p.5)
- "It beggars belief that wife gave birth in order to murder, court is told." (The Daily Express 5/12/03, p.21)
- "Did she bear kids in order to kill – failed mum appeals" (The Daily Mirror 5/12/03, p37)

These headlines all support the same message which highlights the conflicting image of the ‘natural’ mother who is supposed to love and protect her children with the ‘unnatural’ mother who could kill her babies. Her lawyer used this argument as the basis of her defence and is quoted as saying “to convict her, the jury must say to themselves there came a point where she was giving birth in order to kill. It would require an extraordinary situation – she must have been giving birth knowing she was going to be overcome by an indescribable urge to kill or try to kill the baby. That proposition beggars belief.” (The Daily Mirror 5/12/03, p.37). He goes on to say "There was no evidence that Mrs Cannings, was mentally unstable, had abused them or was anything other than a “supportive, loving caring mother.” This is an important quote because implicit in this is a prototype of a good / ‘normal’ mother, i.e. supportive, loving and caring. This is echoed again later when he is quoted as saying "it is asking a lot to say that this woman, who appeared outwardly caring, tortured her children, taking them to the brink but not actually letting them die.” From this it would appear that no mother would torture her children, as mothers are perceived as nurturers, not murderers.

Tensions. So far the emergent themes have outlined apparently clear images of what a mother should and should not be. However the portrayal of natural / unnatural or good / bad mothers, as clear dichotomies is misleading. The idea that motherhood can be presented as ‘black and white’ is overly simplistic and on further analysis there appears to be vast areas of differing shades of grey. Wall (1997) maintains that the term ‘natural’ changes in response to the constantly changing semiotic system and as such what is considered natural will alter and be reconfigured dependent upon what is considered culturally acceptable at a given time. This is further exemplified when returning to the definition of what is natural. The dictionary definition refers to natural as being “pertaining to nature”. The findings above suggest that becoming a mother is a natural state for a woman and the desire to become a mother is driven by
biological urges. However the dictionary definition goes on to say that natural is “not miraculous: not the work of man: not interfered with by man: inborn: having the feelings that may be expected to come by nature, kingly: normal: happening in the usual course: spontaneous: not far-fetched; not acquired: without affectation: not fictitious: physical like, like nature: related by actual birth (not adoption, etc): hence (now rarely) legitimate: (now equally) illegitimate: natural born or having the status of the natural born: in a state of the natural born: in a state of nature.”

This definition contains clear guidelines as to what is and what is not ‘natural’. More importantly this definition demonstrates the inherent problems with current motherhood and highlights the many tensions that exist. For example, whilst there is an image that suggests that a woman may wish to fulfil her role as a woman by having a child, it is only considered appropriate within certain parameters. Moreover, research suggests that if a woman is unable to fulfil this role she may be considered, or consider herself, a lesser woman (Veevers, 1980). However it is arguable that with the availability of current reproductive technology this would not be an issue, but as highlighted within the dictionary definition, what is considered ‘natural’ is situated within a very tight designated description. Within the definition is a clear diktat that ‘natural’ is free from miracles; this raises an important issue within the available images of motherhood and the availability of reproductive technology. A strong sub-theme to emerge within the theme of natural motherhood, is the idea of the miracle of birth.

**Miracle of Birth.** Within this portrayal there appears to be an implicit value placed on children and the value of giving birth, and by giving birth to a baby the mother is part of that miracle and achieves status by being part of that process; fulfilling their role as a woman. More importantly achieving that fulfilment in difficult circumstances, or against the odds, appears to elevate the status of the mother to an even higher plane. The media appear to almost beatify the mother in ‘appropriate’ circumstances.

This theme seems to fall into one of two categories covering either the lengths to which a woman will go in order to conceive or the circumstances in which the baby is born. Either way, the way in which the story is presented creates an image of giving birth as a miracle and something to celebrate.
The first category appears to be women who have achieved motherhood against the odds, and is highlighted by the headlines such as:

- "Miracle Babes" (Daily Mirror 9/12/03, p.34)
- "Joy for 'no hope mum'" (The Daily Mirror, 8/12/03, p.16)

The latter article is about a woman who was told she could not have children because of her cancer treatment and yet has given birth to a baby boy. She claims at the end of the article to be "the luckiest woman alive."

However these stories are juxtaposed by an article that appeared in The Daily Mirror (12/12/03, p.58) about another young woman with cancer who has been forced into making a "heart rending decision - either never have children or give herself a 50/50 chance of survival." This article uses emotional language, making use of evocative phrases such as "a heart-rending decision". However this case only appears to be newsworthy because it is one of the very few articles that goes against the image of women being selfless, and doing all that they can to have a child, and consequently appears to further instil the notion of the importance of motherhood. In this story the young woman is portrayed as having decided not to have children because she felt that she should live her life. "It's a stark choice, but if it's a case of not having children or dying then there's no comparison. I want to live and I have been given that choice". However she does acknowledge that this is not an easy decision for her to make and says "There are times when I get down about not having children".

Research has argued that women who choose not to have children are viewed as unnatural women because it is believed that all women want to be mothers and, as Letherby (1994) suggests, having a child is proof of entry to adulthood; whereas the childless are still considered 'childlike'. Veveers (1980) argues that the voluntarily childless are stigmatised for their situation, but not because they cannot have children, but because they do not want them. Letherby contends that society believes that women are made to feel that they should take advantage of the medical opportunities that are available to them in order to fulfil their roles as women (Franklin, 1997). This view appears to be supported by the available data and most women are portrayed as 'desperate' to have children and willing to go to any lengths to fulfil this
need, including the use of reproductive technology, and to protect the health of the children that they already have.

It is interesting to note that debates about the use of reproductive technologies inevitably centre on the definition of ‘motherhood’; what does it mean to be a mother? This is not just in terms of what it means to society as a whole, or to the individual man or woman, but also what it means to the medical profession. The literature that surrounds this issue appears to examine motherhood in terms of medical versus social models. Weger (1997) refers to the notion of ‘true motherhood’ suggesting that there is a preference for biological motherhood over social motherhood and women will go to great lengths to achieve biological motherhood. This again goes back to the dictionary definition about preference of natural motherhood over social motherhood, which is apparent within the articles examined.

There is also another strand within this theme that highlights the lengths to which women will apparently go to help their children and how they will use reproductive technology as a means of protecting their families. The Daily Mail (6/12/03, p.3) outlines the joy and pain that IVF can bring to a family. This article presents a mother holding her new baby who has been “designed to help” his “desperately” sick brother. She is aware of the risks to both children but says “We have agonised over this, because no parent would like to think they are doing anything which could risk the life of their child, even it is the only chance of a cure”. The article acknowledges “Jamie’s birth ignited a moral controversy over “made to order IVF babies”, the government IVF watchdog deemed it unethical.”

Feminist scholars are also concerned about the impact of modern reproductive technologies on women’s choices, not just on the individual level, but also within the group. They cite current legislation that dictates the circumstances in which reproductive technologies can be used (eg Corea, 1985b; Rowland 1987). They maintain that this issue highlights the threat of ‘difference’ in terms of oppression and attempted subordination (Williams 1996). However Letherby (2002) contends that issues like this are to do with diversity of status. It has been argued that poorer women receive less quality health care and have limited choices especially in regard to reproductive technologies (Davis 1990; Nsiah-Jefferson, 1989). Thomas (1985) and
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Foster (1995) contend that contraception has led to an increase in the supervision of women’s lives. Through contraception a woman is able to control her fertility and take responsibility rather than the man. Foster (1995) argues that contraception has meant that women’s fertility is more closely monitored now than in previous times. But it is not just contraception that had led to this view. Spallone (1986) examined this issue in relation to the Warnock report, contending that this report provided a window on the dominant images of reproductive technology and women’s bodies, in particular “the relationship between scientific knowledge and knowledge constructed by the state, between ideology and technology” (p543).

This appears to be in contrast to the portrayal within the national press which seems to focus on the ethics of ‘creating’ a life as opposed to the effects that this might have on women’s autonomy

State controlled parenting. Within the various portrayals of motherhood there appears to be a strong underlying issue of control and power. However where the control and power lies is debatable. Historically society supports and perpetuates the view that a woman’s primary role is motherhood (although a man’s primary role is not purported to be a father). Despite their apparent lack of power in society, women believe that they do have power in gestation and childbirth of babies, but this is being threatened (Wolliver 1991). Women are inundated with advice from midwives, health visitors, doctors, childcare manuals on how their child should be raised. This advice appears to be conflicting and confusing, but is supposedly held up as “expert advice” (Kaplan, 1992). Further to this, Letherby (1999) points out that whilst, in Britain, motherhood is rhetorically valued it is not supported by the State as women are still seen as dependents of the men (who have the power) (e.g. Coppock, Haydon & Richter 1995). Brewel (1998) points out that the law requires the man to support his children regardless of the mother’s wishes. Therefore it is arguable that it is not just the issue of who controls a woman’s body and her unborn foetus, but also who controls the child that she bears and how she raises that child.

This theme is exemplified by the media reporting of the role of the government in the construction of the image of motherhood. Within this theme the media appears to be putting forward the notion that motherhood is so important that it should not be left to mothers alone. Because of the sociological and financial implications of the results of
motherhood, governments apparently feel the need to be involved in the raising and development of the children and the family unit. Implicit in this is that giving birth and mothering is fundamental to the fabric of society.

Within this theme the media appear to highlight the governmental concerns regarding the finances of child rearing, the contribution of mothers to the economy, the expense of badly reared children, and the cost to the child themselves of being badly reared and the impact of this on future societies.

Chase and Rogers (2001) suggest that motherhood is the most ‘public of personal conditions’. They contend that whilst motherhood is an intensely emotional and personal experience it is also a subject that preoccupies successive governments and policy makers. Kaplan (1992) contends that whilst a woman may arguably still hold the power over whether or not she has a baby, the state stills holds tight control over how that child is raised. According to the portrayal within the press Society can apparently intervene at many different levels. This could be by championing the nuclear family, e.g. “A Married family is a better off family” (The Daily Mail, 12/12/03, p.15) in which article it was said Government research showed that the children of married couples have a much better standard of living than those whose parents simply live together, or to the physical and mental development of the baby, e.g. The Nappy State (The Daily Express 1/12/03, p.29), “Babies get exercise regime by government order”. This article alleges that in a bid to boost brainpower, parents will be given an instruction manual to keep their babies physically fit.
It would appear from these findings that the State will even intervene in how a child should be raised and will penalise those that fail to fulfil their commitments as parents. "They’re no angels...admits mother facing prison if she doesn’t bring her tearaway daughters under control" (Daily Mail, December 12th 2003, p.19). In the article it was explained that a single mother had been told she faces prison if she fails to stop her tearaway daughters from terrorising neighbouring families. From this it would appear that far from the old maxim of “mother knows best” it would seem to be suggested that the ‘nanny state’ knows best. There seems to be an image that suggests that the Government is best placed to decide what is best for the child, how they should be raised, by whom and how this should be funded.

During the period being reviewed there were several articles about tax reforms, including financing childcare. Contained within these various articles are strong messages about the control that the state can have over the way in which children are parented. It appears that to be a fulfilled and functioning female a woman should be a mother and yet to be a fulfilled and functioning member of society a woman should work. “Childcare is really expensive. I understand why and I think that to pay any less demeans the job. I am not resentful of the cost because I thing there’s nothing more important than looking after children.... but it is a big drain. Over 50% of what I take home goes on childcare." (The Guardian 12/12/03, p.11) What is of note within this quote is that this mother believes that looking after children is one of the most important things, but she is not doing it herself. It is interesting that the government does not pay mothers after the first year to look after their own children; this creates an impression that it is only an important job if you are looking after other people’s children. The alternative view is that mothers are not the best people to look after their own children and childcare is a job for trained professionals.

However not everyone appeared to agree with this view, “Nationalising childhood – Yesterday saw the launch of yet more ‘child-friendly’ policies. Don’t be fooled. Their aim is to destroy the family and give the state even more control over our children.” (The Daily Mail 11/12/03. p.12). This article is indicative of the attitude that some mothers have towards the government interventions. The author contends that “This programme however is not about the interests of children at all. It is rather a radical
agenda to reshape the family, to make parents increasingly dependent upon the state and to undermine them by giving the government more and more control over the care of children”.

From the media portrayal it would appear that the whole thrust of these policies is to increase access to ‘childcare’ and encourage more women to return to the workplace. But it is arguable that the government does not mean childcare by the child’s own parents, but care by others. This article highlights that this is “the one thing that’s really important and yet is not provided for.” The author argues that children need their own mothers to look after them, “Children who are in day-care from an early age are far more likely to have behavioural problems than infants who are cared for by their mothers…. the whole system is loaded against stay at home mothers... Not only does it discriminate against women’s desire to do the best for their children, but under the camouflage of “help the children”, it actively undermines their parents.... the message this give is that the care of children is a collective activity to be supervised and run by the state, which knows how to bring up children better than their own mothers who should be sent out to work instead”. This quote raises an important issue and one which appears to dominate many debates. As already mentioned, within this portrayal it would appear the “mother doesn’t know best”, or perhaps is not in the best position to raise their children and, as such, mothers are caught between conflicting messages about whether to stay at home and be a full time mother or to return to work.

Work/home debate. This theme clearly highlights the tensions that exist within the image of motherhood. This theme constructs the differing opinions about what a good or bad mother does or does not do. However there seems to be no clear consensus of opinion and it would appear that where the individual stands as a mother places another mother within one of those categories. From the data it would appear that there is a portrayal which suggests that working mothers see stay at home mothers as ‘selling out’ and stay at home mothers see working mothers as deficient. However it is not as simple as that, for it would appear that whilst each camp views the other as deficient in mothering skills, they also apparently see themselves as failing.
However it would appear that it is not just mothers who have views on other mothers, but fathers as well. This debate was exemplified and fuelled by the author Rod Liddle who launched a scathing attack on stay at home mothers entitled

- "Bone Idle" (The Daily Mail, 4/12/03, p.55).

He claimed to be horrified by women who leave work to have children, only to remain at home once the children are at school. It is important to note that this tirade is not just directed towards mothers, but all women (he claims; according to the Equal Opportunities Commission, only 57% of women work full time, fewer than half of married women work fulltime, whereas 97% of married men work fulltime).

However the main thrust of his argument is levelled against mothers. He maintains that there are cultural pressures that contribute to keeping women in the home, in some cases economic pressures as well, but generally a lot of women do not work because they do not like working (the reasons for this he maintains are very similar to the reasons why men do not like working, but he contends that they do not have the choice to stay at home).

This article highlights an important dilemma that faces mothers, whether to stay at home or to return to work. However whatever decision they make, it appears that women will blame themselves and feel guilty. Liddle contends that this is partly because women believe that there is a special bond between mother and child. However he argues women would not believe this if they believed the feminist lines that mothers have been fed for many years. Implicit in this article is that Liddle does not believe this bond and considers stay at home mothers as 'lazy'.

However on the 11th December the Daily Mail (p.62) also ran another article in response to this by Rod Liddle's partner. She admits that he was in parts right about what he said. She says, "So I admit it. I was jealous of the children's Nanny, Cheryl. She is very nice and the children adore her. But she didn't give birth to them: I did".

She goes on to say "More recently, Tyler (her son) diplomatically told me he liked Mummy and Cheryl 'the same'. I was filling in the forms to go part-time the next day." There appears to be an element of ownership, in that she feels that they are her children and therefore they must love her more. This also refers back to the natural / biological status of the mother.
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She goes on to say "Then there was the guilt. I don’t feel bad just because some newspaper tells me I’m turning my children into violent criminals by going to work. I feel bad because I do the comparisons with the stay-at-home mothers myself. I constantly fail to do the things that they do automatically." This quote highlights the guilt that mothers feel, regardless of whether they stay at home or go back to work.

There appears to be an image which suggests that stay at home mothers are instinctively more in tune with the needs of their children. However she also appears to feels that there is an instinctive quality to mothering when she says “Call it lazy if you like Rod, but we have different priorities. Someone has to give the children a domestic life – and instinctively that person is me.” The author believes that there is an innate reason why she, as the children’s mother, should be at home with them. This again highlights the image of the natural quality of motherhood.

This article also included a selection of readers’ comments which illustrates the breadth of opinions and the extent of the divide which are apparently inherent in this debate. Johnston and Swanson (2004a, 2004b) suggest that employment status has become a standard for evaluating good and bad mothers and suggest that working and stay at home mothers are subject to significantly different portrayals (Johnston and Swanson, 2003a). Buxton (1998) maintains that these differing images of the working mother and the stay at home mother are constructed as rigid binaries as either good or bad mothers and as such are seen as dichotomous. However these rigid binaries fail to acknowledge the large grey areas that exist for mothers who work part time and working mothers who are still at some points during the day, those who are exclusively mothers, or those mothers that work and are in positions that are considered incompatible with their role as a mother.

*Professional Role at odds with the role of mother.* This theme further highlights the tensions of motherhood, because even for mothers within the workplace there are expectations and inconsistencies that the media highlight and explore. According to the media it would appear that there are certain roles that women perform that are in conflict with their roles as mothers. It would appear that there is a vast amount of pressure for women to go out to work, but even when they do it would seem that the media puts them under pressure to question whether they have made the right decision.
From the results it would appear that there is a image that mothers are good, caring, nurturing women, who put their families needs before their own and it is apparent that many mothers believe that they are performing a valuable role. This notion is of motherhood as a role is evident in many of the themes and in particular within the debate between working and stay at home mothers. However the conflict between roles becomes even more apparent when the professional role is perceived as incongruent with the role of the mothers. This conflict of roles was evident in the story about the newly elected head of terrorism. The Times ran a front-page headline

- “Mother and Commander” (The Times 2/12/03)

The Daily Mail ran a similar headline

- “The mother leading our war on terrorism” (The Daily Mail 2/12/03, p.17)

It would appear that this story was noteworthy not only because the new leader was a woman, but because she was also a mother. The strength in both these headlines is in the incongruous nature of the images. Motherhood is juxtaposed with terrorism. Mothers are portrayed as soft and caring, whereas terrorism is portrayed as cruel and heartless. The implicit assumption in these headlines is that mothers are not expected to do a job like this. It is arguable that if a man had filled this role, the story would not have appeared in such a prominent position, if at all.

Also within the body of the text are details that are pertinent to her role and duties as a mother. “She is married with children. Her husband is understood to have given up work to look after the family.” It is arguable that if this article were about a man, whether he had children or not would not be deemed newsworthy and it would not question who would be looking after the children. As such it would appear that this story seems to suggest that this is not a job for a woman.

However within this portrayal it is not just catching terrorists that mothers are not expected to do; they are also not expected to be terrorists.

- “"Black widows” kill 41 on train”. (The Times, 6/12/03, p18)
This story alleges that up to 30 female terrorists attacked a Russian train, killing 40 people and wounding 150. However they were not just women they were wives and mothers. It was believed that some were avenging the deaths of their husbands, but most were doing this to protect their families. This again highlights the lengths that women will go to defend their children. It was specifically stated “a bomb blast ripped through a train packed with students and children in southern Russia yesterday”. This article appears to be implying that the terrorists were willing to kill other people’s children to protect their own.

Also it is not just violence that is at odds with motherhood; it would appear that sex is as well.

- “The Game’s up – Jilly Bywater hit the headlines after she turned to prostitution to pay her daughter’s school fees” (The Guardian, 4/12/03, p30)

On the surface this is a story about a mother doing the best for her children, working to pay the school fees like many other mothers. However the author of this article maintains that this woman is a prostitute. It is arguable that if this were just another story about prostitution it would not have warranted a full-page article, but it appears to be the incongruency of roles that is of interest to the readers. From the articles that were examined it would appear that mothers were not portrayed as sexual women other than in biological / reproductive terms. Mothers appear to be set apart from their sexual identity. However in this article a mother is not only associated with a sex life, but one she is earning a living from. This article appears to imply that mothers are thought of as moral and virtuous, whereas prostitutes are not. And yet this article is about how a mother is trying to make a better life for her child “I have a teenage daughter at public school and pay her fees from my earnings as an escort.”

This theme appears to demonstrate how tightly the criteria for ‘good motherhood’ are constructed. The portrayal within the national press appears to suggest that Society has certain expectations and anything that falls outside these parameters is considered newsworthy.
**Paradox and Guilt.** In Chapter Two it was argued that because of these conflicting images young mothers live their lives within a “damned if you do, damned if you don’t” context and will always be found wanting in society (Letherby 2002). However it would appear that this is not just true for young mothers, but for mothers of any age. This theme exemplifies an apparent paradox of motherhood.

The downside of being a mother is highlighted by an article that appeared in The Times on the 10/12/03 (p.8) which appears to go some way towards articulating the internal conflict that mothers are portrayed as experiencing by the press. The article is entitled “I used to belong to me”. This title portrays a woman no longer belonging to themselves, with their identity being defined by other people. In it the author claims that she wasn’t prepared for the effect that marriage and children would have on her. “There are no guidelines for marriage (other than love, honour and obey, which strike me as being too vague) and certainly none for motherhood. Nobody tells you that though do they? They tell you that it is about hard work, but nobody mentions the guesswork”. This again harks back to the portrayal that mothering skills are innate and instinctive. It would appear that mothers are meant to automatically know what to do

This articles present a woman who, having been fully ensconced in motherhood, raises her head to realise she doesn’t know who she is anymore. She allegedly realises that her children have served to identify her but she is not a person, she is a ‘mother’. She believes that she is only identified by her relationship with children. She maintains that her children have provided a structure and energy of their own that has taken over her life. However now that they are growing up and becoming more independent she claims that she no longer recognises herself; she never envisaged being without them and without them she believes she has no identity. However more importantly within this article the author maintains that the identity of “mother” that she has hitherto been content with does not carry the respect that the ‘outside’ world demands. She contends that she has maintained her self-esteem through being a ‘good mother’, but she now realises that this is not enough to satisfy others, or herself.
She says, "Self esteem, that which is so easily built-up by accolades such as first class degrees and successful presentations at the office and people telling you what a wonderful mother you are (which they stop telling you when your beaming cherub has grown into a bolshy archfiend)..." She goes on to bemoan that fact that having children has ruined her figure and consequently she has nothing to wear. More importantly even if she did have something to wear and the confidence to go out, she would have nothing to say because she is ‘only’ a mother. "It is my self. Society expects more of me. Worse, much worse, I expect more of me. I rail at the thought of living in the shadow of his life (are you surprised? You should not be) I despise mothers who only exist for their children." This quote highlights the effect that society supposedly has on how the individual constructs a sense of self. Also within this the mother relates strong feelings about mothers who are consumed by their children and yet she believes that she has become one of ‘those’ mothers. She is almost apologetic about her beliefs or feelings.

What is of particular note within this article is that it raises the issue of women ‘having it all’. "You have to put your own life on hold when you become a wife and mother, though nobody tells you that. What they tell you is that you can have it all – whatever “all” is, without any loss of self." She highlights a common issue for mothers who are brought up to believe that they can have it all, career and family, but as she says what is “it all”? Mothers are led to believe that they can have it all, but they don’t know what ‘it’ is and how to achieve it and consequently are left confused and guilty, "... My confusion is exacerbated by guilt. Motherhood is meant to be synonymous with selflessness. And wanting more makes me sounds selfish – the antithesis of everything maternal."

Within all of the images outlined so far there appears to be a constant underlying theme of guilt. It appears that a major part of the contemporary stereotype of “mother” is guilt. This debate is strongly related to the feminist issues of the 60’s and 70’s. Motherhood: the fight we feminists forgot – The Times (7/12/03, p.6, Review). This article by Rosie Boycott highlights the foundations of the debate and how the feminist movement forgot about motherhood as they were too busy marching and fighting for the right to abortion and work.
She claims that she regrets that she did not make the most of her time as a mother. Whilst her children were young she was focused more on launching The Virago publishing house than her children. What became apparent in this article was her regret and her feelings of responsibility for the angst of mothers today. "We didn't make motherhood the primary concern it needed to be." Spending time with children was "taboo". She quotes Irma Kurtz when she states "the early feminists underestimated the strength of a maternal urge" and she believes that women are subject to maternal urges which further serves to support that idea that it is 'natural' to want children.

It would appear that one of the main problems with portraying the work / home debate as a dichotomy is that mothers appear to be caught in a double bind. Whilst stay at home mothers are portrayed as achieving 'domestic success,' they are also portrayed as 'incapable of achieving success' (Johnstone 2004). More importantly it has been argued that this double bind commonly results in feelings of inadequacy and guilt (Bateson, 1972). Rosie Boycott draws attention to this issue of guilt for mothers when she alludes to the "lies I had to tell myself during the holidays are too ghastly to recall." This article highlights the work / home dilemma and she says at the end of the article that the government should do more about childcare and that mothers have rights to guilt free childcare. "Until that happens, our choices are fraught and limited and riven with guilt."

The idea that women will always feel guilty is closely tied in with the "myth" of the perfect mother. It has been argued that whilst both men and women are capable of feeling guilt, women are more likely to feel guilt in relation to their parental role (Shaw & Burns, 1993). Boyd (2002) argues that women are led to believe that they are responsible for the emotional welfare of their family and they will feel guilt if they fail in any way in this role. From these articles, within the data, it would seem that women are portrayed as assuming that other mothers are 'perfect mothers' and they are somehow failing against this standard. However it is not as simple as that for it would appear that whilst a mother can believe that she is not as good as another mother, and is somehow failing on a particular dimension, she can still believe herself to be a good mother.
This last point is important within the debate surrounding the images of motherhood, for whilst there is a strong image that motherhood is fraught with tensions and paradoxes, the underlying assumption that these findings seem to suggest is that motherhood is a good thing and that most women aspire to becoming or being 'good mothers'.

**Baby makes it right.** As already stated the notion of motherhood is not just biologically constructed but is also shaped by the social and cultural factors and influences. In a predominantly pronatalist society a high value has been placed on motherhood (Veevers, 1980) and becoming a mother provides a woman with a lifelong status. Motherhood is believed to be a woman’s main identity (Letherby & Williams, 1999).

Pheonix, Woollett and Lloyd (1991) argue that regardless of whether a woman becomes a mother, motherhood is central to the way in which women are defined by themselves and others. They claim that motherhood is romanticised and idealised as the ultimate achievement in a woman’s life (Usher, 1990). Despite all the conflicts and criticism apparent within the various images of motherhood, the media appears to suggest that whatever the trials and tribulations associated with this role, the presence of the baby is the ultimate achievement and whatever has gone wrong before can be put right by having a child.

This is exemplified by the Sara Payne, whose young daughter Sarah was murdered 3 years prior to data collection. Whilst it would appear to be a devastating thing for a mother to lose her child it would appear that having another child can help to ameliorate the effects of the loss.

- **“Sara’s baby – Baby girl for Sara – Tragic family’s Joy”** (The Daily Mirror, 2/12/03, p.3)

This story was referred to in the Daily Express (6/12/03, p.8) on the Richard and Judy pages. Judy Finnegan wishes the family luck and comments that “a new life is always tremendously warm and positive, and gives them a chance to look at the future with hope.” She also goes on to say “...wives may have a completely different way of
expressing their grief. Instead of achieving vengeance and finding some peace in action, they brood, they eternally question. Why, why, why my child? Was it my fault: why couldn't I have protected her from evil?" This quote highlights the image of the mother as the innate protector.

This theme of a baby make things right is continued in the Daily Mail (8/12/03, p.2). They carry a large picture of Sara Payne holding her new baby, with an inset picture of her murdered daughter. The article opens with the words “This is the baby who has brought happiness back into the life of Sara Payne. Cuddling the nine day old girl, Mrs. Payne's face shines with pride.” Sara is quoted as saying “The new baby does not, nor ever will, replace Sarah in our family. But what she has done is give us back tomorrow which is a pretty amazing feeling. She's given us back joy and hope.”

Having another baby has allowed Sara Payne to put the past behind her and move forward. This idea of children helping the adult to move forwards was also apparent in an article that appeared in the Guardian (8/12/03. p.9) about a widow who described how her children brought her to her senses. She admits that she was not coping well. However when her young daughter pointed out how hard it was for her as well, she realised she had to pull herself together for their sake as, she says, she “was still a mother”.

The lasting effect of the mother. Kaplan (1992) argues that the individual can only function within the linguistic and semiotic constraints of their historical moment; that is through the variety of images available to them. This is not to suggest that the individual is merely subjected to the available image being acted upon them, but that they actively play a part in the process by adding their own individual experiences to the multitude of voices and accounts, weaving their own experiences within those of others. In this the portrayal of the mother is a dynamic product of the telling and retelling of personal experiences, stories and myths. According to Barthes (1972) myths are uncontested assumptions within historical and cultural confines. As such they are only transformed into shared meanings once they are combined with “coherent philosophies” which are supported by the dominant culture.

It has been argued that females are subjected to fairy stories from an early age, where the pinnacle of a woman’s life is portrayed as marrying her prince and living happily.
ever after. More importantly such stories construct very strong images of motherhood within them. Stories such as Cinderella and Snow White provide strong images that stepmothers are evil and ‘natural mothers’ are good and kind, and physically and emotionally available to their children (Schroeder, Blood and Maluso (1992).}

It would appear from the data that the portrayals of motherhood as they appear in the press come not just from fictional stories, but from our own experiences as well. It would seem that one of the main sources of the image of motherhood comes from the individual’s own experiences of being mothered and the individual’s own mother. What is also of note is that there appears to be two aspects of this effect. The portrayals appear to suggest that men remember and almost beatify their own mothers and indeed other mothers, whereas women appear to be more in competition, either trying to recreate their experiences and failing or trying to do better. In short women appear to be comparing themselves with their mothers and trying to be their mothers to the best of their ability, whereas men not only are shaped by their mothers, they also appear to continue to want to be mothered. Even though there are subtly different ways in which different sexes might remember and perceive their own mothers, the importance of being mothered seems not to be underestimated. The portrayal appears to suggest that the effect that a mother can have on their child lasts a lifetime and continues after their death. This is reflected in many articles that appeared during this period about celebrities and their lives.

This strong role that a mother can play is exemplified by an article on the actor Samuel L. Jackson (The Guardian, 1/12/03, p.11). He contends that he became an actor because he knew “how determined his mother was that he should get out, evade the dead-end factory jobs.” The article alleges that he was an only child, raised by his mother and grandmother. Both women appeared to be significant in his life.

“His mother – his Mom, is obviously a major influence. I ask him if there’s a trick to being menacing, and he says no, really. But then he thinks again. I guess I have a pretty intense gaze, which I think I inherited from my mom. She’s just look at me that way and I’d know. You could feel the hairs on the back of your neck.” - his hand goes up to his hairline, tenderly, he can feel her gaze still – “and it reminds me of her. She’s very intimidating.” This suggests that however old a person is, the thought of
their mother can still reduce them to a child. Jackson admits that he stills thinks she is intimidating. She may be dead, but her memory lives on.

This is echoed in several articles including one about the rugby captain Martin Johnson.

- “I won it for my mum: He’s the hard man behind England’s World Cup Victory. But in this truly moving interview Martin Johnson talks about the mother who made him, but tragically didn’t live to see his greatest triumph”

(The Daily Mail, 6/12/03, p.33, 34)

This headline demonstrates clearly the effect that his mother has had on him and echoed throughout the article.

“He lifted the Trophy to the heavens with tears in his eyes and momentarily seemed unaware of the thunderous cheers. ‘My mum’ he says simply ‘was in my thoughts.’”

Here is a man at the pinnacle of his career and he is thinking only of his mother. The article alleges, “He felt a tempestuous mix of ecstasy, triumph and heartache because his vibrant, extraordinary mother Hilary wasn’t there to share the joy. She was passionate northern girl who went running and training with him, motivated and inspired him and died last year at only 57. ‘I was proud of her but a bit embarrassed. I thought, you’re a bit different to the others mum... ’. There’s little doubt that he got his tenacity, drive and above all else his fantastic endurance from his formidable mother.”

This article relates fond memories of his mother and their time during her last few days and the love and gratitude that he feels towards her. “She always told us that when she died she didn’t want any fuss. It was typical of Mum.” This highlights the notion of mothers being selfless and their need to put their children first. It is a moving article that seems to encapsulate the many themes that are associated with the image of motherhood. What is also of note within this theme of the lasting effect of a mother, is the effect that a celebrity can have as well in compounding an image.

**Celebrity mothers.** At first glance it would appear that this is a fairly superficial theme, however the amount of media space given to celebrities and in particular
celebrity mothers showed the importance of high profile women becoming mothers and the potential status of them as role models.

Within this theme there is further acknowledgement of the work/home debate, but also within this there is an important suggestion that motherhood itself is more important than celebrity status. In a society that appears to laud celebrity it is interesting to see women willing to sacrifice this for the needs of their family. Female celebrities talk of downsizing their professional commitments, although in reality this means they still intend to continue making films etc., just not as many. Also they are in the fortunate position to be able to afford this luxury. However the main message that seems to be apparent in this is that they are willing to consider giving up celebrity for motherhood.

Within the time span examined there were several articles that alluded to this issue, especially amongst celebrity mothers. During this time Gwynneth Paltrow announced her pregnancy. This story played out over many days and resulted in substantial column inches and covered many issues to do with the portrayal of motherhood. Specifically there were the implicit messages about the tensions between work and home. On the day that this story broke (4/12/03) it was covered by 5 different newspapers and appeared on the front page of The Daily Mail and The Sun. The other papers devoted full or double page spreads to the news. The main message that comes across from these articles is that the celebrity in question was intending to cut right back on her work and devote her time to her family. The quote “from now on I am going to maybe make only one film a year” appeared in all the articles as did the sub heading “I’m ready to settle down on a lot of land and focus on partners and babies.” This not only presents the image of the mother who sacrifices her work for her family but also presents the idea that motherhood is better than her celebrity status. She is quoted as saying “Hopefully, I’ll be married with three or four children. Just at peace.” This appears to imply that motherhood will give her the fulfilment that she needs. This notion is echoed in an article “Charlotte retiring at 17” (Daily Express 4.12.03, p.35) about the young singer Charlotte Church which alleges that was willing to give up her career to start a family.
The importance of motherhood to celebrities is exemplified by a variety of photographs that accompanied the announcement of Gwyneth Paltrow’s pregnancy. These photos appeared in The Daily Mirror (5/12/03, p.2) but similar pictures also appeared in all the other main newspapers. These photographs were allegedly taken as the couple came out of the clinic after having the first scan. They demonstrate clearly the pleasure that both mother and father felt. In the middle picture the father, Chris Martin, appears to be gently touching her ‘bump’ whilst holding a protective arm around her shoulders. As the caption says “baby you’re mine”. This pose is both tender and protective. The bottom photograph is accompanied by the caption the “look of love.”

This appears to demonstrate the notion of a baby being the ultimate expression of a couple’s love for each other.

However these were not the only pictures to appear in this edition. On the opposite page was a full page spread of this photograph. This public display of intimacy is also evident on the front page of this edition. This photograph again has the father focusing his attention on both the mother and the baby. However this appears to be lighter hearted as demonstrated by her laughter. It has been argued that women are usually portrayed as dependent on the protective role of a man. Wagner and Banos (1973) argue that this is because men were often portrayed as perceiving women as sex objects or a domestic appendage and in need of protection.
It is arguable that this was over 30 years ago and such views are no longer relevant. However Lindner(2004) notes that in advertising photographs women are still portrayed as submissive to men. This is portrayed through the posture that they adopt, e.g. physically lower than men and therefore looking up at men or embraced by men. Also men were more likely to adopt the posture of upright with head held high, signifying higher rank, or superiority, whereas women were more often depicted as gazing into the distance / day dreaming quality, whereas men are alert to potential danger. This protective quality was very much evident in the photographs.

This front page clearly demonstrates the changes in societal views of pregnancy and motherhood, especially celebrity motherhood. It is arguable that this photograph sends a clear message to readers that motherhood is something to be proud of.

Also this message is highlighted by the other story that shares the front page. This is story of Maxine Carr who was the girlfriend of Ian Huntley, the ‘Soham Murderer’ and provided a false alibi for him. Ian Huntley was accused of murdering two young schoolgirls and this story appeared during Carr’s court case. Maxine Carr alleged she knew nothing of the crime and the headline quotes her outburst during the trial. “I
won’t be blamed for what that THING has done.” In this quote she dehumanises Huntley, rendering him merely a ‘thing’. This demonstrates the strength of feeling that people feel toward child murderers. More importantly this front page juxtaposes this hatred with the obvious joy that having a child brings. This juxtaposition highlights the strength of this message. It would appear from this that motherhood is not just something to be aspired to, but something to be cherished and protected.

Many photographs appeared during this time span of celebrities who were pregnant such as this one of television presenter Ulrika Johnson. Such photographs only serve to further reinforce the positive role of pregnancy, pregnancy is ‘cool’ and pregnant women are proud of their condition; they are no longer subject to the purdah of pregnancy. As the newspaper claims that she “proudly shows off her bump at a fashion party.”

This is further highlighted by pictures of the singer Sophie Ellis Bextor who announced her pregnancy to the papers during this time period.
This picture shows Sophie with a broad smile demonstrating her ‘joy’ at being pregnant. This is further enhanced and the ‘thumbs up pose’ implying that this is a good thing that has happen to her. What is of particular note here is that not only is Sophie a celebrity, but the article claims that she is also single and has no intentions of marrying at this stage. More importantly this photograph also includes a smaller photograph of her mother. Sophie’s mother was a Blue Peter presenter in the 1970’s who was sacked for becoming pregnant. Not only was she pregnant with Sophie, which was against the television programmes rules, but she was single as well.

However she does not think that her daughter’s pregnancy will cause the scandal that hers did. She is quoted as saying “I don’t believe that this will affect my daughter’s career like it did mine. Now you’re almost naked without a baby, aren’t you?” In this quote she seems to suggest that attitudes towards motherhood, including single motherhood are more positive today than they used to be.

However not all celebrities appear to agree with this view. In an article about the actress Jane Horrocks (The Independent, 8/12/03, p.2) a very different view is presented. Within this article she talks about the joys of motherhood, however after two years at home she felt so frustrated that she needed to work. Whilst she is quick to praise mothers that do feel that they can stay at home, she is also appears to be putting them down. “The other mums are fantastic...I love socialising with them. It made me realise that housewives are interesting to be with too.” I ask if she had a fear of being categorised as just another housewife. “I think so. I wondered also if
people would treat me differently because I was on TV. It was a huge relief when they didn't. I dress down at the school. No make-up. I look a real hound. The other mums are all gorgeous. They must think "bloody hell"

Within this is an implicit assumption that housewives are boring, she says "it made me realise that housewives are interesting too." As if she was surprised that they might have been. Also the interviewer appears to hold this view when he asks her if she is afraid of being classified as "just another housewife". This seems to imply that once you give up work you lose your identity as an individual. This idea is echoed by Tana Ramsey, wife of the celebrity chef Gordon Ramsey. (The Mirror 3/12/03), who talks about the organisational problems associated with multiple roles. She says that she has been "a girlfriend, a wife, a mother, now it's about me again." What is of particular note within this quote is that she appears to define herself in relation to other people. Simone de Beauvoir (1953) refers to the idea that a woman is only defined in relation to a man; she is an "other" in relation to a male norm. But it would appear that this oversimplifies the woman's role. It is not just in relation to a male norm that a woman is defined, but also by her relationships with other people.

What is also interesting within the various articles that appeared during this time is that when a woman is mentioned she is usually defined by her age, but also by her relationship to someone else e.g. somebody's wife, mother, daughter etc. However when men are referred to the articles usually only mention their ages and maybe their profession, but not their relationship to other people.
5.5 Discussion

From the findings it would appear that on the whole motherhood is believed to be a positive part of a woman's life and something that all women should aspire to. Nevertheless it would also appear that 'good mothering' can only take place within certain socially ascribed parameters. It has been argued that there is a tight window of 'appropriate' motherhood and anyone that falls outside this is liable to be stigmatised or alienated, e.g. single mothers (Lewin, 1994), divorced, lesbian, lower socio-economic groups (e.g. Brewel, 1998; Dilapi, 1989) and teenagers. Within the available data it appears that the national newspapers construct a clear image of what a teenage mother is and how she might behave. Through their choice of story, language and the use of photography the newspapers create an image of teenage mothers as lazy, manipulative, drug users, who only have a child in order to get the associated financial benefits, and a council house, and are deserving of their stigmatised status.

However the findings regarding the portrayal of mothers in general appear to suggest that there are many tensions apparent within the various images of motherhood. The predominant images appear to be centred on Natural versus Unnatural motherhood, or Good versus Bad mothers. The term “versus” indicates that these images are in competition with each other, however this construction of the themes as dichotomous is misleading as there are many further tensions apparent within the contradictory sub-themes.

One of the main issues to be raised by the findings is how images are constructed. As already argued images of motherhood are constructed within the available historical and cultural shared meanings. However these shared meanings are not constant, rather the concepts, ideas and values that are contained within the shared meanings are in a constant state of flux. It is arguable that it is this state of flux that helps to create the various tensions. From an early age the individual is subjected to various stories and myths that help to create an expectation of what a mother should be. In addition they tell each other stories about what their mothers are, or were, and the relationships that they have with them. Equally women will tell each other stories about being a woman and at each new stage of development, e.g. menarche or motherhood, will bring in a new set of stories and rules about how a woman should feel and behave. One of the
most powerful portrayals that a woman is subjected to is the ‘woman as mother’ and all of these factors help to shape the image and expectations of mothers and motherhood.

However these images may vary greatly dependent on who is constructing this image and whom the individual believes to be the expert. Even within the broad range of portrayals available within these findings there is a marked difference in what defines a ‘good mother’ or ‘good motherhood’ and who is deemed a responsible arbiter of truth or expertise. In the political construction of motherhood there is evidence to suggest that mothers do not necessarily ‘know best’. Evident within this portrayal was a construction that suggests that good parenting is to provide materially for your child whilst someone else raises them. This is in marked contrast to the ‘natural’ mother who stays at home with their children and who provides instinctively for their child and is always available for them.

In this view motherhood is constructed through the needs of the child, women are made to feel guilty if they put their needs first. It would appear that motherhood is constructed within a “Catch 22”; whatever a mother chooses to do she will feel that she is meant to be doing something else and will feel confused and guilty.

“My confusion is exacerbated by guilt. Motherhood is meant to be synonymous with selflessness. And wanting more makes me sound selfish – the antithesis of everything maternal” (The Daily Telegraph, 10/12/03, p23)

It would appear from these findings that category membership is constantly renegotiated to fit in with the individual. As Pinker (2002) suggests ‘some categories really are social constructions: they exist only because people tacitly agree to act as if they exist “(p.202).

However the term “agrees” suggests a consensus of opinion and whilst the individuals may agree upon the existence of certain categories, they do not necessarily agree on the structure of these categories, i.e. the characteristics and attributes that define it and criteria for membership. Essentialist theory suggests that categories consist of distinct sets of traits or attributes (Medin and Ortony, 1989) which means that a category
membership is dichotomous, an all or nothing concept. In this if a woman is a mother
she will therefore fall into one of several distinct categories of motherhood such as
good or bad mother. However what is apparent from these findings is that the
boundaries that surround each category are more fluid than essentialist argument
would suggest. The many apparent tensions that exist within the images of
motherhood appear to be both between categories and within categories.

Also it would appear the attributes associated with the various categories are fluid and
are constructed in relation to individual's personal experience and present situation.
For example this is exemplified by the work / home debate, whereby women on either
side of the divide maintain that they are doing the best for their children, by either
fulfilling their career potential (which has been argued makes them a happier and
therefore better mother), and earning the money to pay for their children, or by
staying at home to provide their child with a 'proper' upbringing, i.e. the constantly
present mother. Both categories of mothers believe that they are good mothers, more
importantly they both question their decisions and abilities as a result. Also within
this example is the question of how each category is defined. Within the work / home
debate working mothers are classed by some as bad mothers because they are not
there for their children and yet the working mothers still maintain that they are good
mothers, because they use a different criteria to measure what a 'good mother' should
be. These findings seem to be more inline with Rosch's (1973) "fuzzy" category
membership which suggests that the boundaries between categories are more fluid
and susceptible to societal influence.

Also if one accepts the portrayals within the newspapers as a form of the "generalised
other", these findings call into question the deterministic view of labelling theory and
self appraisals, which maintain that the construal of self is dependent on what we
believe others to think of us. In this view it is arguable that a working mother who is
aware that others might think she was a 'bad mother' would accept this appraisal and
therefore see herself in a bad light. However the impression that the newspaper
creates is that this is not the case and they still believe that they are good mothers,
because they are providing a 'better life' for the child. Within this working mother
versus stay at home mother debate what is being debated is not whether they are good
mothers, but whether they are 'better' mothers. Underlying these debates are shared
core values of love and nurturance but what is being debated is how motherhood is operationalised and, as such, mothers appear to be able to reconstruct the dimension on which a good mother is measured. Also it is arguable that the variety of images that are available provide young mothers with alternative images on which they can draw as means of constructing a positive sense of self. This suggests that Turner (1968) may be right when he suggested that the notion of reflected appraisals was only one of many processes involved in the construction of self. He maintained that we need to explore a more dynamic construal of the self, one which is in constant negotiation with their environment and the views of others.

Moscovici (1984a) maintains that one of the prime responsibilities for social sciences is to examine the "thinking society". However he contended that this was a misnomer and was deliberately 'provocative' as this notion of the thinking society is that societies do not think - only the individuals within the society think. All too often we are led to believe that individuals are merely responding to the available shared meanings without thought. It has been argued that cognitive psychology examines the world from the individual's perspective and how they categorise their world, but as Billig, Condor, Edwards, Gane, Middleton & Radley (1988) point out, these need to be seen in the context within which they exist. What appears to be overlooked is the social nature of these thoughts and categories. Billig, et al, maintain that contradictory counter themes are essential for dilemmatic thinking, forcing the individual to consider the meaning of these tensions in their own terms. He maintains that "the very existences of these opposing images, words, evaluations, maxims and so on is crucial, in that they permit the possibility not just of social dilemmas, but of social thinking itself. Without these oppositions there would be no way of arguing about dilemmas or understanding how opposing values can come into collision." (Billig et al, 1988, p.17).

These findings also raise the question that if the boundaries between the various categories of motherhood are fluid, is this fluidity included within the category of teenage mother? What is of note within the findings is that whilst young motherhood is presented in a fairly universally negative light, there were one or two exceptions, but in the main the portrayal was that teenage mothers were 'bad mothers'. However this work is presenting images from the perspective of the 'outsider', i.e. views of
society as presented in the press, but as already pointed out in Chapter Three, different findings may be discovered dependent on the perspective taken, and it is arguable that the young women themselves do not believe that they belong to this category or that they are unaware of this category.

It has been argued that the media provides young women with an array of possible roles to choose from (Rintal & Birrell, 1984) and, bearing in mind the findings from the literature review that suggest that many young mothers do not see their situation in the same way as the rest of society, it is arguable that young mothers are utilising the variety of conflicting images to create their own space within the accepted view of motherhood. As has already been argued the individual is not merely subjected to the available images and portrayals being acted upon them, but that they are actively a part of the process adding their own individual experiences to the multitude of voices and accounts, weaving their own experiences within those of others. In this the portrayal of the mother is a dynamic product of the telling and retelling of personal experiences, stories and myths and women are able to carve out a niche for themselves. Therefore portraying motherhood as rigid binaries of good and bad mothering fails to acknowledge the wealth of roles that women have created for themselves within the traditional parameters. These findings suggest that motherhood should be seen not as dichotomous categories, but dialectical discussions that allow women to create and recreate the meaning of motherhood for them.

5.6 Conclusion

It would appear that research needs to address the different experiences of women, not just mothers in the traditional sense, but those that fall outside this range. There appears to be a tendency to pathologise any idiosyncrasies, which it could be argued is a means of control, looking for the problems as a means of containment, rather than focussing on how the individual feels and deals with their situations. As Wall (1997) contends any mothers who fall outside the norms become monsters. It would appear that by presenting those that fall outside the norm, such as teenage mothers, in such a way society is admonishing such behaviour, because by condoning this behaviour it would give the impression of accepting them within the norm of ‘mother’ i.e. a caring selfless mother, a good mother. This would be saying that teenage mothers can be ‘good’ mothers and therefore might encourage more young mothers.
The main purpose of this study was to focus attention on how motherhood is portrayed within the national press; in particular to draw attention to the complexities and tensions involved. Kaplan (1972) suggests that people can hold ambivalent and conflicting attitudes about motherhood and this study does seem to support this view. What is widely accepted as good mothering is socially constructed and has political implications and consequences.

Kaplan (1990) argues that societal images have tried to reclaim the patriarchal status quo that was brought into question the 1960’s sexual revolution, in particular through female sexuality. However from the results of this study it could be argued that the balance has not so much been redressed, but added to. Young women today are subject to many different images of what it is to be a mother. Whether or not they choose to become a mother, motherhood continues to be romanticised and idealised as the “supreme physical and emotional achievement” in a woman’s life (Usher, 1990) and serves as a major part of their identity. The category of motherhood is central to the way in which women define themselves and others.
Chapter Six

"Through the eyes of a child": Exploring the effects of stigma on self-esteem through interviews with young mothers

6.1 Introduction
In the previous study it was argued that within the category of “mother” there are many apparent tensions, which may provide women with a repertoire of discourses that they can draw on to negotiate category membership in order to make sense of their lives and enable them to create a positive self image. More importantly it was suggested that the boundaries between the various categories of motherhood are fluid. However what was of note within these findings is that this fluidity was only apparent within the representation of ‘motherhood’ in general but, within the category of teenage motherhood, there was a fairly universally agreed negative representation and yet, as already argued in Chapter Two, not all young mothers see themselves in quite the same light. Therefore if one accepts the representations within the newspapers as a form of the ‘generalised other’, these findings call into question the deterministic view of labelling theory and self appraisals, which maintains that the construal of self is dependent on what we believe others to think of us. The findings in Chapter Two suggest that there are many ‘others’ from which the individual can draw conclusions about the self and as such one cannot assume that stigmatised individuals suffer as a result of the negative label.

When a person is stigmatized a label is applied that defines who and what they are. A label is like a mental template that carries information about the person involved and can be positive or negative. In the case of a stigmatized label, such as “teenage mother”, the definitions are negative and carry with them an expectation of someone whose character, or morals, are devalued within a particular society. The label is “deviant” in that it implies a violation of the “norms” of society.

As already discussed in Chapter Three, according to labelling theory (Scheff 1966a) people often form conceptions of what it is to be a member of a stigmatized group
long before they themselves become members of that group. In other words individuals may have a prototype of what a teenage mother is from various sources around them, for example the media, friends or family, long before they become mothers themselves. However, once they become a member of a stigmatised group the negative beliefs that they and others hold about this group then take on a new relevance. What seemed like harmless views have become meaningful to the individual. Becoming aware of their stigmatized role has affected their self-perceptions. This proposition is derived from Mead’s argument (1934) that one’s sense of self develops through interactions with other people; that individuals learn about views and attitudes from those around them and these beliefs become internalised in the form of the “generalised other”. Scheff referred to these stereotypes as “guiding imagery for action”.

Link, Cullen, Struening, Shrout and Dohrenwend’s modified model of labelling theory (MLT) (1989) proposes that once a person becomes a member of a stigmatized group there are two sets of outcomes that are open to them; they will either experience no negative outcomes or will be labelled and consequently suffer negative outcomes. They suggest that once an individual is labelled, societal perceptions / expectations become relevant to them. This can either result in the individual modifying their behaviour in line with the perceived role of this label or one of three approaches will be adopted to deal with the stigma - withdrawal, secrecy or education. According to Link, et al (1989), all these are “unhealthy” methods, which will ultimately lead to negative outcomes.

However, as already argued, more recent work on stigma casts doubt on these findings. For instance Camp, Finlay & Lyons’ (2002) work with MLT and women with mental illness suggests that a negative outcome is not necessarily inevitable for the stigmatised individual. They found that although the women they interviewed were aware of the negative representations held by other members of society about their conditions, and the possible effects that this might have on their lives, they did not feel that these representations were relevant to them and therefore rejected them. These findings reflect similar findings within the literature surrounding teenage mothers which suggests that despite the negative attitudes towards teenage motherhood, young mothers do not believe their lives to be ruined and see their
situation as a positive aspect of their lives (McMahon, 1995; Arensen, 1994; Lesser, Anderson & Koniak-Griffin, 1998). Both these lines of work appear to suggest that the stigmatised label may not necessarily have the negative effect that others previously contended, and it has been argued that individuals engage in a variety of processes that protect self-esteem and ameliorate the effects of the label (e.g. Crocker & Major, 1989; Finlay & Lyons, 2000).

As mentioned in Chapter Four most of the work in this field is based on experiences that relate to mental illness and it is arguable that the stigma experienced by the mentally ill may substantially differ from other groups, e.g. in terms of controllability etc. As already pointed out, the findings within the literature surrounding teenage motherhood do not appear to suggest that this is the case and it would appear that not all young mothers are suffering from the assumed negative outcomes of their label. So what is happening? If young mothers are not able to draw on this element of controllability as a means of ameliorating responsibility for their situation, how is it possible that they are able to construct a positive sense of self? It would appear that there are other processes in operation that allow for the reconstruction of a different construal. Camp, et al (2002), bring into question Link, et al’s original model and suggest that positive outcomes are possible in the face of stigma, but they do not elucidate or examine the actual processes involved. It is the aim of this research to examine whether there is evidence of different processes in operation and whether the findings support Link, et al’s, model. As such this research will be conducted in relation to teenage mothers and from the perspective of the young women.

- Are young mothers aware of the negative representations that other people might hold about them?

- To what extent do they agree with these representations?

- To what extent are the labels that other people ascribe them relevant to their identity?
6.2 Method

As already mentioned in Chapter Four the method chosen for analysis was Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). IPA encourages examination of the lived experience, and allows for this mutability of self, by allowing the themes to emerge from the text in relation to the participant’s frame of reference. This allows an examination not only of the stigmatised identities, but also of those aspects of the self that are not characterised by their stigmatised status (Cross & Clark, 1998), and the shifts, both conscious and unconscious, between these identities.

Data Collection

The purpose of this study is to empirically examine the way young mothers deal with experience of stigma by exploring the way young mothers make sense of their life events, and changes, and examine their experiences at a particular time, stage or trajectory.

This study has been based on one-off semi-structured interviews with three groups of homeless young women who were either pregnant or had babies under one year old.

- Group 1 – 10 young women who are between six to nine months pregnant.
- Group 2 – 10 young mothers shortly after birth.
- Group 3 – 10 young mothers around a year after giving birth.

Participants

All Participants were recruited through charity run hostels for homeless young women / mothers within the South of England, or through “Young Mums 2B” centres based in South-West London. There were 30 participants in total aged between 13 and 19 years of age with a mean age of 17.3 years. All the young women came from the South East of England. 27 lived in hostels for young mothers and 3 with their families. All young women were in receipt of benefits and expressed a desire to return to education.
Chapter Six

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For a full breakdown of Participants see appendix I

Procedure
Data was collected via individual, face-to-face, semi-structured interviews lasting between 30 minutes and 1 hour. Interviews were conducted either at the hostels or “Young Mums 2B” centres. The Interview schedules consisted of a series of open ended questions. The interview schedules were designed to remain as value free as possible and as such attempted to avoid leading questions regarding the experience of stigma. All interviews were divided into three aspects of the young mothers’ lives. By dividing the schedules into three areas it allowed for the participant to relax into the interview.

The first section addressed general aspects of the young mothers’ lives and asked such questions as where they lived, who their friends were and how they met them. The second section addressed how they saw their lives in the future in terms of what they would like to be doing in 5 and 10 years and how likely these things were to happen. The final section was the longest and addressed the issue of becoming a mother and the experiences of being a mother. Questions included issues such as how and when did they find out that they were pregnant, how they felt about the news and whether they were still in contact with the father of the baby.
There were three different interview schedules dependent on what stage they were at, at the time of the interview. The schedule for Time One, dealt with general issues and specifically with how they felt and dealt with the pregnancy and what they thought motherhood would be like. The schedule for Times Two and Three, dealt again with the general issues and the experience of pregnancy, but also addressed the issue of being a mother, how they felt about it and how they coped with the demands of having a baby. Full copies of interview schedules are available in appendix II. All interviews were tape recorded and transcribed verbatim. For an example of a transcript see appendix III.

Analysis of the data
Data was analysed using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis. For a full breakdown of this process see Chapter Four. It is important to highlight that this study was based upon three separate groups of young women who all have a different relationship with the target of the research. The aim of this research was to explore the possible similarities and differences in the phenomenological experience of different groups of young mothers and mothers to be. Therefore the analysis was initially conducted within the separate groups of young women, examining how each group experienced early motherhood. However what became apparent within the analysis was the similarities that all three groups appeared to share. There appeared to be strong themes that were shared by all three groups and there only appeared to be a couple of areas where the young women seemed to have different experiences of early motherhood. As such it was decided to examine all shared themes together as one group, only highlighting differences where applicable. Therefore within the findings all the young women are quoted as relative to the common theme and not the group to which they belong, apart from specific cases where the differences are acknowledged and commented upon.

The findings from this study appeared to fall into two distinct areas and in order to make the findings more accessible to the reader, will be presented in two separate chapters. This chapter will address the issue of self-esteem in relation to stigma theory and Chapter Seven will address the issue of the possible effect of self-efficacy on the negative outcomes of stigma.
6.3 Findings
From the transcripts there were four superordinate themes that emerged:

- Awareness of stigma - this theme demonstrated that not only were the young women aware of their stigmatised situation, but also that there were several categories of stigma in operation, including moral stigmas, poverty and incompetency.

- Consequences - that is how these young women saw their lives at the time of the interview and in the future.

- Prototypes - in line with Link and Phelan’s work these young women already had clear ideas about what it was to be labelled a mother. From the transcripts it became apparent that there were two main prototypes - “good mothers” and “bad mothers”. The latter category included a clear definition of “teenage mothers”. Further prototypes that emerged included “teenager”.

- Processes employed - this theme included the various methods employed by the young mothers to maintain a positive sense of self. These include sub-themes such as social and temporal comparisons.

**Awareness of the stigma.** The first theme that emerged was an awareness of the stigma attached to their situation. These young women all had different experiences and backgrounds and all held slightly different views about teenage mothers, but there were very definite strands running through the interviews about how they saw themselves, how they believed others might perceive them, and why other people might stigmatise a ‘teenage mother’.

There was an apparent awareness that others might believe that it was their fault that they were in this situation. Some explained this away as a problem with the pill and others contended that it was an accident, but accepted responsibility for their actions. However most believed that ‘other’ young mothers were responsible for what happened to them.

What also became apparent from the transcripts was that there were different aspects of stigma that were associated with the phenomenon of teenage motherhood.
Chapter Six

It is important to remember that experiences of stigma vary greatly and different aspects of the phenomenon may be more salient in different circumstances. Teenage mothers appear to be subject to several stigmas running concurrently e.g. poverty, loose morals, incompetence / irresponsibility and all seem to come under the banner of teenage mother. When the girls refer to the stigma attached to this phenomenon, they seem to be referring to one or all of these aspects.

In the interviews it became apparent that many of the girls were aware of the negative evaluations that others held of them. Within this it was apparent the young women believed that there were several reasons why people might hold these views, such as:

Moral stigma. Moral stigma appears to cover two main themes being the problem of being a single parent, and age. For instance Lucy is very aware of the moral stigma attached to teenage motherhood:

Lucy (17)

"Because all the people that were interviewing me at the time or that I could tell that they were all "looking down at me" that I was a slag. Where as none of 'em knows what's happening -- I've been with my boyfriend for 3 years... he was my first boyfriend, and, yet 'they' all look down on me ... erm, and they kicked me out of 6th form."

She is quick to point out that she is in a secure relationship, which makes her different from other teenage mothers. However it is arguable that because of their age young mothers are more likely to be single mothers. This again can be linked to the notion of loose moral values. Another girl, Kelly, does not appear to be particularly aware, or bothered, by the negative stereotypes that others hold. She believes that the only real problems appear to be from the older generation. She says:

Kelly (age 18)

"yeah, well, some negative but there are not many negatives, things like that, obviously some older people are old fashioned and think you shouldn't have a baby until you're married and things like that, but that's about the only negative thing I've got."
In this she acknowledges how other people might feel, but discounts their opinions because they are simply 'old fashioned'. However what is also interesting in this quote is that despite discounting this view, she appears to be very aware of being a single mother and wishes that the situation were different. When she found out she was pregnant the father of the baby reacted badly and would not talk to her. However he has now come round, but they are not together, and he does not plan to be involved with the baby. So she is still a single parent and very conscious of this:

"Well I never really got any funny looks or anything. People that I spoke to, you know like I didn't really know, you know could be quite strange when I said, they say what about Georgia's dad and things and I said he's not really involved. Some of them were like, oh right, you know and didn't speak to me any more after that but I mean I don't think I was really penalised because I was young, as I don't think people really saw me as being young at eighteen."

She contends that age is not an issue and that she wasn’t “penalised” because of her age, but because she was single. This quote emphasises the ‘problem’ of single motherhood, but it also highlights the possibility that age is also a distinguishing feature of the stigma attached to teenage motherhood. It is possible that younger mothers, for example those under 16 years of age, may be more stigmatised than older teenage mothers. It should be pointed out that Kelly is 18 years old, so legally considered an “adult”, therefore she does not consider herself to be a teenage mother; however she is still a teenager and therefore considered by some people to be a teenage mother.

Kelly is also very conscious that her own father isn’t around for her; she remarks that her father doesn’t live with the rest of the family and later admits that she doesn’t talk to him. To Kelly a father figure is an important role.

Haley is also aware that other people might judge her negatively because she is a single mother, she says:
Chapter Six

Haley (age 19)

"I think people look at you and they judge you and they think "oh yeah, here goes another single mum", you know, and you're all labelled, you know. They look at you and look down their nose at you, you're labelled really as whatever they think, they just judge you all the same."

She makes use of the word "you", instead of "me"; this gives the effect of either distancing herself from the slights or drawing the interviewer into her group. She also goes on to explain that it is not just because she has no partner that people judge her harshly, she believes that most people think that single mothers live off benefits:

"Well because you're young they think, you know, they think she must be on benefits and it's just the way that people are with unmarried mothers, isn't it: a lot of them don't agree with all that"

Again this issue is more important to her than her age and is closely linked to the stigmas of both poverty and morals.

Stigma of Poverty. Single mothers are often stigmatised because of their reliance on welfare and are consequently considered 'scroungers'. This is particularly true for teenage mothers as one of the main views of young mothers is that they deliberately get pregnant in order to get a council house. Anna highlights this when she says

Anna (age 19)

"I think a lot of girls may get pregnant to get houses and things like that. Which I believe is true. It's part of the responsibility of being a young mom. I don't think people should have that perspective on life."

Anna believes this to be true in some cases, but not in hers.

Kelly links this notion of welfare reliance to the types of people that live in a hostel. In her view there is a stigma attached to living in one:
Kelly (age 18)

".... But other people, they accept it now, but when you like you first say it they were like oh, hostel and things like that, but when I first heard the word hostel I thought of God, it's going to be dirty and things like that, but it's not. It's actually, well you can see for yourself"

In this she admits to her own negative views of hostels, but says that she was wrong and they are not as bad as she expected. She almost forgives those who hold those views, as they don't know any better.

Emily is also aware that other people might hold this view and that they think that she has it easy now.

Emily (age 17)

"I think they think "oh well, she get money every week and everything else, but she can't be that bad. But it is hard. I mean like with Christmas and everything coming up as well it's worse so it is hard. People just think you have everything easy, given to you on a golden plate, but you don't"

She starts to articulate what she thinks others see as a problem, with benefits, that people are lazy and just sit around raking in the benefits, but she contends that this is not a true picture as she still has very little money and finds it hard to cope.

Simone also refers to the problem of being on the dole, but she sees it as a motivation to do well:

Simone (age 17)

"I'd like to have a career and I wouldn't like to be on the dole because I'd like my kids to look at me and think mummy's done her best not mummy's on the dole and she's just sitting there doing nothing. I want them to be proud of me"

In this statement she acknowledges not only other people's views of those on benefits, but her own beliefs. She goes on to say:
"I am not a biased person because I am on the dole at the moment, but the way I see it is I’d like my kids to see more of me than just to sit there and think she’s on the dole, you know. Just have something to look up to when they’re older."

She positions herself at the beginning of the statement, “I am not a biased person”, because she knows she is about to say something that is in fact biased. She thinks her children might think this, because she herself holds those views, or at least is aware that is what others may think of her. She thinks her children wouldn’t be proud of her if she stayed home with them, and others would assume that she was just sitting back and taking the money. Her children are providing a momentum to go back to college and get a job. She wants them to be proud of her. Later in the interview she echoes what Emily has said in another interview, which was that other people think she is on “easy street” because they get money every week. But it is only just enough to live on she argues.

Consequences. The second superordinate theme to emerge was that of “consequences”. From the interviews it would appear that these young mothers see their lives in a positive light. However some do acknowledge that given the choice again they would not necessarily have chosen to be mothers at such a young age, but having become so they would not change things now. Rebecca (age 18) goes as far as to say:

Rebecca (age 18)

“Erm...my living situation, my money situation. I wouldn’t change him and I wouldn’t have waited till I was older. I know some people say if they could have the same kid but when they were a little older than they would. I wouldn’t. He’s changed my life, but not dramatically. There were certain things that I wanted to do, but I can still do ‘em, I just have to wait.”

She believes that she became a mother at the right time for her, but she does also recognise that not everybody would agree with her. She realises that she has had to readjust her plans to accommodate her new role, and she is also aware that things are in some ways tougher now. However she does not regret what has happened to her as
she considers her baby as a positive change in her life. Most mothers, when asked what they thought was the best thing in their lives felt it was their babies. Abbie highlights this when she says:

*Abbie (age 16)*

"I enjoy every aspect. I enjoy having him around. I enjoy the little things that make you feel good like when he comes out with another word or...I mean I look at him and think he's so gorgeous and it makes me feel so proud."

When asked if motherhood was what she expected Andrea says

*Andrea (age 15)*

"It's definitely a lot better."

*Interviewer*

"In what way better?"

*Andrea*

"Cos people always talk about bad experiences, crying, staying up all night. No one told you about the good things, like how it feels when you see your baby smile for the first time..."

It would appear that Andrea had been led to believe that motherhood would be a lot harder in some respects, and yet despite this, she always wanted a baby. However as a result of her negative expectations of motherhood, her experiences have proved to be much better than she had anticipated and her positive feelings towards her baby are a positive reward she hadn't expected. This notion, that the positive feelings that a mother holds about her baby can outweigh the hard work involved in raising a child, is echoed by Veronica:

*Veronica (age 18)*

"Erm, just when you look in your baby's eye when they see you...when they start cooing at you.... you know, even if you have had a really bad night with them and you wake up every hour. You wake up in the morning and they're just chatting away in their cot, it makes you feel really good inside"
For Veronica the good things compensate for the bad. Her baby more than makes up for the sleepless nights. She clearly states that the little things her baby does make her feel good. Lesley agrees with these young women, but she goes on to further clarify the situation and she says:

Lesley (age 17)

"My baby (laughs)... Definitely my baby (laughs) erm... I got myself into a lot of trouble after I left home. Although I was going to college and I was working I had no way out basically and I knew I would be just dragged down again. Got into drugs and messed up my life whereas now I have something to live for. I have something to improve my life for, to work hard for, and definitely my baby."

Lillian contends that having a baby has given her a reason to re-evaluate her life and return to education. This is echoed by many of the young women interviewed in particularly Heather. Heather is really pleased at the thought of becoming a mother and she believes that it has changed her life for the better and has provided a catalyst to return to school. She says:

Heather (age 17)

"Probably that I've got so much things to do, like not jobs...I mean like... all the things that will happen. I will have a baby, hopefully go back to college. Move out. Bring up the child. Finish this course. Just loads of things that I never...like before, I was just a school and then...there was nothing really ahead of me. I went to college, spend all this time at college and do erm...I didn't get my English GCSE... well, I got a D but you need a C. So, I'm gonna do that, try and do that in September just the GCSE. I just got a load of things to look forward to."

Interviewer

"And you didn't feel like that before?"
Heather

“Nah. I just thought I wasn’t going anywhere before.”

Interviewer

“So, you say you feel yourself going somewhere since you fell pregnant?”

Heather

“Yeah. Because if I wasn’t pregnant I wouldn’t be doing all these things.”

Interviewer

“So, why do you think you are now? You know, planning going back to college..”

Heather

“Erm...well, I wouldn’t have left college if I wasn’t pregnant. But, I wasn’t really ready to like to go to college and I wasn’t really ready to have a job either. So, I would’ve probably ended up doing nothing.”

Having a baby allows the young women to take control of their lives and to be responsible for their situation. When asked how she felt about being a mother Shelley said:

Shirley (age 19)

“I felt happy, I felt good. I can’t believe.............just turned my life around. The things I normally do I don’t do any more.”

When asked if having a baby had changed her life Amanda said:

Amanda (age 13)

“Yeah. I’m more responsible”

The young women appear to enjoy taking on this responsibility and the fact that other people notice that they have changed and matured. They are aware that other people now treat them as adults and offer them more respect:
Karen (age 16)

"Because in most people's eyes you're not an adult till your twenty one and older people, they all treat you as a proper adult now, they don't speak down to you, they speak to you, things like that. They can give you respect which obviously you deserve, but things like that."

She now has respect that she didn’t have before and thinks that it is the most important thing in her life and has changed it for the better.

However it was not just having a baby that proved to be a positive outcome. From the transcripts it appeared that there were several other positive benefits to having a baby at a young age that the young women hadn’t anticipated, such as improving their relationships with their own families, in particular their own mothers:

Gerry (age 17)

"Recently I've been really close to her but I wasn't really close to her before, she went mad when she found out I was pregnant."

Georgina contends that her mother is the most important person in her life and that since she became pregnant her relationship with her mother has improved.

Interviewer

"Were you close before you got pregnant?"

Gerry

"Kind of but we had loads and loads of arguments and we were always together in the house, I don't know, we wasn't, I think we're closer now than we were before."

Veronica, as above, echoes this when she says:

"Because before we didn’t have much in common and I didn’t think. I thought she was a lot different to me and I didn’t really have much to talk to her about. ‘Cos we had very different lifestyles and I didn’t think she understood me."
When I found out I was pregnant I didn’t tell her till I was about 7 and a half months. ‘Cos I thought she would row with me and everything. She’s just been really supportive and helpful, like really proud of me and we’re much closer now.”

Having been through a long period of rows and finally moving out, Lesley didn’t talk to her parents for many months; however once she became pregnant she found that her relationship with her mother improved and her mother became an invaluable support to her. Also having a baby gave her the opportunity to improve her relationship with her father. When asked how her parents reacted when they found out she said:

Lesley (age 17)

“I didn’t actually tell my dad. My mom told my dad and he apparently turned round and said she’s too young, she’s got her whole career planned out for her...erm...it would be better is she had an abortion. Whereas to me, it didn’t even cross my mind. If I was old enough to get out there and do it (laughs nervously)... I was old enough to be responsible for my actions and erm.... my mom turned round to him and said you never gave her any love, never supported her, you never showed her any security when she asked for it. After that my dad completely changed. I think he... from that point of conversation he had with my mom he realised that he hadn’t been the best father to me or to my sister and this was his chance for him to make it right”.

Becoming a mother also gives the young women a chance to look at their own childhood and decide for themselves how they feel about it. For some it is a positive experience, and one they want to emulate, but for others it is difficult and they appear to feel as though having a baby is a chance to rewrite their own childhood and to provide for their children with what they feel was lacking in their own:

Interviewer

“If you could change anything about your life what would it be?”
Chapter Six

Deidre (age 17)

"My past probably. I didn’t have a very good childhood. Erm, I would like to start afresh and not do the things I did before."

Interviewer

“What sort of things?”

Deidre

“Being in Foster care again and stuff like that.”

Interviewer

“Do you think that will affect the way you raise your child?”

Deidre

“I think it will yeah because I’ve known a lot of change and will know how to look after my baby better.”

Donna believes that her experiences will make her a better parent; implicit in this is that she will be a better parent than her parents. Lucy also believes that she will be a better mother than her own mother because she was already used to looking after children:

Lucy (age 17)

“Erm, I’m quite used to being responsible for other people. I was for my sister erm, when she was growing up ‘cos my Mum runs a bar... erm, and she got really bad drinking, we never saw her, I never went to school and brought up my sister erm, so I’m quite used to looking after other children and I used to work to with other children as well erm so, that doesn’t bother me cos I know I’m quite good at it. And, having a child of mine I’m only gonna be better.”

However what is of particular interest with Lucy is whilst she maintains that she will be able to be a better mother, she uses her own experiences and her relationship with her mother as a template for what a “good mother” should be. Having a baby has brought Lucy closer to her own mother and she now tries to emulate her good points.
She acknowledges her mother's drinking problems, and that she didn't do a particularly good job, but tries to improve on these points and also draw on the things that she did do right. She says:

Lucy

"You can understand the child properly... than someone old at 58yrs old she's still gonna be quite behind on everything. Where my Mum's always been... I mean my friends look at my Mum and say your Mum is really "fit" and stuff like that. And, that's not what I'm looking for but its...my Mum was so young when she had me and she's still young now she's only 35yrs but my friends look at my Mum differently and don't see her as my Mum, they respect her but they see her as someone they can talk to as well. And, I feel that I can go and talk to my Mum...I think that's really important to have erm a talking relationship with your child."

Also having a child affords the young mothers a chance to put right their own mistakes and make sure that their children don't make them:

Interviewer

"What sort of hopes have you got?"

Lucy

"That he will do better than I ever could or have done."

This seems to be a common theme amongst the young mothers; they want their babies to do better than they have and not to make the same mistakes:

Alex (age17)

"I don't want him to end up like me. A baby early on life and not able to enjoy life at the age he should be doing things...yeah"

Overall it appears the young women believe that becoming a mother is a positive part of their lives.
Prototypes. The third main theme that emerged of particular interest in this analysis was “prototypes”, i.e. what it means to be a mother. According to the young mothers interviewed, the age at which you have your child is not important; what is important is whether you are a good or a bad mother. Shirley summed it up when she said:

Shirley (age 19)

“I don’t know, because you see a lot of young mums that are bad mums, well to me they’re bad mums, but then you see a lot of young mums that are really good mums. I mean I’ve seen women up the town smacking their kids around the head and things when they’re only about Georgia’s age and you know, you can see that they’re young or they’re propped up with bottles, their mums can’t even see them so they could choke on their bottle or anything. But then you see a lot of good mums so it’s a mixture of in between really. I think even with older mums it’s a mixture of in between, you get good and bad with everything. I think.”

These young women created two very definite prototypical mothers, the “Good Mother” and the “Bad Mother”.

“Good mothers” -

- Are naturally good mothers, they haven’t had to learn these skills
- Are in a relationship
- Have the support of their family
- Interact with their children
- Understand the problems involved in raising a child
- Recognise the responsibilities that face them, and
- They are mature beyond their years.

“Bad Mothers”:

- Are lazy
- Do not interact with their babies
- Are liable to smack their children
- Drink and take drugs
- Are liable to leave their babies alone
• Have a tendency to think motherhood is a game, and
• Have no aspirations

Of particular interest within this latter category is the very clear description of what a 
"teenage mother" is. It is important to remember that “teenage mothers” exist, not 
only in the minds of society in general, but in the minds of other teenage mothers. As 
labelling theory suggests, people develop concepts of what others think about 
particular stigmatised conditions long before they become part of that group. In other 
words these young women develop a view of what a teenage mother is like long 
before they themselves become pregnant. They are bombarded with stimuli from a 
variety of sources, such as the media, personal experience, friends and parents who 
were teenage mothers, and books etc, from which they create a prototype.

But, as already mentioned, these young women do not, in fact, believe their lives to be 
“blighted”. Perhaps what is more important is that they don’t believe themselves to 
be part of this category. Most of the girls interviewed did not see themselves as 
“teenage mothers” because they perceived “teenage mothers” as a negative category. 
In fact some were very clear about distancing themselves from this group.

Katie (19) claims to know a lot of other young mothers and clearly defines what a 
“teenage “mother” is. She says:

Katie (19)

“I think a lot of them they think it’s a game, they think you know, oh I won’t 
use contraception, I don’t need to, and they just, they find out that they’re 
pregnant and it’s not that much of a problem for them because they’ve got the 
kind of families where they probably all had babies young, you know, their 
mum had them when they were young and so it’s always been an issue for 
them. A lot of people that are teenage mums are people on council estates and 
they don’t have many aspirations in life, so maybe they just think I may as well 
have a baby, you know, someone to play with, someone to be there with them, 
they want to feel loved as well, so there’s the baby.”
Whenever Katie makes a negative comment about teenage mothers, she is very quick to make sure she distances herself from that image and explains why she believes she is different:

**Katie**

"I don’t know, there are so many people that I know of that are teenage mums. I think that they did it for the wrong reasons, that’s not to say I’ve done it for the right reasons but I knew that I could still offer my child a good life because of the person that I am. There’s a lot of teenagers that are sixteen and on their second child and that’s just, it’s just too much."

She is aware of age differences, and believes that most are too young to be mothers. In this quote Katie explains that age is an issue, but this doesn’t apply to her and she neatly puts the other teenage mothers into a separate group. Rebecca (age 18) is also aware of the issue of age:

**Rebecca (age 18)**

"Obviously, if you are 12 years old and had a baby, there’s something wrong. But, 16 upwards and think you could cope and it matures you and I don’t think there are benefits to waiting till you are older. If you don’t want a kid now and want to go out and enjoy yourself then don’t have a kid."

She goes on:

"Well, because under 16’s are more, well, they’re still in school. I’m still a kid, but they are really a kid. I know some girl who is 12 and she’s pregnant. I don’t like that, I think that is bad."

This statement exemplifies the mutability of age; age is relative and to some people any teenager that is a mother is too young, however to a teenage mother there are degrees of age and this can be used as means of distancing themselves from a stigmatised group. Anna is also very aware of the views that other people hold about teenage mothers:
Anna (age 19)

"I know a girl who is straight from the Hollies Group and she’s 16 and she’s like... she was 15 when she had her child and she started telling me that when she went to see the Midwife “Oh they were telling me not to smoke and it’s my right to smoke”.... and really I don’t know how someone with a child inside them would smoke. So, I can understand why Midwives act funny. Some people act funny, which I don’t know if they think single mother, young mother.... I don’t know. Maybe because its benefits. Some people do get funny, I think. People you don’t know you know, young mother.... then they realise you’re in a secure relationship and that you do wanna work and not be on benefits for the rest of your life.”

In this statement she explains that some girls are irresponsible mothers because they smoke, but she, again, like the others, distances herself from this group by saying she can’t see how anyone who is pregnant could smoke. But she further distances herself from this prototype by aligning herself with the professionals, the “adults”, and she says she can understand the midwives’ point of view. She then goes on to point out why others might react badly to teenage mothers because of this assumption that they are all doing it for the Benefits. However she excuses this as she believes that other people just assume that she is one, because once they realise that she is different (because she is in a secure relationship and does intend to work) they respond differently to her.

But what happens when they are confronted by members of society that categorise them as “teenage mothers”? As already said these young mothers are very aware of the negative views of others and are aware that people say the same things about them. However when they are confronted with this view the young mothers make sense of it by explaining it away as “mistaken identity”. People are ignored, or in some cases seem to be forgiven, for assuming that these young women are “teenage mothers”. The view is that they have gone on the visual appearance of the young mothers, without realising that these young women are different. The young women interviewed are aware of the labels that are applied to them, but they do not feel that they are necessarily applicable to them.
However category membership is not as clear as these findings would suggest. When the language used in the creation of a prototype was examined another picture begins to develop. From the transcripts it appeared that whilst most of the young women interviewed appeared to believe that they did not belonged to the category of teenage mothers, this was not the case for all the young women. Lorraine admits to being proud of her role. She says:

*Lorraine (age 17)*

"But, I’m proud of him. I’m proud to be a teen mum and I don’t care what anyone says."

However this was not simply a declaration of belonging to one category or another and when seen in context of the rest of the transcript this quote is not as straightforward as it would seem. Earlier in the interview, when asked why she thought others might disapprove of her situation, she says:

"I don’t know to be honest with you. I really ain’t got a clue. But like I explained to them, everyone is gonna have kids one day or the other. I’m just starting my family a bit earlier."

She is very clear that she believes there is nothing wrong with her situation and it is her choice to have the baby. However later on she refers to the fact that she believes that other people are judging her and when asked how she thinks they see a young mother she says:

"They can’t cope. They are only doing it so that they can get a flat so that they don’t have to work."

In this quote she very clearly puts ‘teenage mothers’ into another category. Or more importantly she puts the negative stereotype of a teenage mother into another category. When she says that she is proud to be a ‘teen mum’ this does not necessarily suggest that she is accepting the stereotype of a ‘teenage mother’; it is arguable that she is just accepting the role of a young mother who is a good mother.
As she says later when asked whether there are benefits to having a baby at an early age:

"Yeah, I do actually. I think that people in their mid thirties and that, and have children – they’re just as good as we are. Erm... but they can’t do more things that we can, they can’t run around with them. We got more energy."

In this she not only believes that there is a positive aspects to being a young mother, such as more energy, but she says that older mothers are just as good as they are, i.e. young mothers. She assumes that younger mothers are good mothers and in this it is almost as though she assumes that there is question mark as to whether older mothers are as good.

From this it would appear as though there is confusion about category membership. This issue is made clearer when it is examined over time. The young women were interviewed at one of three times, either when they were in the latter stages of pregnancy, shortly after birth (within three – five months) and around a year after birth.

From this it would appear that the young women distance themselves from the category of “teenage mother” to varying degrees. As time passes the young women seem to distance themselves more from the category of “teenage mother” than at the beginning. In the latter stages of pregnancy, there appeared to be more young women who moved between categories. When asked what she thought others thought about teenage mothers Demi says:

**Demi (age 17)**

"I think a lot of people don’t like them. I think like they reckon teenage moms are getting pregnant in order to get a flat."

In the first sentence Demi uses the pronoun “them” to indicate another group, one in which she is not included. In the second sentence she clearly labels this group as ‘teenage mothers’. She then goes on to say why she thinks other people don’t like teenage mothers – because they are trying to get a flat and it is that specific attribute group that she is disassociating herself from. She continues:
Demi

"Because we’re too young to look after a baby. We can just about look after ourselves”

In this extract she uses the pronoun “we” indicating inclusive membership; she is part of that group. Although it could be that she is including herself in the broader category of teenager / young person. Whatever her reasoning, it would appear that she is willing to include herself in a broader category, but not specifically the negative category of ‘teenage mother’.

Lesley, as mentioned earlier, is clear about not wanting to “get mixed up with those sorts of people.” However she is also aware that others might see her as this group and when she discusses how she might be perceived she makes use of the pronoun “you”:

Lesley (age 17)

“I feel people see you but if you are young, they think...there’s loads of ...what’s it called...ideas that people think that you are young and pregnant. Like you’re irresponsible or something.”

In this instance the use of the term ‘you’ is more inclusive in a general sense. If she had said I, we or me, this would have been accepting the criticism on a personal level, whereas the use of ‘you’ generalises this view to others, including the listener. In this view the criticism is usually levelled in fairly general terms across the board. However she later goes on to say:

Lesley

“I think people look at teenagers and think how can they bring up their kids when they’re kids themselves...erm...how can they be responsible. They look at the bad things about it. But, they don’t look at...I dunno.... they don’t understand we can be mature.... we are responsible...they just don’t see kids that...I dunno it’s hard to explain.”
In this she again makes it clear that she doesn’t belong to that category. She believes that others see ‘teenagers’ as a negative thing and uses the terms ‘them’ and ‘they’, firmly putting “them” into another category. However she further clarifies this criticism by explaining that not all teenagers are irresponsible. When she describes the positive aspects of teenagers she includes herself, “we can be mature...we are responsible”. She might be a teenager, and she might be a mother, but she does not fit the category of ‘teenage mother’. She is not irresponsible.

It is arguable that the movement between categories is more fluid during the later stages of pregnancy because the young women have yet to become mothers and are not sure what it will be like and whether they will be good mothers. This is reflected in a variety of comments:

Alice (age 17)

“You can’t tell because I haven’t been a mum before so it is hard to answer”

When asked what it would be like to be a mother and responsible for a baby Emily and Heather say:

Emily (age 17)

“I don’t know I am not a mother yet.”

Heather (age 17)

“Don’t know...erm...not sure”

Until they have the baby and they have proof that they can be a good mother, it is hard for the young women to understand what it will be like and therefore they are not quite so positive as to which category they belong in. As Demi says:

Demi

“I think in a way it will be quite good.”

She can only imagine what it will be like and what sort of mother she will be.
The confusion in category membership is also more evident during the early days of motherhood. Again this is a testing time for the young women who are still trying to make sense of the situation and their new found responsibilities. They are still gaining confidence in their abilities. During this period there were not as many incidences of this movement of categories, but there were a few cases. For example Lee says:

*Lee (age 18)*

"I think young moms in general are looked down upon as if we just sleep around and get what’s coming to us. When I was on the bus one day, it really annoyed me, a woman got on and said “Oh look at that little girl with a baby” and I was like “I’m not a little girl, I’m his mother!” I may look young but when you have a baby you soon grow up, mentally."

In this quote she starts off explaining why others might think the way they do about her, but by using the term ‘we’ she generalises the issues. She explains that it is young mums in general. However she then goes on to relate an incident that was specifically aimed at her. In this she is described by a stranger as a “child” and she is quick to put them straight that she is a “mother”, not a child; again distancing herself from the stereotype of the irresponsible teenage mother.

However as stated before category movement at this stage is not as obvious as during the latter stages of pregnancy and even at this stage the majority of women interviewed believe that they were not ‘teenage mothers’ and by around a year after birth this effect seems to have disappeared.

However essentialist theory suggests that society believes that categories are comprised of a distinct set of traits or attributes (Medin and Ortony, 1989). This means that category membership is dichotomous, an all or nothing concept. Whilst there are some categories that are argued to be dichotomous, such as male or female, Wittgenstein contends that category membership is not as cut and dried as that. This is more in line with Rosch’s “fuzzy” membership, (1973) and she suggests that boundaries between categories are more fluid than essentialists would believe and are more susceptible to societal influence.
Gelman and Wellman (1991) demonstrated that people believe that categories that are associated with living things are believed to be essentialist; however non-organic artefacts are believed to be more susceptible to variation. However Yzerbyt, et al, (1997) contends that social categories are perceived to be homogenous members of that group possessing the same traits. They suggest that stereotypes reflect the theoretical view that social groups are seen as “large and unalterable”. Hewstone (1990) suggests that outgroup failures are more likely to be attributed to the internal attributes of the group members. Yzerbyt, et al, (1998) demonstrated that perceived outgroup homogeneity is associated with negative evaluations and outcomes. However Haslam, Rothschild and Ernst (2000) refute this, contending that very little is known about the beliefs that people hold about social categories. Haslam argues that this work fails to distinguish the effects over time; this work is experimental and tests transient attributions, rather than enduring perceptions. More importantly this work again takes the perspective of the outsider; how an outsider might perceive a group and not how the insider might perceive their situation.

Yzerbyt et al’s work is based on an assumption of exclusivity; that there is exclusive membership of a category and its associated attributes which define the category. However whilst certain attributes may define the category, they are not exclusive to this category and can be shared with other categories. More specifically in the case of a teenage mother, many of the attributes that define the category are shared by other aspects of the superordinate category of “mother”. The attributed label may make the individual a member of a category, and that label will, at times, be salient but not always.

When one examines the attributes of a teenage mother these attributes can be associated with, and can define what it is to be, a bad mother. It is only age that differentiates these categories. However the attributes associated with good mothers are fairly generalised, and not defined by age, so a good mother can be of any age.

When the young women are during the latter stages of pregnancy they are not yet mothers. They are mothers in waiting - waiting to see what life will be like for them and whether they will be good mothers. At this stage they are only able to imagine
what sort of mother they will be as they have yet to have proof that they possess the necessary attributes to classify themselves as a good mother. They have the intention, but not the evidence. However they do possess the fundamental attribute of a teenage mother, i.e. they are teenagers and until they have proved to themselves that they possess the attributes of a good mother, their age will be relatively salient and more easily accessible. At this time category membership is not fixed and immutable but is fluid and blurred and, as Rosch suggests, the boundaries are fuzzy and shared. However as time passes and the young women become mothers the boundaries appear to become more fixed with teenage mothers becoming the outgroup.

However it is important to remember that even at this stage the boundaries are not completely fixed and even the superordinate category of mother is not discrete. The first impression is that it would be a dichotomous category; you are either a mother or you are not, but at what point do you become a mother? When you are still pregnant? Also is membership only open to biological mothers? Are foster mothers and adoptive mothers members of this group? What about those women who have lost babies, or children? This begs the question - what is a mother?

Also, of particular note within this theme of prototypes is that within the transcripts another social category began to emerge, that of ‘teenager’. This is an interesting prototype as the young women interviewed appeared to create a prototype of what an average teenager is like. Most of these appeared to be a fairly negative view, such as:

*Daisy (age 15)*

"And then everyday I would be out even on Sunday. I will be out on the street – just doing what every teenage does, getting into trouble"

Daisy contends that it is normal for teenagers to get into trouble. This is echoed by Demi who says:

*Demi (age 17)*

"I was going to get a job, erm and basically live my life to the full, going out, doing what a normal 17 year old does and like try ...... drugs (?) (giggles)"
and seeing if I can get away (laughs) and sort of like finding the boyfriend
what you want and, like, being yourself.”

Lucy contends that teenagers have got worse and that they are starting the bad
behaviour even earlier than when she was that age, she says:

Lucy (age 17)

“Erm, no....I don’t think young kids should have kids of their own like 12yr
olds. To me, that’s really young and I remember what I was doing at 12yrs
old. I look at 12yr olds now and they’re a lot more grown up and doing stuff
that I was doing when I was 15yrs old...already going to parks and drinking,
whatever. There’s not really a right age, it’s when feeling ready.”

However it is important to note that most of the young women that were interviewed
felt that they had been getting into trouble before they had their children. Deidre feels
that this is normal, but she puts it down to peer pressure:

Deidre (age 17)

“Some people are more responsible when they’re older rather than teenagers.
‘Cos like when you are a teenager you are more inclined to go drinking and
do drugs, that sort of thing. But, when you are older you are less inclined to
do it. Cos when you are younger it’s like peer pressure and stuff.”

Alex describes what she believes the stereotype of a teenage mother to be:

Alex (age 17)

“They probably think that all teenage moms can’t look after kids ‘cos all they
do is smoke, shoplift and things like that. So, they probably see me like that.”

It is interesting that she could easily be describing the negative stereotype of a
‘teenager’ that other young women have created. In this view the stereotype of a
teenage mother is the same as a ‘teenager’ but with a child. This point goes back to
the issue of multiple stigmas. Not only do teenage mothers possess many different
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attributes that they could be stigmatised for, such as morality, poverty etc, but they also possess an inescapable and arguably stigmatised category of ‘teenager’.

**Processes involved** The final main theme that emerged was strategies employed in the management of identities. One of the management methods involves making constant comparisons between themselves and others, evaluating how they are doing and where they fit into the “bigger picture”. One method of comparison is through social comparisons. Even though gender identities and the image of motherhood are deeply ingrained within society negative consequences can be avoidable. Although others may say that teenage motherhood is a negative experience it is possible that these young girls do not choose to draw social comparisons with the macro society, but instead draw self-evaluations from a micro context, e.g. friends and family, within which teenage motherhood is viewed as positive. This feedback may act as buffer to negative exposure or ameliorate the effects of stigma.

What was apparent from the interviews was that all the girls interviewed said that they had one or two old friends, that they had known for a while, who were not parents. However the majority of their friends were either pregnant or had babies. Kelly who was pregnant stated that she was the last of her group of friends to get pregnant. Her other friends had been parents for a while. When the girls needed advice they chose to ask their own mothers or other young mothers. Most of the young women had formed groups that were similar to them and used them for comparisons.

However not everyone chooses to place themselves within a category because of a shared stigma. People will choose the comparative dimensions that will present themselves in a more positive light. This can be done by emphasising the similarities that they share with those that do not share the stigma. One of the young mothers, Katie, had several friends who were older married mothers; she felt that they were important to her, as they were her role models. It is arguable that she compared herself with these older friends as they fit the prototype of what she believed was a ‘good mother’. She appeared to use them as a benchmark to see how she was performing as a mother and she was very proud to state:
Chapter Six

Katie (age 19)

“They are all so surprised that I’ve managed quite well at a young age with a baby and stuff.”

It was important to her to feel that she was coping but she needed to be told this as well. In fact all the interviewees appear to be happy that their parents think they are coping really well.

However what is important to note is that these young women make use of the prototypes that they have created as reference points, as a means of measuring how they are doing in comparison to others. They use the prototype of “teenage mother” as a downward social comparison, making them feel better about their abilities to be a mother, rising above that label. It is interesting that most of the girls interviewed felt that they belonged in the category of “good mothers” and they believed that they were “good mothers, who just happened to be teenagers”. They focus on those aspects that they feel they are good at and that teenage mothers aren’t able to do.

Katie uses this idea to distance herself from “teenage mothers”; she believes that she is different because she is used to children already:

Katie (age 19)

“I had thought about it a lot because I had a friend of mine who had a baby and she was really young and she couldn’t cope so I looked after the baby for her for about six solid months and I knew what it was like. I had always looked after kids and, whether it be friends of the family or my sisters, they’re much younger than me, so I looked after them a lot as well so I knew sort of what it would be like.”

What is also implicit in this statement is that she could cope whereas her friend, also a teenage mother, couldn’t. She believes that most teenage mothers are unable to cope with their babies because they don’t know what to do.
The last part of this statement highlights a recurrent theme that emerges from the transcripts. The young women interviewed made an important distinction between themselves and "teenage mothers". Teenage Mothers apparently don't understand what it means to be a mother and what will be expected of them, whereas it would appear that good mothers are "natural" mothers. This means that not only are they already used to children, but also they are "natural" mothers; looking after children has come "naturally" to them and so they are, or were, ready to be mothers.

Anna, for instance, contends that she is a natural mother and that mothering comes easily to her:

Anna (age 19)

"Becoming a mother like that has come natural to me. Like I was talking to my mother the other day and she thought there was nothing she had to say about becoming a mother 'cos it's come naturally to me."

"Yeah, like I said...yeah becoming a mother, it just came naturally...yeah. I love listening to him, seeing him play, going to parks...errmm...yeah I love being a mother."

This suggests that mothering has come naturally to her and is not something she had to learn. Being a natural mother gives these young women confidence that they will be good mothers.

However an individual's sense of identity is not solely based on who they are in comparison to others. These young women also made use of temporal comparisons. Individuals learn about themselves and are able to evaluate themselves through comparisons with themselves over time. Individuals compare their attributes and achievements with their past and future selves in much the same way as they would with other people.

All the girls interviewed made comparisons between their present selves and both their past and future selves. They all believed that their current situation was in some
respects tougher than it had been. They all felt that looking after a child was hard work and that there were certain things in life that they did miss out on such as going out when they felt like it etc. They also recognised that they had had to change their plans as a result of getting pregnant. However they didn’t feel that they were abandoning their plans, merely re-ordering them. They would still do the things they had planned, but just at a different time. But what was most apparent was that they all felt that the experience of being a mother was an extremely positive thing. They all felt that they were more mature, more sensible:

*Clare (age 16)*

> “It’s just like cannabis, I used to drink a lot, stupid, stay out really late, stay out sometimes all night and stupid things, mixing with the wrong people, getting into trouble.”

Another girl admitted to drinking and smoking cannabis, but said that getting pregnant has made her realise how stupid she was being. Most feel it has given a focus to their lives and Clare goes on to say:

> “It makes me more organised because I have got to make sure he’s ok first. ”

> I’ve got to get myself sorted out. “

Tied in with these past temporal comparisons are downward social comparisons of those they used to share their lives with. Most had lost contact with their old friends since becoming mothers and now saw them as immature and self-indulgent. When asked how she viewed her old friends lives Shirley says:

*Shirley (age 19)*

> “Just meaningless, just well, they just you know go out and get drunk. Well, they’re feeling ill all the time and tired and you know. I wouldn’t change my life for anything.”

The young women are able to draw on the prototype of the ‘teenager’ that they have created to make these downward comparisons. In their view the typical ‘teenager’ wastes time getting drunk and taking drugs. This downward social comparison allows them to make temporal comparisons. From this the young mothers are able to make
comparisons with the teenager that they used to be and with the woman that they have become. The young women interviewed believe themselves to be mothers and are therefore no longer teenagers.

They also make use of future comparisons and how they see their lives in the future. It is interesting to note that most of the comparisons are linked to the role as a mother; how they see their children developing and what they see themselves doing with the children.

**Juliana (age 17)**

"I don't want my baby to grow up and think you know...I want her to grow up and be proud of where she came from. Be proud of her life and you know, me as well. I want to have a good life for my family."

Her baby has become a reason for her to work hard and to succeed. She wants her child to be as proud of her as she is of her daughter.
6.4 Discussion

The findings suggest that the young women interviewed are very aware of the negative labels that others may apply to them. However they do not all see themselves as “teenage mothers”. For some, they are merely mothers, who happen to be young and do not believe that their lives are ruined. This is in line with Camp et al’s findings, which were in marked contrast to Link et al’s models which suggests that once an individual is labelled they will undoubtedly suffer from negative outcomes. Consequently the emergent themes within the transcripts were then examined in relation to both Link et al’s model and Camp et al’s findings. The specific research questions that were addressed were.

- Are young mothers aware of the negative representations that other people might hold about them?

- To what extent do they agree with these representations?

- To what extent are the labels that other people ascribe them relevant to their identity?

The first theme that emerged was awareness of stigma, which linked closely with the first research question: Are young mothers aware of the negative representations that other people might hold about them? This theme demonstrated that not only were the young women aware of their stigmatised situation, but they were aware of the different attributes that were stigmatised, such as poverty, morals etc. and that others perceived them as responsible for their situation. Therefore in terms of the modified labelling theory model, we can accept the first stage of the model; these girls are labelled and are aware of the label that others apply to them.

However the next two research questions were more complex than this and needed to be examined in relation to each other. Link et al’s model suggests that there are only two outcomes; you are either not labelled and therefore there are no discernible effects or you are labelled and therefore there will be a negative outcome. This is in
line with traditional views of stigma. Most definitions of stigma are full of deeply emotive language, deeming the person to be “spoiled” or “flawed” or “devalued” thus insinuating that their lives are ruined by the stigma that others attach to an aspect of an individual’s social world. Link et al contends that societal conceptions will inevitably become relevant to self. This will result in either the labelled individual modifying their behaviour in line with this label (which leads to negative consequences for self-esteem etc), or bypassing the change in behaviour, but still suffering the negative consequences.

The second superordinate theme that emerged was outcomes. This demonstrated that although the participants were aware of and acknowledged the negative evaluations associated with their situation, they were not experiencing the negative outcomes that this model predicts. All the young women interviewed acknowledged that their lives were in some respects tougher than they had been before, and that they would like to change the financial aspects of their lives. Given a choice most of the participants would have had their babies when they were older, nevertheless they would not be without their babies now they have them. They were all aware of the major changes in their lives but felt that the changes that had occurred were for the better. The majority of young mothers believed that motherhood had created an opportunity to abandon a lifestyle that they now believed to be detrimental to their well-being.

So what is happening? How can these young women be aware of the stigmatised labels that are applied to them and yet still believe that this was a positive outcome? Labelling theory contends that once a person becomes part of the stigmatised group, these views take on a new meaning and what seemed an “innocuous array” of opinions is no longer innocuous and these views become part of the “stigmatised” individual’s beliefs about how they are now devalued and discriminated against. It is this expectation of rejection that will lead to the eventual negative outcomes within the model. In other words, when these young women became pregnant they became “Teenage Mothers” and should have accepted the negative beliefs associated with this label. Therefore anticipating the negative reactions of others should have lead to the predicted negative outcomes.
However what appeared to be happening with these young women is that they do not believe themselves to be “teenage mothers”.

The third superordinate theme revealed that they had created prototypes of both “good” and “bad” mothers. They believed that “teenage mothers” fell into the category of “bad” mothers, whereas they believed themselves to fall into the category of “good” mothers and therefore they couldn’t be “teenage mothers”; they were merely mothers who happened to be young.

From this we can see that these young mothers are aware of the labels that are applied to them, but they do not feel that they are necessarily applicable to them. This highlights an important criticism of the modified labelling model. This model assumes that the stigmatised individual uses the same measure of “normal” as the rest of society (Eisenberg, Griggins and Duval, 1982, Thoits, 1985), but more importantly that the stigmatised individual is merely a passive recipient of the label. Poole et al (1986) argued that the stigmatised are constantly involved in actively managing these labels.

Part of this management involves making constant comparisons between themselves and others, evaluating how they are doing and where they fit into the “bigger picture”. One method of comparison is through social comparisons. Negative consequences can be avoidable even though gender identities and the image of motherhood are deeply ingrained within society, and the media, and created through everyday encounters. Social context is not monolithic, and although society may say that teenage motherhood is a negative experience it is possible that these young girls draw self-evaluations from a micro context, e.g. friends and family, within which teenage motherhood is viewed as positive. This feedback may act as a buffer to negative exposure or ameliorate the effects of stigma. All the young women created the prototypes of “good” and “bad” mothers and used these as a measuring tool to gauge how they fared in relation to other mothers; highlighting the differences between themselves and teenage mothers and accentuate the similarities that they share with “good mothers”.

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It is arguable that it is not age that matters to these girls, but the fact that they are mothers. The prefix “teenage” carries many negative connotations to some people. However to these girls that is not important because they are mothers and the label “mother” outweighs the bad connotations. The fact that they are mothers has become the major aspect of their identity.

In a predominantly pronatalist society high value is placed on parenting (Veevers, 1980) and becoming a mother is often regarded as a lifelong status and main identity (Letherby and Williams, 1999). As Ussher (1989) commented “becoming a mother is seen to be every woman’s crowning glory, the pinnacle of her achievement: what we are all destined for, and ultimately the only means of true fulfilment” (p.80). Those that chose to remain childless are potentially stigmatised just as much as young mothers. It is arguable that society is dealing with labels that are of little importance or even irrelevant to these young women; they are proud to be mothers and see their future identity as very much linked to being a mother and successfully raising a child. They gain a sense of self-efficacy from the idea that they can raise their children. They almost bask in a reflected glory of what could be.

It is this issue of the importance of the label that we need to focus on. In Link et al’s model they suggest that the individual is aware of “societal conceptions” and of what it means to be labelled before they are labelled. The model then goes on to suggest that once the individual is labelled, these “societal conceptions become relevant to self” and the individual is set on a path to negative consequences.

The findings of this research suggest that the young mothers interviewed were aware of the negative representations that other people might hold about them, and they did agree with these representations in as much as they were representations of “teenage mothers”, but they did not see themselves as “teenage mothers”; they were merely mothers who happened to be young.

However whilst these representations were relevant to their identity, in so far as they were young mothers and they were aware that other people might think that they were teenage mothers and as a result might have negatives views about them, these
representations were not meaningful to them. This is in contrast to Camp et al’s findings, which suggested that despite having a positive outcome, the label was both relevant and meaningful to the individuals and did affect their sense of self.

In the light of this the question is whether once labelled, the label is accepted as meaningful to the individual. Although societal conceptions may be relevant to the self, in so far as they are connected to the issue, the individual may be aware that others may hold these views and behave towards them accordingly. But if this label is not meaningful to them they will disregard it. Therefore the label can be applied, but, through a series of mechanisms, can be rejected as meaningless. We are suggesting that there are other processes involved in the active management of the stigmatised label that can result in positive outcomes. The young mothers interviewed, through a process of bottom up processing, were able to associate themselves with the superordinate category of “mother” which has positive connotations, whereas for the participants in Camp et al’s study the superordinate category would be “mental illness” which carries negative connotations. As one of Camp’s participants commented: “If you’re a woman you’ve only got a limited amount of time to have a child and ’cause I’ve been mentally ill and I was ill through my twenties, I feel robbed of some of my life by my mental health problems...I feel cheated out of my right to be a partner and a mother.” In this quote this woman appears to aspire to being a mother. However, it is arguable, that she does not aspire to being mentally ill.

So in conclusion, despite an awareness of the stigma associated with their situation, these young women still found motherhood a powerful positive aspect of their lives. Other people’s views did not appear to matter as they felt they were the ones living their lives. Also our findings support the recent findings that suggest that teenage motherhood is not necessarily a negative experience. All the girls claimed to want to return to education in order to be able provide for their babies. And in one case provide a good role model.

Therefore we suggest that this model needs to take account of the positive outcomes that can occur despite holding a negative label. It is possible that a person may be aware of their label, but choose to ignore it, because there is another that is more important to them. The main criticism of this model is that it is too rigid in its
outcomes; it does not provide the necessary versatility to account for the huge variation of experiences and outcomes of stigmatised individuals.

This work demonstrates that others may be ready to stigmatise, but the self is resourceful and flexible enough to construct alternative positive self-conceptions. As Juliana says:

*Juliana (age 17)*

"*It has made me more determined in life, to actually make a better life for my baby and for me.*"
"Through the eyes of a child": Exploring the role of self-efficacy in the amelioration of stigma through interviews with young mothers

7.1 Introduction

It has been argued that stigmatised individuals will behave in a way that accords with how they believe others perceive them (Snyder, 1984, Boudreau, Allen & Sherman, 1971) and conform to the negative stereotype (Steels & Aronson, 1995). However in line with more recent work that disputes these findings (e.g. Crocker & Major, 1989; Finlay & Lyons, 2000) the previous study in this thesis suggests that, despite acknowledging the negative views that society holds about them, the young mothers interviewed all felt that they were good mothers and were coping well with the demands of the situation. By believing themselves to be "good mothers" the young women are able to have a sense of control.

Stigma is strongly related to the notion of power and control. The language used within the broad range of literature is steeped in words related to control such as discrimination, prejudice, devaluation, etc. The mere fact that until recently the majority of the work was conducted from the stigmatiser's perspective speaks volumes about society's views at the time and about how the stigmatised individual was viewed. Goffman (1963) described stigma as a mark or sign that marks the person out as "spoiled" and "devalued" by "normal" people; a "threat" to societal norms. Dovidio, Major and Crocker (2000) contend that "stigmatising others can then enhance the stigmatiser's perceived and actual control to the extent that it leads to differential treatment, systematic avoidance, segregation, and marginalisation of others who are threatening to the stigmatiser's personal well being (e.g. criminals) or values (e.g. adherents of certain religions)." (p.8) (In the case of the teenage mothers they are perceived to be a threat to financial resources, e.g. Clark & Coleman, 1991; Hopkinson, 1976; and Clark, 1989).

Further to this Dovidio et al suggest that "stigmatisation may arise from motivations to justify or rationalise the status quo in society, which involves institutional forms of
discrimination and segregation that serve both individual and group functions." (p.8); in other words controlling the competition for resources or emotional well-being.

From this it is would appear that stigma is about society controlling and maintaining the status quo by attempting to control those that fail to live up to the group norms. This suggests that the stigmatised is left with no control. Allport (1954 / 1979) refers to the fact that "group oppression may destroy the integrity of the ego entirely and reverse its normal pride, and create a grovelling self-image" (p152). His reference to a "grovelling self image" suggests power differentials; the use of the word "grovelling" implies that someone else holds the power and the stigmatised individual is subservient to society.

Therefore a fundamental precept of stigma is control and power and yet it would appear that there is no research to date that specifically examines the notion of control or lack of control for the stigmatised individual. How do they perceive the shift in power? How do they maintain a sense of personal control or agency in their lives? Bandura (1992a) contends that agency is a central tenet to a person's continued well-being. To be a fully functioning member of society the individual needs to believe that they have the capabilities and skills to control their lives. He refers to this notion as a belief in personal self-efficacy. Without the subjective belief that it is possible to act in a certain way, or that they have control to act in a certain way, the individual is unlikely to take action. In this view the individual has no control and consequently will become a passive recipient of circumstance.

Control is an important factor for stigmatised groups as there is a view that one of the negative effects of the label is limited access to power and material resources and therefore a lack a control. It has been argued that a social system that tolerates prejudice and discrimination reduces the available opportunities for mastery and control over the individual's environment (Fiske, 1993; Sidanius & Pratto, 1993). Rotter (1966) suggests that this lack of control can have a negative effect on self-esteem.
From this it is arguable that control and self-efficacy are important factors for the stigmatised and yet there appears to be a conspicuous absence of specific work in this field. There does not appear to be any direct research into the relationship between self-efficacy and stigma. However there is a strand within the stigma literature that might explain the absence of self-efficacy and that is self-esteem. There is a strong history of research into this concept that presents a persuasive argument in favour of the motivational need to maintain a positive sense of self-worth. Within the field of stigma, there is a wealth of work that measures the effect of a stigma on levels of self-esteem. The overarching view of this line of research is that the possession of a stigmatised identity would have a negative effect on self-esteem.

However comparisons between stigmatised and non-stigmatised groups have produced conflicting results (Crocker & Major, 1989); in some cases stigmatised groups maintaining the same if not higher levels of self-esteem than the non-stigmatised group (e.g. Gray-Little & Hafdahl, 2000, Rosenberg, 1965).

One possible explanation for this finding is the focus of the work with traditional theories of stigma examining the outsider’s perspective as opposed to the insider perspective. However Crocker and Major (1989) also acknowledge that some of the controversy and inconsistent findings in this area could be related to a failure to differentiate between different aspects of the self-concept.

Self-esteem is generally accepted as a central aspect of psychological functioning (e.g. Taylor and Brown 1988; Wylie, 1979) and can be linked to many other variables such as a generalised life satisfaction (Diener, 1984). Self-esteem can also be linked to a sense of competence or power (Gecas, 1982), ability to competently function in daily living (Van Dongen, 1996) and a sense of mastery (Arms & Linney, 1993; Wright, Gronfein & Owens, 2000). Although conceptually distinct, all these items are closely related to Bandura’s concept of self-efficacy, which suggests that efficacy beliefs will determine the actual performance (Bandura, 1997). It would appear that the measures used to assess global self-esteem contain many elements that are strongly related to control and self-efficacy. There is also evidence that suggests that levels of self-esteem are affected by the individual’s perceived beliefs about others’ reasons for discrimination.
Chapter Seven

Crocker, Voelkl, Testa and Major (1991, study 1) proposed that a group of female students' levels of self-esteem rose and fell in response to the criticisms of a male adjudicator. A group of women were asked to write an essay that was to be evaluated by a male examiner. The results suggested that if the women perceived his negative comments to be as a result of sexism their self-esteem levels were unaffected; however if they believed that the criticisms were due to poor essay writing skills their level of self-esteem would fall. However these results could also be explained in terms of locus of control (Rotter, 1966); if the women can “blame the system”, i.e. institutionalised sexism (external locus of control) and not their essay writing skills (internal locus of control), their self-esteem remains intact. In this view the issue is about maintaining their beliefs about their capabilities and competency or to put it another way “beliefs in one’s capabilities to organise and execute the courses of action required to produce given attainments” (Bandura, 1986 p.3). In other words self-efficacy.

From this it would appear that self-efficacy is present within these measures, but is not explicated. Rather there is a conflation of concepts with self-efficacy being subsumed within the concept of self-esteem; self-efficacy appears to be subordinate to self-esteem. However Bandura (1997) contends that self-efficacy is distinct from self-esteem and “refers to entirely different things, perceived self-efficacy is concerned with judgements of personal capability, whereas self-esteem is concerned with judgements of self-worth. There is no fixed relationship between beliefs about one’s capabilities and whether one likes or dislikes oneself.” (p.11). Abrams and Hogg (1988) propose that self esteem may be over-implicated in theories of group behaviour and may not deserve the role of prime motivation. They contend that in order to understand behaviour psychology needs to include other motivations such as efficacy through action (Gecas and Schwalbe, 1983).

However, as stated earlier, within the existing stigma literature self-efficacy appears to be subordinate to self-esteem, but the relationship between concepts is at best unclear. Within the stigma literature the umbrella term self-esteem appears to be measured as a product of the stigmatised identity, however both self-esteem and self-efficacy can be both a cause and an effect. By measuring self-esteem as an outcome
we are unable to examine the full role that either motivation plays or the relationship between the two. Also self-efficacy and self-esteem are domainally dependent and relative to their context. James (1890) claimed that the individual will only “stake their salvation” on certain selected domains. He proposed that “our feeling in this world depends entirely on what we back ourselves to be and do” (p.45). In this he highlights the need to understand ourselves not only for who we are, but what we can do as well. He also emphasises the relative importance of different domains. For some people self-worth will be measured in terms of financial success, whilst for others it might be creativity and for some it might be being a good mother. Self-worth is relative to both the situation and the available abilities. Research has already highlighted the conflict between insider and outsider perspectives, but it is also arguable that there will be discrepancies between group and personal levels.

As already demonstrated in the previous study, whilst society appears to believe that young mothers have ruined their lives, the young women interviewed are proud to be good mothers and therefore the skill and abilities associated with being a mother will be important to them. By qualitatively examining perceived self-efficacy from the young women’s perspective we will be able to explore the role of self-efficacy in maintaining a positive sense of self. Therefore the research questions are

- How do young mothers construct and maintain a perceived sense of self-efficacy?

- What is the relationship between perceived self-efficacy and self-esteem for young mothers?
7.2 Methodology
As was discussed in the previous chapter, in order to make the findings of this study more accessible to the reader, the findings are presented in two different chapters. Below are the main themes pertaining to the issue of perceived self-efficacy.

7.3 Findings
Within the transcripts there were three main superordinate themes that emerged: Control, Lack of Control and the Paradox of Motherhood.

- Control
  - Controllability
  - Self-efficacy
    - Personal agency
    - Responsibility
      - Ownership of the baby
    - Development of self-efficacy
      - Mastery skills
      - Vicarious experience
      - Social persuasion
        - Pride and achievement (motherhood as a job)

- Lack of control
  - Challenged self-efficacy
    - Pregnancy
    - Early days
  - Fear / learning curves
    - Pregnancy
    - Early days
  - Lack of control prior to having a baby
    - Out of control
    - Rebirth / rewriting history
      - Do as I say, not as I do

- The Paradox of Motherhood
  - Baby makes it right
These superordinate themes have complex relationships and are linked and interlinked with this notion of control. The accepted means of presenting data like this is to list themes within a heading. Unfortunately this gives the impression of linearity, one idea flowing from another; however these themes are far more complex than that. They are not just bi-directional; they relate and interrelate impacting and impinging on different aspects of the self.

**Control.** The first superordinate theme that emerged is Control and encompasses issues such as controllability, personal agency, responsibility, self-efficacy, achievement (motherhood as a job), pride (self and others), control over the future.

**Controllability.** Previous research has suggested that certain parts of society believe stigmatised conditions are brought on by the “victim”; that they are responsible for their situation, e.g. drug addicts, alcoholics, obesity etc. Moreover if the condition is believed to be under the volition of the victim outsiders offer less sympathy and support and the “victim” will suffer lower self-esteem as a consequence. It is arguable that society views teenage mothers as responsible for their situation. From the transcripts it became evident that the young mothers interviewed were conscious of these negative views and were fully aware that other people believe that teenage mothers have only themselves to blame for their situation, Katie states:

*Katie (age 19)*

"I know I see people looking at me, thinking oh, you know, there goes another teenage mum and I just fit into the stereotype of the teenage mum, you know, so it's not very good, a lot of people don't take you seriously because they think that maybe you just did it because your friends did it."

In this she highlights the notion that some people believe that young mothers only get pregnant because their friends do and it is just a trend amongst teenagers. This implies that this is a conscious decision and the young women are aware of what they are doing and therefore aren't taken very seriously by other people.
There is also another commonly held view that young mothers deliberately get pregnant in order to get housing. Alice says

Alice (age 17)

"I think a lot of people don't like them. I think like they reckon teenage moms are getting pregnant in order to get a flat. But, I don't reckon that's true because of...if teenage mothers got pregnant to get a flat, why aren't there more teenage pregnancies?"

Again within this there is an element of a conscious decision; young women deliberately get pregnant in order to get a house. Alice is aware that this is what other people might think, but she refutes this idea arguing that if this were the case there would be more teenage pregnancies.

However Anna believes that there are some young women who do get pregnant for this reason. She says;

Anna (age 19)

"I think a lot of girls may get pregnant to get houses and things like that. Which I believe is true. It's part of the responsibility of being a young mom. I don't think people should have that perspective on life."

However what is important within this statement is that whilst she maintains that a lot of teenage mothers do get pregnant in order to get a council house, she makes it clear that she doesn't agree with this view and she thinks they are wrong. She doesn't consider herself as part of that group and clearly distances herself from those attitudes. From this it is apparent that it is not just other members of society that believe that young mothers have control over whether they get pregnant, but other teenage mothers as well. Katie also makes this clear that she herself holds these views about other teenage mothers as she goes on to say:

Katie

"I think a lot of them they think it's a game, they think it's a game, they think you know, oh I won't use contraception, I don't need to, and they just, they
find out that they’re pregnant and it’s not that much of a problem for them because they’ve got the kind of families where they probably all had babies young, you know their mum had them when they were young and their mum had them when they were young, so it’s always been an issue for them. A lot of people that are teenage mums are people on council estates and they don’t have many aspirations in life so maybe they just think I may as well have a baby, you know, someone to play with, someone to be there with them, they want to feel loved as well so there’s the baby.”

Katie clearly outlines why young women would choose to become pregnant at an early age; they think it is a game, they don’t think they need to use contraception, other members of their families are teenage mothers, therefore it is alright to be one as well, and because they are either bored or need someone to love. All these reasons imply an element of choice; they have chosen to become pregnant which support that view of controllability.

What is interesting here though is that young mothers see others as responsible for their situation, but not themselves. The majority of young women interviewed contended that their pregnancy was an accident:

*Emily (age 17)*

“I’d ended up falling pregnant, you know, so she thought it was like irresponsible. I was on the pill but I’d been taking antibiotics and didn’t really think about me. I don’t know, she just thought, you know, I was quite young.”

Emily was not irresponsible, she was taking the ‘pill’ but antibiotics interfered with its effectiveness therefore it was an accident and she had not intended to become pregnant.

However, there are a few who do admit to wanting to become pregnant. But, whilst they maintain that they wanted to have babies, they do not appear to fully accept responsibility for their actions and appear to make excuses for the situation. Part of them wants the baby and accepts the internal locus of control, but another part appears
to disengage themselves by blaming the circumstances on factors that are beyond their volition.

*Interviewer:*

_How did you feel when you found out?_

*Alice (age 17):*

_I was quite happy but a bit shocked_

*Interviewer:*

_Had you been trying for a baby?_

*Alice:*

_Sort of. I stopped taking my tablets and I was having regular periods._

*Interviewer:*

_So, you stopped taking the tablets in order to get pregnant?_

*Alice:*

_Yeah. I just stopped taking them because I was getting really bad headaches too. I didn’t mind if I got pregnant too._

*Interviewer:*

_Did your husband know?_

*Alice:*

_He wanted me to get pregnant. He was shocked as well ‘cos he didn’t think I would get pregnant._

In this quote Alice admits that she wanted to get pregnant but that wasn’t her prime motivation. She says she stopped taking the pill for medical reasons and she did not mind if she did get pregnant, because she did not expect to anyway. Anna also relates a rather vague desire to have a baby:
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Anna (age 19)

"When we got back together I wouldn't...I didn't want to get pregnant. Yet another part of me wanted to get pregnant. I always wanted his children. Maybe to keep... Well, not to keep him but I've always wanted his children, but ermm...we've always talked about it...I don't know...I suppose you accept what comes with it"

In this Anna is displacing responsibility for having the baby; she admits to wanting his children in a vague sense, but contradicts herself by saying that she didn't want to get pregnant. In this she appears to abdicate responsibility for actually deciding to try for a baby, that decision was taken out of her hands.

However it is important to point out here that these examples relate to issue of becoming pregnant in the first place. Societal views seem to apply to beliefs about young women having control over whether or not they become pregnant and, regardless of whether the young women interviewed believed that this was true or valid, they all had an element of control about whether they chose to continue with the pregnancy. In other words, they might not have control over whether they were pregnant teenagers, but they did have control over whether or not they became mothers whilst they were still teenagers.

It is important to make this distinction, because what seems to be apparent from these transcripts is that, despite the circumstances surrounding becoming pregnant, these young mothers have all made a conscious decision to keep their babies and it is this conscious decision that gives rise to the sense of personal agency that they gain from becoming mothers.

Self-efficacy. From the transcripts it would appear that by taking control of the decision to have a baby the young mothers are imbuing themselves with a positive sense of perceived self efficacy that appears to help to ameliorate the negative effects of the stigma.

This is similar to Bandura’s (1986) notion of self-efficacy. He maintains that a positive sense of well-being and a higher level of achievement is dependent on a
positive sense of personal self-efficacy. Bandura suggests that self-efficacy is rooted in the belief that the individual has the ability to produce the desired outcomes and provides an important range of determinants. Without this belief he contends that the individual has little or no incentive to persevere when faced with difficult circumstances. When related to theories of stigma one would assume, as do traditional theorists, that the individual would accept their circumstances and the consequential negative outcomes. However, as was discussed previously, more recent work in the field of stigma contests this view and suggests the individual does not need to suffer the expected fate of the stigmatised.

Within the theme of self-efficacy are several important sub-themes that are related to the issue of constructing and maintaining a positive sense of self such as agency (including moral agency), responsibility and achievement and the development of self-efficacy.

**Personal Agency.** A general sense of agency is apparent throughout the transcripts. However within this theme agency is evident in a narrower sense of the word and emerges as a sense of personal agency. This refers to the individual's intention to make things happen through their own actions; to have control over one's choices and actions. Bandura's (1992a) Social cognitive theory is based on this fundamental precept and suggests that personal agency is essential if the individual is to become a functioning proactive member of society. Without personal agency the individual becomes a passive recipient of life and merely reacts to the situation, rather that proactively making decisions and affecting the possible outcomes. By taking control of the situation, the young women interviewed gained a sense of personal agency. Choice is an essential aspect of personal agency as it allows a person to shape and construct their lives and the way in which they develop as an individual.

There are various reasons why the young mothers appear to have taken control of the situation and chosen to continue with the pregnancy. For example they believed that this was the right time to have a baby:

*Katie (age 19)*
“I was quite happy actually because I always wanted a baby and when I was fifteen I was pregnant then and had to have an abortion because I was too young and my parents were being ten times worse than they are now and so becoming pregnant again felt like a second chance for me and, like, it felt right for me and I was quite happy.”

Another reason some of them choose to have the baby appears to be to prove other people wrong or demonstrate (either to themselves or others) that they have control over their choices:

Lee (age 18)

The boyfriend I had at the time wasn’t a nice bloke. He actually used to hit me. Some people must have thought that I shouldn’t have his kids. But, because he told me I weren’t gonna have his kid that’s when I thought nah, it was more like a defence and I was like nah I’m gonna have this baby ‘cos it’s mine too.”

What is interesting within this quote is the use of the “defence”. This is a strong word that implies that she is standing up to her friends, family and her boyfriend. She admits that he has hit her in the past and it seems to be that by choosing to continue with the pregnancy she is able to regain control of the situation and her life:

Daisy (age 15)

Interviewer:

What did you panic about?

Daisy:

Just being pregnant really. I didn’t know the first thing about babies

Interviewer:

What made you decide to keep it?

Daisy:
Because everyone said you can’t raise a baby, you’re too young. You don’t know the first thing about raising kids. I didn’t but...well, that’s when I thought hang on a minute I’ll learn. So, I kept it

Interviewer:

Who did you tell first?

Daisy:

My boyfriend was with me when I found out. Then I told my foster mom a couple of weeks later. She rung up my mom and my mom then rang up my grandma and then the abortion bit was raised. But, I kept her.

This again highlights the notion of choice. By deciding to continue with the pregnancy Daisy is taking control and giving herself choices. From this it could be argued that these young mothers utilise this notion of controllability as a means of gaining control over their lives. Choice is an essential aspect of personal agency, as it allows a person to shape and construct their lives and the way in which they develop as an individual. But perhaps more importantly the choices available within this context allow the creation of moral standards. Bandura (2001) contends that moral agency is central to both self-direction and self-efficacy. The young women are faced with terminating the pregnancy or becoming mothers. It is arguable that by choosing the latter they are able to construe their decisions as principled decisions.

What choice gives them is the ability to construct reasoning within a moral framework. By making choices about outcomes the individual is able to justify their actions. Within the transcripts the young women made various assertions as to why they chose to continue with the pregnancy, such as they have always wanted a baby, they didn’t want an abortion or they believe they can be a good mother, but not because they made a mistake and are now paying for it. They chose to have the baby because they wanted a baby:

Lucy (age 17)

Yeah, I do. But, I have said before to ‘em. If I got rid of him it would be for you. I didn’t want to do that. So, I wanted to keep him. But she did give me the choice to adopt
Lucy demonstrates that she kept her baby because she wanted to, but she also highlights an important point within this. Lucy is the only one of the young women interviewed who talked of the third option, adoption. The choices that appeared to be presented were reduced to motherhood or termination. However we are taught from a very young age that killing a person is wrong and immoral. There is a long standing, highly charged, debate around the ethics of abortion. Ball-Rokeach (1972) claims that there is an ongoing war within the media where groups try to gain the moral highground. The media becomes an arena in which groups constantly try to gain the moral highground by justifying their actions and devaluing any opposing views. Within this arena is the continuing debate surrounding abortion.

However regardless of the rights or wrongs of the situation the fact that such strong view exist means that there are contrasting images available to the young women that they can utilise to justify their decisions. It also seems to be that if others believe that you are responsible for getting pregnant it gives you the confidence and a reason to take control over the outcomes:

Lesley (age 17)

“If I was old enough to get out there and do it (laughs nervously)... I was old enough to be responsible for my actions and erm...”

Responsibility. To have a sense of agency infers influence over an outcome, but with agency comes an obligation or a duty for that outcome, i.e. responsibility for your actions and the associated products. Having made the choice to continue with the pregnancy, how do the young mothers feel that they are coping with the associated responsibilities?

Celia (age 17)

“Responsible. They see me now as being a lot more responsible than I used to be... a bit boring...they want me to get out and do stuff now before I won’t be able to...other than that...I don’t know.”
She likes the fact that other people see her as a responsible person, but is also aware that her old friends could see this as boring. In this quote she does not seem to be as positive as some of the other girls about her new role and is very aware of what others think and what she is unable to do, but this could be explained by the fact that she is still pregnant. This seems to change once they have the baby. When asked if there was anything she would change about her life Lorraine (age 17) whose baby is four months old said:

Lorraine

"My money...erm...don't know....I wouldn't...apart from money there's nothing I'd change. I'm really happy with the way it's all gone. A lot of people just say that I should've got pregnant later in life...but...I haven't, I'm pregnant now I'm dealing with it and I'm happy with my life."

She is “dealing” with the situation; she has taken control and is happy with her life. This idea of dealing with it is echoed by Katie when she says

Katie (age 19)

"I wanted to do modelling, this was a big thing for me, to become a mum meant a lot of sacrifices, my dreams and that was probably the hardest thing so it's had to change a lot in that direction but you just learn to deal with it really."

They had plans, but they became pregnant and had to change them. This reflects recognition of their responsibilities. However the notion of “dealing” with the situation suggests an element of a fait accompli. It is as though they see it as an inevitable acceptance of the situation or a duty. But this is not the case for all the young women; some appear to be more positive about accepting the responsibility. When asked how she felt about being responsible for another person Andrea, whose baby is four months old, says.

Andrea (age 15)

"I like being responsible for other people. It feels good"

Rebecca is also very happy with her role as a mother:
Rebecca (age 18)

"Erm...personally I don't know if I'm saying this to you because I'm a young mum myself but. Obviously, if you are 12 years old and had a baby, there's something wrong. But, 16 upwards and think you could cope and it matures you and I don't think there are benefits to waiting till you are older. If you don't want a kid now and want to go out and enjoy yourself then don't have a kid"

She makes it clear that there is an element of choice - if you do not want a child then do not have one. She believes that young mothers are fully responsible for their situation. By taking control of their lives these young mothers are taking responsibility for their situation and for their babies. It is up to them to make that they and their babies are properly taken care of:

Demi (age 17)

"You've got to make sure that other person what you're bringing up, that baby, gets all the love and attention it needs and is not getting hurt and it's a big responsibility and that's what it is at the end of the day"

The young mothers appear to enjoy the responsibility and the independence:

Interviewer

"What do you think you will enjoy most about being a parent?"

Celia (age 17)

"Everything, everything about it. It will be my own responsibility for my baby. That's good in a way, raising my own child."

Most of the young mothers see responsibility as a good thing and are aware that being responsible for another person gives them a structure and order to their lives:

Hayley (age 19)
"No, it's positive really because it just gives, it makes me more organised because I've got to make sure he's OK first, he's my first priority and then I can move on and do what I want to do afterwards and then I just try and entertain him so I don't feel it as a negative thing, no."

Ownership of the baby. Accepting responsibility is associated quite strongly with the fact that many of these young mothers see their babies as their property. They use positive language when talking about their babies and make it clear that they "own" the babies and it is their responsibility to look after them and make decisions about them:

Interviewer

"Did you imagine what it was like before you became a mother?"

Lee (age 18)

"Yeah, and it's nothing like it was. I didn't think about all the sleepless nights and the horrible nappies, and not able to go out and all the clothes that he goes through is unbelievable. It's different, it's not like how I imagined it but it's still just as good. Having this little person that is mine you know."

The problems of being a new mother are outweighed by the fact that they have their babies. However they readily admit that early motherhood is a sharp learning curve:

Interviewer

"How do you feel about being responsible for your baby?"

Katie (age 19)

"That was very scary in the beginning because I sort of didn't, for example his auntie had taken him out one time and had not told me, his dad's sister had taken him out, and it was, when she came back I was furious but no-one else reacted in a way that was, like I didn't have a reason to be furious and at that time I still hadn't realised that this is my responsibility, I am allowed to react how I want to react because he is mine but at that time he was only two months old and I was still new to the fact that he was mine and it was kind of hard to get my head around all of that, now I know."
What is interesting in this quote is that it takes a while for Katie to realise that she is responsible for her baby. However once she realises she is responsible, she also realises that this responsibility means that she is allowed to react and behave with her baby as she wants. She was allowed to be upset because she is the baby’s mother. Having a baby propels young mothers into an adult role. They are allowed to grow up and mature because they have to be responsible for other people. Becoming a mother allows them to not only take control of their lives, but their baby’s life as well. But perhaps more importantly having to be responsible for another person provides them with the motivation to develop the new skills associated with being a good mother.

**Development of Self-efficacy.** Self-efficacy theory suggests that self-efficacy can be achieved from various sources, e.g. mastery skills (learning and mastering the necessary sub-skills), vicarious performances (observing similar others and their performances and reinforcement of similar tasks) and social persuasion. Self-efficacy can also be determined by several factors such as successful past performance, for example many young mothers interviewed felt that they had successfully looked after children already and therefore did not anticipate this aspect of motherhood as a problem. Self-efficacy can also provide vital direct information about current performances such as feedback about how the baby is thriving. If the baby is developing well the young mothers might see this as a demonstration that they were good at mothering. This feedback can lead to the formation of more accurate judgements about personal efficacy, such as how a young mother is doing in her new role as mother.

**Mastery skills.** As already mentioned many of the young mothers believe that they are ‘natural mothers’ and that they are already used to looking after children. It is this belief and experience that gives them the confidence that they could be good mothers:

*Katie (age 19)*

"I had thought about it a lot because I had a friend of mine who had a baby and she was really young and she couldn’t cope so I looked after the baby for her for about six solid months and I knew what it was like, I had always looked after kids and, whether it be friends of the family or my sisters, they’re..."
much younger than me, so I looked after them a lot as well so I knew sort of what it would be like."

They use this information about previous experience to assess how they might cope as mothers. Bandura (1986) maintains that “Perceived self efficacy contributes to the development of sub skills, as well as draws upon them in fashioning new behaviour patterns” (p395). In this he suggests that before the individual makes choices and initiates the necessary effort, they tend to weigh up and evaluate the abilities they already possess, the possible outcomes and their abilities to achieve these outcomes:

Heather (age 17)

“Erm...well I wasn’t really happy about it, having an abortion and then erm...I went out for a coffee with my mum and just realised that by talking to her that I could actually do it. ‘Cos I thought no way I could have a baby. Then I thought, yeah I could, it would work out.”

By taking control of their lives the young mothers give themselves a sense of agency and choice and therefore a sense of perceived self-efficacy. They gain independence and see motherhood as a challenge:

Daisy (age 15)

“Because everyone said you can’t raise a baby, you’re too young. You don’t know the first thing about raising kids. I didn’t but...well, that’s when I thought hang on a minute I’ll learn. So, I kept it”

Daisy sees it as a challenge and believes that she can learn. She sets herself the task of developing the skills she needs to become a good mother. But it is not just learning new skills that make a good mother, these young women also recognise that they need to make changes to their lives in order to achieve their goals:

Veronica (age 18)

“It’s good. It’s really good. Knowing that every decision you make could affect the way your child will grow up...you have to change to make things better.”
In this Veronica is looking forward to the challenge of motherhood, but more importantly she has recognised that her actions will have an effect on other people, namely her baby. She realises that how she performs will affect the way her baby will develop.

Bandura (1986) suggests that "infants acquire a sense of personal agency when they recognise that they can make things happen and they regard themselves as the doers" (p1670). However this is not only in infancy and occurs throughout the life span and especially during the transition from adolescent to adult this can be important. Bandura talks about the how self-efficacy grows during the transition of adolescence. Self-efficacy enables the individual to select and structure their environments. Having a baby allows the young mothers to realise and recognise that they can do things for themselves. By becoming mothers, the young women have to take control over their lives and environment. They have to learn the new skills that allow them to look after themselves and they appear to be enjoying taking the responsibility and in the process becoming independent people. Sally sums it up when what the best things in her life were at the moment.

*Sally (age 17)*

"Having to be by myself and know how life is"

*Interviewer*

"What sort of things would you say you have learnt about yourself since living on your own?"

*Sally*

"How to cook, how to be by myself and stay in all the time. Before, I was always going out. Now, just being independent."

By becoming a mother Sally has gained independence and believes that she is allowed to live her own life. She has gained a perceived sense of self-efficacy through becoming a mother. Alice also gains a perceived sense of self-efficacy from taking responsibility for doing things for herself:
Chapter Seven

Alice (age 17)

"It is better now knowing that I will have my own house and doing things for myself instead of my family doing it for me, more responsible."

Vicarious experience. However perceived self-efficacy does not just appear with the baby, it has to develop over time:

Hayley (age 19)

"I was quite excited, but also quite scared because I didn't, first time around, you know, I didn't know what to expect, what to do or anything, but obviously you gain the experience all the time, but it was quite frightening at first."

The development of perceived self-efficacy also requires constant reinforcement and reassurance for the young mothers that they are coping. This is similar to Bandura’s vicarious experience. He contends that because most performances are evaluated in relation to social norms, and criteria, social comparisons will be essential components in assessing how the individual believes they are doing. This can come from positive assessments of other people that are perceived as similar and doing well in the situation.

When asked whom she admired most Lee says:

Lee (age 18)

"Actually that would be my friend Gill. A while ago she had a baby. She was 15 and she had another one when she was 17. And, her first child was deaf, dumb and blind and she still went ahead and had her second baby. You know, I’m proud of her actually because to do that and have a second baby would be pretty hard work, let alone having one."

Or it can come from comparisons with peers. Sam highlights this point when asked if her friends understand her life:

Sam (age 18)
“Nah. You don’t until you’ve got a child of your own. I feel like I’ve grown up since I’ve had Mason and I feel like that my friends are still in that hole of drinking all the time. Others are at college and have cars. But, then me and Dane have a car and I have a baby which is more important than anything, makes me feel more responsible.”

Part of the sense of maturity comes from making downward comparisons with her old friends. They are still doing the same things whereas Sam has moved on and is now more responsible.

It is not just through other mothers that the young women are able to evaluate their own performance; it can be through their babies as well. Having a baby provides physical validation of their skills; not only are their babies surviving, but thriving as well:

*Interviewer*

“*What sort of things do you enjoy mostly about motherhood?”*

*Veronica (age 18)*

“*Probably knowing that I created him. Brought him up the way he is.*”

She enjoys the fact that she has created him. She has achieved something, but the last part of this quote suggests that she will also have continuing enjoyment from him. She reflects how she has brought him up and the skills she has as a mother. When asked what the best things were in her life, Simone (age 17) was very clear in her answer:

*Simone (age 17)*

“*My kids. No, watching them grow up I’d say because I think to myself, when I watch them grow up I sit there and think I made them, you know, they’re something of mine and I’m proud of because hopefully I can teach them by my mistakes.*”

However it is not just the idea that they have produced a baby that gives them a sense of achievement. They also gain validation when their babies learn new things; it is as
though they gain a vicarious sense of perceived self-efficacy as their babies master new skills.

When asked what she enjoyed most about being a mother Heather says:

*Heather (age 17)*

"I like to play with her and talk to her and stuff"

*Interviewer*

"What do you think she gains from you talking to her"

*Heather*

"Obviously, like learning things...erm...If I'm always around then she'll feel safe and stuff."

Perceived self-efficacy can come from watching their babies achieve things, knowing that they have helped and facilitated this development. This constant feedback about their skills helps the young mothers cope when things are not going so well.

*Simone (age 17)*

"They just keep me off, if you know what I mean. If I go through a bad patch or I feel a bit like I cant cope no more they pick me back up and they say yes you can, you know you can, and it makes me sit there and think to myself yes, I can. I don't know why I'm sitting here saying no I can't because I know I can... Watching them grow. With Chloe it's something new every day. With Sam she's learning how to toddle. It's sitting there and watching all of that and thinking they're mine, you know. I'm really proud of them."

Pride appears to be an important factor in the maintenance of perceived self-efficacy. However it is not just pride in their abilities, but it is the motivation to make their babies proud of them that keeps them going during the hard times. Having a baby appears to make the young women determined to succeed.

Determination is essential to developing a positive sense of perceived self-efficacy and is closely linked to 'forethought'. Bandura (1986) contends that most human behaviour is regulated by forethought; that is the creation and operation of goals. The
higher the goals that the individual sets the stronger their level of determination to succeed will be. A sense of perceived self-efficacy will influence the range of possible scenarios that the individual might visualise. In this the young mothers create/visualise the type of lifestyle that they want for themselves and their children. Individuals that are low in perceived self-efficacy are more likely to imagine scenarios in which they fail. This imagined failure serves to lower perceived self-efficacy further. Whereas high levels of perceived self-efficacy will encourage positive visualisation and serves to reinforce determination to succeed and a continued strengthening of perceptions of self-efficacy (Bandura, Reese and Adams, 1977; Kazdin, 1979).

*Katie (age 19)*

"I am, I am happy to be a mum. I do wish that I could offer him more, it’s a sense of guilt that I have is the thing that I feel a lot because I feel that he’s, I want to give him so much more, there’s so many things holding me back, but being a mum I do really like it. He keeps me happy and he has given him more focus on my life and has made me see that I do sort of need to start thinking about what it is I want to do. I mean some people are obviously in their forties and fifties and they just find out yes, this is definitely what I want to do but I need to sort of see, in the next twenty years I can sort of see myself being OK with doing this or, you know, so it has given me more focus being a mum. Yeah, I’m dealing with it."

Becoming a mother has encouraged Katie to focus on her life and make plans for the future. She wants to be able to provide things for her baby and realises that she will have to make changes in order to achieve this. Bandura (1986) suggests *research shows that people who regard themselves as highly efficacious act, think and feel differently from those who perceive themselves as inefficacious. They produce their own future, rather than simply foretell it.* (p. 395). Failure is not considered an option as the stronger perceived self-efficacy is the more vigorous is the determination to succeed. When asked what she would like to be doing in 5 years time Lesley says:

*Lesley (age 17)*
“Ooh, probably.... hopefully, settled down with someone erm.... and...just.... I don’t know really. I do hope to get a degree, that’s all I really want. I don’t want to be living off benefits all my life. I don’t want to rely...like I said I don’t like to rely on people for myself. So, I will get a job. I’ve always wanted to be a Barrister and although it is going to take me longer and it’s going to be so much harder with a baby, I intend to get there whichever way I go I really want to get there. I want to give my baby everything that she needs and I know I’d be a “bum” if I did not help myself and get out “there” and get an education. I’m never going to be able to do that for my kids...erm. Those that are on benefit are bums”

Heather is equally determined to take control and change her life:

Interviewer

“So you will make this happen for you?”

Heather (age 17)

“Yeah. I’m not living in a council flat when I’m older! Or living off benefits either.”

Interviewer

“Why do you not want to do that?”

Heather

“‘Cos I would like to choose where I live and have a nice house and I want to have more money than that. I want to like feel that I’ve earned my own money instead of just been given to me.”

Social persuasion. Successful feedback is essential for the continued development of mastery skills and it raises self-efficacy appraisals. It can contribute to continued successful performances if it is deemed within realistic bounds and comes from valued sources.
As this theme is closely related to another sub heading of pride and achievement it will be considered within this structure.

_Pride and Achievement (motherhood as a job)_ The development of self-efficacy is partly dependent on 'social persuasion'. Embedded within this is the concept of pride. The word 'pride' appears to have many definitions. In the extreme view pride can be viewed as a sense of arrogance, haughtiness or vanity; the individual believes himself better or more important than others. In its weaker form pride is seen as "a sense of one's own proper dignity or value; self respect" (The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language 2000). In this view pride is seen as a motivational factor in the maintenance of a positive sense of self. From this it is evident that pride is a complex concept and can be construed in many ways.

What is also of note is that within the various definitions available some definitions use the notions of pride and self-esteem as interchangeable. However what is of more importance here is that is whilst pride is seen in some definitions as something that is intrinsic to the individual, that is a state of 'being', in others it is seen as a product of an external influence, e.g. wealth, beauty, rank or achievements and talents. It is the latter influence that is of interest here as it is arguable that achievements and talents are strongly related to perceived self-efficacy. Ben-Ze'ev (2000) and Lazarus & Lazarus (1984) both suggested that the ability to demonstrate superior performance and abilities is strongly related to levels of pride. From this it would appear that within the various definitions of pride self-efficacy is subsumed within the concept of a general sense of pride or self-esteem. It is arguable that it is these definitions that are partly responsible for the conflation of self-esteem and self-efficacy that is found within the stigma literature.

Rousseau, the philosopher, contended that it was important to distinguish between the notions of pride and self-love. He claimed that "self-love is natural sentiment which prompts every animal to watch over its own conservation...Pride is only a relative, artificial sentiment born in society, a sentiment which prompts each individual to attach more importance to himself than to anyone else." (1754/1984, p.167)
In this he refers to two types of pride which he calls ‘amour de soi même’ and ‘amour propre’. Amour de soi même translates as ‘love of self’ and in this context pride is inner derived and operates in isolation, independent of society. The individual experiences pride as a result of their efficacious actions within their environment. Conversely Amour-propre is bound by society and social comparisons. The individual derives a sense of pride from carefully chosen comparisons with others. Comparisons are drawn from a variety of dimensions including, beauty, wealth and abilities.

Pride is an important part of how these young mothers make sense of their situation and how they perceive their abilities. They are conscious of other people’s views of them and are pleased by the fact that other people are proud of them for what they have achieved. In most cultures giving birth is considered an achievement and celebrated accordingly. It does not appear to matter what age the mother is when they give birth, both mother and baby are lauded by friends and family. Society might disapprove of teenage mothers, but it is still considered an achievement to produce a new life and young mothers are proud of this achievement:

Anna (age 19)

“I enjoy every aspect. I enjoy having him around. I enjoy the little things that makes you feel good, like when he comes out with another word or...I mean I look at him and think he's so gorgeous and it makes me feel so proud. Nearly every aspect of being a mother.”

Many of the young mothers that were interviewed felt that before they had their children they were not achieving very much. They were disengaged from school and wasting their time; having fun, but going off the rails. Having a baby has given them an opportunity to achieve something. It is important to remember that the young women in this study are not just “mothers” but they are also adolescents. Adolescence is a period during which beliefs about personal efficacy can be critical to development (Bandura, 1997; Graber, Brooks-Gunn & Peterson 1996). What is also of particular note about the work relating to self-efficacy during adolescence is that it is mainly focussed on the role of academia, both the affects of performance on self-efficacy and the effect of self-efficacy of academic achievement.
It is arguable that this focus on academically related self-efficacy is because it has been suggested that adolescent self-efficacy is key to perceived occupational self-efficacy. Occupational choice made during this period of development shape the course of an individual’s life and will play an important role in personal identity and self-evaluation (Bandura, Barbarinelli, Caprara and Pastorelli, 2001).

However what happens to those adolescents who are failing academically and lack the self-efficacy in this domain? Bandura claims that perceived inefficacy could have important implication for an individual’s emotional reactions to situations and one’s motivation to undertake various behaviours. Successful school functioning is positively related to the education, employment and welfare status of the mother. Children who are brought up in poverty are more at risk of academic failure. In turn adolescents that are failing in school are more likely to have lower academic self-efficacy and are more likely to engage in under age sex (Hofferth & Hayes 1987). It is arguable that adolescents that experience a threat to their sense of self-efficacy appear to lack self-efficacious beliefs in other areas of their lives as well. However having a baby provides the young women with an opportunity to develop new skills and demonstrate that they can succeed in a career that they believe is an important one.

Anna (age 19)

“\textit{I see it as the best job in the world, being a mother. Everyone wants to have a career. Parents expect us to get jobs. But this is a job, bringing up children... errm... So I don't think there is any need to benefit being a mother. If you are proud of having a child that...I think you have to be in the right mind.}”

Anna is not only proud of what she has achieved as a mother, but she also sees motherhood as an achievement in itself. Broucek (1979) refers to a competence pleasure, a sense of pleasure that is derived from a demonstration of competence, e.g. passing a test or successfully raising a baby. Anna obtains a sense of pride from her ability to successfully raise a baby. This could in part be explained by her belief that motherhood is a job. This is important to many of the young women, as not only do they redefine the dimensions from which they gain self-efficacy, but they also redress
one of the main criticisms that are levelled against young mothers, i.e. their reliance on benefits. As already pointed out in the previous chapter there is a widely held view that young mothers are lazy and only have babies as a means of getting money from the government. Many of the young women interviewed are aware that others hold this view and are quick to point out that they do not intend to stay on benefits for long. However whilst they have to remain on benefits some of the young mothers are able to construct motherhood as a ‘proper’ job. By seeing their responsibilities as a career they are able to maintain a sense of pride about their lives because they are able to see themselves as doing a valuable job and not just ‘sponging’. They also see that they are good at what they are doing and that they have mastered the necessary skills to be good mother:

Shirley (age 19)

“I’m a good mum; I know I’m a good mum. I’m good at my job…”

These young women believe that they have managed to achieve something of worth in their lives:

Emily (age 17)

“Yes, I’ve achieved something. I see it as that. People look at me when I say I’ve achieved something but I have, so I look at it like that.”

Whilst Emily is proud of what she has achieved she is also aware that other people might not agree with her and might question her achievements. This again goes back to an awareness of the negative evaluations that exist about teenage mothers. There is a generally accepted view that having a baby is not an achievement, but a waste of a young life. However Emily prefers to see it as something to be proud of and therefore she can be proud of what she has achieved.

Emily’s awareness of other people’s views highlights an important aspect of this theme - the construction of pride through other people’s evaluations. As already demonstrated in the previous study the young mothers make use of social comparisons to gauge how they are doing, but they also want to be told by other people that they are doing a good job. Rousseau refers to this need for recognition as
'publicity', which is close to Bandura's notion of 'social persuasion. Rousseau contends that the individual's sense of self worth is dependent on the positive evaluations of others. It is important to remember that pride is not just a product of self-efficacy. In this view it can also be a motivational factor for self-efficacy as well. It is arguable that the acknowledgement of others provides a motivation to practice and acquire new skills. This acknowledgement can come from friends and family or from the baby itself. This is demonstrated when Julie says:

**Julie (age 17)**

"I don't think they have changed. I have just had to put them on hold for now. I don't want to be a failure. That's not an option"

**Interviewer**

"Why do you think you may be a failure?"

**Julie**

"I don't want my baby to grow up and think you know...I want her to grow up and be proud of where she came from. Be proud of her life and you know, me as well. I want to have a good life for my family."

Having a baby has motivated Julie; she is willing to work hard at being a good mother because she wants her daughter to be proud of her.

The young women all felt pleased when other people acknowledge and respect the fact that they are doing a good job:

**Katie (age 19)**

"They have been the best, I'd have to say, because they just find it amazing how I've done it this way and just think I'm very strong for doing it this way."

Katie has not only gained self-respect, but also the respect of her friends and parents. What is also of interest within this quote is the fact that her friends think that she is strong for what she has done, continuing with the pregnancy. The use of the word
"strong" is linked to the notion of power. Members of a stigmatised group are assumed to be powerless. However by becoming a mother Katie has regained control over her life and other people respect her for this. As she goes on to say:

"My parents have always said to me I grew up too fast anyway and I think now they respect me more. They can see that I'm trying to do things right and they do listen to me now."

Rather than seeing her as a stereotypical teenage mother, her parents now respect her for the way that she copes with the responsibilities and she now has a more equal relationship with them. Again this relates to the notion of power. Her parents listen to her now. By gaining a sense of agency over their lives they gain not only self-respect, but the respect of others. The word "respect" suggests that there is a shift in the balance of power within certain interactions. Respect is linked to esteem and deference. By gaining the respect of other people the young women are able to meet others on a more equal footing. From this it appears that having a baby not only provides the young women with self-respect, but the respect of others as well. Hayley echoes this when she talks about her parents' views of her:

*Hayley (age 19)*

"... I think they're both quite proud of me really for achieving what I have" 

Hayley's parents are proud of what she has achieved. Becoming a mother also appears to change the nature of the relationship with their parents. The young mothers believe they have the opportunity to make their parents proud of them and what they have achieved. This all is important to the development of a positive sense of self. By seeing motherhood as a job and recognising the achievements that are associated with the role, the young mothers gain not only perceived self-efficacy and therefore self-respect, but respect from other people as well. They are proud of their achievements and are proud that other people recognise this.
Lack of Control. The second superordinate theme to emerge was lack of control. Within this theme are the subordinate themes of challenged self-efficacy, fear / learning curves and lack of control prior to having a baby.

Challenged self-efficacy. This theme straddles both control and lack of control and appears to be progressive in that it seems to indicate patterns of change over time, from when the young women are in the later stages of pregnancy to when they actually become mothers and as they gain more confidence. From the transcripts it appears that when the young mothers’ perceived self-efficacy is lowered they become more aware of the potentially negative evaluations that others might make about them. This manifests itself in different ways during the pregnancy and after birth.

Pregnancy From the transcripts it appears that pregnancy is a particularly potent time for the mothers. At this time they are more vulnerable and seem to be more aware of the negative comments that other people make, especially the health professionals that they meet during hospital visits:

Veronica (age 18)

“I think strangers are narrow-minded. They don’t take the individual’s case. They think everyone who is young is you know, ruining their life and don’t know anything about children. Whereas that’s not always the case. I used to work in a nursery, so I got lots of experience with babies. Fair enough, not newborn babies. You give ‘em back at the end of the day. I knew what I was letting myself in for. I think they just assume that you are gonna live off the Social... Not all of young mothers do that. I also, think the midwives are horrible. Before I had him, one of the midwives said that ‘cos I was six weeks showing that my baby was too small and that it was my fault ‘cos I hadn’t been eating! All you teenage moms are the same, blah, blah, blah.... you’re stunting your baby’s growth. When all I ever did when I was pregnant was eat! I think that was very judgemental”

Veronica believes that the midwives and nurses are very judgemental of her and assume that as she is a young mother she is not taking care of herself. This highlights the stereotype of the teenage mother being irresponsible and incapable of looking
after themselves or their babies. Veronica believes that the health workers think that young mothers are wasting their time when she says:

"But, I think it was the, you know, the other people that spend time with you, coming in changing dressings, the general nurses. I think they didn’t care much for you. You were wasting their time. I don’t know whether that was with everyone or if they were like that just with me? Probably because I was young."

She makes an assumption that she is treated like this because she is young, This is echoed by Karen who says

Interviewer

“What about people generally, people in the street, or doctors, nurses?”

Karen (age 16)

“They reacted like I was too young and that I shouldn’t have a baby... ‘cos, I’ve been told off once by a nurse. I had just moved in and was registering with the doctor, and she’s like how old are you? You shouldn’t be having a child at this age. Sometimes, I do feel uncomfortable. The doctors are ok, but that nurse erm...and some people as well, and you tell a child don’t do this and don’t do that, to them just ‘cos you’re young they just think that you can’t look after the child. Also, in hospital when I was giving birth some of the midwives treated me different. But, when I have met up with other girls of my age that have had babies they say that they had the same experience, so...”

These young women believe that it is because they are young that the midwives treat them differently, they believe that they are rushed and that no one listens to them. As Veronica points out she believes that the midwives think that young mothers “are wasting their time” inferring that older mothers are more valuable. She does also point out though that she is unsure as to whether this just a reaction to her or if they are like this with everyone. However within any social interaction there is a balance of power, but within an interaction between a potential stigmatiser and a stigmatised person the balance appears to be preordained. The fact that one party is referred to as the ‘stigmatiser’ and the other the ‘stigmatised’ suggests where the balance lies. Also
within the stigma literature the two parties are more commonly referred to as the ‘perpetrator’ and the ‘victim’ which further dictates expectations about control within an interaction.

Harvey (1999) refers to the notion of civilised oppression. In the traditional sense oppression can mean the abuse of power or authority either physically or mentally. However within a politically correct society overt oppression is “frowned on” but still exists as a subtler, more insidious form, such as in racism or sexism. Harvey contends this type of oppression “has at its heart systematic and morally inappropriate control embedded in relationships that are morally unacceptable” (1999 p.53). Whilst it may not be overt and aggressive, this subtle form is still immoral. For oppression to occur there has to be an unequal balance within a relationship. What should be an equal relationship of peers is skewed to allow one person to have control or power within an interaction. This imbalance can occur for many reasons. Karen believes that she is treated differently because she is young. Alex echoes this when she says:

Alex (age 17)

“When I first went into hospital the Midwife thought my mom was the one who was pregnant, not me (laughs). But, I think a few of the Midwives and that were quite rude and when I tried to tell ‘em what I wanted and things they try and put me down or intimidate me. Things like that. Like try and take over ‘cos I’m so young, I was only 15 at the time they did this and did that and got away with it. So my mom came to every single appointment with me so that when they tried to do that she turned round and said nah. And like she was there for me at every one of my appointments.”

Alex believes that the midwives deliberately tried to intimidate her and because of their ‘power’ or her lack of ‘power’ “got away with it”. She felt that they were unnecessarily “rude” to her. Harvey argues that in an oppressive interaction the person with power will use language or behaviour that devalues or denigrates the other person. The nature of this unequal relationship allows the more powerful person to feel that they are legitimately putting the other person down. In these circumstances the young mothers find it difficult to gain control and therefore may require the services of a proxy agent, someone to act on their behalf and in their
interests. In Alex’s case her mother stepped into the breach. Celia’s mother also acts as her agent:

_Celia (age 17)_

“When I went to the Maternity Ward and everything, I just felt awkward going there ‘cos I was so young. And then sitting there with older women pregnant and then there’s me. But, my mom just said don’t let it bother you. One of the receptionists was really rude to me there before.”

_Interviewer_

“Why, what did she say?”

_Celia_

“I walked in there and there was just...I was going for my thing and she’s like oh your pregnant. I was like yeah, and she goes, all the problems you will get, you’re a stupid little girl. And then I just...I thought that was really rude but I didn’t say nothing back ‘cos I was quite down, so I just sat down.”

As already demonstrated in Chapter Five the prevailing attitudes about teenage mothers is that they are “lazy” and “stupid” and are young girls who only become pregnant in order to get council houses. Harvey contends that because the ‘victim’ is usually considered ‘morally inferior’ such interactions are considered acceptable. The dominant actor in the interaction is ‘allowed’ to ‘keep’ the other person in their place and possibly humiliate them. Within this interaction the health professional is interacting with what she perceives to be either a child or a ‘teenage mother’ both of whom have little power within society.

These young mothers assume that other people judge them because they are young and therefore unable to cope. However what is interesting about these quotes is that at this stage the young women still do not have a high level of perceived self-efficacy. They have yet to see the evidence that they will be able to cope and they have not yet experienced being responsible for their babies and therefore have no reason to question the “professional’s” view. Celia makes this clear when she says she felt it was rude, but she just sat down without saying so. Harvey calls this “constrained
silence". Because they have a low sense of perceived self-efficacy the young women are complicit in the maintenance of the power relationship. It is only as they gain confidence in their abilities that they start to stand up for themselves. It is almost as though there is a "them and us" operating, the professional and the novice. The young women have yet to develop the confidence in their abilities to counter such criticisms nor see themselves as ‘acceptable’ mothers at that stage. However it must be pointed out that civilised oppression is not always intentional and the perpetrators can believe that they are acting in the other person’s best interest.

The young mothers related many interactions like this, but not all interactions appeared to affect them or upset them. The incidents that seem to affect the young women most appeared to take place when they were pregnant and interacting with people they perceived as in a controlling position; when their sense of perceived self-efficacy was lowered. However incidents like this that happen at a different time appeared to be ignored by the young women. For example, as mentioned earlier Karen believes that having a baby will give her the confidence she needs to stand up for herself. She says:

Karen (age 16)

"Yeah, ‘cos I can stand up more for myself whereas I feel a bit stronger and care. When you have someone else you have to be a bit stronger and the things that you go through makes you grow up quickly, you have no choice."

Alex who felt that the midwives were trying to ‘intimidate’ her when she was pregnant, is not bothered by other people’s comments after giving birth. She demonstrates this when she later says about another interaction with a stranger.

Alex (age 17)

"I don’t know ‘cos at the end of the day that ain’t their problem. So, they never bother me, it’s my life not theirs."

In this instance the comments do not upset her. What is not clear from these comments, however, is why this should be. It is arguable that the negative comments are from a stranger and therefore are not relevant to her. Whereas when she is talking
to a midwife their comments are relevant as they are in a ‘professional’ position and therefore allowed to pass judgement. It is also arguable that it is because she is a now a mother and has evidence to support the fact that she is a good mother, whereas when she was pregnant she did not.

There is also is an issue of whether or not people want control over their lives. Existential arguments suggest that that the act of choosing is an act of self-creation. The choices the individual takes will dictate the person that they become. However whilst some people prefer to take choices and the control that is associated with them, others are intimidated by the responsibility of choice as they have ‘fear of freedom’. Yalom (1980) contends that they individual will adopt strategies to displace responsibility such as refusing to take responsibility, impulsive or compulsive behaviour, or withdrawal into mental illness. He argues that through such actions they allow others to take this control. It is arguable that during pregnancy the young women prefer others to help make these choices and want others to tell them what to do. It is only as perceived self-efficacy levels rise that the desire to have control emerges. Even then this fluctuates and the young women are happy for others to support them and take control occasionally. It is arguable that this is where the paradoxical nature of motherhood is apparent. They have control over their lives, but sometimes it is too much and they just want to be able to let others take control and be able to go out without thinking. However, at the other extreme they do not want to be told by others what to do. Existentialist would argue that a complete surrender of power could lead to a sense of being, and nothingness, and would lead to depression.

However either way what is apparent is that whilst they are still pregnant an interaction with a midwife can make the young women feel less efficacious and unsure of themselves and therefore the comments appear to affect them more. This point becomes clearer when examining the young mother’s experiences of interactions once they have had the baby.

*Early days.* From the findings so far it is arguable that perceived self-efficacy changes over time and is context dependent and as such, we need to examine within the context of the situation in which they occur to fully understand the effects of self efficacy. Bandura contends, “*The relationship between self-referent thought and*
actions is most accurately revealed when they are measured in close temporal proximity” (1986 p.396).

During the early days of motherhood perceived self-efficacy appears to be closely linked to confidence. Confidence again seems to develop with the situation as the young mothers gain more skills. During the early stages of motherhood, when self efficacy is low the young mothers appear to be just as aware of the negative evaluations, and are ready to judge themselves negatively.

Demi (age 17)

“To tell you the truth it was an accident and I’m not going to deny that but it’s sort of like, I had that feeling that I would have got pregnant for medical reasons and erm, I suppose yes I suppose I did and in some ways I think what I thought it would sort of just pass by and like sort of like it would be really, really easy but then when obviously you are a mum it’s not so easy and it is a lot of hard work when they’re up crying and teething and you don’t know what’s wrong with them or they’re ill and like she’s had suspected meningitis and she scared the hell out of me, she’d had her injections and it was pretty scary.

Like when she was born she was in intensive care and I had to watch in case of blood and anything like that and they were on about going to her head with blood with one stage and I said no you ain’t, that’s her head and you’re going to leave that alone, you’re not going near that and where she was so tiny it’s just seeing her in the incubator and the first time I saw her I blamed myself, it’s me what’s done this to her, I’ve done this to her, I’ve harmed, I’ve hurt my baby because I smoked and I’ve been stressed out during the pregnancy and I blamed myself for it, that’s what thought it was. It was horrible, for four days, I was constantly crying, then it kicked in to baby blues, I knew about it, my step mum went boo and I cried, they could just do a little signal, know you’re a novice, and I cried my heart out and I just blamed myself for what happened to her, I thought it was because of me.”

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In this quote Demi highlights the fear she felt as a new mother, not only was everything new to her, but she also had to contend with her baby’s illness. This experience brought home the responsibilities she now bears, not only now the baby is born, but also when she was pregnant. She blames herself and her lifestyle for her baby’s illness.

However not only are these young women experiencing the major changes in their circumstances, but also hormonal changes brought about by childbirth, Bandura contends that “people read their somatic arousals in stressful or taxing situations as ominous signs of vulnerability to dysfunction” (p.401). These young women have to make rapid adjustments to a new life and responsibilities and rather than perceiving the situation as just one of those things, the young mothers perceive the stress as a result of their inability to cope, that they are not being efficacious mothers. Demi actually refers to herself as a novice and assumes that her baby’s problems are her fault. She is aware that she may have had the baby blues, but she still assumes that her lifestyle whilst she was pregnant had affected her baby.

This quote highlights an important point in that the young mothers appear to find it the hardest when they have no control over the situation. Bandura believes that a strong sense of perceived self-efficacy can ‘strengthen resilience’ and can reduce the vulnerability to stress and the threat of challenging situations. However, as already mentioned, self-efficacy is not a constant structure; it is open to the effects of the context in which it appears and/or is constructed. In this self-efficacy can be an outcome of a situation and is dependent on the ability of the individual to control their behaviour and performance within the situation. If performance is based on the production of certain behaviour or specific outcomes, e.g. a contented baby, there will undoubtedly be times when such behaviours will be beyond their control. In Donna’s case it is when she has no control over her baby’s illness, but in many cases it is when they have no control over the baby’s behaviour:

Lee (age 18)

“Getting stressed, upset with him sometimes when he cries, I suppose. I can’t deal with how to cope when it gets to that point. It makes me feel very guilty ‘cos he’s only baby.”
Bandura suggests that individuals who are low in self-efficacy are more likely to see their circumstances as harder than they really are, allowing the stress of the situation to narrow their vision and only see problems. Whereas those with high self-efficacy are more likely to focus their attention and efforts on what is needed to control the situation and are more likely to sustain effort to achieve goals:

Hayley (age 19)

"Sometimes I'm a bit impatient with him because he whinges a lot, it can get to you, it does annoy you after a while and it's constant and you've done everything. erm sometimes I get quite stressed with him as well, quite stressful when he doesn't want to settle and that's probably a couple of the worst things."

Alex (age 17)

"Yeah, I don't know... I'm just like... I always get stressed and I'll be sitting there and I just want to do something and I can't. When the baby is crying constantly and he won't shut up and just cries for hours and he still keeps going through the night and I wake in the morning and I'm like a zombie... stuff like that stresses me out and I have to come home, cook dinner and things like that. Things like a 30yr old woman has been doing is like erm an old woman or something. I'm not doing what kids are doing at my own age. I'm living all mummified like a 30yr old"

These quotes highlight that the young mothers appear to be most stressed when they have no control over their baby's behaviour and actions and consequently their sense of self-efficacy is lowered. "When performances are impeded by disincentives, inadequate resources, or external constraints, self-judged efficacy will exceed the actual performance" (Bandura 1986 P. 396). In such incidents Bandura contends that the individual's beliefs about performance will exceed the actual performance as they are held back by these restraints. However it is also arguable in the case of the young mothers that their beliefs about their performance are impeded by the baby's behaviour. Because they fail to settle their babies they believe they are not doing a good job, but in fact they are performing as any mother would in the circumstances.
So it is not actual performance that is affected, but the belief about that performance and therefore their own sense of self-efficacy. In such circumstances the young mothers question their abilities and also appear to believe that others are questioning their abilities:

Lorraine (age 17)

"I get mixed reactions. I get people tutting at me, looking at me, staring at me all the time. So...shaking their heads when Ryan is crying and I can’t do nothing about it to quieten him down. And, when I’m on the buses — you know you get special buses you can get the buggy on, I was getting on one of them and this lady she was sitting in the space. I said excuse me to her, can I get there please so I can get the pushchair in. She just tutted at me and looked me up and down. I do get mixed reactions. Some people aren’t bothered. Some people — dunno really, they just judge me."

Interviewer

"Why do you think they are judging you?"

Lorraine

"Cos I’m a young mom"

Interviewer

"And how do you think they see a young mom?"

Lorraine

"They can’t cope. They are only doing it so that they can get a flat so that they don’t have to work."

Lorraine is worried that other people think that she cannot cope with being a mother at such a young age and therefore when she has a problem, for example, like not being able to get the buggy on the bus, she worries that people will think it is because she is too young to cope. She is using her own prototype of what it is to be a good mother to measure her own actions against; good mothers are able to calm their babies and can cope with the buggy. In this instance she seems to perceive herself as not coping and more importantly when her perceived self-efficacy is low she thinks she is fulfilling
the stereotype of a teenage mother. Her mothering skills reflect on who she is. Vigilance hypothesis (Crocker & Major, 1989) suggests that members of a low status or stigmatised group are more likely to anticipate prejudicial behaviour because they are more likely to have encountered it in the past (eg Allport, 1954; Feldman, Barrett & Swim, 1998) and consequently are more likely to perceive ambiguous situations as threatening (Sedikides & Skowronski, 1991). In the case of young mothers it is arguable that during a stressful encounter with other people they are primed to anticipate the potentially negative reactions. At other times such encounters would be dismissed. However because their sense of self-efficacy is lowered by the inability to control their baby’s distress they question their own abilities and more importantly anticipate and assume that other people will do the same.

However as the baby grows and develops so does the young mother’s confidence. The things that worry them in the early days become less of a problem as they gain more confidence in their abilities.

Interviewer

“How do you feel about being a mother?”

Sam (age 18)

“Erm....at the start I did feel a bit funny. You know, going out to town or walk round the shop. I felt like people were staring at me - bit insecure...I dunno.”

Interviewer

“Do you think people would stare at you?”

Sam

“It don’t bother me now. But, before it used to.”

From this it would appear that the young mother’s sense of self-efficacy is contingent upon having a healthy and contented baby. As has already been mentioned having a baby provides a physical manifestation of the young mother’s abilities. They are able to see that their babies are health and happy babies as a result of their ability to be a good mother. However the baby can undermine their perceived self-efficacy, e.g. through being ill or unsettled. When self-efficacy is challenged in this way the young
mothers doubt or call into question their abilities rather than recognising this as just a ‘natural’ occurrence. Perhaps more importantly this is what they believe other people might think. It is important however, to point out that this is not just a phenomenon that is restricted to young mothers. It is arguable that most mothers of any age feel this crisis of confidence and insecurity in similar situations and worry that other will judge them to be a “bad mother”. Unfortunately for younger mothers they have the added stigma of being a “teenage mother” and the possibility of fulfilling this negative stereotype.

Gerry encapsulates this process when she is asked how it feels to be responsible for another person:

Gerry (age 17)

“Scary. If anything happened it always reflects back on you, the littlest things but I feel bad, I know it’s not the same thing but like people in here say you’ve got to leave him crying, because I pick him up as soon as he cries, that’s why he’s so clingy but everyone here says he’s got to exercise his lungs. It’s good for him, and also that you’ve got to let him cry otherwise they’re going to think on yeah, I can get away with it because he’s really brainy for his age, he knows that if he cries he’s going to get picked up so he proper screams but I think, I do still do it now though, let him cry, but at first I was like, I thought if people heard him crying for a long time they would think my God, what’s she doing to him or oh she’s not even bothering with him. That’s what I thought, I was getting really worried what other people would think, sort of thing, so I was like shush, don’t cry, you know, trying to stop him from crying because I thought oh my God what are they thinking. But they all said you should leave him otherwise he will want to be picked up all the time so I do it now. I just let him get on with it, a proper little strop.”

In these circumstances she is acutely aware of what other people might think. Gerry admitted that in the early days of motherhood she was scared to leave her child to cry in case other people thought that she was being a ‘bad mother’. This highlights the effect that the negative stereotype can have on her confidence and consequently her
actions. However as she gains more confidence in her mothering skills, she appears not to worry as much. She goes on to confirm the development of her confidence:

*Interviewer*

"Have you got more confidence now?"

*Gerry*

"It’s getting better. At first I had none, I was like oh my god. I didn’t know how to hold the bottle properly and was worried when he slept that he was going to choke or when he slept and I didn’t sleep some nights I just wanted to watch him. The first time he slept through I was scared; I was poking him. I thought why doesn’t he wake up. I was poking him and he woke up and he had a strop because I woke him up and I said oh sorry, I just wanted to make sure he was all right."

*Fear and learning curves.* This theme comes under the heading of lack of control and is closely related to the idea of challenged self-efficacy. During the transition to motherhood the young women are faced with an array of new experiences and the task of mastering the new skills associated with their new role as a mother. From the transcripts it would appear that this is a period of uncertainty that leaves the young mothers feeling vulnerable and insecure about their abilities and fearful about their future. Fear in this context is apparent in two ways, fear of the unknown and fear of not having the necessary capabilities. Fear also appears to have a progressive aspect to it. The nature and manifestation of fear appears to change as the young women progress from the early days of pregnancy through to becoming a mother.

*Pregnancy:*

During pregnancy most of the mothers interviewed initially felt scared when they discovered that they were pregnant.

*Demi (age 17)*

"Who did I tell first? Erm, I told my mate Natalie because I was absolutely scared out of my skin. Then I told Tina who was also pregnant, erm and I was like Tina I don’t know what to do, what did you do when you found out you were pregnant? This was on the Sunday and I goes straight down the doctors"
Monday morning and just made sure, a test or exam, whatever she said I was seven months pregnant. It was very scary."

At this stage fear appears to be related to other people’s reactions (which infers an awareness of the stigma and disapproval that they think they will be met with) but also the fear of not being able to cope. However fear at this stage could also be linked into the notion of choice; they have just discovered that they are pregnant and in the majority of cases this was not out of choice. However once they have made the choice to keep the baby the fear appears to dissipate and they seem to settle down and enjoy the prospect of becoming a mother. There is still a fear of not being able to cope, but that too seems to dissipate over time as well as they become more used to actually being a mother. Lee highlights this point when she says;

Lee (age 18)

"I went to a centre and sat down. I told them I needed to speak to someone and can you give me some advice about it. They spoke to me and made me think about it. I came back and told them that I did want this baby. I think I was more scared of not being able to cope and Dan would be at work all day and I’d have two children like under the age of 2 and running the house, you know."

The other main concern linked into this idea is coping with the responsibility for another person:

Interviewer

"What aspects scare you?"

Emily (age 17)

"I don’t know, just having the responsibility of a human being twenty-four seven I suppose."

Interviewer

"What sort of responsibilities will you have?"

Emily
"Well you have to be there twenty-four seven don’t you? You have to feed them, do everything else, it’s just scary the thought of it really. Everyone says it’s not scary but it is, I’m scared anyway."

Early days:
However it is not just during pregnancy that this fear is felt. Shortly after birth and during the early stages of motherhood worries appear to centre on whether or not they are capable of raising a child and whether they have the appropriate skills and will be able to look after a fragile baby:

Hayley (age 19)
“I didn’t know what to expect, what to do or anything but obviously you gain the experience all the time but it was quite frightening at first.”

Interviewer
“What did you find frightening?”

Hayley
“The fact he was so tiny, the sort of, trying to get him to feed was difficult and just holding him was quite, you know because he was so delicate, I was worried hurting him really because he was so tiny, those sorts of things but I learnt everything, most of it they showed me at the hospital.”

At this stage it also appears as though there is an element of the fear of the unknown. The young mothers are not sure what they should be doing and whether they are doing it right. It is important to note however that fear of the unknown at this stage is not just the domain of the young mother as new mothers of any age go through a sharp learning curve once they have the baby and it is almost as though they have to go through the bad times in order to gain the confidence. As they gain knowledge and skills they gain more confidence and sense of self-efficacy. This is exemplified by Simone (baby’s ages 6 and 24 months) when she says:
Simone (age 17)

"I didn't think it was going to be a bed of roses, I thought oh no it's not that bad, once you get the first few months over it's fine, perfectly OK, but I got a couple of months into it and I found it so hard. You know, barely scraping through and then I managed to pull myself up again."

Interviewer

"What sort of things do you find hard?"

Simone

"The night time feeds I'd say. I mean, the bathing, I was always a bit shaky about bathing them because just in case they slipped and they banged their head or something but I don't know. I'm glad I went through it all now to get to where I am today."

Simone went through some tough times learning how to be a mother, but she is glad she did. It is through facing these problems and dealing with them that she has developed a positive sense of self-efficacy. During this transitional period the young mothers appear to be more insecure about what is expected of them and the abilities that they will need to cope with the situation, but as they gain confidence the worries seem to dissipate and the mothers see this period as a necessary part of mastering new skills.

Lack of control prior to having the baby. 'Lack of control' is closely linked to 'out of control', but it is subtly different. One can have a lack of control, but still not be out of control. Within these transcripts there is evidence of both aspects and it seems to be most evident prior to giving birth. It would appear that young women try very hard to gain control over their lives and consequently fight with those they perceived to have authority over them. They seem to be aware that parents and teachers hold the control. Anna makes this clear when she says:

Anna (age 19)

"You don't wanna know...ermm...I gave up school in year 10, when I was 15yrs old...ermm as much as my parents tried to get me back. And it
wasn’t…(baby noises)…ermm…yeah I gave up school and it wasn’t the fact that I wasn’t very good at learning because I asked to go on a ermm… a lot of people that left school went on a training thing. But they wouldn’t let me go on it ‘cos they thought I couldn’t get better GCSE’s. I think again it was pretty bad of me now being too immature. I didn’t like the way teachers can talk to you when you can’t do any better. I could’ve been really bad, like there was one teacher that constantly made me stand up when he walked in the room…you had to stand up and I thought that was completely wrong, why should I have to stand up for you. I don’t even stand up when my parents walk in the room. Why should I have to stand up for someone looking like that…you know…I should’ve respected them. It was the teachers and also my friends were giving up school. So I ended up giving up school and I didn’t think about my parents. Then I went into a college cleaning all night to pay for a holiday and then I ermm…then I went to India and fell pregnant.”

Andrea also highlights this issue when she was asked what she was doing before she left school:

Interviewer
“What were you doing at school before you left at 13?”

Andrea (age 15)
“Erm…I was just being a bit rebellious at the time ‘cos… I didn’t really like the way people were telling me what to do all the time, teachers… I didn’t really enjoy it. I just wanted to be out…”

Interviewer
“The teachers weren’t a problem?”

Andrea
“No. They just tried to get me back into school, other kinds of education like part time or whatever. I just didn’t want to.”

She was not going to do what other people told her to do. Rebecca echoes this when she says:
Rebecca (age 18)

“Nah. I knew what I was doing. If I wasn’t gonna be stopped doing it, then I was gonna carry on doing it. So, if my Mum is not telling me don’t do it, I’m gonna carry on. I know that when I was 13, I thought it was all good coming in at 1 or 2 in the morning and then not going to school the following morning.”

However Rebecca seems to be a slightly different case as earlier in this interview she says:

“I never see my dad. I never knew who he was. My mom left me to do what I wanted to do. At 13 I was coming in at all hours and I wouldn’t come home for days. I was always in the Police Station. Troubled child really.”

In the first quote she implies that she took control, whilst in this one she says that her mother left her to do what she wanted to; her mother did not even try to control her (there is an impression in this that she would have liked the control). This quote also highlights another aspect of lack of control - “out of control”

Out of control The young women appear to try to gain control over their lives by rebelling against their parents and their teachers. However several of the young women seem to suggest that they end up out of control. Quite a few young mothers refer to the fact that they felt that their lives were out of control:

Heather (age 17)

“Erm...well, before I was pregnant we used to go like out drinking and stuff. But, they still do that and I can’t obviously do that. But, erm.. so I don’t see them as much because they are always drinking and stuff. I normally just go to the cinema, or just go round someone’s house, or the pub occasionally. But, I don’t...I can’t really stay out that late now.”

Interviewer

“Do you miss that?”
Chapter Seven

Heather

"No. Not at all. It's a really good excuse not to do it anymore."

Interviewer

"Good excuse?"

Heather

"Yeah. Well I can't drink. I'm quite glad I can't do that anymore."

Interviewer

"Why's that?"

Heather

"Erm...dunno. A bit out of control."

Interviewer

"You felt out of control?"

Heather

"A bit yeah."

Interviewer

"In what way?"

Heather

"I was always out drinking and...dunno...strayed off the path if you like. But, now I don't do any of that. It's quite nice. And it's nice that I'm always in the right state of mind now."

Having a baby has given Heather a reason to gain an element of control over her life. This is echoed by both Rebecca and Lesley:

Rebecca (age 18)

"I always knew that at the end of it I would get a really good job out of it...now I know I have to really work for it....yeah, I worry about me If I hadn't had Kai. Even though I am a pregnant and very mature girl, eventually, I hope, I would've got on the right path...the people I hung around with".

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Lesley (age 17)

"My baby (laughs). Definitely my baby (laughs) erm... I got myself into a lot of trouble after I left home. Although I was going to college and I was working I had no way out basically and I knew I would be just dragged down again. Got into drugs and messed up my life whereas now I have something to live for. I have something to improve my life for, to work hard for, and definitely my baby."

The idea of gaining control over their lives is very closely linked to the fact that once they have the baby they, and others, see how they have matured and grown up:

Interviewer

"How do you find it, being responsible for another person?"

Hayley (age 19)

"It's quite, it is quite different, a life changing experience really because suddenly you're not the child any more, you're the adult and you're looking after a child. It is, I find it sometimes it is a big responsibility but I enjoy it, I enjoy looking after him."

Having a baby provides a catalyst for change, a chance to rewrite their lives.

Rebirth / rewriting history. An important part of self-efficacy theory is the notion that once self-efficacy has been fostered in one domain it can then be generalised to other areas and situations. This is evident in the young mothers' determination to re-enter the academic arena. Where once they felt that they were failing, they have a renewed confidence and motivation to return and try again. This time because they have a practical reason for finishing their education, to make a better life for their babies:

Heather (age 17)
"Yeah and I don’t want her to go without things. Because I never had to go without things when I was young and I don’t want her to. When I could actually do something about it. I can stop it from happening."

She goes on to say:

"I think it’s made me more determined to do my course and stuff, whereas I was just gonna do it. But it didn’t really matter if I dropped out. But, now I wouldn’t drop out. I would have to do it. More focussed really."

Heather’s new found sense of self efficacy enables her to believe that she has the capabilities to change the situation. She says “I can stop it from happening”. She also recognises that having a baby has given her a reason to continue.

Through forethought people are able to plan and execute their futures. They anticipate the likely outcomes of future actions and use these to set goals. Bandura contends that future actions shape present behaviours and motivations. The young women want to be good mothers and to provide a good life for their babies; this means initiating current actions that will enhance this likelihood. The higher the sense of perceived self-efficacy the higher the goals that they will set (Bandura and Wood 1989; Locke, Frederick, Lee and Bobko, 1984) and the higher the goals are set, the higher the levels of motivation to achieve them. What is interesting is that many of the young women interviewed felt that they were not doing well at school and not achieving. This is supported by previous research, e.g. Irvine, Bradley, Cupples & Boohan, 1997; Moore and Waite, 1977. However now they have a motivation to change, and succeed, and they have evidence to prove that they are achieving, they are setting higher goals which in turn is motivating them to be even better mothers.

Another part of the idea of having control over their lives is the chance, or the opportunity, to rewrite their history. There are many comments from the young women about how they were going to do things differently from the way they were brought up. It appears that they are trying to put right the things that they believe were wrong with their lives. This is not just the mistakes that they have made, but those that their parents have made as well:
Interviewer

“If you could change anything about your life what would it be?”

Deidre (age 17)

“My past probably. I didn’t have a very good childhood. Erm, I would like to start afresh and not do the things I did before”

Interviewer

“What sort of things?”

Deidre

“Being in Foster care again and stuff like that.”

Interviewer

“Do you think that will affect the way you raise your child?”

Deidre

“I think it will yeah because I’ve know a lot of change and will know how to look after my baby better.”

Another interviewee put it another way:

Interviewer

“What sort of hopes have you got?”

Lucy (age 17)

“That he will do better than I ever could or have done.”

This suggests that she will learn by her own and others’ mistakes and be a better parent than her own, consequently her child will do even better than her. Lucy also believes that she will be a better mother than own mother:

Lucy

“Erm, I’m quite used to being responsible for other people. I was for my sister erm, when she was growing up ‘cos my Mum runs a bar… erm, and she got really bad drinking. We never saw her, I never went to school and brought
up my sister erm, so I'm quite used to looking after other children and I want to work to with other children as well, erm so, that doesn't bother me 'cos I know I'm quite good at it. And, having a child of mine I'm only gonna be better."

However having a baby has not just given them the opportunity to provide a better childhood, it gives them a chance to do different things.

Interviewer

"What sort of things do you look forward to doing with the baby?"

Alice (age 17)

"Buying clothes and things."

Interviewer

"What about as it gets older?"

Alice

"Erm...chance to do different things."

From this it would appear that the young mothers are using their own parents as a template for how to be a parent. Some see their childhood as a positive experience and want to recreate the roles that their parents played. However others see their parents as a template for bad parenting and are attempting distance themselves from this role model.

"Do as I say, not as I do". Within this theme is a subordinate theme of "Do as I say, not as I do". Part of rewriting their own history is making sure that their children do not make the same mistakes as they have; this includes becoming a parent at a young age. They might be delighted to be mothers, but they wouldn't want it for their own children:

Alice (age 17)
"I hope that he or she gets older, does studying and gets a good job and does well. If she is a girl, that she doesn't get into situations like me, make sure she has got a lot of money, support and love."

Demi (age 17)

"Erm, (long pause) Being a mother to a ten year old (giggles). Erm, (long pause), out working and doing the things I like doing, making sure that she's safe and she's always in when she's meant to be in, basically."

These are interesting comments as they highlight the point that whilst the young mothers profess to be delighted to be mothers and claim they would not change their lives, they also want to make sure that their babies do not make the same "mistake" as them. Demi emphasises this when she says:

Interviewer

"What do you think it will be like to be responsible for another person now?"

Demi

"I think in a way it will be quite good. It shows that you could be more grown up and then at least when you are a teenage Mum you can actually teach, if you have a daughter you can teach it. Being a teenage Mum can ruin your life."

This is a complex statement, full of contradictions, Demi thinks it will be good to have a child because it will prove to others that she is an adult, however the most important part is that as a teenage mother she can prove to her own child that it can ruin your life. However she goes on to say:

Interviewer

"Do you think it will ruin your life?"

Demi
"Yes and no really. I don’t think it does because you know. Before I said you can’t get a good job when you have the rest of your life with this child. But on the other hand you’ve got a child and it’s part of your life and it will always be there for you."

What is of particular note within all these quotes is an implicit sense of lack of self-esteem. Despite the fact that the mothers feel that their babies have been a positive change in their lives, they do not want their children to make the same ‘mistake’ that they have. They are proud to be mothers, for producing their babies and they feel efficacious and believe that they have coped well with the situation, but they are not proud of the situation. They appear to suggest that they still feel having a baby at such a young age was not the best thing that they could have done. It is arguable that this demonstrates that higher levels of perceived self-efficacy can exist when self-esteem is low. This suggests that perceived self-efficacy exists independently of self-esteem rather than subordinate to it.

Also the last quote highlights a particularly important point and the third superordinate theme that emerged from the data, the paradoxical nature of motherhood.

Paradox of motherhood. “It was the best of times, it was the worst of times.” Dickens’ famous opening to A Tale of Two Cities sums up the dynamic shifts in the lives of the French people during the French revolution. It also highlights the paradoxical nature of change in people’s lives. Whilst ultimately the change can be positive and beneficial the process of change can be both shocking and challenging. This can be true for a mother of any age, but for a teenager in particular the transition to motherhood can be very hard work.

This third superordinate theme appears to demonstrate that having a baby can be one of the best things in the young women’s lives, but it can also be one of the worst as well. The young mothers interviewed were all very positive about being mothers and felt that their babies were the best things in their lives and they would not change them. However they were also acutely aware of the problems associated with being a young mother and those aspects of life that they were missing out on:
Alex (age 17)

"Just not being able to go out and live my life and enjoy myself. I wish...I wouldn't change my baby for the world but I wish I could have lived my life and enjoyed myself first. I met JJ when I was 13 and been with him ever since so I've missed out on other things with friends and then I fell pregnant and living by myself and all that. Like I miss living at my moms and just being able to lay on my bed and speak to my sisters and brothers and just sit listening to music with them, and that...I miss that. It's silly little things like that I miss the most, so..."

She goes on to say later in the interview:

"Yeah, I don't know... I'm just like...I always get stressed and I'll be sitting there and I just want to do something and I can't. When the baby is crying constantly and he won't shut up and just cries for hours and he still keeps going through the night and I wake in the morning and I'm like a zombie,...stuff like that stresses me out and I have to come home cook dinner and things like that. Things like a 30yr old woman has been doing is like erm an old woman or something. I'm not doing what kids are doing at my own age. I'm living all mummified like a 30yr old"

Lack of control over her life is a big issue for Alex. She desperately misses what she had before. She still identifies with being a teenager as, to her, mothers are 30 year old women. She recognises that she is not doing what a teenager of her age should be doing. Demi also recognises that she misses her old lifestyle:

Demi (age 17)

"I was going to go college, I was going to get a job, erm and basically live my life to the full, going out, doing what a normal 17 year old does and like trying drugs (giggles) and seeing if I can get away (laughs) and sort of like finding the boyfriend what you want and, like, being yourself. Just having lots and lots of fun but obviously that don't happen if you have a baby, it slows it right down."
Interviewer

"Do you think you're not living your life to the full then?"

Demi

"Not as much as I would like to but obviously that's the responsibility of becoming a mum and if you had chosen to become a mum then that's what you've got to respect, the baby takes up your life, you can't just go out and do what you want and leave your baby at home, whether it's on its own or with people, you just can't do it because anything could be happening to it, like, you just if you're out and if there's a fire to be happening and you think Oh God, that's my fault, I've got out and left that baby. You just don't do that."

Demi is aware of what she is missing but she also is acutely aware of the responsibilities she has taken on when she decided to continue with her pregnancy:

"You grow up a hell of a lot and it does change your life because you can't go out and do things what you want to do."

She really highlights the problems that young mothers face; they love their babies, but they still miss being a teenager. Alex acknowledges that she enjoys being a mother, but feels that she is lacking adult company:

Alex (age 17)

"To tell you truth I don't think it's hard looking after a baby."

Interviewer

"Really?"

Alex

"Yeah, changing him, feed him, they ain't hard. It's the bit of not having your freedom. You have to think before you even walk to the shop, like you have to get him put him in his buggy and think is someone gonna watch him, just to go to the shop which is two minutes away or something. That's the hard part, but looking after a baby I think is easy."
Chapter Seven

Interviewer

“What’s the best part about your life?”

Alex

“Oh, I dunno...erm...I love being with my baby I love him to bits. The only thing I can say is the best thing in my life is coming here really ‘cos I get a break. That’s it really. Being here with other people that’s got kids and other people that haven’t got kids and are my age and being able to socialise. This is the only time I get to socialise with other people my own age.”

Motherhood restricts their movements and yet gives different freedom. But these are dilemmas at any age as Alex points out:

Interviewer

“Do you think there are any benefits to waiting till you are older?”

Alex

“I don’t know. You can go out and enjoy yourself and live your life. But at the end of the day if you wait till your 25 or whatever and you’ve gone out and got yourself a career, got a good job and all that and then you go and have a child you gotta give up that career to bring up the child. If you have a child when you are young, the time you are 19 you can still go to College and still get your career and bringing up your child at the same. You get what I mean?”

Alex highlights that this is also an issue for older mothers. Alex acknowledges that she has given up being a teenager and giving up education, but older mothers also face the dilemma of having a baby and giving up work.

This is where the paradox becomes apparent and whilst there are aspects of their lives that they would like to change there are aspects that are non negotiable; having a baby is one them.

Alex
“What would I change? Erm...I wouldn't want the rows with my boyfriend and I would’ve wanted to know my dad and they are the only real things I would want to change. I wouldn't want to change a single thing about my baby.”

She is not happy with her lifestyle and would make changes in her relationship with her boyfriend, but she would not change anything about her baby. Their lives have changed significantly both for the worse and for the better:

Hayley (age 19)

“Well it's changed dramatically, everything's changed, I don't have as much time to myself any more, everything revolves around him and his eating times and I can't come and go as I did before but I fit it all in around him now. It works OK.”

Interviewer

“Do you feel like it's a positive or negative change?”

Hayley

“No, it's positive really because it just gives, it makes me more organised because I've got to make sure he's OK first, he's my first priority and then I can move on and do what I want to do afterwards and then I just try and entertain him so I don't feel it as a negative thing, no.”

Hayley highlights the paradoxical nature of her life as she realises that her life has had to change and is, in some respects, harder now but she can also see how positive some of these changes can be.

Closely related to the notion of control and agency are the conflicting concepts of free will and determinism. Free will suggests that we have complete control over our choices in life. The individual is responsible for the situation they are in. However determinism suggests there is no such thing as free will and that it is the environment and the circumstances that determine who we are. Existential philosophy suggests that the individual does have free will, but only within certain parameters. The individual’s freedom is situated within their environment and circumstances.
Heidigger (1962) refers to the “throwness” of existence. Our experiences are dependent on when and where we were born, the influences of history, culture, experience etc. Merleau-Ponty introduced the notion of situated freedom; freedom is interwoven within the field of existence. Therefore the individual is free to make choices within certain parameters and because of the existing parameters there are only certain choices available. In this study the young mothers have made a choice about their lives in that they have chosen to become mothers. However whilst becoming a mother has given certain freedoms associated with the role (agency, responsibility for others, freedom as an adult and not a teenager) their freedom only exists within this role. They are freer in some respects, but they are still mothers which brings its own restrictions. They are responsible for their babies and therefore not free. Moreover their freedom is also situated within the available support. They are young women who need the help of other people to deal with the situation.

_Baby makes it right._ However whilst they are fully aware of the aspects of life that they are missing out on, they wouldn’t change it for the world. All the young mothers are proud of their babies and proud of what their babies are achieving:

*Interviewer*

"Can you tell me what it feels like becoming a mother? You always wanted to become a mother. What plans do you have?"

_Andrea (age 15)_

"It’s definitely a lot better."

*Interviewer*

"In what way, better?"

_Andrea_

"Cos people always talk about bad experiences, crying, staying up all night. No one told you about the good things, like how it feels when you see your baby smile for the first time..."

Despite the fact that she always wanted a baby, this is a positive reward she hadn’t expected. Anna and Alex echo this:
Anna (age 19)

“I enjoy every aspect. I enjoy having him around. I enjoy the little things that makes you feel good like when he comes out with another word or...I mean I look at him and think he’s so gorgeous and it makes me feel so proud. Nearly every aspect of being a mother.”

Alex (age 17)

“His first word, first step. Just things like that and you look at them and think no-one in the world could have made that baby part of me and no-one else. You look at your child and know it’s part of you and it’s dad...yeah.”

Like most mothers of any age, these young women connect with their babies in a way that they hadn’t expected:

Deidre (age 17)

“I love it, I love it because it’s just, it’s hard work but just the fact that I sort of like, I look down on her and she looks a hell of a lot like me, she’s the double of me and I look down of her and say she’s me, me. It’s just sort of the smiles and the faces that she pulls, and the expressions she does on her face they make me laugh, she gets a lot of giggle in her laugh and she’s just, my baby (giggles).”

Veronica (age 18)

“Erm, just when you look in your baby’s eye when they see you...when they start cooing at you..... you know, even if you have had a really bad night with them and you wake up every hour. You wake up in the morning and they’re just chatting away in their cot, it makes you feel really good inside”

Despite all the problems that the young women believe are associated with being a young mother, they believe it is worth having a baby. The baby outweighs all the negative experiences of being a young mother and makes up for those things they believe are lacking in their lives. But this is not just a short-term effect. They young
women interviewed saw this as an ongoing benefit. The see their babies almost as an insurance policy, by having a baby they having someone to love who will always love them:

Interviewer

"Why do you worry about your looks?"

Lorraine (age 17)

"Oh I’ve had a problem with it since I was 13 or 14. I just get down about it. Since I had Ryan I went down about my looks but now I’ve got a new partner and everything and I feel a bit better now. At the end of the day I’ve got Ryan”

Interviewer

“Do you think Ryan makes you feel different towards things?”

Lorraine

“Erm... yeah. ‘Cos if no one wants to look at me I just think don’t look at me then. If no one wants to be with me well at least I’ve got Ryan there. He will always love me.”
7.4 Discussion

How does the stigmatised individual construct and maintain a sense of self-efficacy? Bandura contends that “to make their way successfully through a complex world full of hazards people have to make good judgements about their capabilities, anticipate the probable effects of different events and courses of action, size up sociostructural opportunities and constraints and regulate their behaviour accordingly.” (2001 P.34)

Bandura contends that the development of agency is a fundamental percept to the theory of self-efficacy and it is essential if the individual is to become a functioning proactive member of society. Without personal agency the individual becomes a passive recipient of life and merely reacts to the situation, rather that proactively making decisions and affecting the possible outcomes. Contrary to the prevailing view of young motherhood, having a baby provides a motivation for the young women interviewed to change their lives and behaviour. Whilst they might not have chosen to become pregnant, they have all chosen to continue with their pregnancies and become mothers. It is this element of choice that appears to be a turning point for the young mothers. By taking the decision to keep their babies, they are taking responsibility and taking control of the situation and thereby creating a sense of personal agency.

Bandura contends that for agency to be effective the individual needs to have Intentionality. This is an important aspect of these young women’s lives in that they might not have intended to become pregnant, but they intend to be good mothers. There also needs to be a strong element of forethought. The individual needs to be able to construct outcome expectations. They need to be able to make the link between events in their environments and the outcomes of their actions. It is this, Bandura (1986) argues, that allows the individual to rise above their environments and attempt to control their futures. This is an essential point for the stigmatised individual as traditional theories assume that the individual is a passive recipient of circumstances. Bandura contends that the individual needs to be purposive and sentient in order to maintain a positive sense of self and it is this forethought that helps the individual to develop self-direction. Bandura (2001) argues that without forethought people would be merely reactive, behaving like “weather vanes” responding to the changing environment.
It is interesting to note that adolescence is a time that is typified by constantly changing plans and directions and before the young women became pregnant they appeared to feel that their lives were out of control. The young women contend that their actions during this stage were beyond their volitional control. Bandura (1990) contends that if the individual believes that they are not the agent for their action, their actions may be deemed beyond their control and responsibility. This displacement of responsibility can have the affect of lessening restraints over the individual’s behaviour and weakening social concerns (Tilker, 1970). However once they have regained a sense of agency and control over their lives they are able to look back at their previous selves and condemn their actions. They now see themselves as more grown up and morally responsible than their ‘younger’ counterparts. Having a baby appears to ‘ground’ the young mothers, providing a catalyst for reassessing their lifestyles.

However Bandura also points out that to be a competent agent the individual needs more than just forethought; they also need to be self-reactive. He contends that the individual needs to be able not only to take choices and makes plans, but also to have the ability to put into operation the necessary courses of action and to maintain motivation. Part of this is to be able to be self-monitoring, constantly assessing and reassessing performance and plans. The individual will pursue activities that give rise to self-satisfaction and self-worth and will avoid those that lower self-confidence. What is interesting is that these young women appear to find that having a baby provides an embodied motivator, a reason to change routines, make plans and take action. They acknowledge that their lives seemed a little ‘pointless’ before, but having a baby has made them take responsibility for their lives and plan for their futures.

It is important to remember that outcomes are not an attribute of agency, they are a result. Outcomes are derived from accepting agency and responsibility for the choices that are made. The young mothers believe that they have to gain control over their lives because they are now responsible for the futures of their babies and how their babies perceive them. They feel that that they are good at being a mother and therefore the continued effort is worthwhile.
Chapter Seven

Within the concept of agency is the notion of moral agency. Bandura (2001) contends that moral agency is central to the maintenance of a positive sense of self. According to stigma theories if the individual is perceived to be responsible for their stigma, they will be more likely to suffer from the negative effects of the label. It is arguable that this is because they are affected by the moral value of their stigma. In the case of teenage mothers, they are perceived to be of low moral value because they have had sex at a young age or are perceived to have become pregnant in order to get a house or live off benefits. However Bandura (1991b) contends that moral standards are not fixed and the individual has the ability to disengage themselves from the given activities that go against moral standards by either displacing responsibility for them or reconstructing the actions and portraying the perceived negative actions as “socially worthy” or morally purposeful.

Bandura claims that it is through moral disengagement that people are able to engage in actions that are perceived to be in violation of societal moral codes, e.g. murderers or terrorists. However whilst this may be true, it is also possible that by diverting responsibility for the actions and portraying the outcomes as morally appropriate this allows the individual to reframe their situation in a positive light and take control of the outcomes. If young mothers believed themselves to be morally reprehensible they would have no reason to accept the role of being a mother and no reason to prove others wrong. Therefore by becoming a mother the young women can claim a moral standing that they believe is better than being seen as a teenager. By taking on the role of mother they are taking on the positive attributes associated with that category membership of good mother.

Moral agency is exercised through self-sanctions, in that the individual makes judgements about actions in relation to personal standards and individual circumstances. Through the process of social comparisons the young mothers are able to construct their morality in relation to bad mothers and sanction their behaviour to behave in a way that ‘good mothers’ behave. Moral agency is constructed in two ways, e.g. ‘inhibitive’; refraining from old ways of behaving e.g. drugs etc, and ‘proactive’; engaging in behaviours that make them a ‘good mother’, e.g. loving their children, not leaving them alone, teaching them right from wrong.
In addition to the concept of agency, Bandura contends that forethought is an important factor in the development of self-efficacy. It is through forethought that people are able to plan and execute their futures. They anticipate the likely outcomes of future action and use these to set goals. Future actions can shape present behaviour and motivations. The young women interviewed envisage a future of being good mothers and providing a good life for their babies and this means initiating current actions that will enhance this likelihood.

**What effect can self-efficacy have on the maintenance of a positive sense of self for the stigmatised individual?** As already mentioned traditional theories of stigma suggest that once a person acquires a stigmatised label their lives are ruined, they will have limited access to resources and they will experience a devalued sense of self. However more recent work questions this negative view and suggests that stigmatised individuals can remain unaffected by the negative evaluations that others hold about them. To date the work in this area mainly focuses on the outcomes of stigma in terms of self-esteem and little research has been conducted into the actual processes involved in the maintaining a positive sense of self. However the findings from this study seem to suggest that self-efficacy might play a role in ameliorating the negative effects of acquiring a stigmatised label.

It is important to remember that self-efficacy takes time to develop and has to overcome many setbacks, but it is through the repeated experience of failure that robust percepts of self-efficacy are developed. It is only through overcoming the most difficult obstacles that the individual can learn to trust and anticipate their capabilities. This process of development is evident from the transcripts. The young women all acknowledge how tough it was for them at the beginning and how they had to learn the necessary skills and confidence to be a good mother.

This process of development highlights how vulnerable a sense of self-efficacy can be and how dependent it is on the context. There is a strong temporal quality to the concept of self-efficacy; not only does it fluctuate over time and within the situation, but it is part of forethought and planning. The individual plans events and courses of actions, not just in the long term, but also in short-term immediate situations, that create a desired outcome and more importantly to avoid detrimental outcomes.
However as with "the best laid plans of mice and men..." the individual cannot plan for every eventuality as they do not operate in isolation and are dependent on the environment and other people to achieve their goals. If they believe failures to be within their control, and that they have the ability to overcome them, they will increase their efforts to overcome the problem. However if they do not see the "problem" in a positive light; as a reflection of their lack of abilities this will further lower the threatened perceived self-efficacy (Bandura, 2001). In the case of young mothers their perceived self-efficacy appears to be dependent on being perceived as a "good mother". However as already has been mentioned this is dependent not just on their own beliefs, but on the manifestations of their abilities, i.e. their babies. The babies act as a barometer for how they are doing. In the early days the young women are dependent on health professionals measuring how they are doing by measuring how well the baby is doing. However the baby is not just a reflection of a mother's abilities, they are individuals and do not necessarily perform to order. If the baby is upset, hungry, angry, etc., it will whinge and cry. To a new young mother this can be seen as a result of their actions and not some internal state of the baby. Bandura points out that a high sense of self-efficacy is based on repeated successes; the occasional failure should not affect the individual in the long term. However how failures are construed is largely dependent on where they take place. In the privacy of their own home a crying baby might not be perceived as a problem, but in a public place, where there are other people present the young women appear to become more aware that other people might judge them.

It is arguable that this is due to the performance ambiguity, "the problem of performance ambiguity arises when aspects of one's performance are personally observable or when the level of accomplishment is socially judged by ill-defined criteria so that one has to rely on others to find how one is doing" (Bandura, 1986 p. 398). In the early days the young mothers rely heavily on other people to guide them as they learn the necessary skills and when they are unsure of their performance they look to others for reassurance. However the measure of a 'good mother' is subjective and open to individual interpretation. It is this lack of clarity that can lead the young women to anticipate the potentially negative evaluations of others. However on another occasion when the baby is 'behaving' and the young mothers have a higher sense of self-efficacy critical comments would pass unnoticed or be deemed as
unimportant. Bandura argues that this is because previous experience and current levels of perceived self-efficacy confirm their abilities as mothers and this outweighs the negative evaluations and leads them to discount the comments as irrelevant.

**What is the relationship between self-efficacy and self-esteem for the stigmatised individual?** No study into the role of self-efficacy would be complete without acknowledging the concept of self-esteem. However the relationship between the two is at best unclear. Within the stigma literature the two concepts are conflated with self-efficacy being subsumed within self-esteem. Bandura contends that they are distinct concepts and should be considered as such. He further maintains that levels of self-efficacy should be measured in close relation to the experience or context of the actions. This suggests that laboratory based experiments are unlikely to capture the full range of fluctuations. By forcing the situation in a laboratory experiment we are taking out the essential interactions, the fine detail that explains the processes. He suggests that "causal processes are best clarified by a micro analytical approach in which self-reference thought is measured in terms of particularised self-percepts of efficacy that may vary across activities and circumstances, rather in terms of a global disposition assayed by an omnibus test" (1986 p.396). However sometimes we need to adopt a broader exploration to try to examine all the factors that are engaged during interactions rather than seeing self-efficacy as an isolated occurrence. Self-efficacy can be both motivator and product of a situation and is contextually constructed. By adopting an experimental approach the experimenters are forcing predetermined factors on the individual that might not be of relevance to them. It is arguable that this could be applied to the examination of self-esteem. However the qualitative analysis in this study allows self-efficacy and self-esteem to be considered within the context that they occur and takes account of the meaning that these interactions hold for the young mothers.

The findings demonstrate that self-esteem can be derived from self-efficacy in two ways, both internally and externally. Rousseau refers to the notions of amour de soi même and amour propre – amour de soi même refers to the sense of pride that the individual derives from themselves and their abilities to master new skills etc. The young women interviewed were proud that they had mastered new skills and were
coping well with being a mother. Amour propre illustrates the effects that other people's reaction can have on the individual's sense of self worth.

In this study the young women are pleased that other people are proud of how they are coping and pleased that they acknowledge their achievements. More importantly this also demonstrates that self-esteem can be a result of self-efficacy, but it can also be a motivation for self-efficacy. Bandura refers to the notion of reciprocal determinism; he argued that self-efficacy and action were reciprocally determined, each being dependent on the other. However this is too simplistic a description for the relationship between self-esteem and self-efficacy as it only acknowledges one aspect of the relationship, the interdependence.

This work also appears to demonstrate that the young mothers can derive self-esteem from giving birth without a sense of self-efficacy. Self-efficacy in this instance develops over time. This suggests that self-esteem can be derived from, but can also act independently of, self-efficacy. This supports the traditional view that self-efficacy is subsumed within the notion of self-esteem.

What is also of note within the findings is the theme of "do as I say, not as I do". This is an interesting theme in that is demonstrates that whilst the young women are pleased and proud to be mothers, and believe that becoming a young mother has had positive effects on their lives, they are not necessarily proud of their situation.

These findings show that implicit in these comments is a lack of self-esteem. If they garnered self-esteem from the situation they would want their children to behave in a similar way. However whilst they do not derive self-esteem from the situation, they do derive self-efficacy from the way in which they have coped. In this self-efficacy is operating independently from self-esteem. From this is could be argued that self-efficacy can run parallel to self-esteem with the two acting independently of each other, but they can also be related to each other, each helping to define the other.

This work highlights the need for more clarification of the concept of self-esteem. Self-esteem appears to have become a catch-all term for many different concepts. More importantly it has been used an outcome of stigma, rather than a motivational
principle. Moreover this loose interpretation does not allow for the full examination of the underlying processes that are involved in the maintenance of a positive sense of self. By using such broad assumptions we are clouding the issue and not allowing the explication of the fine detail. In its current formulation self-esteem is too broad to be fully useful and is therefore reductionist in its approach and needs to be redefined more succinctly.

In conclusion it would appear that Society might have control over access to and power over resources at a macro level, but not over how the individual makes sense of their situation. However it must be remembered that power is a relative concept, relative to who you are and who you perceive yourself to be. Like situated freedom, control is situated within its context and environment. Self-efficacy in this view operates at the micro level and can provide the means to construct and maintain control at the individual level. This allows the stigmatised individual to successfully operate within an environment that limits their access to the broader power and the associated resources.
Chapter Eight

The role of the significant other: An examination of the categories invoked by youth workers and their possible effects on the lives of young mothers.

8.1 Introduction

Chapter Five identified many categories of motherhood, including good, bad and teenage mothers. However within the broad range of categories there are many apparent tensions and placement within a category appears to be subjective and context dependent. Chapter Six explored these categories from the perspective of the young women interviewed and argued that young mothers do not position themselves within the category of teenage mothers, as they possess many attributes that are shared with the category of a good mother, and through bottom up processing are able to position themselves within that latter category.

However these chapters have only examined categorisation from the perspective of the young mothers and from the broader view of society, or the 'generalised other'. Social interactionists argue that it is not just the views of the generalized other that are incorporated into the self, but also specific or 'significant' others. These are people within the micro context that play a significant role in the individual's lives, e.g. family, teachers, peers, health workers and so on (Mead, 1934). In this it is arguable that an individual may develop both negative and positive self-concepts as a result of incorporating views of the generalized other, as in the media, towards the group as a whole or from interactions within their immediate environment or micro context.

Therefore it is important to examine the views of people within the micro context and explore the categories that they utilise. Placing another person within a category can have a number of cognitive preconceptions and, arguably, biases which may have important implications for the interactions between the stigmatised individual and the people within their micro context. The choice of category can create certain stereotypes and expectations about group membership and whether an individual is an ingroup member or a member of an outgroup. The possession of a stereotype implies
that a person is perceived as being similar to or different from another and can result in attributes of the category being over-exaggerated to fit in with desired outcomes. More importantly category membership and the associated stereotypes will place an individual in relation to another person. Where one places the boundaries around 'we' has many implications for social interactions (e.g. Turner, Hogg et al 1987) and the construction and maintenance of stigma.

This is particularly pertinent to young mothers as categories are dynamic. They do not simply reflect the individual’s social world, but they also are part of its construction. Reicher & Hopkins (2001) maintain that categories “orient as much to the future as to the present” (P.384). This is an important aspect of categorisation for not only will the choice of category affect and constrain current action, but it can also affect future actions (Edwards, 1991). There is evidence to suggest that workers in ‘human services’ agencies employ categories to organise their understandings of their clientele, drawing on typified knowledge to define the essential characteristics of a case and the subsequent action and allocation of resources (e.g. Scheff, 1965; Griffiths & Hughes, 1993). Mäkitalo and Säljäö (2002) suggest that when an individual comes into contact with an institution they will be categorised in relation to pre-existing institutional concerns and priorities and as such will be processed within institutionally embedded expectations. Mäkitalo (2003) maintains the need to ‘bridge the gap’ between expectation and action.

This is particularly important for members of stigmatised groups such as teenage mothers who are dependent on the help and guidance from larger institutions. The categories invoked by the representatives of these institutions, such as health workers, can reflect a course of action; how a young mother will be treated and the help that will be available to her, and as such may have the potential to influence the outcomes for a young mother. The category a young woman is placed in may have an effect on what type of mother she can become.

Therefore it is essential to examine how significant others construct categories. Knutson (1967) maintains that “people are defined by people” (p.7) and the label that we choose to apply to others defines and creates an expectation of who they are and what they are capable of and how they will behave and, as such, the choices that are
available to them will be constructed within the parameter of this category. This category will underpin interactions and dictate the power dynamics within that interaction. The research questions are:

- What are the roles and categories that the “youth workers” invoke when working with young mothers?

- What possible effects might the choice of category have on the outcomes for the young mothers?
8.2 Method

Data Collection

The purpose of this study is to empirically examine the way the hostel managers and youth workers that the young women have daily contact with construct and utilised categories of motherhood.

Participants

All Participants were recruited through charity run hostels for homeless young women / mothers within London and the south of England. There were nine participants in total aged between 38 and 55 years of age. All the women were mothers, four of whom had been teenage mothers and came from London and the South East of England. Six were managers of the charity run hostels and three were youth workers associated with the charities. As already argued in Chapter Four these women will hereafter be referred to as ‘youth workers’.

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<td>White/British</td>
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<td>Jane</td>
<td>Mid 50’s</td>
<td>White/British</td>
<td>Youth Worker</td>
<td>Farnham, Surrey</td>
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<tr>
<td>Maureen</td>
<td>Mid 50’s</td>
<td>Black/African</td>
<td>Hostel Manager</td>
<td>South London</td>
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<td>White/British</td>
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<td>Joan</td>
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Procedure

Data was collected via individual, face-to-face, semi-structured interviews lasting between 60 and 90 minutes. All interviews were conducted in a private room at the ‘youth workers’ place of work. The interview schedules consisted of a series of open ended questions. The interview schedules were designed to remain as value free as possible and as such attempted to avoid leading questions. All interviews were divided into four aspects of the youth workers’ daily lives. By dividing the schedules into four areas it allowed for the participant to relax into the interview.
The first section addressed the general background of the Youth Worker’s role and asked questions about how long they had been in this post, how much training is required, and what drew them to their role. The second section addressed the day to day interactions with young mothers and covered, for instance, a typical day and what duties were performed on a regular basis. The third section dealt with specific cases and asked the Youth workers to describe both positive and negative stories of young motherhood. The final section addressed the possibility of discrimination and addressed such questions as whether they were aware of the negative representations of young motherhood in the press, whether they thought they were valid and whether others might agree with these representations. This section also asked whether colleagues might discriminate against young mothers. Full copies of interview schedules are available in appendix IV.

All interviews were tape recorded and transcribed verbatim. For an example of a transcript see appendix V.

Analysis

All the interviews were transcribed and subjected to IPA in order to examine the meanings contained within the Youth Worker’s accounts. For a full breakdown of this process see Chapter Four.
8.3 Findings

Research Question 1 - What are the roles and categories that the “youth workers” invoke when working with young mothers?

Categories. From the data it would appear that the youth workers appeared to draw on a range of categories similar to those found in the media study, and those utilised by the young mothers themselves, including childless women, bad mothers, good mothers, teenage mothers and teenagers.

Childless women. This category is very similar to the views that emerged from the findings of the media study:

Jane

“Selfish women then aren’t they. They’re not having children, they’re very selfish and they just want to be looking out for themselves. I personally don’t believe that but because I believe women do very much have a choice on whether they want to be mothers or whether they want to be career women or whatever. I’ve always said to my own girls as well as other young people, that just because you are a woman, doesn’t mean that you have got to grow up, get married and have 6 kids. I mean that doesn’t, that isn’t a foregone conclusion. But, I still think society thinks that women who choose not to have a family, there’s something not quite right with them.”

At the beginning of this quote Jane presents a very clear representation of what she believes someone who chooses to remain childless might be like, e.g. ‘selfish’.

However she then goes on to distance herself from this view and places responsibility for such attitudes with other people; she foists these attitudes onto the generalised other. It is also important to note that she is very aware that women have choices and should use them, but she also makes it clear that some choices are not necessarily acceptable choices. This highlights the notion of situated freedom which suggests that the individual’s freedom to choose is situated within clearly determined parameters of what is perceived as acceptable by society. A woman can choose not to have children, but there are others who may perceive this as a selfish decision. From this it would appear that the stigma attached to the voluntary childless is likely to still exist.
Bad mothers. When talking about their experiences with young mothers, the youth workers all create a clear image of what they perceived the ‘bad mother’ to be. It would appear that bad mothers are, for instance, immoral drug users:

Heather

“We did have a girl before I started, she was here. She’d already had one child taken away from her. She also went on to have a second child that was placed in foster care and she was living here. But, she went back to her old ways of prostitution and using crack and she had to leave the house in the end.”

They are also irresponsible and thoughtless:

Carol

“Let’s see (big sigh). They go out for the day and don’t take a bottle with them. They go out and maybe it’s as cold as they thought and the baby hasn’t got a coat on you know, those sort of things that when you’ve got a baby, you go out armed with sort of everything, don’t you. But, sometimes some of them don’t stop and think about what they are doing. It’s just that they’ve got to be somewhere and off they go.”

And perhaps involved in inappropriate relationships:

Deborah

“And, now she wants to go with this guy I’ve never seen before from Prison. I’m just thinking how can that be a good mum”

They may also be liable to harm their child:

Sharon

“Erma...start off saying that they had blue and black marks here and also the baby’s nose was a bit sore there and marks were sort of identical.”
Teenage mothers

Whilst the category of bad mother became apparent during conversations about their experiences of teenage mothers, the youth workers also created clear templates of teenage mothers that were separate from the above descriptions. It appeared that bad mothering was in the main based on poor mothering skills. However teenage mothers were judged on their personalities, ambitions and financial status as well. It appears that stigma can be attached to many attributes:

Heather

"I think they are viewed as teenage mothers. Single teenage mums. I think there is a stigma to it. You know, single teenage mums says it all really, doesn't it really? I've got no qualms about it at all. But I don't know how other people view it."

In this quote Heather makes a point that she had no personal 'qualms' about teenage mothers, but this is what other people say. However she slips up when she says, "you know, single teenage mums, says it all really, doesn't it really?" According to the youth workers it would appear that young mothers can be stigmatised for being children. Deborah believes that many people see teenage mothers as "children having children’ and are therefore unable to be good mothers:

Deborah

"Because they are a child and you just think they're young, they're too young"

She goes on to say later in the interview:

"I've come with, oh my gosh, you know children having children. And  erm...thinking how are they going to cope? How are they going to cope with the TV, how are they going to cope with not having the sort of ...when I was a teenage I was going out and buying clothes, going out. I was enjoying what I would call, travelling. And, I think my gosh they are not going to be able to do that. But then, I suppose the next question is do they want to do that and what my enjoyment is might not be their enjoyment."
Deborah uses her own experiences of being a teenager to point out what a young mother might be missing out on and acknowledges that they perhaps do not feel the same. Also it would appear that many people believe that young mothers have babies in order to have someone to love:

Jane

"I think it is for the mums that use their babies, if you like for somebody to love and somebody to love them because that is all they've got, nothing else. They haven't got a partner; they haven't got parents that's unconditionally there for them. They've just got that baby. I don't think it means you've got to be 16, or 17, I think that is just as likely to form...you know if you are 28, 30 you might still be in that situation that you just need someone to love you because your haven't' and your life experience has been that you haven't had somebody to love you."

Another main concern that the youth workers appear to have about teenage mothers is their reliance on benefits:

Liz

"I would say so 'cos normally I mean when you see someone who is a teenage mother that's one thing that they all think that's a teenage mother on her own and has got x, y, z, kids, or she's on benefit and blah, blah, blah and it comes across as complete and absolute disgust. So, yes society does society does... Well, the only thing I can put it down to is the cost, taxes. Many people think that they are paying them to stay at home and live off my taxes, they can have baby after baby after baby and still stay at home living off benefits."

Heather echoes this when she says:

Heather

"Well, they obviously go into the benefits system straight away. And, I think it... it creates apathy amongst them. Because all they do is just sit in each other's flats all day and smoke and drink tea and just talk about....they have
no direction in their life. They seem to just to have accepted, you know, they accept...they’ve got what they wanted and they accept it and they just talk about having more and more children. By probably, by more they are not going to be having the same father. They are not giving them secure loving relationship. They just look on a male to provide sperm for the next baby. They don’t want to live with their man, they don’t want a relationship with him, just want a baby from him and I think it’s wrong.”

Sharon highlights the double standards that young mothers are subject to; being concurrently seen as either passive victims in need of support or consciously manipulative young women who are undermining the societally accepted role of the family and are a drain on public resources (Wellbank 2001):

Sharon

“Yeah. Not for you know...it’s, you could say it’s the same out there for some, not pregnant, but some young people that want to leave home and go to Social Services because they give them...they give them everything (starts laughing)...they buy their clothes, they give them money, you know.”

Interviewer

“And, having a baby is an easier way of...a way in?”

Sharon

“Yes, a quick way in, mainly for the woman... young mothers, but also for the fathers as well. I mean, that’s another area, yeah.”

McRobbie (2000) maintains that young mothers are either seen as ‘a risk’ to society or an ‘at risk’ group within society.

What is also of note within this category is that the negative attitudes towards a young woman’s reliance on benefits is not just limited to teenage mothers. Many of the women interviewed appeared to be comfortable to espouse their views on other members of society that relied on benefits. Jane had very strong views about this
subject and related a story about her next-door neighbour who was on benefits. She said;

Jane

"The system is now that you have to go and try and get a job and he would come home and say oh God, I nearly got a job today; he would make a joke of it. At first I would, you know well if you want...it does it irritates you, even broadminded as I am about things, it irritated me. Because I would think it's my taxes and everything that's paying for him, you know. He's not the only one, there's thousands of them out there doing that and it was annoying me."

In this she makes it clear this is not a personal issue specifically about her neighbour, but anyone that is on benefits. She resents having to pay money into her taxes so that other people can stay at home and not work. She then went on to question how her neighbour could survive without a job:

"So, it was annoying and I was going through a stage of you know, there's never enough money to do anything that we wanna do and anything we want to do we have to beg for it from a charity and yet I'm a statutory based organisation and can't get any money out of the council to do any of these things. If I want to do anything I've got to go and get it from outside. It grieves you and so I was...I just thought oh well came home one day I thought I'll ask this question and when he reasoned it all out and showed it all to me on paper, I though I'm a bloody mug! You know, I'm not getting any of those benefits, I'm paying my own way for everything and I'm scrimping and scraping and sometimes he's better off than I am. The only difference is that I've not been brought up in a family prior to...you know, my dad worked all his life, he didn't get any benefits apart from what everybody gets. And, the one time he did...like he retired from postman in-between getting out of there and getting another job, he had no income coming in and he went to the benefits office to get some help and they offered him a pittance and he told them keep it because they obviously needed it more than him, because it was so pathetic what they offered him... and, I mean that was my experience so for me I wouldn't give them...that was my background. So, I wouldn't go there"
Chapter Eight

She maintains that her neighbour at times has more money than her, despite the fact that she is working for a living. However the difference between her and her neighbour is their background. She maintains that she would not rely on benefits because she was not brought up that way. Implicit in this is that her neighbour does not share the same values and as a result he is willing to use the system.

Whilst Jane does not directly relate her views of the recipients of benefits to young mothers, she does make it clear that she does not approve of the system and those people that utilise it. She explains how her father’s experiences have affected her views. Carol however was more circumspect about revealing her beliefs. Throughout the interview she maintained a ‘professional’ image and was very careful to assert an egalitarian approach to the young women. However at the very end of the interview Carol brought up the subject of benefits and said:

Carol

“In years to come this is what is going to happen. People...young person with a baby is on benefit, they’ve got their flat, they’ve got their life going exactly how they want it. Young professional person has got a job, they can’t afford to give up work when they have a baby. The young person on benefit has got the luxury of being at home, with their baby until they start school. Also, I think that is a Government initiative that when they start school they might have to look for a job. But, until they start school they can be at home with their baby looking after that baby, doing whatever they want with their baby. This professional person might have a mortgage, might have to go back to work because they can’t afford to stay at home. But they still want a baby. So, they’ve gotta...their baby has to be looked after by someone else and they haven’t got the luxury of being able to be at home for 5 years.”

Carol made it clear that she felt that young mothers had an easier time in some respects. She makes clear comparisons between the amount of time an older ‘professional’ mother would be able to spend with her baby as opposed to a teenage mother who is reliant on benefits. She maintains that once a person is on the ‘career ladder’ they are unable to take time off to be with their children.
Carol

"Possibly, but if they've got a mortgage how could they do that. They couldn't. The only way they could do that is to sell up and they still couldn't go on benefits because they wouldn't be on a lower enough income to go onto benefit. Then, maybe what will happen in the future is that (starts to laugh) these people are at home, and the young professional people, their babies are looked after by these people that are at home because they think oh, I'll do a bit of childminding maybe while I'm at home. They've got the benefit of being at home all the time. This person that has to work sees their baby for a couple of hours while they are trying to get it to bed."

Carol made clear comparisons between young mothers and her own daughter and concluded that her daughter would have a harder time because, despite having worked hard, she would not be able to give her child the time that she would like. When asked if she thought that young motherhood was a good option, she replied:

Carol

"In a way, it must be musn't it. That's...it's what it is becoming... what it's becoming almost is that you gonna have, I hate to say this class thing. But, what is gonna happen is these people that are gonna have less and less children and all the children will be here, do you see what I mean?"

Within this she compares the experiences of young mothers with those that have chosen the 'normal' path. Again there is the use of the term "these people" which clearly places teenage mothers, and those on benefits, in a different category from herself. It would appear that Carol holds 'dual attitudes'. It has been argued that as the individual develops they acquire a range of attitudes, however these attitudes may change or be perceived as inappropriate at different stages of development. However the original attitude is not replaced by the new one, it is merely stored in memory and becomes implicit with the new attitude becoming explicit and conscious. While explicit attitudes are relatively new they can change and evolve but implicit attitudes are often deep seated and rooted in habitual reactions and therefore harder to change (Wilson, Lindsey & Schooler, 2000).
Explicit attitudes influence behaviour in different ways dependent on the context in which they occur (Dovidio and Fazio, 1992). In circumstances where the individual has the opportunity to weigh their response, explicit attitudes provide a considered and deliberative responses. However implicit attitudes are more difficult to monitor and control and often become apparent through non-verbal behaviour or ‘slips of the tongue’. Therefore it is extremely difficult to continually control such leaches of attitude.

**Teenagers.** However when dealing with the young women that they come in contact with it is not the stereotypes of mothers and teenage mothers that the older women draw on. The young mothers are not just mothers; they are teenagers as well. In the previous chapter the results of the media study seemed to suggest that there is a strong negative stereotype of a teenager. Zebrowitz and Montepare (2000) contend that the young are just as likely to be stigmatised for their youth and lack of experience as teenage mothers. From the transcripts it would appear that there is a notion that teenagers are a problem that needs to be dealt with:

*Liz*

"I think that is probably why society now is a lot of local governments want to do a lot of work with teenager and youths in general because they just...There is a need for some sort of support that is needed there, some work to be done with young people”

*Interviewer*

“What sort of problems?”

*Liz*

“Oh crime, they are talking about teenage mothers but you also hear about the young people on the street all the time, and crime and there needs to be a curfew for them.”

Jane describes teenagers as:

*Jane*
“Thugs, hooligans, especially if they are not at home doing their homework or listening to music in their bedrooms with their friends, they are hooligans and thugs.”

Liz believes that part of this negative representation comes from the behaviour of the young people when dealing with people in authority, like the housing officers:

Liz

“I think that the reason the problem is negative is because of the amount of negative people and positive people. They feel every so often they usually see a lot of young people every day and they’re getting a lot of abuse and they are getting a lot of negativity.”

This view is echoed by many of the women interviewed. They believe that teenagers have in part brought this attitude on themselves.

Good mothers. So far the categories appear to focus on negative attitudes and stereotypes of mothers and young people, however the worker also holds positive stereotypes of good mothering including the ‘perfect mother’.

Jane

“I suppose the perfect mother in society would be the mum that’s always at home, always there for her children and helps out a little bit and doing a little bit social society thing. Helping, bit of voluntary work”

It would appear that the good mother is always there for her child, as opposed to the teenage mother who goes out and leaves her child alone. The perfect mother seems to provide a benchmark for measuring the abilities of other mothers including ‘good mothers’. The women interviewed all seem to refer to the skills and abilities of a good mother, what a good mother is, and does, and how she becomes a good mother:

Liz

“Well, there’s no one way to become a good mother is there? Being a mother comes from so many different means that you can’t just tell somebody. That
comes from experience and life itself, as you mature and how you deal with life that will be both passed down into how you raise your child... But you can't put that through into another human being's life... You have to grasp that for yourself."

Liz contends that a person can only become a good mother through their own experience of being mothered and their experience of life; it is not a skill that can be taught.

*Teenage mother as a good mother.* Most of the women interviewed felt that many of the young women that they deal with are 'good mothers'. The youth workers all seem to be sympathetic to the young women's needs and believe that becoming a mother can be a very optimistic part of a young woman's life and result in many positive changes:

**Maureen**

"Yes, yes it's a big positive change in their life having a baby."

**Carol**

"I think they probably they don't always move right away from those bad influences. But they actually see or realise that they are bad influences. Whereas, before when they were in that peer group they weren't looked on as negative influences. But, when they've got their babies, they often do change the way that they think. They still see those people possibly. Maybe not as much as they used to and they know that it's not a positive and yet they probably do move away from them eventually. They probably withdraw a bit from them. I don't think they lose them all together. But, yeah, they realise they have a baby to look after and they are positive about their babies most of them."

In this she recognises that some young mothers can be good mothers, but not all of them. It would appear that good mothering is not dependent on age. Liz highlights this when she says:
Liz

“In regards to that seen as motherhood, there’s no manual to say that because you are in your 30’s and had your first child that you’re going to treated much better than someone who is 16. You might find that situations cross, perhaps some of you are more mature, there are certain people that find it difficult to adapt to motherhood, likewise and can be dealt with the same way or conditioned with someone who is younger, getting into that need of mature lifestyle for whatever reason. They find it difficult and you get some who is younger that will adapt to motherhood very well.”

She recognises that some older mothers also find it difficult to adapt to motherhood and that good and bad mothers exists in all age groups. Sharon, contends that younger mothers can be caring and nurturing:

Sharon

“These mothers are quite caring, they seek some guidance sometimes, but they’re caring mothers.”

**Becoming good mother.** Before examining the evidence of implicit prejudice it is important to emphasise that it would appear from the transcripts that youth workers are very supportive of the young mothers. They believe that these young women are in need of and deserve a voice and someone to fight their corner. The youth workers appear to believe that their role is to care and support the young mothers and to teach them the necessary life skills:

Carol

“Well, (laughs) I think um... I am mainly there for their support, any support they need within my power, I will give them. Or, if I cant give it I will point them in the direction to go to find that support. But, mainly I’m there so when they leave us they’ve got independent living skills.”

In the early stages youth workers act as an advocate for the young mothers:
Deborah

"I always see myself as the bridge to Head Office. Because Head Office, then a bridge and then there’s the residents. I’ll be like an advocacy for them.”

This suggests that the youth workers are gatekeepers and it is they who will decide what should be raised with Head Office and how any request should be couched. However it is important to note that the youth workers interviewed believe themselves to be compassionate to the needs of the young mothers and have many roles to juggle. It would appear that the youth workers are carers, enablers, teachers and advocates. These roles place them in the category of ‘expert’ or ‘professional’. What is of note within the transcripts is that whilst many women were happy to proffer their own opinions, they were also aware that this was not part of their job description and might not be deemed “professional”:

Deborah

“I have actually come out of my professional. I mean out of my profession sort of putting in my opinion...being subjective here, and I know I’m not supposed to be subjective”

Heather

“No, we are not here to criticise them. You know, we are not allowed to make judgements or criticise.”

What is of note here is that the dual role that the youth workers hold. Underpinning any work that they do, or any advice that they might give the young mothers, is an underlying awareness of their professional role and the explicit and implicit rules of that role.

Ministering Angels. It would appear that it is not just ‘other’ people in society that believe that teenagers are a problem, it would appear that the very people that are there to help them believe this as well. From these findings it would appear that the youth workers do hold overt and in some cases extreme negative views about teenage mothers and yet profess to be acting in their best interest. What appears to be
happening is that the role of the worker is to facilitate the movement of the young women from the ‘teenage mothers’ they arrive as, into the category of ‘good mothers’.

**Maureen**

"The girls I have worked with have been initially a young mother, it’s not that easy for them but after settling down for after when the babies come, the initial aspect of caring for the baby is a problem for them because like that they now know that in the morning they need to wake up and some of them stay up till late but in the morning this idea of having to wake up getting the baby dressed, this and that. Some of them find it straining for them. But because we are here we give them the encouragement because they have said “teach a child the way it should grow” and when he grows up he will pick up from where you left he or she and because we give them that support and try to pick it up and then eventually it becomes a habit to them."

It is through the young mothers conforming to the societal norms of mothering that allows the young mothers to become members of the category of ‘good mother’. Maureen believes that through her own experience she is able to educate the young mothers and help bring these changes about. It would appear that it is this progression that draws the youth workers to their work. They appear to gain a sense of pride and self-worth from seeing the young women successfully progress:

**Liz**

"The best part of my work is actually is when they’re here or when they’re coming in and now they are so independent and they’re managing their life, looking after their children and they’re focused on what they want to do with their life because of the help from me...having the future, having a goal"

It would appear as though the youth workers see themselves almost as ‘ministering angels’. The Bible holds that ‘ministering angels’ are messengers sent by God to deliver messages, minister his children and teach salvation and repentance. The ministering angels role is to educate, direct, protect and provide support.
Heather

"Umm... just tell them that they can do it and support them, guide them. And help them any way you can, really. Just talking to them and giving them confidence. They're young and still very vulnerable."

The women interviewed all appeared to be drawn to this work out of a need to help.

**Good mothers or good teenage mothers?** From the findings it would appear that the youth workers draw on many different categories of motherhood and young people to make sense of their experiences, and to facilitate the young women’s moves from teenage mother to good mother. Dividing the world into a manageable number of categories does not only simplify our lives, save time and make sense of our worlds, but it also serves to define who we are in relation to others. The individual’s identity is located within various group memberships. By locating themselves in the position of enabler they are also putting themselves in the category of ‘professional’.

In this context the worker’s superordinate category is ‘professional’ and the young women will inevitably be in subordinate category. However the youth workers and the young mothers do both share another category - that of ‘mother’. All the women interviewed, and the young women in the hostels are mothers (or about to become mothers) and it is arguable that this is where both groups of women can share some common ground and categories. The youth workers all acknowledge that most of the young mothers they have helped are good mothers, but is this the same category of ‘good mothers’ as the workers inhabit? In Chapter Five it became evident that the young women interviewed believed themselves to be ‘good mothers’ that happened to be young. In the initial stages they appeared to move between the categories of teenage mother and good mother, but it appears that as their confidence and abilities grew so did the gap between categories. Teenager mothers became another category within the superordinate category of ‘bad mothers’ and these young women believed that they were in the parallel superordinate category of ‘good mother’ and therefore could not be teenage mothers.

However with the youth workers it does not appear to be quite so clear-cut. As already argued the boundaries that surround category membership are not fixed; they
are at best blurred or fuzzy. This is evident within the category of ‘good mothers’ for whilst the youth workers and the young mothers share several similar attributes of this category the youth workers are in a subtly different category because the older women are there to teach the young women how to be good mothers; they teach them the necessary skills and enable them to be independent young women. From this it is arguable that implicit in the professional roles they have chosen is an assumption that they themselves are ‘good mothers’ who can help others to achieve this status:

Maureen

“Maybe before I have my interaction with them they could be bad mothers, but with me, I don’t think they are bad mothers.”

As a result of the adopted roles interactions that occur within these parameters will always have an uneven distribution of power and will be skewed by expectations. As Jayussi (1984, p.136) points out “Members do not routinely use category concepts as mere labels, but as methods for organising their knowledge, beliefs, perceptions, tasks, moral relationships....” Young mothers will expect certain behaviours and actions from the youth workers as ‘professionals’ and the youth workers will expect certain behaviours and actions from the young mothers. However whilst they appear to believe that young mothers can be good mothers, they are perhaps not as ‘good’ as the youth workers.

What is apparent from the data is that the youth workers appear to use the traditional standards and values that they have been raised with, and their own experiences of being a mother, as a benchmark to gauge how the young women are coping with their new role:

Carol

“Yeah. Definitely they can be good mothers, yeah, most of ’em are good mothers really. They often...they don’t necessarily mother their children in the way that I might have mothered mine.”

Sharon also makes direct comparisons:
Sharon

"Very much so...well, I mean at the time when I had my son, I didn't get as much care in the hospital and there is a young mum who saying that they don't respect them, I found that I was treated very erm...not well... Yeah. Because I felt isolated basically. When I think back now I just thought isolated in that ward."

Jane maintains that she tries hard not to make comparisons with her own experiences, but sometimes "these thoughts come into my head". She explained how when her children were young, her husband refused to help her and she had to raise them by herself and as a consequence never went out. However she says that young mothers are always out.

Jane

"And, then you see these girls, they're out partying, maybe once a month or twice a month, it was jealousy. I never got that opportunity, nobody brought or gave me any extra or bought me a pushchair for my baby. I had to do that with my husband and save up the money. In fact, I had to get second hand one. I got second hand and all these young women have got brand new cots, brand new buggies, got three or four hundred quid and you sit there and think where has all of that come from? Why's that? It's jealousy! Because you couldn't do it, it was...I don't know if we couldn't do it. It was just in my day, you didn't. You made the best of what you got and you didn't get yourself into debt. Whereas these girls would go out and they'll buy a £300 buggy on the never, never and then to try and pay it off and then the bailiff will be in and...but you see, you don't see that side. All you see from the outside looking in, is the posh buggy, living off benefits. The fact that she hasn't paid for it yet...you don't know that."

Within this quote Jane appears to believe that the young mothers in her care have an easier time than she did when she first became a mother. They have more time to go out and enjoy themselves and are happy to rely on credit to buy new things for the baby and she admits that she sometimes feels jealous. This is an important comment because if there is an element of jealousy, whether it is implicit or explicit, it might
affect her interactions with the young mothers. One of the dangers here is that by using their own skills and experiences as the benchmark for good mothering, it is questionable as to whether the young mothers would ever reach the standards that they have achieved.

In this the youth workers seem to use their own experiences of mothering to create a template of ‘good mothers’ and ‘good mothering’. Within these templates young mothers can be good, but not good enough to fulfil all the criteria. This is particularly important, as it would appear that despite being good mothers they still do not belong within the superordinate category of ‘good mother’. It seems as though the youth workers continue to place the young women within a different category from themselves. It is arguable that this is merely within a hierarchy of ‘good mothers’. However it would seem to be that within the category of ‘teenage mother’ there are subordinate categories of ‘good teenage mothers’ and ‘bad teenage mothers’. It would appear from the data that the young women that these youth workers interact with are good mothers for teenage mothers. It would appear that whenever a young mother is praised, the praise is qualified by her limitations:

Liz

"Erma...it doesn’t have to be...I mean, yes the fact that they have had to start off on benefits, but there are a lot of young people that do literally turn their lives around, they do adapt to motherhood and are very good mothers and they are young."

Liz appears to suggest that young mothers can be good bearing in mind that they start off on benefits. Also at the end of this quote she says ‘and they are young’; it would appear as though she is almost surprised that a ‘young’ mother can be a good. What is of note is that one of the criteria for being a ‘good mother’ is that mothering comes naturally. In both the media study and from the interviews with the young mothers it became apparent that good mothers are ‘natural mothers’ and know instinctively what to do and yet the youth workers believe that the young mothers need to be taught the necessary skill. It would appear that the youth workers do not believe the young mothers to be natural mothers and the necessary skills seem to be in opposition to being a teenager. From the categories outlined above it would appear that there is an
element that teenagers know no better and need to be taught. Again this appears to
place the young mothers in a different category from the youth workers that is not the
superordinate category of ‘good mother’. From this it is arguable that young mothers
are good enough as far as teenage mothers go, but not good enough to be ‘real’
mothers or ‘adult’ mothers:

Sharon

“They might be mothers (starts to laugh) but they’re both babies so yeah, it’s
not easy. Well, this is what I say, because sometimes it is good that they are
young and they through the same things as other mums, what an adult
mum...you know what I mean.”

Within these quotes are very clear demarcation lines between categories. This is an
important point to bear in mind because any course of action that is taken will have an
implicit starting point of young mothers being ‘teenage mothers’. For example they
admit that they have preconceived ideas based on their own stereotypes of what a
teenage mother might be like and how she will cope:

Deborah

“I know her mom told her to leave because she got pregnant. So, I can only
assume that possibly it was because mom said oh you’re going to have a baby
now and you’re not going to cope. But, watching her she coped very very
well. And, I mean my stereotype was oh she’s 16, she’s not...you know I
perceived that she wasn’t going to cope and she did well. Very well”

Interviewer

“What is your stereotype then?”

Deborah

“Erm...I dunno, thought 16 she’s not going to be able...the baby was
constantly crying and I just thought you need to pick the baby up and she was
like no he’s fine, he’s been fed, his nappy has been changed and he is fine.
Just watching how she would...how she dealt with her day to day work. It was
brilliant.”
Heather also presents a negative view of young mothers when she explains what she believes a teenage mother to be:

_Heather_

"There are three girls I know that live near me that have deliberately got themselves pregnant and they have all got flats... Well, they obviously go into the benefits system straight away. And, I think it... it think it creates apathy amongst them. Because all they do is just sit in each other’s flats all day and smoke and drink tea and just talk about....they have no direction in their life. They seem to just to have accepted you know, they accept...they’ve got what they wanted and they accept it and they just talk about having more and more children. By probably, by more they are not going to be having the same father. They are not giving them secure loving relationship. They just look on a male to provide sperm for the next baby. They don’t want to live with their man, they don’t want a relationship with him, just want a baby from him and I think it’s wrong."

Bruner (1957) argues that the individual chooses categories that are most ‘accessible’ to the person at a given time. Accessibility refers to the perceived fit of the category to the properties of the environment and what makes a particular category accessible are the perceived tasks, motives, values and goals associated with that category. From this it is arguable that the category of ‘teenage mother’ is perceived to be the best fit for the context. However if this is the case it is arguable that, regardless of the positive disposition towards the young mothers, it is the category of teenage mother that will be salient and negative views such as these will underpin any interaction between the youth workers and the young mothers and any decisions that are taken. As already stated earlier the categories and roles that are assumed within an interaction will create an expectation of actions and behaviours associated with that role and in the case of young mothers, if there is an implicit assumption that they are teenage mothers until proven otherwise, it is possible that there will be an expectation and anticipation of failure or at best struggle. In this view young mothers will always be struggling to prove themselves and to have influence over their lives.
Discussion Research Question 1 - What are the roles and categories that the youth workers invoke when working with young mothers?
From the findings it became apparent that the youth workers draw on many different categories that are similar to the categories already outlined in previous chapters. The youth workers construct clear stereotypes of good and bad mothers, teenage mothers and teenagers. However, what is also apparent in these findings is the many categories that the youth workers inhabit and roles they assume within their working day. What was of particular note within the findings was the way in which the youth workers utilise these multiple categories to make sense of their experiences. It has been argued that the individual is flexible in the ways in which they perceive multiple group memberships and they will see themselves and others as a member of a particular category at one moment and a different one at another time. This movement between categories can happen over time or in a split second dependent on the context of an interaction and the category that consequently is salient (e.g. Brewer, 1991).

James (1990) recognises the possibility of multiple group memberships and maintains that “a man has as many social selves as there are individuals who recognise him and carry an image of him in their mind” (James, 1890, p.294). What is of particular interest within James’ work is his acknowledgement of the potential conflicts between the various components of self. This is highlighted in the following example cited by Herman and Kempen (1993):

“as a man I pity you, but as an official I must show you no mercy; as a politician I regard him as an ally, but as a moralist I loathe him” (James, 1890, p.295, cited in Herman & Kempen, 1993, p.114).

This quote demonstrates the variety of roles and positions that an individual can maintain at any one time. More importantly it demonstrates the conflicting internal dialogues between these roles. This is particularly pertinent to the youth workers as they inhabit many different categories at the same time, juggling the various roles such as teacher, enabler, friend and professional. These are difficult roles to maintain because whilst they can empathise with the young mothers, and understand the joys and problems of early motherhood, they are also there as representatives of the institutions that employ them. They are bound by the ritualised roles and routines of
both the institutions that they represent the myths of motherhood. Further to this they also appear to hold views that question the abilities of the young mothers. In the above example the individual holds the roles of the official, the politician, the moralist and the individual; all these roles are evident within the youth workers transcripts. As a women they pity the young mothers and show them compassion, as officials they follow and maintain institutional policies, as politicians they maintain a politically correct front, but as moralists they question the appropriateness of early motherhood. It is arguable that such conflicting positions and views will create tensions within an interaction and a constant shifting of attitudes.

What is of further note within this is that it demonstrates the blurring of the boundaries between categories. The parameters are not fixed, but constantly moving to accommodate the shifting positions of both parties. However it would seem that the youth workers do position themselves and the young mothers within fairly well defined categories. It would appear that the youth workers position themselves within the categories of both ‘professional’ and ‘good mother’. It seems that an inherent attribute of the youth workers professional roles is that of a good mother as they believe that they possess the necessary skills and experience to educate others to be good mothers. However although they believe that they young mothers that they come in contact with can be good mothers, it would appear that the young mothers still do not belong in the same superordinate category of ‘good mothers’ that the youth workers inhabit. This is of note because from the interviews with the young mothers in Chapter Six it became apparent that through bottom up processing young women believed that they possessed the relevant attributes to position themselves in the category of ‘good mother’, whereas teenage mothers were another category under the superordinate heading of ‘bad mother’.
The young women interviewed appeared to believe that they were ‘good mothers’ who merely happened to be young. However from these findings it appears that youth workers perceive the category membership as subtly different from this. It appears that although both the youth workers and the young mothers share some similar attributes regarding good mothering, they do not appear to share enough of these attributes, or possibly not to the necessary standard, to be incorporated into this superordinate category of ‘good mother’. It is arguable that this could be because this category is hierarchical and the young mothers are just lower on the scale of good mothering. However it would appear that there is evidence to suggest that the youth workers create impressions of ‘us and them’ but not just in terms of experience and age. The youth workers make it clear that they are ‘adults’ and the young mothers are still ‘children’ and several youth workers refer to ‘adult mothers’ in opposition to the young mothers but they also create ‘us and them’ in terms of mothering skills. Whenever they mention the good mothering skills of the young women they qualify these comments with observations that suggest that they are ‘good’, bearing in mind that they are teenage mothers. It seems to be that the youth workers also focus on other possibly negative attributes and still position the young mothers as teenage mothers. From this it is arguable that the young mothers are positioned within a sub category of teenage mothers, that of the ‘good teenage mother’.
It was argued in Chapter Six that the young mothers make use of bottom up processing to identify the attributes that they share with 'good mothers'. However it as been argued that bottom up processing is usually utilised when making person based assessment, but when one is making a group based assessment the processing of information tends to be “top down” which means that assessments are based on pre-existing schemas and stereotypes. This is of particular note as it has been suggested that these different modes of assessment can critically influence cognitive and affective responses to a stigmatised group member (Fiske & Neuberg, 1990). In other words where one places the boundaries around ‘them’ and ‘us’ can have significant implications for social interactions (e.g. Turner, Hogg et al 1987) and the construction and maintenance of stigma. Knutson (1967) maintains that “people are defined by people” (p.7) and behaviour will be determined by the categories ‘contents’ (norms and values) (Hogg & Turner, 1987; Reicher, 1984b). The label that we choose to apply to others defines and creates an expectation of who they are and what they are capable of and how they will behave. Therefore the choices that are available to them will be constructed within the parameter of this category. This category will underpin interactions and dictate the power dynamics within that interaction. This is of particular importance within the interactions between worker and young mothers, because, from the evidence so far, it would appear that ‘teenage mothers’ are ‘bad mothers’ for many reasons, such as age (they are perceived as still being children), lack of experience, lack of money, lack of skills etc. and if the skills of young mothers
are ‘judged’ on this basis it is arguable that they can only ever be as good as they can within the category of teenage mother. The category of teenage mother could have the effect of undermining the abilities of the young mothers to be ‘good mothers’. It might also undermine the opportunities that are available to them. The effects of this category placement are similar to the notion of subtle prejudice.

Pettrigrew and Meertens (1995) propose that subtle prejudice is apparent in one of three mechanisms:

- The exaggeration of cultural differences
- Defence of traditional values
- The denial of positive emotions.

They suggest that members of an ingroup will exaggerate cultural differences between groups. Unlike blatant prejudice, where the perpetrator draws on genetic inferiority, the perpetrator of subtle prejudice is more likely to attribute outgroup disadvantages to cultural differences and the way in which they were brought up. Pettigrew and Meerton contend that “This process sets the outgroup aside as ‘a people apart’ – wholly unlike the ingroup” (p60).

Also members of the ingroup use stereotypes that can act as a means of substantiating, or justifying, individual opinions and as a means of defending the traditional values that are important to the individual or majority group. Pettigrew and Meertens contend that “Such issues as minorities needing to try ‘hard enough’, work their ‘way up’ and teach their children traditional values emerge as effective, yet ostensibly non-prejudicial, indicators of subtle prejudice.” (P59). They maintain that perpetrators are likely to hold, and strive to uphold, traditional ‘conservative’ values. From the findings it became evident that the youth workers not only draw on their own experiences of mothering as a benchmark or template for mothering, but also they draw on the traditional ideological values such as raising a child within the setting of the nuclear family.

Pettigrew and Meerten also suggest that another aspect of prejudice that is apparent is the denial of positive emotions. They contend that outgroup members will not be perceived as obviously lacking or unable to compete with ingroup members, however they will not be perceived as being as good as the ingroup are. The youth workers are
careful to praise the young mother’s skills, but these skills are never quite as good as the skills of the youth workers, nor do they perform as well. Pettigrew and Meerten argue that members of the ingroup will always be considered as better than members of the outgroup.

It is important to point out that subtle forms of prejudice are based on unconscious attitudes that the perpetrator may be completely unaware of or attitudes that they are aware of but that are repressed because of prevailing views (Myers 1993). Sherman (2000) refers to this a ‘polite’ form of racism. However, whilst subtle prejudice and racism may be considered ‘polite’, it is none the less still prejudice and will still have an affect on those that are subjected to it. Berg (1990) maintains that once a stereotype is accepted as ‘real’, prejudice is likely to occur and invoking categories can influence the response of the majority to the minority group member (Faber, O’Guinn & Meyer, 1987). More importantly the actions and effects of implicit prejudice are more insidious within all levels of society and therefore harder to detect and manage.

It would appear that despite a cultural climate that claims not to sanction prejudicial behaviours and responses, there is a wealth of evidence that suggests that prejudicial responses and attitudes still exists at all levels of society; individual, institutional and cultural (e.g. Crosby, Bromley, & Saxe, 1980. Devine, 1989; McConahay, 1986).
Research Question 2 - What possible effects might the choice of category have on the outcomes for the young mothers?

It is arguable that by placing the young mothers within the category of good teenage mother, interaction between Youth Worker and young mother will be based upon assumptions attached to the superordinate category of teenage mother and the young mothers will become victims of implicit prejudice. Berg (1990) maintains that once a stereotype is accepted as 'real' prejudice is likely to occur and invoking categories can influence the response of the majority to the minority group member (Faber, O'Guinn & Meyer, 1987).

The findings reported so far would suggest that there is evidence of implicit prejudice within the young mother's micro context. It appears that the very people that are there to help the young women hold views about the young mothers that could be deemed prejudicial. As Macpherson (1999) points out it is not necessarily the intentions of the perpetrators that is of concern, but the effects of their actions or attitudes. What effect might this implicit prejudice have on the lives of the young mothers?

A common effect of blatant prejudice is oppression and subjugation of the victim. However oppression implies a conscious, systematic, act of oppressing. Many dictionaries referring to the arbitrary and 'cruel exercise of power' and such definitions place the emphasis on the deterministic nature of prejudice. To the extent that Florynce R. Kennedy is quoted as saying that "there can be no really pervasive system of oppression...without the consent of the oppressed." Within this there is an implication that effects of prejudice and oppression are consciously held and felt by both parties. However as already pointed out these views may not necessarily be consciously held opinions and "Some of these (incidents) are inherently difficult to see by non victims, and they can occur even when the 'blamer' is well intentioned toward the victim." (Harvey, 1999p.79).

The effects of placing someone within a stigmatised category such as 'teenage mother' are as subtle as the acts and attitudes themselves and are an insidious power
within society and consequently are often difficult to assess. Harvey refers to this process as "civilized oppression" and acknowledges that whilst this form of oppression is not as overt or violent as other forms, its effects can be nonetheless as 'degrading and destructive' to the recipient. According to Harvey there are several key elements involved in civilized oppression such as:

- **Power** - relationships are often power laden and non-peer.
- **Acts and attitudes** - interactions are often unequal and involve acts and attitudes that diminish and control the recipient. Whilst these acts might be fairly subtle and possibly perceived as innocuous, it is the cumulative acts of omission and commission that serve to distort the relationship.
- **Blaming the victim** - Harvey maintains that there is a tendency within such relationships for the recipient to be blamed for their situation and consequent situations. Recipients are seen as 'masters of their own destinies'.
- **Moral status** - The result of such distortions within the relationships are a reduction in the moral status of the recipient. Consequently the recipient is often disempowered and as a result may remain silent and unlikely to seek the necessary help.

It is important to note that Harvey's work appears to come from a philosophical stance and does not appear to be substantiated by empirical work. However it does appear to provide a valuable framework for examining the effects of subtle prejudice on the lives of stigmatised individuals and therefore these findings will be examined in relation to the key elements already set out.

**Power.** The assignment of power within a relationship is not straightforward. It is not simply a matter of those in authority holding the power. In a politically correct environment it is possible that the 'victim' of the stigma may hold the power for fear of appearing politically incorrect. Also within a politically correct society it is difficult to reduce interactions to a simple 'dyadic' relationship. There are always more than two people that affect the outcome and the interaction of a relationship. The relationship between a worker and a young mother is tempered by a need to maintain a professional opinion / position / distance:
Heather

“No, we are not here to criticise them. You know, we are not allowed to make judgements or criticise.”

Jane is also aware of this need to remain professional, but admits that this is not always possible:

Jane

“Oh yeah, I do and I mean as I say I find it really, really hard. And, sometimes I haven’t succeeded in being non-judgmental and sometimes I have actually blurted it out in a moment of anger from what they’re doing.”

There needs to be an awareness of intuitional procedures:

Deborah

“I always see myself as the bridge to Head Office. Because Head Office, then a bridge and then there’s the residents. I’ll be like an advocacy for them”

She goes on to explain this role:

“I can see what the girls want. I mean with girls for example, they may want, they might need something in their room. And, to them it’s go to the shop and pick it up and take it straight away and I have to sort o explain to them, it’s not as simple as that, it has to be to head office, it has to be approved and then it has to come back here. So, um… for me it’s the bureaucracy that goes with it, the paperwork that goes with it too.”

Underlying these opinions and implicit biases there is awareness of having to answer to Line Management etc., or an awareness of the importance of remaining politically correct.

Interactive power. Having acknowledged the effect that the macro context might play on the relationship between a young mother and a worker, it is important to examine this dyadic relationship more closely. There is a wealth of work that suggests that
health care youth workers play a major part in the extent to which health care provisions are accepted and acted upon (e.g. Oakley, 1992; Edwards, 1995,1998). The relationship between Youth Worker and young mother is extremely influential as the Youth Worker might have considerable impact on the lives of the young mothers they come in contact with. It must be remembered that health care workers, youth workers etc., operate within a particular cultural context and the expectations of that context. There is an underlying assumption that the Hostel Managers and youth workers have a certain standard of education and experience and operate within particular professional parameters. These expectations are carried, not only by the youth workers themselves, but also by their clients who are the young mothers they work with. This assumption plays a fundamental part in deciding the balance of power within their relationship. There is a perception that the youth workers are there to meet the needs of the young women and guide them through the process.

Gerrish, 1996 suggests that there is an assumption of having to ‘meet the needs’ of the client, which largely ignores issues such prejudice, discrimination and oppression. Hart et al (2001) suggests that despite the extreme importance of such issues there is very little consideration of them within the relevant literature. Botes (1998) acknowledges that health visitors pay little heed to the effect that their own experiences and values might have on the relationship with their clients and the ultimate practices.

As already demonstrated the youth workers are subject to implicit prejudices. Whether these are conscious and controlled or unconscious is debatable, however Harvey points out that this form of prejudice or oppression is so subtle that it is possible that neither party is fully aware of its existence. More importantly this form of oppression is commonly as a result of well meaning interventions.

Liz

“For me to support them it really needs to be a 2-way thing because erm...like going to see your GP, I can’t write out a prescription for you if you won’t tell me what’s wrong with you”
What is of note within this quote is that whilst Liz maintains that the interaction is a two way process, inferring that they young mothers have as much power as she does, she then likens herself to a doctor, which puts herself in the position of authority. Also she is there to sort out the young women’s problems. They are not in a position to, nor expected to, help her. Deutsch, (1973) refers to this as a lack of cooperative power. He maintains that whilst competitive power is important in a relationship, cooperative power is equally important and often forgotten. He maintains that within a relationship each party must be of benefit to the other party to maintain the equilibrium. Harvey refers to this as, interactive power. This is defined as “The power to take the initiative in a relationship: in beginning or ending a relationship, in insisting on its being modified, and in taking a number of communication initiatives like the power to begin or end a specific contact (like a conversation), to insist on being listened to and on being given answers to reasonable and pertinent questions.” (P43)

This is particularly pertinent to the relationship between a worker and a young mother. Jingree, Finlay and Antaki (2005) suggest that staff in a residential home for people with learning disabilities will adopt various techniques in order to guide group discussions in order to produce desired outcomes. They suggest that staff will have to decide between several conflicting intuitionally driven objectives, which can result in outcomes that are in disagreement with the espoused objectives of the meeting. This is of note within these findings for whilst the youth workers maintain that the young women set the agenda it would appear that the choice of agenda is to some extent manipulated or fixed by the worker. It appears that conversations and decisions are steered by the youth workers in a manner that allows the young women to feel that they have made these decisions:

_Liz_

“One of the things I did was I suppose, having a look through her portfolio, speaking with her and finding out what her interests were and she was very keen on fashion which I didn’t know at all. She set up some pictures that she showed me and some fashion items that she had drawn and I suppose having put them together to create her portfolio...erm...there were other areas that we discussed and part of that was basically secretarial and administrative and
...but, I thought no this is really going to waste. So, I said to her what is your real interest and she thought and said she was not sure and I said to her if you wouldn't mind I'd like to push on the fashion for you and call up some colleges and then she became more for that area."

Through a seemingly informal conversation Liz is able to steer the conversation to education. Throughout the interview Liz was emphatic that all decisions came from the young women, however, as with this example, she is able to direct and control the topic of conversation. It has been argued that group leaders tend to take on guiding roles within interactions steering the discussions to desired outcomes (Markova, 1991) in such a ways as to marshal the individual into producing 'pseudoacquiescent responses" (Antaki, 1996, p.213). More importantly Antaki maintains that such responses are often as a result of confirming the individual's existing stereotypical beliefs. Maureen however is clearer about her motives:

Maureen

"Yeah, because I have been able to impact my own views on them. Not forcefully, but I try...the way I work with them try to highlight certain things."

It also appears that the youth workers not only make use of dyadic conversations to achieve a desired outcome, but they also make us of the group. Jane explains:

Jane

"It was the mum's final decision, but it was a group decision."

In this the group are used to structure the options that are available to the young women. Later in the interview she explains how she engineers such a decision:

Jane

"It was an established group by then and we were just generally talking about it, just comes up in conversation, you set it up so that it comes up in conversation."
Jane decides on a course of action before the meeting and uses the group to either raise the issue or support her view. She also explains why she intervenes when she believes that young women are going to make mistakes. She says:

Jane

“It's a habit and you've got to unlearn things and it's more hard to unlearn something than it is to learn something new and this is how it is for young mums and it is frustrating because you can see 'em doing it. And, you can see the road they are travelling and I try to explain it to 'em like in simple terms, like you know this is a ball, this is an ant and this is the size of the ant and he can't see over this side is a big anteater going to eat him. But I'm bigger than the ant and that anteater and I can see round this ball and I know that the anteater is over there waiting to eat him. But, if I come back here and said to the ant don't go that way because there's an ant eater it will tell me to go fly a kite because he wants to go there because he can smell whatever he can smell that makes him go there.”

The tone of this explanation could be perceived as quite patronising as she says that she simplifies it because she doesn’t think that they will be able to understand her otherwise. This raises an important issue that the relationship between young mother and worker is predicated on a notion that the young women are still children. Hart (2000) suggests that health care youth workers, such as health visitors etc., are essentially self-serving. She contends that through the use of language and rituals the health youth workers are able to maintain and reinforce their position of power. This can have the effect of ‘infantilising’ the client / patient resulting in them being over-pathologised (House 2000).

Sharon

“They might be mothers (starts to laugh) but they're both babies so yeah, it's not easy. Well, this is what I say, because sometimes it is good that they are young and they through the same things as other mums, what an adult mum...you know what I mean.”
Sharon makes it very clear that she believes that the young women are still children, more importantly she makes a distinction between young mothers and "adult mothers". The inference is that they are different and therefore have different needs and are to be handled in different ways. Heather also points out that

Heather

"Sometimes they are children with children."

This underlying assumption highlights the stereotype of the irresponsible teenager and the irresponsible teenage mother:

Carol

"Let's see (big sigh). They go out for the day and don't take a bottle with them, they go out and maybe it's as cold as they thought and the baby hasn't got a coat on you know, those sorts of things that when you've got a baby, you go out armed with sort of everything, don't you?"

Sharon highlights the sort of things that a young mother might do, but there is an assumption that they are thoughtless and irresponsible, but at the end of this quote she also positions herself as an adult and mother and draws the interviewer into this category by saying, "don't you?" The assumption being that the interviewer knows and understands what she is saying whereas a 'child' would not.

More importantly the relationship is based not just on that fact that they young mothers are children, or 'teenagers', but on an assumption that the young women come to the hostels as "teenage mothers" and with the right help move into the category of 'good mother'. Therefore this relationship is based on a model or a template of a 'teenage mother's' needs and not on a 'normal mother's' needs.

Hart (2005) suggests that the 'professional / client' relationship may be framed by unequal power structures. Further to this he suggests "Players' responses are often shaped by conflicting drivers." (P504). These drivers may operate at a conscious level, but in the case of implicit / subtle prejudice they may be operating at a subconscious level and in spite of the health youth workers best intentions. In this
way despite their best attempts at creating and maintaining an egalitarian relationship the balance of power between the youth workers and the young mothers will inevitably be skewed.

If this is the case at what point are the young women allowed to choose for themselves? It would appear from this that there is little interactive power within this relationship. Any choice that a young mother makes is shaped by the Youth Worker’s perceptions of her needs and a desire by the young mother to prove that she is a good mother. Young mother are under a constant threat that their child might be taken away. Wareing and Newell (2002) refer to such choice as “the choice you have when you are not having choice” (p.420). They maintain the choices are constituted by the professional and support staff within prevailing ideological parameters and ritualised routines and practices. In this freedom is not only situated within very narrow confines of the young women’s environments, but also the institutional systems and ideologies.

Acts and attitudes. It is important to note that civilised oppression is not just apparent in acts against another person, but through the attitudes towards another person as well. One area of contention that demonstrates this appears to be the issue of benefits. Whilst the youth workers are fully supportive of the young mother’s entitlements, there is an apparent lack of support for other recipients of benefits. As demonstrated earlier several of the youth workers that were interviewed felt that benefits can create apathy and a further reliance of benefits and in some cases an unfair advantage. However this view is not just reserved for ‘other people’ as some of the women interviewed acknowledged that being on benefits might have a negative effect on the young mothers:

Heather

“Well, they obviously go into the benefits system straight away. And, I think...it ...think it creates apathy amongst them.”

She goes on to say:
"Yeah, I think maybe one or two of them here have tried to dodge the work system and they know how to...I think they will."

If this is the case how does this view of others affect the views that the youth workers might hold about the young women that they have contact with and how they ultimately handle any issues that might arise?

One of the main areas of concern for the young mothers appears to be the perceived discrimination that they believed they experienced at the housing and benefits offices. The young mothers felt that they were ‘pushed to the bottom of the pile’ and treated in an unfair and sometimes unnecessarily aggressive manner.

However from this study it would appear that the youth workers believe that in a few cases the young women are discriminated against, but on the whole the problems that they experience at the benefits offices are exacerbated or in some cases directly caused by the young women themselves. When asked about the young women’s beliefs that they are discriminated against at the benefits offices Carol said:

Carol

"I think the do feel like that, but I don’t think that is the case. I really don’t think that is the case at all. They...I think at the Benefits a lot of things go wrong, that is true. A lot of things go wrong and it is frustrating. And if you are expecting you’re money let’s say on a Thursday and it doesn’t come and you’ve got no money, how frustrating is that? But...it’s...they always, can I say “go off on one” (laughs) to people at the Benefits, when it’s not actually that person that they are talking to fault. Often, when they are dealing with people at the Benefits they don’t know how to deal with the situation and just lose it and then on one will deal with them....if you start swearing at them down the phone they will put the phone down on you, which is fair enough. I say to the young people I work with. I usually sort out their benefits for them. But if you have to phone them, don’t lose your temper with that person, tell them exactly what has happened"
She acknowledges that this is a difficult situation for a young mother, however she then goes on to suggest that the problems that they encounter are down to the way in which they approach the situation. Also within this there is an assumption that the young women ‘always’ react like this to the extent that she feels that she must work on the basis that they will and tell them before they phone ‘don’t lose your temper with that person’. This attitude further endorses a power relationship, whereby the young mother is subjugated to those in perceived ‘authority’. Benefit offices have the power and the control in the relationship. The youth workers endorse this through their attitudes, leading the young women to believe that discrimination is because of their own action. It appears that the youth workers work on the assumption that the young women are going to approach other people with a negative attitude; there is an expectation that they will fail in their communications.

Carol

“They would be fine, but they don’t, they go in there and go absolutely “raa” at the person behind the counter and (exasperated laughter) a massive breakdown in communications.”

As a result of this expectation of failure the advice that the young women are given again suggests that they are in the wrong and that it is they who need to alter their approach. More importantly this advice is given to the young women by people who they trust and whose judgement they value.

Blaming the victim. Harvey contends that there may be a tendency for ingroup members to ‘blame the victim’ suggesting that they have brought their problems on themselves. From the transcripts it would appear that this may be the case for some youth workers. They perceive that there are occasions when something goes wrong for the young mothers but that they are responsible in some way. As demonstrated above in situations such as a problem in communication, it is often perceived as the young women failing to take responsibility for their actions.

Carol

“Those that don’t take the responsibility, it is never their fault. Whatever happens they always see it as being someone else’s fault. The reason that this
happened is because that person is stupid, or didn’t ...often, the reason why this happened is because that person sent them a letter and it was ignored and if, say for instance, if a benefit doesn’t come on a Thursday, it’s like where’s my benefit, oh my god it’s pay day and I haven’t got my benefit. Oh my God, what am I gonna do now! Get onto Carol, Carol I haven’t got my benefit, what am I gonna do? Ok, I’ll ring up the benefits agency, oh, yeah we did send them out a letter and we haven’t heard from them so the benefit has been stopped and it’s like, well I haven’t had any letter. But, they have had the letter. They just can’t, they won’t take the responsibility for it. Even thought when I do have meetings I always say to them, if you have any letters from housing benefit or benefit or any letters that you don’t understand, that you want me to deal with let me have a look at them and we’ll get them sorted. It’s always someone else’s fault. It’s ...I don’t know, I just think that’s the way some people are, isn’t it.”

The youth workers maintain that the young mothers blame others to cover up for their own mistakes, covering for their lack of organisation. However it would appear they also feel the young mother’s attitudes encourage a negative response from other people. Maureen believes that the young mothers need to adjust their reactions to other people:

Maureen

“…It depends on their attitude. On several occasions whereby for instance on a bus you come on with your pushchair probably you find someone that won’t ...let’s say they are illiterate and they cannot read the sign that says please give up your seat for...and you just find the girl starts screaming ‘do you mind getting up I need to put my baby’s pram there and my baby..’ you don’t say things like that. Consider the manners and simple politeness and the person you are talking to probably doesn’t understand. That attitudes tends to make people think because you that that you are carrying a baby in a buggy society should not be respected.”

Harvey contends that blame is often due to the victim’s character defects - either they are perceived to be too sensitive, have a problem with authority figures, or a problem
with how they handle situations (as in benefits office). Harvey contends that it is common in such a situation to assume that the victim has somehow provoked the situation. However blaming the victim is not just apparent in day-to-day interaction, but also in the case of the young mothers that ‘fail’ to become good mothers.

It is reasoned that they do not accept the help that is offered to them as in some cases they are unable to see that they have a problem. Also at a deeper level there is an assumption that they are only mothers because they have somehow brought the situation upon themselves; their lifestyles prior to having a child were such that this was somehow an inevitability. This view is supported by work within the stigma literature that suggests that many people believe that membership of some stigmatised condition is brought upon them by themselves. Within this there is an assumption that many young women are looking for someone to love. This manifests in several ways, such as the need for love leading young women to seek sexual relationships that were ‘unsuitable’ or ‘inappropriate’, or, whether knowingly or unknowingly, having a child fulfil this need.

*Policing Parenting.* It is important to note that this form of prejudice or oppression is so subtle that it is possible that neither party is fully aware of its existence. Moreover Harvey maintains that blaming the victim often occurs as a result of compassion for them. Also it is important to be clear about who is doing the blaming. It is possible that it may not be the most obvious person; it could be the authority figure, or an onlooker, but it might also be subtler as in a tradition, a saying or institutional ideologies. When looking for the effects of subtle prejudice it is it important to look deeper as the effects are as subtle as the prejudice itself.

As mentioned earlier there appears to be an assumption that young mothers come into the care of the youth workers as ‘teenage mothers’ and with their help are able to move into the category of ‘good teenage mother’. There appears to be an assumption that the role of the worker is to ‘improve’, almost ‘civilize’, the young women. They arrive as teenage mothers, but with the youth workers help and guidance become acceptable mothers, acceptable by society’s standards. It would appear from the transcripts that when a young mother first makes contact with a ‘worker’, the starting point is that they are a teenage mother. It is arguable this starting point must have an
effect on the way in which the youth workers approach the young mothers and how they deal with them.

As was noted earlier one aspect of this stereotype is that the young mothers are only children themselves and this seems to be an issue that underpins how the youth workers approach them. Rather than assuming that the young women will be able to cope or indeed are coping already and more importantly, that they are good mothers, they appear to be involved in damage limitation.

If the starting point is that that the young women enter their care as teenage mothers, it is arguable that there will be an element of policing involved. It is appears to be the role of the worker to look for problems that might arise and alert others to such issues, such as lack of care or child abuse:

*Sharon*

"Erm...one young mother had been on social services erm...she was neglecting her child and erm...she was reported to social services. I'm not going right in to details but it ended up that her child was taken away and placed in care. I think the part is seeing the mother, social services, social youth workers coming in taking the baby and the mother, how....seeing how distressed she was. I had to think to myself it was for the best...best for the child and...

Foucault (1976, 1979) refers to the notion of "regimes of truth" suggesting that health professionals use this as a means of observing and regulating interactions. youth workers make use of existing rules and regulations as a means of justifying their position and actions.

*Maureen*

"well, yeah, if I find that erm...someone is at risk, I make sure that...we have rules and regulations for her and I will go by the rules."
This relates back to the notion of unequal relationships. Whilst the youth workers like to see themselves in a more informal role as a friend, as well as an ally, within this relationship, the worker will be operating within professional parameters and not as a mother substitute or friend. Davies (1988) suggests that the notion of a health visitor as a “mother’s friend” creates an informal atmosphere which masks state intervention and surveillance. In the case of the youth workers there appears to be an assumption that the young women that come to them will inevitably have non existent or at best low level skills and therefore need to be monitored for progress.

Maureen

“You look at their maternity book, you know, make sure that the progresses and then you liase with the midwife, the doctors in case there are any issues of concern. Then, you discuss it with them and then the midwives will give you the feedback if there is anything that needs to be done with the consent of the person you are working with.”

Initially the monitoring process is fairly broad based, but as the young women progress this will become more specific:

Sharon

“Maybe not in the beginning, but when they’re here and they’re settled in. It normally comes out, you know when I’m walking around, observation. For example if bottles aren’t washed up and things like that or I feel that she may not be sterilising the bottles or whatever, I ask her to do it and I ask her to watch how to do it.”

This demonstrates the role of the worker checking that the young women are achieving the required standards of parenting, standards that are set by personal experience. It has been argued that individuals working within the caring environment must always be careful about being self-referent, using themselves as a benchmark for other’s successes or failures. But more importantly within this quote the young mother is asked to demonstrate her abilities; it appears that young mothers constantly have to prove themselves. It is arguable that this may have an effect of undermining their efforts, that they will never be perceived as, or perceive themselves as, as good
as the women supporting them. Jacoby (1990) argues that there is potential for health youth workers to have an overdeveloped sense of self-efficacy and self-worth as a result of deep-seated feelings of inadequacy. It is such feelings that can draw the individual to such work. Jung (1966) refers to this as the ‘wounded healer’ healing their own ‘pain’ by helping others. What is of note here is that many youth workers that are involved with young mothers, were in fact young mothers themselves. It has been suggested that any self reflective work that does occur is usually ‘self-congratulatory’ and does not address the issues of dependency of the carers and how the professional relationship might be fulfilling their own needs (e.g. Thorne, 1987, Lazarus, 1994). If this is the case what effect might this have on the relationship between carer and client or, more specifically, worker and young mother?

More importantly at what point does supporting become policing? Hart (2005) maintains that the continually expanding role and authority of the health visitor now impinges on a broader range of issues including not only health, but also social and lifestyle issues, creating a web of surveillance for those at risk. The role of the health worker is to monitor their clients.

However what effect does monitoring young mothers have on the individual? McIntosh (1986) argues that surveillance can be counter-productive. The unequal relationship can discourage clients from opening up to their health youth workers and make them reluctant to accept advice. Advice can be seen as too invasive and directive (Plews, 1998). Oakley (1995) suggests that this can result in those that most need this ‘help’ resisting help and opting out. Nettelton (1991) talks of the practice of concealing domestic violence within the discourse of good motherhood. Women refuse to admit what is happening to them for fear of being cast as bad mothers and having their children removed. It appeared from the media study that there is a belief that mothers are meant to be perfect and are supposed to enjoy every moment of motherhood. It is arguable that young mothers feel under a constant pressure to perform as there is an underlying threat that their children could be taken way. It is possible that if this is the case they are unlikely to be honest about how they are coping. They are unlikely to let their guard down and admit to problems for fear of fulfilling the stereotype of the teenage mother and possibly having their child
removed. It is also possible that this is why some young mothers appear to be resistant to help:

Sharon

“No, she didn’t want help at all.”

Interviewer

“Did she avoid it then?”

Sharon

“Erm...it was more she wouldn’t let us go into her room, there were time when she didn’t open the door properly, so...we have to have a look on the baby as a responsibility, but she would say the baby was asleep and didn’t want to wake her.”

Whilst it is undoubtedly important to focus on the needs of the child it is arguable whether removal of the child from their mother is necessarily the best thing for the child’s well-being, furthermore the effect that this has on the mother’s self-esteem and self efficacy does not appear to be considered (Charlton et al 1998>)

However it is not just the attitude of the individual that might have an effect on the young mothers, it is also the attitude of the system. It appears that this is a system that is predicated on an assumption of middle class parenting, i.e. married mothers in their twenties are ‘good mothers’, and teenage mothers are ‘bad mothers’. There is also an assumption that a full time partner is essential to good mothering:

Maureen

“They need the support of their partners because erm...I’m looking at it from my own background. I’m not...castigating single parents, you need, a child needs good parents. There’s a need for them, so to enable the child to grow, to develop and look towards the future. But is a child grows without this support, it could be a father figure, some women are very strong, but the father figure that you know it will be missing in a child. It’s something you have taken out of a natural, you know...you cannot take it from a child.”
Maureen

"Well, yes you find that it's that bond, that cheerfulness in a child when there
is a father figure in their life. A child depends on this homelessness in a child."

It is this model that underlies and is the starting point of policing the parenting skills
of any mother that falls outside this category (Peckover, 2001). There appears to be a
pressure to create mothers that fulfil a socially ascribed model of motherhood based
on the nuclear family. Young mothers are at odds with this model and are
consequently always playing 'catch up'; they will never be quite good enough
parents.

Moral status. Harvey maintains that one of the main effects of prejudicial acts and
attitudes towards a minority group member, is that they are not afforded moral status.
Society is in constant denial of their moral worth. It would appear that this is true of
young mothers who constantly have to justify their existence and situation, even to
those that are there to help them. There appears to be a constant pressure on young
mothers to prove that they are fully functioning members of society and not just a
drain on resources. However Harvey introduces the notion of the functioning member
model and questions to what extent victims of oppression are allowed to be a
functioning members of society. Whilst it might be that others acknowledge their
moral status, young mothers are not necessarily afforded the rights that accompany
this status.

For example with regards to benefits, the young women are paid the appropriate
benefits, however there is a constant supervision of how they allocate and spend this
money. It appears that members of society might sanction paying benefits, but they
retain the right to question how this money is spent. Deborah related a story of a
young mother whom she believed had problems budgeting. She maintained that
despite being shown how to budget the young mother still insisted on buying things
that were not what she considered ‘essentials’:

Deborah
“Buying baby clothes when she doesn’t need to be buying baby clothes, 
err...for her as well, boyfriends as well.”

Again there is this underlying assumption that they are ‘children’, not adults and 
therefore different from other mothers and not to be trusted:

Deborah

“Because they are a child and you just think they’re young, they’re too 
young.”

The young mothers appear to be caught in a double bind. They are a mother and have 
responsibilities, but they need to have others to make decisions for them. Also it is 
important to note that the system is predicated on a belief that the baby’s needs are 
paramount:

Interviewer

“So, who do you see is your responsibility? Is it the mother or the child?”

Sharon

“The mother and the child.”

Interviewer

“That’s your responsibility?”

Sharon

“Oh, no the child. Sorry (laughs) no, nope definitely the child, yeah.”

In this view it is arguable that a young mother is answerable to both their baby and 
society and within this the individual is not encouraged to learn by his or her own 
mistakes. The young mothers are now shepherded and guided to ensure they do not 
make mistakes.

What is perhaps more telling within these transcripts is not how these young women 
handle their situation and how their choices are constructed, but what happens to
those that fail to reach the ascribed standards of good mothering. How are they handled?

Sharon

"Sometimes no matter how erm...how much you try and support them and erm...there is nothing else you can do with them."

Carol

"Not quite sure where she's living now. Because I kept going round for appointed visits and she wasn't there and then she turn up when she wanted something and wanted me to do something or needed something and erm... I would make another appointment to go round and she wouldn't be there. I would try for months and months and months to erm... get in and give any sort of support... she just didn't want it really. And then, the last I heard of her I still see her occasionally but I don't support her anymore, the last I heard she was having another baby. She's probably had it by now. And, it makes you feel a failure really, but (laughs) because there was still positives in that negative situation. But, because I suppose you can't help everyone can you. If they don't want the help..."

The youth workers are upset by the circumstances, but distance themselves from the responsibility for the young women. It has been argued that most people will associate themselves with desirable outcomes, however when the outcome is undesirable, such as perceived 'failure' of the system to bring about a satisfactory conclusion, the individual will seek to dissociate themselves for this event (Sedikes, 1993). The self serving bias (Zuckerman, 1979) maintains that the individual will attribute success to internal factors, such as skill and effort whereas failure will be attributed to external factors such as luck, or in the case of the youth workers failure to bring a satisfactory conclusion, the fault of the young women themselves, as either they did not want help or their lives were such that they needed more help than the youth workers were able to offer.

Liz
"They go back to housing and housing will just move them somewhere else. But erm...these are the people who are acting for their best interests, but they don't want our help...then they move the follow-up to them is minimal."

Because they are unable to help the young mothers, the youth workers reason that this is because the young mothers do not want help or are refusing guidance. It is arguable that there is a need for the helpers to maintain this emotional distance, however Harvey would maintain that this is merely supporting and perpetuating institutional oppression. The individual hides behind not only their own rights, but other's rights; the individual's rights to freedom allow us to stand by and not become involved.

**Disempowered victims.** One of the consequences of a lack of moral status is that 'victims' are disempowered. Deutsch (2002) suggests that the dominant group uses its power to increase its chances and status in society and is more likely to want to preserve the status quo. Given this Deutsch maintains that any pressure to change the status quo must therefore come from the minority group. However he argues that majority group members will make use of the lack of interactive power to maintain the asymmetrical relationships.

The problem with an unequal relationship, where there is no interactive power, is that victims are likely to be subjected to unfulfilled conversations, inadequate explanations, lack of voice and assumptions of needs. The more vulnerable the 'victim' the more likely they are to be 'silenced and immobilized'. In some cases the 'victim' is unable to register protest because they are too young to articulate their views or objections (Harvey). In such cases it is up to the worker to help the young women to find this voice. However if the underlying assumption is that the 'worker' does not agree with the protest, how are they able to fully articulate these needs? This is evident with the problems with the benefits offices and the housing offices. It has been argued that because of an unequal balance of power within the relationship and knowledge, individuals are at risk of being placed in 'non reversible' roles where there are little or no opportunities to express their views freely (Leudar, 1981).

Harvey refers to this as material impossibility and claims that those that do manage to
protest are in danger of ‘retaliation response’; this is where the ‘victim’ is likely to suffer a negative response to the protest, or constrained silence for fear of such a response. Wareing and Newell (2005) refer to this as the choice of refusal or the passive choice of acceptance. However Harvey maintains that the strongest response is likely to be ‘total non response’ where victims register a protest, but are ignored. Such treatment usually results in the long term with the victim being demoralised and ceasing to protest and merely accepting the situation, no matter how unfair.

Deprivation of time. Another effect of a lack of moral status can be that the young mothers may be deprived of the time and opportunity to be the mothers that they would like to be. Hart and Freeman (2005) conclude that in certain circumstances the health worker / client relationship may only serve to exacerbate the already disadvantaged group members. It is not always consciously that youth workers are oppressing the young women; sometimes it is merely the fact that they are supporting and maintaining existing institutional structures.

Harvey maintains that onlookers, or youth workers, can add to this situation by limiting access to facilities or putting an individual in a situation that exposes the ‘victim’ to ‘penalty, censure and deprivation’. It could be argued that young mothers are deprived of time with their babies, deprived of the opportunity to just be a mother, because they are counselled to return to college as soon as possible and decision-making is structured around practicalities of life. What is of note is that a successful outcome for a young mother does not just include taking care of herself and her baby, but is also measured by her return to school, college or the workplace. The young women are all heavily guided back into education as a means of getting off benefits. But for any mother of any age to return to education or work is difficult with a new baby and yet these women are expected to; they are still being treated as children who have interrupted their education. And yet it is questionable as to whether this would be the case for an older mother. It is arguable that an older mother would have completed her education, but what about an older mother who has no education but is married? Would society force her back into education or the workplace at such an early stage of motherhood? This point is highlighted by Liz, who during her interview, started to talk about how society defines a mother, she contends that:
Liz

"Society would see that as a mother in her late 20’s early 30’s, someone who had a job, paying tax and decided to have a family and take 5 years off. What’s wrong with a 16yr old saying that I want to take 5 years off and stay at home with my child? She would be laughed at, there would the one saying I’m paying for you out of my taxes to stay at home to look after your child, taxpayers are paying you to do that. But, for someone who is older that have worked or might be more affluent in their career, it would be ok for them to do that. They wouldn’t looked upon twice for doing that. But, why shouldn’t they? Why shouldn’t they want to do that?"

She makes that point that is considered acceptable for an older mother to want to stay at home with her children, however a younger mother would be seen as wasting her life or a leech for accepting benefits. It would appear that there are different definitions and expectations of motherhood dependent on age and circumstances. It is arguable that this would also be the case for a single mother. Whilst society is apparently trying to help young mothers they are still operating within a stigmatised framework, drawing on negative stereotypes and therefore setting goals that are only relevant to a narrow band of ‘mothers’. Liz goes on to say:

“I think that if you had, you know, if you had erm...three women that was on a panel, let’s say one was 40 and decided to start her family and the she was going to take 5 years off to stay at home with her family I don’t think anyone would bat an eyelid at her. A 20 year old, that erm...someone who could be not married, decided that she wanted to stay at home and have a family, nobody would bat an eyelid, in fact even at 18 she could be married and her partner there to support here....16 or 17 year old or 18 year old on their own, I don’t think they would be looked at the same way.”

This notion of different expectations is echoed by Jane who says:

Jane

“I think society doesn’t like the idea of the working mother very much. Erm...I think that in the ideal society, I think that society still believes quite strongly that mums should be there with their children until they have grown up and
left home and there for them, you know, doing their washing, their cooking, doing their cleaning, mending their hurts. They shouldn't be doing other things besides being a mother. I think society still thinks that way. You still hear the comments about the working mother, how can she be a mother if she works all day? She's got her mind on other things, how can she be there for her children, latchkey kids? I think that is still, even in today's society where many mums are working, not because of choice but because of the necessity you know, I still believe that there, it is still very much frowned on.”

Within this quote she draws on her ideal of a ‘good’ mother as one who is at home for her children and points out that she believes that society still disapproves of working mothers and in her eyes this equates with being a bad mother. And yet society also expects young mothers to be working mothers as it is not enough for them to stay at home and try to be good mothers.

Carol

“Erm...I don't know whether their needs differ. I think it is different because they erm...if you are working with just single young people, you are mainly aiming to get them into independent living and work and moving them on that way. Whereas with erm...young women with babies, you're not often trying to get them to get a job, but you are more trying to get them into college maybe. If someone was 20/22 something like that and they could go do something like that, on a course, often they sort come through that I've just left school and I don't want to go back, when they've got a bit older, they've got to the stage where they are thinking ‘cor I should've done this at school I wish I could go back’. So, I think really they are targeting the wrong age group there. I know they want to get them into college and some of them do it.”
**Discussion Research Question 2 - What possible effects might the choice of category have on the outcomes for the young mothers?**

As already highlighted in the first research question there is evidence to suggest that subtle prejudice exists within the interactions between youth workers and young mothers. However it is important to point out that all the women interviewed appeared to care greatly about the young women that they come in contact with and want to do the best for them, but the processes of implicit prejudice are so subtle that "Some of these (incidents) are inherently difficult to see by non victims, and they can occur even when the 'blamer' is well intentioned toward the victim." (Harvey, 1999, P79) These incidents are referred to as ‘moral oversights’ and it is the constant distortion of such events that serve to maintain and deepen this oppression. In this view the perpetrator often acts with the best of intentions, but attitudes and reactions are moulded by a series of apparently trivial acts. This form of prejudice or oppression is so subtle that it is possible that neither party is fully aware of its existence. Harvey (1999) maintains that this form of oppression is evident in several interacting key elements such as power, acts and attitudes, blaming the victim and moral status.

Of note within the findings is the placement of young mothers within the category of ‘good teenage mothers’ which has implications for the autonomy of the young mothers. As already argued the main outcome of this placement is that young mothers are still included within the superordinate category of ‘Teenage mother’ which is arguably a stigmatised category. As a result the young women appear to have no real power within their relationship with the youth workers. They are expected to take responsibility for their babies, but they are not afforded full responsibility over their lives. This is partly due to the fact that the relationship is predicated on the negative attributes associated with the category of teenage mother, one of which is that young mothers are still children and therefore incapable of making their own decisions, and lack the necessary skills and abilities to be a good mothers. They are only able to become good mothers with the help of the ‘adults’ or ‘experts’. Within this relationship between category membership the youth workers maintain their authority.
Weber (1947) maintains that there are hierarchical roles that the individual will adopt and within these roles are accepted duties and expectations of power differentials. Simon (1976) defines authority as "the power to make decisions that effect the actions of others" (p.125). He further maintains that within an interaction the subordinate will hold "in abeyance his own critical facilities for choosing between alternatives and uses the formal criterion of the receipt of a command or a signal as his basis for choice" (p.126). In this the young women will defer to the youth workers suggestions because they are perceived to be in authority and that entails "the right to command others" (Kelman & Hamilton, 1989, p.53.).

This is a particularly important point for young mothers as it is within such power laden interactions that they are expected to make choices that affect their lives. For the young mothers, choices are taken with the context of ritualised practices and routines that are bound by ideology and stereotypical beliefs which constrain opportunities. Not only are the choices of the young mothers situated within an underlying assumption of category membership of teenage mothers, but any choices that a young mother makes is also shaped by the youth workers perceptions of her needs and a desire by the young mother to prove that she is a good mother. Young mothers are under a constant threat that their children might be taken away. Wareing and Newell (2002) maintain that such choices are limited and oppressive; oppressed by what is normal, acceptable, natural and good. They refer to such choices as "the choice you have when you are not having choice" (p.420). In this freedom is not only situated within very narrow confines of the young women’s environments, but the institutional systems and ideologies. If a young woman’s choices are constructed within the category of a ‘good teenage mother’ there is an assumption that she can still share the negative attributes of the superordinate category ‘teenage mother’ and in this the young women have little or no agency and are in danger of being constrained by ‘non reversible’ roles (Leudar, 1981) and passive choices (Wareing & Newell, 2002).

As already argued in Chapter Seven Bandura (1992a) contends that agency is a central tenet to a person’s continued well-being. To be a fully functioning member of society the individual needs to believe that they have the capabilities and skills to control their lives. He refers to this notion as a belief in personal self-efficacy.
Without the subjective belief that it is possible to act in a certain way or that they have control to act in a certain way, the individual is unlikely to take action. In this view the individual has no control and consequently will become a passive recipient of circumstance.

From the interviews it became apparent that the youth workers believe that a large part of their role is to give young women a ‘voice’. However from the findings it is arguable as to whose ‘voice’ they are given. It is possible that the voice that they are given is not just one that is structured by the perceptions of the youth workers at the micro level, but also one that is structured by the macro level which is predicated on the ideological notion that the nuclear family is the best model of parenting. Within this model the young women will find it hard if not impossible to be a ‘good enough’ parents.

8.4 Conclusion

Dovidio and Gaertner (1998) maintain that “Although the expression of aversive racism may be subtle, the consequences are not subtle. Aversive racism, like more blatant forms, may contribute to the restriction of opportunity for Blacks and other minorities” (p. 31). The nature of implicit prejudices can shape everyday perceptions of the stigmatised individual and can consequently interfere with the basis of communications and needs. It is arguable that such forms of disempowerment could result in young women remaining silent, or not seeking help when it is most needed, and consequently resulting in the perceived failure of the system or the young woman not wanting to be helped. Whilst the effects of implicit prejudice may not necessarily affect the majority of young mothers, there are undoubtedly some young women that feel unable to ask for help or guidance for fear of retribution or drawing attention to their perceived inadequacies. It is all very well to focus on the examples of the positive stories of young mothers that with the necessary help achieved success and have become good mothers. But it is those that fail or are failed by others that are of most importance. What happens to them? How are such failures addressed and how do they prevent this happening again?
Chapter Nine

Summary and Discussion

9.1 Summary of findings
Previous research contended that early motherhood ‘ruins’ a young woman’s life. However more recent research suggested that this was not always the case and that many young women find early motherhood changed their lives in a positive way and that having a baby provided them with a catalyst for change. This research examined the lives of young mothers through the eyes of the macro context as portrayed in the national press, from the perspective of the young women themselves and from the perspective of a micro context, i.e. the Youth Workers who are in daily contact with the young mothers. From these different perspectives the experiences of young mothers were examined for the use of categories and the ways in which young mothers are able to construct and maintain a positive sense of self despite living with a stigmatised label. In particular this work explored the categories young mothers invoked to make sense of their experiences and what meanings they attach to these categories and the sources of self-evaluation and relevant dimensions of self-evaluations.

Major findings and interpretations are summarised below:

- The media, through text and photography, constructs many categories of motherhood, including good and bad mothers, with teenage mothers in the latter category. However within the broad range of categories there are many apparent tensions and placement within a category appears to be subjective and context dependent.

- The findings of the study which focused on how young women experience becoming mothers does not support traditional theories of stigma, which suggest that negative outcomes for the stigmatised individual are inevitable. These findings suggest that whilst the young mothers may be aware of the negative labels applied to them, they are not meaningful to them. Young mothers are aware of the negative images of teenage mothers that exist in society. However they do not believe themselves to be ‘teenage mothers’.
Through bottom up processing young mothers are able to identify positive attributes that they share with the category of ‘good mothers’ and therefore position themselves as ‘good mothers’ who happen to be young.

- These findings suggest that Link et al’s (1987) modified model of labelling does not allow for processes that protect the individual between the stages of being labelled and incorporating that label within their sense of self.

- Contrary to prevailing views of teenage motherhood, having a baby provides the young mothers with a motivation to change their lives and behaviour. The findings suggest that by taking the decision to continue with the pregnancy the young women take responsibility and control of their lives and thereby create a sense of personal and moral agency.

- Traditional theories of stigma appear to focus on the outcomes of stigma in terms of the effects of self-esteem. Our findings suggest that self-efficacy might play a role in ameliorating the negative effects of living with a stigmatised label.

- Moreover it would appear that traditional views have conflated the concepts of self-esteem and self-efficacy, with self-efficacy subsumed within self-esteem. However, from our findings it would appear that self-efficacy might operate independently of self-esteem.

- Members of the young mothers’ micro context (youth workers) draw on a similar range of categories of motherhood when talking about their work with young mothers. However whilst young mothers position themselves within the category of good mothers, the youth workers appear to position the young mothers within the category of ‘good teenage mother’. This placement of young mothers within the category of teenage mothers may have implications for the autonomy of young mothers.

- Within all the studies similar categories were invoked. However how these categories were constructed and where individuals were placed appeared to vary greatly dependent on where an individual perceived themselves to be and the context in which the categories were invoked. These findings question the essentialist view of category membership and appear to support more ‘fuzzy’ membership and as such it is this ‘fuzziness’ and flexibility that allows the individual to create and maintain a positive sense of self, despite being
stigmatised. What is of particular note within this work is that it explores the content and meaning of a category rather than just examining the process of categorisation.

9.2 Theoretical implications of the research
Previous findings suggest that members of a stigmatised group, such as teenage mothers, would suffer from the negative consequences of the stigmatised label. This suggestion was often based on the assumptions of labelling theory, which maintains that once a stigmatised label is attached to an individual the negative attributes of the label would become meaningful to the individual and would be incorporated into their sense of self and affect their self-perceptions and consequently their self-esteem. However recent findings have questioned such a deterministic outcome for a stigmatised individual and the findings of this thesis appear to support this later view. The findings appear to question the inevitable outcomes outlined by Link et al’s model of modified labelling which suggest that once a label is applied to an individual it becomes relevant to their sense of self. It appears that whilst a negative label might be relevant to young mothers, in that they are aware that others might see them this way, it is not meaningful to them as they do not believe themselves to be ‘teenage mothers’; rather they believe that they are ‘good mothers’ that happen to be young. From this it would seem that there are processes involved that ameliorate the effects of the label.

It has been argued that one of the possible processes involved is categorisation, how young mothers utilise the various categories available to them. What is of note with this work is that traditionally work in the field of categorisation has tended to focus on the actual processes involved in terms of how people categorise people or objects. However this work seeks to explore the content of the category and the meaning that the category may hold for the individual. In Chapter Five it was demonstrated that within the national press there are a wide variety of categories associated with motherhood that young women could draw on. Further, within these categories are many tensions and inconsistencies that allow young women to negotiate their roles. In this the portrayal of the mother is a dynamic product of the telling and retelling of personal experiences, stories and myths, and women are able to carve out a niche for themselves. This suggests that Turner (1968) may be right when he suggested that the
The notion of reflected appraisals was only one of many processes involved in the construction of self. He argues that there is a need to explore a more dynamic construal of the self, one which is in constant negotiation with their environment and others’ views. He maintains that “the very existences of these opposing images, word, evaluations, maxims and so on is crucial, in that they permit the possibility not just of social dilemmas, but of social thinking itself. Without these oppositions there would be no way of arguing about dilemmas or understanding how opposing values can come into collision.” (Billig et al., 1988, p.17). Findings from Chapter Six propose that through the use of social comparisons, the young mothers are able to identify positive attributes that they share with the category of ‘good mother’ and as such they are able to align themselves with this category.

Further to this it appears that not everyone draws on the same categories. It would appear that whilst young mothers do not see themselves as teenage mothers, the macro society tends to categorise the majority of young mothers within the negative category of ‘teenage mothers’. However within the young women’s micro society it appears that the ‘youth workers’ with whom they have daily contact appear to position them within a subordinate category of ‘good teenage mother’.

These findings question the assumed essentialist nature of categories which suggests that categories are fixed and immutable and therefore resistant to modification (Yzerbyt et al. 1997). As Chapter Six argued essentialist theory suggests that categories are comprised of distinct sets of traits or attributes (Medin & Ortony, 1989) and as such are an ‘all or nothing’ concept. However whilst some categories, such as male and female, may reflect this notion, the findings in this thesis suggest that boundaries between categories are more fluid than essentialist theory would suggest and more importantly are susceptible to societal influence.

Traditional views are based on exclusivity, in that attributes belong exclusively to a category and as such those that posses these attributes will belong to this category. However within the subordinate category of teenage mother there are many attributes that are shared by the superordinate category of ‘mother’ and good and bad mothers. In this view category membership is not fixed and immutable, rather it is fluid and blurred. Young mothers are able to assess the attributes that they possess to negotiate
moves between categories. The movement between categories appears to allow the young women to construct and maintain a positive sense of self. It appears that whilst a category might be salient for the individual, it does not mean it is meaningful to them. In terms of the young mothers interviewed it appeared that the category of ‘teenage mother’ was salient because they were aware that other people might think that they belong in that category. However this category did not appear to be meaningful to them as they did not appear to believe that they belong in that category.

Perhaps of most importance within the results is an unexpected finding which is the role that self-efficacy might play. To date work in this area has mainly focussed on the outcomes for stigmatised individuals in terms of self-esteem. To what extent is self-esteem affected by stigma? It would appear that little research has been conducted into the other process involved in maintaining a positive sense of self. What is of particular note is that these findings suggest that self-efficacy might play a part in ameliorating the effects of stigma. It seems that, contrary to the prevailing view of teenage motherhood, having a baby provides a motivation for the young women interviewed to change their lives and behaviour. Whilst they might not have chosen to become pregnant, they have all chosen to continue with their pregnancies and become mothers. It is this element of choice that appears to be a turning point for the young mothers. Because, by taking the decision to keep their babies, they are accepting responsibility and taking control of the situation and thereby creating a sense of personal agency. It is this development of personal agency that Bandura maintains is fundamental to maintaining a positive sense of self and becoming a fully a functioning proactive member of society. It would appear that having a baby has provided the young women with an opportunity to take control of their lives and as such create a positive sense of self-efficacy that had hitherto been lacking in their lives.

Also within the concept of agency is the notion of moral agency. Bandura (2001) contends that moral agency is central to the maintenance of a positive sense of self. If young mothers believed themselves to be morally reprehensible they would have no reason to accept the role of being a mother and no reason to prove others wrong. Therefore by becoming a mother young women can claim a moral standing that they believe is better than being seen as a teenager. By taking on the role of mother they
are taking on the positive attributes associated with that category membership of a
good mother. Bandura argues that moral agency is exercised through self-sanctions, in
that the individual makes judgements about actions in relation to personal standards
and individual circumstances. Through the process of social comparisons the young
mothers are able to construct their morality in relation to bad mothers and sanction
their behaviour to behave in a way that 'good mothers' behave.

Moral agency is constructed in two ways. Firstly, 'Inhibitive', which means
refraining from old ways of behaving, e.g. taking drugs etc. The second way is
'Proactively', which means engaging in behaviours that make them a 'good mother',
e.g. loving their children, not leaving them alone, teaching them right from wrong.
Also future actions appear to shape present behaviour and motivations. The young
women interviewed envisage a future of being good mothers and providing a good
life for their babies; this means initiating current actions that will enhance this
likelihood. In this it would appear that young mothers are changing their lifestyles
and behaviours in order to provide for their children.

Further to this, these findings appear to suggest that self-efficacy is operating
independently of self-esteem. This work appears to demonstrate that young mothers
can derive self-esteem from giving birth without a sense of perceived self-efficacy.
In this case perceived self-efficacy develops over time as the young women gain the
necessary skills and confidence to look after their babies. This demonstrates that self­
esteeam can act independently of self-efficacy. However within the findings of
Chapter Seven it appeared that the young women interviewed were proud to be
mothers, but they were not necessarily proud of their situation and would not want
their children to be young mothers. Implicit in this is a lack of self-esteem and yet the
young women still have derived perceived self-efficacy from the situation. The
findings suggest that self-efficacy can run parallel to self-esteem, each acting
independently of, but also related to, each other.

These findings are in contrast to traditional views where self-efficacy is subsumed and
used as a measure within self-esteem. These findings appear to support Bandura's
original suggestions that self-efficacy and self-esteem are two distinct concepts and
should be considered as such. These findings suggest that there needs to be more work into the clarification of both concepts.

9.3 Methodological issues and limitations of the research

It is important to acknowledge the role of methodology in this research. In this thesis it was decided to employ qualitative research methods, in particular Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis and Qualitative Content Analysis. Smith (1996) maintains that phenomenology deals with the uniqueness of a person's experiences and a fundamental aspect of this type of analysis is how people think about their bodies and the effects that the body has on thoughts and accounts. Whilst not diseased or disabled, the young mother's physical embodiment has been transfigured and transformed by the physical, emotional and psychological changes brought about through motherhood. It has been argued that the transition to motherhood is the transition from girl to woman, and it is arguable that this method has allowed the research to examine in more detail the effects that becoming a mother can have on the life of a young woman. Phenomenology allows the researcher to examine how experiences are made meaningful and how these meanings manifest themselves within the context of the person, both as an individual and in their many cultural roles, and as such it is arguable that this methodology has allowed and encouraged the young women to speak for themselves about their various roles.

However one of the limitations of this work has been a reluctance of some of the young women to talk freely resulting in some cases in fairly short transcripts. It is arguable that this is as a result of the dynamics between researcher and participant. Many are shy about talking to people that they perceive to be in authority and are conscious about not having the education and language to represent themselves accurately. On reflection it would have been helpful to have interviewed the young women on more than one occasion in order to break down some barriers and build up a rapport, and possibly encourage them to be more open in the discussion. Having said that it was an initial intention of this thesis to conduct longitudinal research with the young mothers. However this proved to be extremely difficult within the constraints of a PhD study. One of the main problems appeared to be maintaining contact with the young women; some appeared to move regularly between several hostels and council housing, and keeping track of them appeared to be difficult at the
best of times. It would appear that many of the young women changed ‘phone numbers or moved without leaving contact addresses and the hostel managers were not allowed to reveal contact details without the consent of the young women. In most cases this did not appear to be a deliberate ploy, but a genuine mistake. Many hostel managers maintained that if the young women had been paid to participate in the research they would have ensured that they stayed in contact, however this was not feasible within the limited resources available to a PhD student.

Nevertheless, having said that longitudinal research was not feasible within this thesis, this research did explore the experiences within groups of young women. Analysis was based on three distinct groups of young women in the later stages of pregnancy, shortly after birth and about a year after birth. By using these three groups at different stages of the processes it was still possible to examine how differences in self-evaluation processes changed between groups of young women who were at different stages of motherhood. By analysing the groups it was possible to gain insight as to how perceived self-efficacy developed over time as the young women gained new skills and confidence in their abilities to be good mothers. It also allowed the research to examine the effects of the changing status of stigma; this mean that the analysis could consider the differences between possessing a strong visual stigma, such as pregnancy and a stigma that could arguably be concealed.

Another problem with this research was the accessibility of participants. Young mothers are perceived to be a vulnerable group and as such are protected by the people that work with them. Many managers of the hostels approached were reluctant to put young women forward as they believed that young mothers as a group were over-exposed and over-consulted. The managers maintained that many political bodies and government funded groups were asking the young women about the services they needed without regard for the young women’s ‘real needs’. Hostel managers were only persuaded to help enlist participants once they were reassured about the nature of the research.

Whilst understandable, this protection of the young mothers severely limited access to a broader population and it is arguable that the young mothers interviewed did not fully represent young mothers in general. The young mothers all lived in hostels for
homeless young women and therefore those that were not homeless were not included in the research, also those that were already living in council accommodation were not included. More importantly, as argued within Chapter Nine, the young mothers included within this research were all deemed to be ‘good’ young mothers and it appeared that they were considered successful in their efforts. However, as mentioned the youth workers alluded to young mothers that had not been a success within the system and subsequently dropped out of the system. It is arguable that these young women would have had very different experiences and opinions from those included in the research.

As already highlighted in Chapter Four it is important when conducting qualitative research to acknowledge and be aware of the influence of the researcher on the voice of the participants. I have always been cautious about the way in which self-reflexivity is handled in research projects as without careful thought there can be a tendency for it to appear sycophantic and in some cases it can serve to further ‘other’ an already marginalised group. However it is also important in research such as this, to be aware of the influence that participants and the research might have had on the researcher and as such I felt it important to comment on the effect that this research experience has had on my own views. When I started this research I was conscious that I was approaching the young mothers as an older, middle class, white mother, who had reached a higher level of education and as a result was assumed to be more articulate. As such I felt it was important not to intimidate the young mothers and not to approach them with pre-conceived views of their lives. However what I had not accounted for was the effect that meeting and getting to know these young women would have not only on my opinions, but also my own parenting skills. I found myself learning to appreciate how hard these young women worked to achieve the status of ‘good mother’, but also how they measured their own successes. I have always believed that I espoused the view that education is important, but not at the expense of the individual’s self-esteem. However as a parent in a predominantly middle class town it is easy to be drawn into measuring young people’s successes by conventional standards of education. When my own teenage son chose to challenge my core values I was forced to reflect on the lessons that I had learned from the young mothers I had interviewed and recognised that success does not always come on our
terms and has to been seen in the context of the individual. As such I have found that conducting this research has opened my eyes to my own, at times hypocritical, views and to appreciate that young people have to be able to discover their paths for themselves and if they do chose the wrong path allowing them to make those mistakes. It would appear to me that responsible parenting is not about forcing a child to become the person you want them to be, but supporting and guiding them and allowing them to become the best person that they can be.

9.4 Practical implications of the research

It is arguable that the findings in this thesis could have important implications for the way in which society handles the issues of early motherhood. It is important to point out at this stage that whilst this thesis is not suggesting that society should encourage young women to have children during their teen years, it is important however to consider how we handle those that do choose to continue with their pregnancy and the positive effect that having a child can have for young women. As such it is important to examine and acknowledge how the young mothers are approached. This thesis has highlighted the positive role that self-efficacy can play in constructing and maintaining a positive sense of self and interventions and management programmes need to recognise and ensure that the development of self-efficacy is paramount.

Also, from the findings, it would appear that many of the young women alluded to a perceived lack of control prior to having their children and feelings of low self-worth. It is arguable that these feelings could be as a result of disempowerment by individuals within their micro context, such as teachers etc. One point that several young women raised was that having a child meant that other people were now treating them as adults. It is possible that there is a need to address the issue of language and empowerment within schools and programmes aimed at encouraging young women in education. However it is also possible that feelings of lack of control and low self-worth are as a result of a lack of perceived self-efficacy. If, as already argued, the young women are being measured by socially accepted dimensions of success, i.e. academic success, where do young women who are struggling with the demands of education garner a sense of self-efficacy? These findings suggest that having a baby provides some young women with this sense of self-efficacy. However this is not suggesting that all young women with low
perceived self-efficacy should have children, but it is arguable that by addressing the issues of self-efficacy for young women it might be possible to find other ways for young women to garner a positive sense of self. It is arguable that in order to reduce the rates of teenage pregnancy, we need to address the issues of a lack of perceived self-efficacy first.

9.5 Suggestions for future research

Of particular note within the findings is the demonstration of the blurring of the boundaries between categories. The parameters are not fixed, but constantly moving to accommodate the shifting positions of both parties and the power relations involved. It has been argued that services address the issues of disempowerment through the rearrangement of structures and services; however they fail to acknowledge and address the issues of unequal power within the many interactions that take place within the micro context. It has been argued that the balance of power is constructed and maintained through informal conversation (Jingree, Finlay & Antaki, 2005). Interactions are bound by ritualised practices and routines and unequal relationships are not necessarily just as a result of the interaction (conflicting categories) but of the conflicting responsibilities and needs. It is arguable that the youth workers are juggling multiple roles of educator, enabler, carer, supporter, advocate, etc., which is further complicated by their conflicting duties within these roles and their conflicting responsibilities to both the institutions that employ them and the young women they work with.

However the research in this thesis only examined how youth workers talked about the young mothers in their care; it did not examine the more general roles of the youth worker within the institutions that employed them or how young mothers felt about their youth workers. This work also failed to address the actual interactions between youth worker and young mother. As such it is important for further research to address actual interactions and how categories are constructed and negotiated within the available shared meanings and the effect that the choice of category might have on another person. Also how the choice of category might affect the range of opportunities and choices available to young mothers should be considered.
As already mentioned above this work only examined those participants available through the mother and child hostels, but not those that are apparently ‘failing’ within the system; those that the youth workers believe exemplify the ‘bad teenage mother’. It is arguable as to whether they exist as such, or whether, again, this is dependent on the context and where these young mothers position themselves. Regardless of this it is important to explore how other young mothers experience their lives and situations and what happens to them once they leave the hostels. How are such ‘failures’ addressed and how do they prevent this happening again?

One of the most important points to emerge from this research is the role of self-efficacy and as already argued above it is important to address the issue of self-efficacy and self-esteem in more detail. It is important to attempt to clarify the roles. Moreover this work raises the issue of the role of both of these concepts within stigma. To date self-esteem appears to be examined as an outcome of stigma, rather than a motivational principle. Self-esteem appears to be a catch all term for many different concepts and as such these broad assumptions appear to cloud the issue. More work is needed to explicate the fine detail and the relationship between self-esteem and self-efficacy.

9.6 Conclusion
Overall it would appear that through the use of qualitative research methods, this thesis has been able to explore the lives of young mothers and how they make sense of their situation. Kaplan (1990) argues that societal discourses have tried to reclaim the patriarchal status quo that was brought into question the 1960’s sexual revolution, in particular female sexuality. However from the results of this research it could be argued that the balance has not so much been redressed, but added to. Young women today are subject to many different images of what it is to be a mother. Whether or not they choose to become a mother, motherhood continues to be romanticised and idealised as the ‘supreme physical and emotional achievement’ in a woman’s life (Ussher, 1990) and serves as a major part of their identity. Motherhood is central to ways in which women define themselves and others.
From our data it would appear that young mothers use these portrayals as templates to construct and maintain a positive identity. They draw on those aspects of the "good mother" that they can relate to and can choose to ignore or dismiss those that don’t fit with their chosen category. The choices that these girls make are situated within their lives, experiences and the representations that are available to them. At the end of the day they believe it is down to the individual to choose to do and what they consider is right for them; As Alexis said.

"I think people should make up their own minds. It really depends on your... well... some people think it's great to have a career, others think it's great having children. What a lovely thing it is to bring a child into the world."
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### Appendix I

#### Breakdown of Participants for Study Two

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<th>Name</th>
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<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>Baby’s Age</th>
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Appendix II

Study Two – Interview Schedules

Time 1 (pregnancy)

1. Perhaps we can start with you telling me a bit about yourself
   What is your name and how old are you?

2. Do you still attend school? Which school do you go to?
   *(If no do you work? Where do you work?)*

3. Where do you live? What brought you to the hostel?

4. Would you mind telling me a bit about your family? Who does it consist of?
   *Mother, father, do you have brothers and sisters?*

5. Who do you share a house with? *Your parents, brothers and sisters?*

6. Perhaps you could tell me a bit about your life at the moment.
   What would you day is a typical day? Can you describe it to me?

7. What sort of things do you do in your spare time? What do you like doing?

8. Who do you spend most of you spare time with?

9. Can you tell me some more about your friends? *Who would you say you are closest to?*

10. How long have you known them?

11. Can you remember where you first met them?

12. If you could choose anybody, it doesn’t have to be someone you know, who do you admire most?

13. What is it that you admire about them?

14. Who would you say is the most important person in your life at the moment?

15. Why is that?

16. What sorts of things concern you most in your life at the moment?

17. Who would you choose to talk to about these things? *Who’s opinion do you value the most*

18. Still on the subject of your life, what would you say are the best things in your life?
19. And what about the worst things?

20. You have told me a bit about your life, would you mind telling me something about who you are? For example How would you describe yourself at the moment?

21. What would you say the best things about you are?

22. And what about the worst things?

23. So you think your friends would agree with you? Or would they say something different? How would they describe you?

24. What about your parents, do they see you as you see yourself? What would they say are the best and worst things about you?

25. What would you like to be doing in 5 years time? What sort of person do you think you will be?

26. What about in 10 years?

27. How likely do you think it is that these things will happen? What do you think is the most likely thing to happen?

Can I now ask you a bit about your experiences of becoming a mother?

28. At what stage did you realise that you were pregnant?

29. How did you feel when you first discovered that you were pregnant?

30. How did you think that others were going to react?

31. Did it take you long to tell other people?

32. Who did you tell first? Why?

33. How did they react to the news?

34. Will the father be involved with raising your baby?

35. Would you like him to be involved?

36. How do you think your parents feel about you becoming a mother?

37. Do you think that your parents understand what your life is like?

38. What about your friends so you think that they understand what your life is like now?

39. Could you tell me a bit about how you feel about becoming a mother?
40. Have you thought much about what it will be like to be a mother? What do you think it will be like being responsible for another person?

41. In your opinion what do you think makes a good mother?

42. Do you think other people would agree with you? What do you think others would say makes a good mother?

43. Where do you get most support from? *Do your friends and family help you with your baby?*

44. What do you think you will enjoy most about being a parent?

45. What sort of things do you enjoy most about being a parent?

46. What sort of things do you look forward to doing with your child as they get older?

47. What sort of hopes do you have for your baby?

48. Can I ask you, do you think that there are benefits of being a mother at your age?

49. Do you think that there are more benefits to waiting until you are older?

50. Did you have any plans for the future before you became a mother/pregnant?

51. In what sort of ways do you think they have changed?

52. Will you be returning to school/work after you have had the baby?
1. Perhaps we can start with you telling me a bit about yourself. What is your name and how old are you?

2. Do you still attend school? Which school do you go to?
   (If no what do you do for a living? Where do you work?)


4. Would you mind telling me a bit about your family? Your mother and father, do you have brothers and sisters?

5. *Who do you share a house with? Your parents, brothers and sisters?*

6. Perhaps you could tell me a bit about your life at the moment.
7. What would you day is a typical day? Can you describe it to me?

8. What sort of things do you do in your spare time? *What do you like doing?*

9. Who do you spend most of you spare time with?

10. Can you tell me some more about your friends? *Who would you say you are closest to?*

11. How long have you known them?

12. Can you remember where you first met them?

13. If you could choose anybody, it doesn’t have to be someone you know, who do you admire most?

14. What is it that you admire about them?

15. Who would you say is the most important person in your life at the moment?

16. Why is that?

17. What sorts of things concern you most in your life at the moment?

18. Who would you choose to talk to about these things? *Who’s opinion do you value the most*

19. Still on the subject of your life, what would you say are the best things in your life?

20. And what about the worst things?
   You have told me a bit about your life, would you mind telling me something about who you are? For example

21. How would you describe yourself at the moment?
22. What would you say the best things about you are?

23. And what about the worst things?

24. So you think your friends would agree with you? Or would they say something different? How would they describe you?

25. What about your parents, do they see you as you see yourself? What would they say are the best and worst things about you?

26. What would you like to be doing in 5 years time? What sort of person do you think you will be?

27. What about in 10 years?

28. How likely do you think it is that these things will happen? What do you think is the most likely thing to happen?

Can I now ask you a bit about your experiences of becoming a mother?

29. At what stage did you realise that you were pregnant?

30. How did you feel when you first discovered that you were pregnant?

31. How did you think that others were going to react?

32. Did it take you long to tell other people?

33. Who did you tell first? /why?

34. How did they react to the news?

35. Will the father be involved with raising your baby?

36. Would you like him to be involved?

37. How do you think your parents feel about you becoming a mother?

38. Do you think that your parents understand what your life is like?

39. What about your friends so you think that they understand what your life is like now?

40. Could you tell me a bit about how you feel about becoming a mother?

41. Did you think a lot about what it would be like to be a mother? What did you think it would be like being responsible for another person?

42. How do you feel about being responsible for another person?

43. Is this what you expected it to be like? What did you think it would be like before you had your baby?
44. What do you think makes a good mother?

45. Do you think other people would agree with you? What do you think others would say makes a good mother?

46. Where do you get most support from? Do your friends and family help your with your baby?

47. What sort of things do you enjoy most about being a parent?

48. What sort of things do you look forward to doing with your child as they get older?

49. What sort of hopes do you have for your baby?

50. Can I ask you, do you think that there are benefits of being a mother at your age?

51. Do you think that there are more benefits to waiting until you are older?

52. What sort of plans for the future did you have before you became a mother/pregnant?

53. In what sort of ways do you think they have changed?

54. Have you any plans to return to education or work at some stage?
Appendix III

Study Two Transcript - Time One

Sally is Age 17 years old and pregnant.

Interviewer
Can we start by you telling me your name?
Sally
Sally Harding
Interviewer
Do you still attend school? Or do you work?
Sally
I don’t go to school. I’ve just done my GCSEs and going back into college in September to do Childcare. I was doing it before my pregnancy and at the beginning of my pregnancy I was doing the Prince’s Trust. It was like voluntary work and.. erm.. we did loads of different things. We built a garden for children at school to be able to let them grow things. We did a thing that was through the National Trust which allowed us to plant trees. We went on a week away thing which was like an induction to Nature. It was about teamwork and getting to know each other. We went to the New Forest. But I wasn’t very well ‘cos I was in my first few weeks of pregnancy...

Interviewer
Did you realise you were?
Sally
Erm, I thought I was. But I didn’t know till I got back. I found out the day I got back. But I was really sick a lot. So, erm.. we did work experience. I went to a Nursery ‘cos I wanted to get into childcare. They taught lots of things like interview techniques and did loads of stuff and it was really good. It was for 12 weeks. It was definitely worth going.

Interviewer
Did you always wanted to do childcare?
Sally
Yeah, I’ve always wanted to work with children. I did stop doing the course when I left school, when my cousin died and I sort of like thought I was better off just leaving college than just falling behind rather than not attending. I stopped going to my course and just got a job and then I did the Princes Trust. But I’m going back to college ‘cos I feel like I’m ready now and want to go back into education because I don’t really want to be on Income Support. If I go back into college and get my course done then I can give my child a better life and myself. So, I thought whiles she’s young I could do the course instead of waiting till she gets older.

Interviewer
Can you tell me a bit about your family?
Sally
Yeah.
Interviewer
Do you have any brother or sisters? Do you live with your parents?

Sally
Erm, I live with my mum. I've got a half brother and half sister. But I don't see them, 'cos I don't have anything to do with my dad. Erm... I'm really close to my mum and her family – got an uncle who is the same age as me. We're really close. My mum is one of eight. They're all boys and are all very protective over me. Erm, I'm really close to my mum and granddad. My granddad is sort of like a father figure. He's sort of always helped out my mum. My mum has been a single parent all her life. She was a young mum as well. She had a hard time.

Interviewer
How old was she?
Sally
She had a hard life.

Interviewer
In what way?
Sally
Erm... she hadn't had much family support. My nan wasn't over the moon. My nan made her move out. Even when she was having me in hospital, they didn't treat her with any respect. Their attitude was she got pregnant deliberately to get a house – that's how they look at us. Erm.. She had to wait quite a while to be housed, because she was in hospital with me. Erm... My mum has never been on income support because she went straight back into work once she had me and er my nan looked after me for two years and then I started nursery. But erm.. she said it was hard but it was worth it.

Interviewer
What do you sort of do with yourself in the day?
Sally
When I'm here. I get here about 9.30am, do work, talk to the other girls. Erm... I go home, I normally go like swimming 'cos I really like swimming. Erm... I find it relaxes me. Erm... I watch telly and then go to bed. When I'm not here I do er... I go out, or I take my little cousin to the park. I meet up with friends....different things really.

Interviewer
Do you go out much?
Sally
Yeah.

Interviewer
What things do you do?
Sally
I go shopping a lot. I just meet up with my friends and we go to our local park. Because I'm pregnant now, I get tired a lot more so I don't tend to go out so much. But I still go out for a couple of hours a day. Go bowling and the cinema and things like that.

Interviewer
Who would you say your closest friends are?
Sally
Erm... my closest friend? I have a lot of friends that are close. I wouldn’t say that any of the people that I hang around with are really like... they’ve all been close to me ‘cos we’ve all been friends for years. But, it’s like everyone that lives in my area. My closest friends are my friends that I went to school with.

Interviewer
How long have you know them all?

Sally
About six years. And we’re quite close. We sort of gone our separate ways now because we are all doing different things. We still meet up like once a month or something and I still feel I am really close to them. I talk to them a lot on the phone more than anything. They are all doing different things...

Interviewer
Do they understand what you are going through?

Sally
Some of them have been really supportive. But some of them I don’t think understand why I can’t go out clubbing and things like that. But, they think I’m just being boring. But I couldn’t be bothered to go clubbing now. I’m just so tired all the time. I just want to go to bed early, now. But a lot of my friends have been supportive. They do things that I can still do and they include me. Whereas, a few of my friends, the ones that don’t really understand tend to be a bit younger than me – about 15. So, I sort of expected it anyway. I don’t expect them to understand. They’re still at school and quite young.

Interviewer
Do you think you will go back to your old lifestyle?

Sally
Erm... I don’t think it’s gonna change anything really, ‘cos I don’t think a baby should stop you from doing things you wanna do. Obviously, I can’t go to the cinema and things like that. But the things I do I can more or less take a baby with me anyway. I mean, I go shopping with my friends and can take the baby with me. But erm., I think I’m just starting to grow up a bit more now. Starting to understand what life is like, ‘cos before I had always relied on my mum and done what I want. And, now I’m starting to understand that life – you need to manage and calm down and now I’m responsible for someone else as well, not just myself. I think I’ve grown up a lot since I fell pregnant.

Interviewer
How do you feel about the idea of being responsible for someone else?

Sally
Erm... I’m looking forward to it. I really am. At first I was really scared about how my mum would react. My mum and my family have been great. They have taken it really well. I’m just looking forward to having her now.

Interviewer
You know it’s a girl?

Sally
Yeah.
Interviewer
If you could choose absolutely anybody, who would you say you admire?
Sally
My mum, yeah.
Interviewer
Why's that?
Sally
I just think my mum has been great. Erm... she brought me up on her own. My mum now has her own flat. She owns her home. She has always put me first. And she has always worked hard and I don’t know how she did it, when she was only young herself. She went back to work...I know my mum has had a hard time. I just admire her for what she has done and now I’m older and she is starting to have her life. Like, when she goes out with her friends she hasn’t got to worry about me anymore. She told me that having a child young doesn’t stop you from doing what you want. She said it is hard at first, but she said it’s worth it. ‘cos my mum is like 19 years older than me - we can go out together and we’re really close - like sisters. I can tell her anything.

Interviewer
Who would you say is the most important person in your life is?
Sally
At the moment, my mum. When my baby arrives, my baby. At the moment though, my mum is the most important person in my life. I think all my family is as well.

Interviewer
What sort of things concern you most about your life?
Sally
Erm, my housing is the biggest worry at the moment. Because they don’t seem to tell me much. Erm....I’m supposed to be moving to a mother and baby unit just a week before my baby is born. But, I haven’t had anything back from them. So, I’m going to give it a few more days and give em a ring to see what was happening. They said they would ring back three to four weeks – that was nearly five weeks ago! But the Council don’t seem to be helping me at all. They put me in a bed and breakfast in Chiswick and I don’t know Chiswick at all. And, it was – there were holes in the doors and it was really horrible and I was really scared. There were lots of fights and they put me in a Hostel next but... I know I’m pregnant and I know I chose to have a baby but they don’t think about the fact that I’m still young and I’ve never been away from home and they put you in a Hostel which is full of people and you don’t know what they’re like! There is always shouting and I’ve always been quite scared ‘cos my stepdad was abusive towards my mum when I was younger. So, I don’t know – they should have a bit more understanding for people that are young with babies. Or people that are young and pregnant. They put you on a housing list and they make you wait two years which is a long time to be in a hostel with a baby. That is my worst fear.

Interviewer
So you have to be two years in the Mother and Baby Unit have you?
Sally
Yeah. Two years – between six month and two years. But they told me that ‘cos I’m under 18 it will be longer. So....

Interviewer
Who do you choose to talk to about this?

Sally
I talk to my mum a lot. I just talk to my friends about it and people who I know who have been there who are a little bit older than me, have given me advice. My uncle’s girlfriend, she’s living between my nan’s house and her mum’s house. Her baby is 14mths – she’s having to go backwards and forwards ‘cos no one has decided to have her there – her baby will not sleep through the night and she is up three or four times a night and I think its really unfair that she’s like – if she had a home she would probably settle by now. But because she’s tossing and turning and sleeping on sofas it’s not good for a child...they need a bit of stability. I don’t think that baby knows if she’s coming or going. She’s at one house one night, and at another the next and they haven’t got anything for her. She’s a lot older than me so I thought they may have helped her out. But they just don’t do anything. It’s just not fair how they treat people. ‘cos she’s still with my uncle...

Interviewer
Do you think its because you are young mothers rather than..

Sally
Yeah.

Interviewer
You think they discriminate against her?

Sally
Yeah. I see it...I’ve heard people say things like my mate is older – older ladies, or whatever you want to call them...they say things like she only got pregnant ‘cos she wants her own place. Or, she’s sponging off the Social. That’s like the sort of thing you hear a lot and that upsets me because I didn’t...you know at the end of the day I had a baby – I chose to have this baby but I do need help. I’m not just staying at home, I’m going back into college when my baby is 13 weeks old and its not going to be easy, but I’m going back ‘cos I want to give myself a better life. I’m not staying at home and expecting the council to pay for me. I don’t think you can have a life....I will be able to give my child what she needs more than...yeah..

Interviewer
Do you think these attitudes are true of some of these teenage mothers?

Sally
Erm...I don’t know...no...think some people...I’ve heard some people say...like one girl I know, she wants her baby ‘cos she likes the idea of having the money and that really annoys me ‘cos she doesn’t understand that that baby is a human being, you know. It’s not like a cat or a dog....all people I know who’ve been young have always adored their babies....I don’t think so.

Interviewer
Can I ask you what you think the best things about your life are at the moment?
Sally
Oh I’ve had a problem with it since I was 13 or 14. I just get down about it. Since I had Ryan I went down about my looks but now I’ve got a new partner and everything and I feel a bit better now. At the end of the day I’ve got Ryan
Interviewer
Do you think Ryan makes you feel different towards things?
Sally
Erm... I enjoy life at the moment. Everything is good at the moment. I’m just looking forward to having my baby now.
Interviewer
How would you describe yourself?
Sally
Erm, don’t know really (long pause). A strong person. I’m determined to better my education. I’m very focused on what I want to do. Erm...
Interviewer
What was your life like before you were pregnant
Sally
Erm... it was alright. I wasn’t focused on anything, I didn’t really know what I wanted to do with myself. I just was going from course to course or just job to job. And, now I’ve got... I’m having a baby. I think I really need to sort myself out because I need to have a good life for my baby and can’t be messing about going from job to job and so I’m gonna go back to college and get my qualifications and get a job. So my kid can have what she wants rather than having to count the pennies and...
Interviewer
Did you have plans for the future though?
Sally
Yeah but I wasn’t planning on doing it until I was a little bit older.
Interviewer
What sort of plans did you have?
Sally
I was always gonna go back to college and do my qualifications in childcare and then I was gonna get a job. But I wasn’t planning on doing it till I got to about 21. ‘cos that way I’ve got plenty of years ahead of me. Now, I think I need to sort myself out because it’s not just me anymore... there’s two of us I need to look after and I need to clothe her and I don’t think you can do it when you are on Income Support, its really hard and I want to give her the best I can.
Interviewer
Do you think your friends would agree with the way you see yourself?
Sally
Yeah.
Interviewer
What about your family?
Sally
Yeah.

Interviewer
So, what would you like to be doing then in 10 years’ time or five years’ time?

Sally
Going back to college and going to University. ‘cos I want to qualify to become a nurse in a children’s hospital. But I want to wait till she’s little older before going to University. ‘cos you’ve already missed a year of them growing up. And when she goes to school I want to go back to University. So, hopefully at University, doing a course and become a nurse, off income support (laughs) hopefully, and I want to try and sort out my relationship with my father. But, I don’t think it’s going to be easy.

Interviewer
What about in 10 years’s time?

Sally
Hopefully, have a few more children. Maybe one more child

Interviewer
How hard do you think its going to be?

Sally
My mum went to University and it never stopped her having another child. And now my mum has enough money to....where she could...I could have the money I wanted, the clothes I wanted, the shoes I wanted. My mum has been able to go out and not have to watch her money. But, I think I could do it if I put my mind to it. I determined to do it and I can do it.

Interviewer
Can I ask you a bit about your experiences of becoming a mother? At what stage did you realise you were pregnant?

Sally
Erm...I think I knew straight away. After about 4 or 5 weeks and I missed my period, I think I knew. But, I didn't find out from my doctors till I was 8 weeks.

Interviewer
How did you react?

Sally
I was pleased, but I was scared ‘cos I didn’t think my mum would accept it. My mum has always said that If you get pregnant when you’re young – your’re out. She tried to put me off having children ‘cos she knew how hard it was going to be. But, when I did tell my mum, all my family were really good. They’ve all been really supportive and now I’m much happier that I told em. ‘cos I didn’t tell mum till I was 5 months. ‘cos I was really really scared on how she was going to react. But now I’m just...I’m really looking forward to it ‘cos my family is looking forward to it as well.

Interviewer
You said earlier about choosing to have a baby. Did you plan it?

Sally
Oh no, it wasn’t planned. I mean I was booked in to have a termination because I thought it was the only option, ‘cos I really didn’t know how I was
gonna tell my mum. And my doctor sort of said to me, you’re very young and sort of made it look like that was what I should do. But, I knew from the day that I was at hospital I knew I wasn’t gonna go through with it

Interviewer
So you felt pressurised by the doctor
Sally
Yeah. And it was like you’re very young and you’ve got lots ahead of you, you know. But I knew from the minute I booked it, I wasn’t gonna go.

Because, I think I’m old enough to have a baby. I’m 17 but in my mum’s eyes...she has always said that I’ve acted older than my years. I’ve have loads of experience with babies. My cousins and my aunts are always having children. So, I’ve got loads of experience. If you’ve got family to support you it’s a lot easier. My mum is really helping me. But, like er...I’ve got a problem with funding at college. At the moment my personal advisor is trying to get a grant for me ‘cos my fund is £145 and I only get £120 from the college...but, it’s really really hard. But it annoys me ‘cos the Government say that young mums get pregnant and stay at home. When you want to go back into education it’s really hard because the nursing courses are expensive and they can’t give you enough money then I can’t really afford to £50 out of my income support – I only get £78 a week. So, if it comes to that my mum said she would pay some of it for me and I have to pay the rest out of my income support, which I really don’t think would be fair because I need to give her food and things. I really think it is wrong how the Government wack out the funding for college.

Interviewer
So, they don’t actually give you enough to....
Sally
Yeah. They help me to take my child to another borough ‘cos its cheaper.

But, why should I have to get up at 6 in the morning to take my child to nursery and getting home at 8 in the evening – I can’t do. I’m already gonna have a long enough day as it is!

Interviewer
Going back a little. You mentioned you were booked in to have a termination. How did people react when you decided not to?
Sally
Erm.... I didn’t see my doctor for ages and she was funny. But, I don’t know...she wasn’t that chatty towards me. But erm...the hospital said well done. One of the nurses even said well done, you’ve made the right choice.

It’s not gonna be easy but you know, you’ve got a lot of support and erm...recently, I saw a different doctor at my surgery and he said well done. But, it will be very hard for me. But, I made the right choice.

Interviewer
How did your friends react when they found out you were pregnant?
Sally
They were really excited....really pleased with me

Interviewer
What about strangers, how did they react towards you?
Sally
You get different types really. Some people don’t really say anything. But, it’s always the older ones that will say, oh look she’s pregnant, sponging of Security. Last week I was on the bus and an old lady was really rude to me and then she moved seats ‘cos she couldn’t stand looking at me any longer which really upset me, because I thought because I’m young it doesn’t mean I won’t be a good mum. It doesn’t mean that if I was 30, that I would be a better mum to 17. If I’m bringing my child up properly, why does age matter. But, a lot of people don’t really say a lot.

Interviewer
What made the lady move her seat. Had she said anything before that?

Sally
Yeah. She kept giving me a dirty look. So I smiled and she carried on giving me a dirty look and then she just said to her friend, these young teenagers do really wind me up – they get pregnant and then they sponge of security. And, I’ve worked all my life and I paid my stamp and...things like that

Interviewer
And that upset you?

Sally
It didn’t upset me. It just annoyed me. She doesn’t know me as a person, whether I’m 17 or 30. She doesn’t know me! And, I’m...You know, it just annoyed me a bit and I was a bit embarrassed as well, ‘cos everyone else was looking at me on the bus. So, I just put my walkman on an ignored it.

Interviewer
So, how did your mother feel about you having a baby?

Sally
At first, she was upset ‘cos she said it was really hard for her and she didn’t want me to have to go through all that again, pressure....but she said she did think I would be a really good mum. Now, she’s getting excited and she’s buying things. She’s getting more excited. She’s thinks it’s quite nice ‘cos my mum’s 36 so she said it will be nice that she’s not that old and be able to do things with her. Be able to take her to the park and run around after her. There are advantages like if she was older she wouldn’t be able to keep up with thing like that. My mum couldn’t have anymore children, so...I think it’s gonna be good for her too.

Interviewer
How do you feel about becoming a mother?

Sally
I’m really looking forward to it. I think it will be quite hard, I’m not saying it’s gonna be easy. But, I think it’s gonna be rewarding. Just watching her grow up.

Interviewer
What sort of things do you look forward to do with her?

Sally
Just taking her to the park, her first word, her first step, anything really. And, what she is gonna look like.

Interviewer
What sort of hopes have you got for her?
Sally
That she’s healthy, she’s got the things she needs.
Interviewer
Right. That’s great. Thank you very much!
Appendix III

Study Two Transcript – Time two

Demi is 17 years old and has a baby of three months.

Interviewer
Can I start off by asking your name?
Demi
Demi.
Interviewer
And your age is?
Demi
Erm, seventeen.
Interviewer
Seventeen (unable to hear alarm going off)
Demi
No, because I didn’t know if you wanted my date of birth or what, then.
Interviewer
Oh no, no, don’t worry in the slightest, that’s fine. I’ll ask you for that sort of information later. OK. Can we start off with you just telling me a bit about your life for the moment. What’s a typical day, what sort of things do you do?
Demi
Sit in, watch TV and play with the baby until she’s asleep or go to sleep myself ‘cos she will have been awake at night time. That’s my normal day or I’ll go out around town.
Interviewer
What sort of things do you do when you’re out around town?
Demi
Look in shops, erm if my mate’s in I’ll go down there. Basically that’s it.
Interviewer
If you get any spare time what do you like to do?
Demi
Erm, that’s the point. I don’t get no spare time, (laughs). Erm, if it’s in, like, the evening then I’d like to go out but even though I’m only 17, like out clubbing, or whatever, but during the day I catch up on my sleep.
Interviewer
Tell me a bit about your friends. Can you tell me a bit about your friends. Tell me about your closest friends.
Demi
My closest friends are Sheralee, she’s pregnant, Cheryl and there’s Sarah, who’s daughter has died, they’ve known me since she’s been born, basically since I’ve had the problems sorted out with the girls in the house erm, they’re basically my closest friends.
Interviewer
How long have you known those friends?
Demi
I met Cheryl back in year 4.

**Interviewer**
At school?

**Demi**
Yeah, so that's going back some years now, back ten years if not more, (laughs). I've know Sheralee since, erm, how old was I? Erm, since about year 7 I think it was, and we were best mates all the way through school and, Sarah who I've known for about a year now, Danielle who also lives in the house, erm, I've known her but not really to talk to since about year 7. Kelly I've just met about three months ago.

**Interviewer**
Can you tell me, if you could choose anybody who would you think you admire?

**Demi**
I haven't got a clue, (giggles), I haven't got a clue on that one.

**Interviewer**
It's quite a difficult one isn't it? Well, who would you say is the most important person in your life?

**Demi**
I would say my baby, she's my life.

**Interviewer**
What sort of things would you say are the biggest concerns in your life?

**Demi**
Erm,

**Interviewer**
What sort of worries do you have?

**Demi**
My dad.

**Interviewer**
May I ask why that is?

**Demi**
'Cos we've got lots of problems. Erm, he is causing lots of problems for me. I've had Social Services out about Destiny and all sorts of things.

**Interviewer**
Right, OK. Who would you chose to talk to about problems like that about?

**Demi**
No-one.

**Interviewer**
We were saying, who would you choose to talk to about any problems?

**Demi**
As it is I talk to no-one, I keep the problems to myself and sort the problems out mainly, if that's going through the solicitors then I do it that way, if it's through the police then I do it that way. It's so that I don't have to deal with my dad.

**Interviewer**
What you say the best things about your life are?

**Demi**
Erm, erm, (long pause), Other than having Destiny, being relieved.........................
What would you say are the worst parts of your life?

Demi
Things what happened to me when I was little. Erm, I got abused when I was only four years old at the time by my first step-dad and that’s why I got taken into care and then I ended up moving in with my dad. It was fine for about two years and then it all started and he was mentally and physically abusing me. So that’s the kind of stuff I’ve had to deal with. So that’s my worst points and I’ll say having Destiny so young, if I had a choice I’d have her earlier, erm not earlier, later.

Interviewer
What difference do you think that would have made?

Demi
I could have, I dunno, got on with my life a bit more, seen what’s out there but now I’ve got her it don’t bother me no more, she is my life and that’s what I’ve got to deal with.

Interviewer
How would you describe yourself? What would you say your good qualities are?

Demi
Erm (long pause), I dunno. (Another long pause). Going back to Destiny again, doing everything to make sure she’s got what she needs, to make sure she gets love and attention, erm, other than that being able to have a laugh with my mates. Being in the same house, knowing all the problems will be sorted out and we can have a laugh and be settled and do what I want basically.

Interviewer
What about your bad qualities?

Demi
(Long pause). I don’t know about that one. Do a lot of things (nervous giggle). Erm, I don’t know.

Interviewer
How do you think your friends would describe you?

Demi
(Nervous giggle). I don’t know about that one. .....................ask my baby. She would describe me all right. Erm, I really don’t know.

Interviewer
OK. What about your parents? How do you think they see you?

Demi
No, my dad doesn’t want me to be happy. My mum doesn’t talk to me, full stop.

Interviewer
You mother doesn’t talk to you?

Demi
No, cos of my dad. When I was living with her he told a load of lies and said that I ....at the time he was her husband to be but now they’re married and she obviously believed him, so...

Interviewer
Do you have anything to do...

Demi
No, and he works just down the road.

Interviewer
What do you think you’ll be doing in five years time? What would you like to be doing?
Demi
Out working, while she’s at school. Just being myself and go where I want to during the day. Even though she’s three months old, sort of kiddie things that I used to do. Basically be living the high life. (Giggles). I’ve got a lot of money coming to me.

Interviewer
Have you?

Demi
Yes, I’ve got quite a lot of money coming to me so I’m quite happy.

Interviewer
What about in ten years?

Demi
Erm, (long pause) Being a mother to a ten year old (giggles). Erm, (long pause), out working and doing the things I like doing, making sure that she’s safe and she’s always in when she’s meant to be in, basically. I dunno, I think I might like to go back to college, I’m not sure yet. I was still at college when I was pregnant with her and it was all right but I just got bored with it in the end but I’m think I might go back to college, I’m sure because...I ended up leaving half way through year 11.

Interviewer
So you’d quite like to do that?

Demi
Yeah.

Interviewer
Can I ask you a bit about your experience of actually becoming a mother?

Demi
I must have been about six and a half months, I didn’t have her until a month later...(laughs,)

Interviewer
Really?

Demi
Because she was really early.

Interviewer
So you only had a month to get used to being pregnant?

Demi
Yeah, yeah, so it was scary even though I felt the baby kicking and sort of like kicking out and everything, I didn’t actually feel I was actually pregnant until I had one of my late date scans and like I was six / six and a half months pregnant then and I see her on the screen and I was like I am actually being a mum, she’s actually on her way and a month later there she was, so...

Interviewer
Who did you tell first?

Demi
Who did I tell first? Erm.. I told my mate Natalie because I was absolutely scared out of my skin. Then I told Tina who was also pregnant, erm and I was like Tina I don’t know what to do, what did you do when you found out you were pregnant? This was on the Sunday and I goes straight down the doctors Monday morning and just made sure, a test or exam, whatever she said I was seven months pregnant. It was very scary.

Interviewer
How did you react?
Demi
I don’t think I did, I think I was sort of like putting it to the back of my head and saying it wasn’t happening and when it come up positive, the test, I don’t think it was being truthful. It’s meant to be negative and I was thinking, I just went along each day by each day but the women who I was living with said she knew I was pregnant before even I found out because she had done it with her daughter and she knew I was pregnant before I did.

Interviewer
How long did you leave it before you told anybody?

Demi
Erm, about two and a half months I reckon that people knew by then. I dunno.

Interviewer
How did you think others were going to react?

Demi
I don’t know but it’s got nothing to do with what no-one says, it’s changing my life, not their life so I wasn’t really bothered about what they were going to say. It’s something I’ve got to deal with, they haven’t, they can just walk away from it, I can’t so I wasn’t really bothered about what they were going to say.

Interviewer
What about people generally?

Demi
What, sort of like if I’m walking through town and like?

Interviewer
Yes.

Demi
I don’t care, it’s my baby now and sort of like I don’t care, when I realised that she was actually there, she was on her way and I couldn’t stop her so if they didn’t like it then they didn’t have to walk with me, they could look the other way. It doesn’t matter.

Interviewer
So, is the father involved?

Demi
(Giggles), yeah, he’s involved. He loves her to pieces.

Interviewer
How do you think your parents feel about it? I know it’s a difficult situation.

Demi
My mum when she got told I was pregnant I was about four, four and a half months pregnant when she got told. No I was a bit further gone actually because I actually knew that I was having a girl at about five and half months pregnant and I phoned up my mate and it was like, I was speaking to her and she was like, when I spoke to her, she lives next door to my mum and I said have you told my mum? And she goes no, not yet, and she said I was going to wait until you found out what it is. I said you can tell my mum that I’m having girl and if she does want something to do with her then I don’t mind her having something to do with her. I won’t say what she said but she wasn’t really fussed, she didn’t really want to know.

My dad, he didn’t even believe I was pregnant, he bet the baby’s dad a month of his wages that I wasn’t pregnant and............(inaudible)............erm, I’d miscarried and then I started talking to my dad again around ...I was about five months pregnant and, no I was about four and a half months pregnant and then he realised obviously because
my stomach had got bigger and he sees me walk around Portsmouth and he actually believed me that I was actually pregnant and he didn't know what to say. So I said you are going to be a grand-dad but it's up to you how you deal with it because this is my baby on her way and you ain't going to stop her.

Then when she was born my stepmother was at the birth, he came up but I was actually in labour and he loved her and he loved the fact of being a granddad, but it's all changed now.

Interviewer
Why has it changed?

Demi
Because, erm, now I've got back with Lee, I actually split up with him when I was in labour, erm, ...... (inaudible)...... get back to me no he don't want nothing to do with me because of ..................... Erm, and I said well not being funny but I'm getting back with him, if you don't like it that's not my problem, that's your problem and basically we went our separate ways and he's caused hassle for me ever since. I've had social services out and all sorts and he's trying to say that Lee assaults me and I had chucked Destiny on the floor and I'm abusing her but they said there's no case because we can see that you ain't doing that and she's perfectly healthy. I wasn't really bothered that they'd come out because I knew I'd done nothing wrong.

Interviewer
It didn't ...?

Demi
No.

Interviewer
Do you think your parents understand your life?

Demi
No, they never do, because there was one thing they turned around and said to me is that I was...................... starting from about 14 and he turned around and said we're his property and that from that day onwards I don't think he's ever realised what our life is about, all of us his kids and he'll never know because he's probably losing them.

Interviewer
What about your friends? Do you think they understand what your life's like now?

Demi
The majority of them because they have a kid themselves but the ones that aren't they don't know because obviously they haven't become a mother, they haven't got the responsibility of looking after and bringing up somebody else. You've got to make sure that other person what you're bringing up, that baby, gets all the love and attention it needs and is not getting hurt and it's a big responsibility and that's what it is at the end of the day, and they obviously won't know because they're not actually in my position because they haven't got a baby themselves.

Interviewer
How do you feel about becoming a mother?

Demi
I love it, I love it because it's just, it's hard work but just the fact that I sort of like, I look down on her and she looks a hell of a lot like me, she's the double of me and I look down of her and say she's me, me. It's just sort of the smiles and the faces that she pulls, and the expressions she does on her face they make me laugh, she gets a lot of giggle in her laugh and she's just, my baby (giggles).
Interviewer
Did you think about, before you had your baby, what it would be like to be a mother? Did you imagine what it would be like?

Demi
I don’t know, about that. To tell you the truth it was an accident and I’m not going to deny that but it’s sort of like, I had that feeling that I would have got pregnant for medical reasons and erm, I suppose yes I suppose I did and in some ways I think what I thought, it would sort of just pass by and like sort of like it would be really, really easy but then when obviously you are a mum it’s not so easy and it is a lot of hard work when they’re up crying and teething and you don’t know what’s wrong with them, or they’re ill, and like she’s had suspected meningitis and she scared the hell out of me, she’d had her injections and it was pretty scary.

Like when she was born she was in intensive care and I had to watch in case blood and anything like that and they were on about going to her head with blood with one stage and I said no you ain’t, that’s her head and you’re going to leave that alone, you’re not going near that and where she was so tiny, it’s just seeing her in the incubator and the first time I saw her I blamed myself, it’s me what’s done this to her, I’ve done this to her, I’ve harmed, I’ve hurt my baby because I smoked and I’ve been stressed out during the pregnancy and I blamed myself for it, that’s what thought it was. It was horrible, for four days, I was constantly crying, then it kicked in to baby blues, I knew about it, my step mum went boo and I cried, they could just do a little signal, know you’re a novice, and I cried my heart out and I just blamed myself for what happened to her, I thought it was because of me.

Interviewer
How do you feel about being responsible for another person?

Demi
It’s nice if you know what you’re doing, if you’re not in a frame of mind, sort of like I don’t care about this baby, I don’t want anything to do with this baby then that would be pretty scary but if you’re in that mind to sort of like, this is my baby and I’m going to make what I’ve got of her and to each day comes by each day something could happen, I could get killed or something like that and you think no, take each day as a fresh day. I can’t imagine her, like, being, she’s only three months, I can imagine her being four months and I can imagine her being a year old, like next year, and I love it. It’s, because that’s what you’ve put your life.........................you put your heart and soul into bringing that baby up and at the end of it you’ve got that baby to look at when it’s 20, 30 years old and you’re thinking I’ve brought this child up, I’ve done everything for this child, if she, or he, has a baby like herself, then you think I’ve brought that baby up and now ...........................................and, every thought of what could happen it’s erm.

Interviewer
Is it how you expected it to be?

Demi
It’s a lot harder, erm you get a lot more tired because (giggles) because you’re constantly on the go and you’ve got to make sure you have everything ready for that baby like bottles, it’s got a clean bum, erm you’re up, if you’re anything like mine, you’re up during the night (giggles) I’ve got .........................tomorrow and you’d better sleep. Obviously they don’t want to go to sleep and she’s started to teeth at the
moment by the sound of it so I’ve got her constantly yelling at me. It’s a lot of hard
work but that’s part of it and that’s what it is basically.

Interviewer
What do you think makes a good mother?

Demi
What makes a good mother? Erm (long pause) what makes a good mother? Erm (long
pause), showing them not affection but love and affection and letting them know that
you are there and then they’re, like times when they’re in pain like if they’ve had their
injections or they’re teething or they’ve just got a bad tummy, that they know you’re
there for them and sort of like they’re not going to get palmed off on to someone else
and they can sort of cuddle up to you, erm changing their bum, making sure their bottles
are all done and just being there like playtimes when they start learning how to play it’s
you what’s there, not somebody else, making sure you’re there for everything, not
everybody else.

Interviewer
Do you think other people would agree with you or have they got different views?

Demi
Each person has got different views so it doesn’t matter.

Interviewer
Who do you get most support from? Who helps you out the most?

Demi
Erm (long pause), Lee. Lee and his family because his family would like my family
...Lee and his mum are pretty close and like there’s friends of their family who ...and
Lee’s got involved on a little break for, say, a night or a couple of hours and we’ve got
loads of people say we’ll have the baby, isn’t she lovely, I want to stay with her and like
she’s been babysat with somebody else once and it’s really hard to let her go, I don’t
even like letting her go to my dad, I’m really sort of like, I dunno, it’s my baby, I want
her back but I’d say Lee and his family mostly.

Interviewer
What sort of things do you enjoy most about being a mother?

Demi
Erm (long pause), What do I enjoy most about her? Watching her grow and getting
more interesting each day as it goes on and sort of like when they starting to learn
things, like when they’re lying on their mat or whatever and they starting to play with
their toys.

Interviewer
What do you look forward to doing in the future?

Demi
Erm, loads of stuff, loads of stuff...not because I want to get rid of her but sort of like
she’s got that far now and sort of like she’s going to have her first day at school and will
spend that time away from me and ...I’m going to be with her and she does, like, things
like ballet and horse riding and things at school and just like doing stuff together, like,
even if it’s making cakes it’s something you’re doing together. Going out doing stuff
with her and showing her around where sort of like places, where she wouldn’t see if
she wasn’t not to be taken round and things what I done when I was younger, sort of
like if I’m having a row with her, whatever, and telling her off sort of like “I don’t do
that when you were younger, I aint letting you” I’m looking forward to all of that stuff.

Interviewer
What other hopes have you got for her?

**Demi**
I don’t know at the moment because she’s so young and she’s not really established her own personality and things like that, she’s just starting to establish that at the moment so I don’t really know the answer to that one.

**Interviewer**
Do you think there are benefits to being a mother at your age?

**Demi**
Erm (long pause), it’s basically the same as being a mother whether you’re my age, 25, 35 or whatever. You’re still a mother and you’re going to be the mother how you’re going to be either you’re older, younger or whatever. You’re going to be the same mother. Erm, but I’m quite glad I’ve had her so young is because when she’s 10 I’ll only be like 27 so I can quite sort of like be that young mum as I had, I had a young mum and sort of like she had me when she was 17 and when she’s learning I can say this is what I done and it’s up to you whether you do you but this is what I done and this is how I learned from my mistakes and things like that, so, but I don’t really think I would really change.

**Interviewer**
Do you think there are any benefits to being older?

**Demi**
Erm, (long pause), I don’t know. (long pause) because you’re going to be the mother of what you’re going to be no matter what age, it’s not really going to change a lot, so, no I don’t think so. Personally I don’t.

**Interviewer**
What sort of plans did you have for the future before you became pregnant. What were you going to do?

**Demi**
I was going to go college, I was going to get a job, erm and basically live my life to the full, going out, doing what a normal 17 year old does and like try ..........drugs (?) (giggles) and seeing if I can get away (laughs) and sort of like finding the boyfriend what you want and, like, being yourself, Just having lots and lots of fun but obviously that don’t happen if you have a baby, it slows it right down.

**Interviewer**
Do you think you’re not living your life to the full then?

**Demi**
Not as much as I would like to but obviously that’s the responsibility of becoming a mum and if you had chosen to become a mum then that’s what you’ve got to respect. The baby takes up your life, you can’t just go out and do what you want and leave your baby at home, whether it’s on its own or with people, you just cant do it because anything could be happening to it, like, you, just if you’re out and if there’s a fire to be happening and you think Oh God, that’s my fault, I’ve got out and left that baby. You just don’t do that.

**Interviewer**
Do you like that feeling of being responsible?

**Demi**
Yes, I think I do. This is putting everything what I’ve got and everything what, I’m in a way being sort of how you bring up a baby and how you do when you
...when your mum sort of like talks to you about college and everything then you sort of
like, when you’re older you think about all those things that your mum told you and
..........................actually she was actually going on about having a baby, like
sort of thing, yeah I do actually, it’s nice being a mum, hard work but its nice.

**Interviewer**

In what way do you think it’s changed you?

**Demi**

Erm (big sigh), it’s made me grow up a hell of a lot, a hell of a lot and a lot of people
have said that that they seen me back a year ago and a lot of told people have turned
around and said, like people I haven’t seen for like a year, have said you’ve really,
really grown up and I said I’m not being funny but I’ve had to because it’s the
responsibility of being a mum and they’ve turned around and said ...sort of thing, But,
yes, I’ve really grown up and changed a lot since my having her. I was growing up bit
by bit but when obviously she came early with me being on the bus at the time, she
decided no I want to come into the world and it’s like I was saying hold on a minute, I
thought I was getting myself ready here, I’ve got to get myself sorted out and sort of
like I didn’t even have, like, ten hours or five minutes to get myself sorted, waiting for
this baby to be here, and yeah. You grow up a hell of a lot and it does change your life
because you cant go out and do things what you want to do.

**Interviewer**

That’s great. Thank you ever so much. That was really fantastic.
Appendix IV

Study Three -Interview Schedule

Introduction
Thank you for agreeing to participate in this research. So far our research has focused on the young mothers themselves and how they make sense of becoming a mother, we would now like to expand this research and talk to the professionals that work directly with the young mothers. We are trying to understand what happens to the young women once they have had their babies. From our research to date we know that some girls find this transition to motherhood easier than others and we are now trying to understand more fully some of the issues that are involved in this transition, the choices that these young women face and how they go about making these decisions. I will start off by asking some fairly general questions about your role and I would then like you to reflect and reconstruct some of the life stories of young mothers that you know.

1. What is your name?

2. What is your title/position?

3. How long have you worked in this position?

4. What sort of clients do you work with?

5. How long have you worked in this field?

6. Did you have to have training? If so what sort of training did you have?

7. What sort of other client groups have you worked with before this?

8. Was it your choice to work with this client group?

9. What made you go in to this field, in particular working with teenage mothers?

10. Do you enjoy your work?

11. What is the best aspect of your work?

12. What is the worst aspect of your work?

13. Would you describe a typical day?
14. Could you tell me a positive story about a teenage mother that you have had dealings with?

15. Could you tell me a negative story about a teenage mother that you have had dealings with?

_Prompts_

*Why do think she made this decision?*

*Did she discuss this decision with anyone else?*

*What other options were available to her?*

*Do you think she was made aware of all her options?*

*Who made her aware?*

*Was anybody else involved in this decision?*

*Did she try any other options?*

16. Could you outline some of the other sorts of issues that you have to deal with.

17. In what ways do you think their needs are different from other mothers/clients?

18. Who helps them to meet these needs e.g. family, social workers, government etc?

19. Whose responsibility is it to meet these needs?

20. How do you try accommodate these needs?

21. What are your responsibilities to the young mothers?

22. Do you find it easy to understand or anticipate their needs?

23. Do you think the government is sensitive and supportive of their needs?

24. What about her needs as a teenager?

25. There is a representation of teenage mothers that appears in the media, do you think this is a fair representation?

26. How do you think the reality of their situation differs from the stereotype?

27. What about teenage mothers being leeches? There is an impression that young women only get pregnant for the benefits or to get ahead of the housing list, do you think this is right? Have you ever met any young women who admitted to getting pregnant just to get benefits/housing? Or do you think that this is a myth?
28. Do you think that other people would agree with these views?

29. Some young mothers believe that some health workers etc are prejudiced against them, do you think that this could be true?

30. Do you think that any of your colleagues might discriminate against them?

31. Have you ever heard of anybody discriminating against them?

32. Do you think younger mothers can make good mothers? What sort of help do they need to achieve this? What sorts of things prevents them from being a good mother?

33. From our research some of the girls seem to think that some people discriminate against them, can you think why they might think this?

34. Do you think this affects the way they approach you for help?
Appendix V

Study Three Transcript

Carol Housing Worker/Project Worker – Rainbow Trust, Southampton

Interviewer
Can we start by you telling me your name?
Carol
Carol
Interviewer
And what is your position?
Carol
Housing Worker/Project Worker
Interviewer
Have you worked in this position long?
Carol
Almost two years
Interviewer
And what were you doing before that?
Carol
I was a family support worker before I came here with the Health Authority, NHS. And, before that I worked with Health Visitors, not quite the same but some of the same.
Interviewer
So, what made you go into this field?
Carol
I wanted to...the role that I had before just didn't have enough responsibility. I just needed to move on really. I wasn't going anywhere either. It was a new role that I was developing and it sort of got cut off while I was half way through it and instead of it being more than one person doing it, it turned out that they had gone down a different road and then there was only going to be one person doing it. And, probably in the end no one doing it, which is what's turned out to be what's happened.
Interviewer
So, did you have to have training to go into this job?
Carol
Erm... not specific training no.
Interviewer
But did you find your experience before helped?
Carol
Yeah, because I have done a lot of work with erm..young people with babies. I've done playgroup. I used to be a playgroup supervisor. So, I've worked with children before. I did a pre-counselling course. Not that that was needed. But, it was something that I...I did child psychology just as an A level. So, I guess I drifted into it, probably (laughs nervously).
Interviewer
Do you enjoy your work?
Carol
I love it.
Interviewer
What’s the best part of it?
Carol
It’s... I like it all. Most of it is really positive. I love working with the young people.
I... most of them are so positive and erm... yeah, I really like working with them. They’re really good.
Interviewer
What’s the worst aspect of the work then?
Carol
Erm... well, because I look after the house that they live in... the worst aspect is probably getting the place tidy (starts laughing) and that is like fighting a losing battle all the time. Sometimes, if I get a bit worried for some of the babies and that is probably pretty bad as well.
Interviewer
In what way do you get worried about them?
Carol
Well because sometimes... they are looked after but maybe not in a way that I would look after them. So, I sort of... I don’t know, I just worry about them sometimes. You know, all sorts of things happen and I think – oh dear
Interviewer
What sort of things?
Carol
Let’s see (big sigh). They go out for the day and don’t take a bottle with them. They go out and maybe it’s as cold as they thought and the baby hasn’t got a coat on – you know, those sort of things that when you’ve got a baby, you go out armed with sort of everything, don’t you. But, sometimes some of them don’t stop and think about what they are doing. It’s just that they’ve got to be somewhere and off they go!
Interviewer
Is that because of their age do you think?
Carol
Erm... not necessarily because of their age. Quite often I think it’s being the way they’ve been parented themselves. Because I’ve got... I know people that are exactly the same age but they’re different in the way that they are with their babies.
Interviewer
How do most of the girls end up in your house?
Carol
All of them are homeless. That’s the main criteria, they have to be homeless to come to us and need to have support because we are part of the support people.
Interviewer
Is it voluntary homelessness in some cases?
Carol
Well...
**Interviewer**
It's that I had heard in some cases some girls have said that they have to homeless before they are re-housed. So they had to leave home..

**Carol**
I don’t think voluntary is a word I would use for it really. Because, quite often they can’t stay at home and when I interview them their mum is often with them and they don’t want them to be homeless but they just can’t keep them at home. They haven’t got the room for them at home. Quite often, they’ve still got the support of their parents but, because of their parents’ situation they haven’t got the room to keep them there or can’t have them there with the baby. So, they have...they’re homeless. That’s...it’s not really a voluntary thing. But, maybe in some cases but not the majority of cases.

**Interviewer**
It's interesting really because somebody said to me about the relationship with the mother that it improves after they have babies. Is that your experience?

**Carol**
It has happened. But erm...I sort of interviewed people and they have had to leave because the mom has been so bad - you know. And, when the baby’s been born they get on a better footing. But, often it’s because...it’s not just because the baby’s been born, it’s because they’re not living under the same roof anymore. I think the baby probably does make the situation a bit easier. Sometimes, it makes it worse. If that person had a particularly bad childhood and then they have the baby and think to themselves gosh now how could my parents have treated me like that because I really love this baby and it’s worse for them. So...

**Interviewer**
How would describe a typical day?

**Carol**
Oh dear (laughs)...I don’t think there is a typical day really. I just...I go up to the house - its’ full at the moment as well. There’s five people, I have five young people in the house and I support five other floating support schemes as well. So, I look after ten....a typical day would be to go to the house, I would make sure that everyone is ok, usually I’ve gotta sort out someone’s benefit. I always make sure the babies are ok, like I don’t mother them or anything like that....yes, I just make sure they keep appointments...erm...we do...I try and sit there and listen to whatever they want to tell me really. Erm...I have to register them with a new GP when they normally move in because they’ve moved away from home. I listen to that, if the baby’s not been born I take them here, there and everywhere....I take them here, there and everywhere anyway, when the baby’s born...

**Interviewer**
You drive them around, do you?

**Carol**
Yep – taxi service

**Interviewer**
So, what do you see your role as then?

**Carol**
Well, (laughs) I think um...I mainly there for their support, any support they need within my power, I will give them. Or, if I can’t give it I will point them in the direction to go to find that support. But, mainly I’m there so when they leave us they’ve got independent living skills. So, when they do move into their own flat they know they’ve gotta pay the
electricity otherwise they are gonna be in debt. I do budgeting with them. I do cooking with them sometimes – they can’t cook. I go shopping with them if – some of them have never been shopping before to do like a shop that will last them the week, they do a daily basis shop and it’s just trying to point out how expensive that is.

Interviewer
So, it’s really back to basics?
Carol
It is really. We try and do healthy eating and try get them to see a dentist on a regular basis, a GP. I make sure that they keep their appointments with health visitors, with GPs. I make sure that their contraception is up to date. All sorts of things. We talk about sexual health, all sorts of stuff.

Interviewer
So, do you find they need a lot of this nurturing?
Carol
Erm... Some of them do. Majority of them probably do. I think some of them would say they didn’t. But erm... when you actually get down to it, they do.

Interviewer
Can you tell me a positive story about a teenage mother that you had dealings with?
Carol
I had erm... a mother that came, that was homeless that...and she...it hadn’t been very good at home and when she came to us she was...she already had her baby. He was, I think he was about eight months old and erm...she was lovely, she was very shy. But erm...she was very positive and erm...she had started at college and erm...we made sure that she carried on at college, we got the baby into a crèche at college and erm...she finished that year at college and then went back the next year and did the second year and she was...when she first went into the house she was very quiet and didn’t want to do anything. Her father wouldn’t speak to her because she had this baby and he was devastated about it. But very gradually, over the month her mum came on the scene and started to – they started on a bit of a better footing. Then her nan turned up and she built up a relationship with her nan again and her dad as well. She was so pleased when she built up this relationship with her dad again. She finished college and moved out into her own flat and she’s been fantastic. She was just 16 when her baby was born. And, she just took, even though she was really shy, everything she just took in her stride. She had to be at college at 8.30 in the morning, she was first out of the house in the morning with the baby ready. She was fantastic (laughs) – I think this is why I really liked, she used to do all the cleaning up at the house (starts laughing again). She was amazing really, when she first came I thought she was gonna be really difficult to work with because she was so shy. But she just turned out to be really positive. I still see her.

Interviewer
What sort of role did you have to play with her? What sort of support did you have to give her?
Carol
Well I had to... all sorts of things really, why her dad was being as he was, erm...brought her through a bad time with her partner. Erm...all her benefits, I had to sort out all of her benefits. We had to get...the baby was in hospital for a while, we had to sort all that out, backwards and forwards to the hospital. There were all sorts of things and...her money, we sorted out her money she became really good with budgeting and money. She never had to do that before, she only had pocket money before.
Interviewer
So, how do you teach them to do that sort of thing?
Carol
Well, we have...what we do is we have a thing what we call where an individual development plan and erm...we go, we set targets for them basically to do. It can be anything, it can be tiny, it can be long term and then they just action towards these targets and then we review them every six to eight weeks we review so that we just check to see how they are coming on.

Interviewer
Who decides all these targets?
Carol
They do

Interviewer
I was going to say, if they know what sort of choices are open to them and...
Carol
They can choose anything. I mean, usually the first one I do is maintain tenancy because they’ve got to maintain their tenancy, otherwise they’ve got nowhere to live. So, after that, I set that one and afterwards they can do whatever, it can be erm...if they just want to cook one healthy meal a week or it could anything, anything they feel they want to achieve. It could be opening a post office account, it could be erm...getting their tv licence organised, could be saving £2 a week. Anything.

Interviewer
So, what sort of advice did you give this young lady then?
Carol
Oh when she was thinking of giving up college and then...I don’t really like giving advice (laughs)

Interviewer
She was thinking about giving up college, why did she want to do that?
Carol
Well, I think – you know, when you are 16 it’s difficult when all the other people in the house aren’t getting up till 12 and you’re out of the house at 8.30 every morning and sometimes that got, she found it really difficult to do but she’s talked it through, what her aims were, why she wanted to go in the first place and that that was still...

Interviewer
Why did she want to go in the first place? What made her decided to go back to college?
Carol
She went...really she just wanted to do this beauty...she was doing beauty therapy and she was good at it. I think that is why she carried on doing it. I think also, as it happened when the family sort of came back in they were very supportive family. They were all going through, I think they were all shell shocked when she had the baby and but, you know, eventually they were all very supportive family and erm...

Interviewer
So, do you think she wanted to back more because of peer pressure, rather than...
Carol
Oh yeah, definitely

Interviewer
But she stuck it out in the end?
Carol
Yep, she did

Interviewer
What is she doing now then?
Carol
She’s got another baby now (laughs).

Interviewer
Is this by the same father or a different father?
Carol
This is difficult...It is by a different father but the first baby, the father of the first baby disappeared from the scene long before the baby was born and the partner that she is with now appeared on the scene before the baby was born. So he has been bringing the child up as his own and this new one, he is the father of

Interviewer
Oh right. So, how old is she now?
Carol
She’s probably 18. She’s 18

Interviewer
So, she hasn’t actually done anything with her qualifications?
Carol
Not yet because she has had this new baby. But, I think she will

Interviewer
Could you tell me a negative story about a teenage mother?
Carol
Erm...I think a negative is when you have tried, I’ve tried and it’s not just me, everyone has tried to give someone as much help as you feel they need and this person just took what she wanted and only I had to stop supporting her in the end because she only wanted the support when she wanted it. And, things were, I thought that erm...when she was offered her flat that she was gonna be fine but it just turned out...I mean, the flat never really became a home, she never really lived there. The baby was always fed on chips and burgers and didn’t walk until she was 18 months old because she was so huge. Everyone tried their hardest to try and change it round and it just fell on deaf ears really. And, the Social Services also worked with this young person and erm...she was always on to social services for money for this and money for that. But, when they wanted to do some work, or we wanted to do some work with her she – nothing was ever forthcoming. It was like...I don’t know, everything was on her terms.

Interviewer
So, what sort of things did you want her to do with you?
Carol
Well, we would’ve liked the baby to have been on a healthy diet. We would have liked to have...her to have not such a chaotic lifestyle with tagging the baby here, there and everywhere. And, maybe have a bit more of a routine for the baby. Maybe of erm...oh, I don’t know....maybe realise a baby is more important than she thought it was.

Interviewer
What were the circumstances around her becoming pregnant?
Carol
Oh gosh...! It, oh dear...she...she was pregnant when she was 15, she came to us when she was 16. She was a care leaver. Her circumstances, I don’t know if I ought to say this really on tape...
Interviewer
It’s all strictly confidential
Carol
I don’t think she knew who the father was. Would that be the circumstances (laughs 
nervously) around her.
Interviewer
I wondered if she was pleased to be pregnant or...?
Carol
In a funny way she was pleased to be pregnant – yeah, I think she was. She had had a 
very difficult childhood and erm...she was always saying that she was determined that 
her baby wasn’t gonna have the life she had when she was a child. But, it was sort of 
heading that way. She’s still got the baby and I’m certain that she loves the baby. But 
it’s... I don’t know what sort of childhood the baby will have because the mother still 
has a lot of needs herself. So, it’s difficult for her to recognise the baby’s needs.
Interviewer
What sort of needs does she have then?
Carol
Well, she’s still got a lot of issues with her parents. She’s still – they argue constantly 
and then even down to the fact that her parents report her to Social Services for things 
that you wouldn’t, things that weren’t true, but they would report her to Social Services 
and to the Police. I just couldn’t get my head around it half of the time. Why would you 
want to do that to your daughter and then 3 weeks later be best of buddies again. She was 
desperate really to be part of their family. But, she was always being cut off. You know 
– you’re not part of our family anymore.
Interviewer
And, this was something that had gone on before she got pregnant?
Carol
Yeah, has been going on for years.
Interviewer
So, she’s living in a flat now?
Carol
Not quite sure where she’s living now. Because I kept going round for appointed visits 
and she wasn’t there and then she’d turn up when she wanted something and wanted me 
to do something or needed something and erm...I would make another appointment to go 
round and she wouldn’t be there. I would try for months and months and months to 
erm... get in and give any sort of support...she just didn’t want it really. And then, the 
last I heard of her – I still see her occasionally – but I don’t support her anymore, the last 
I heard she was having another baby. She’s probably had it by now. And, it makes you 
feel a failure really, but (laughs) because there was still positives in that negative 
situation. But, because I suppose you can’t help everyone can you. If they don’t want 
the help...
Interviewer
But you took it very personally?
Carol
Not really personally, I don’t think. She caused me a lot of heartache, yeah. Some things 
did become personal I suppose, but because her parents were involved and I had to deal 
with them as well. So, yeah, I suppose some of it was personal, but I didn’t take it 
personally that you know, I had to withdraw support or...
Interviewer
It was just that you thought a failure?
Carol
Well, yeah. You do, don't you really when you trying to work with someone and it hasn’t worked out the way that maybe you would have liked it to. But, I don't...I didn’t look on myself as a failure, just the situation I don’t think it was ever going to work really.

Interviewer
It should be picked up again by the system if she is pregnant again?
Carol
She won’t come to us again. She could come to us again because we’ve got another erm...support service that we offer. She won’t come to me again. But, she could work with someone else again. But she would have to be referred and I don’t know if erm...if she would want the support really.

Interviewer
You said that there were some positives that came out of it. What kind of positives came out of it?
Carol
Oh....(sighs)...it’s difficult isn’t it really to think (laughs)...I can’t....when I was working with her, I got on really well with her and I felt she got on really well with me, even though sometimes she didn’t want to see me, that was fine and some of those....if she did something that...she would come and say – oh, Sue I’ve done something and she was really pleased with I was the person that she came to, to tell. So, that was like a positive for her and erm...other bits really. I mean if I saw her now she would tell me her life history (laughs).

Interviewer
Who do you think is perhaps more typical then of the clients that you have. Of the positive and the negative?
Carol
I think the positive. Most of the young people that we work with are positive about the situation that they’re in. Yet, they are a bit apprehensive probably, when, probably before the baby is born. But, I mean we have far more positives than negatives. It’s not often that we have to withdraw support from people. Usually, the only reason why we withdraw support is because they don’t need us anymore. Not because they’re not accessing the support. Most of the people that we deal with, it’s a positive outcome. I have a lot of people that go to college, or get a job and or just cope with their babies, because they’re young, they’re very young. Yet, they cope with these babies. They’re fantastic with them. They do really well, they get into their own flat, they decorate the place, they get themselves organised and...

Interviewer
Interestingly, you say that they are young. Would you expect them, that they are young, not to expect them to be able to do this?
Carol
Not really. No. I think....some of the really...I don’t know...even when they’re really young, they can’t go into their own flat usually until they are 18. So, if they come to us at 16, if they moved to their own flat they have to have a guarantor and it is usually a family member and often if a family member is standing guarantor it’s often and indicator that that family is a supportive family anyway, if you can’t get a family member to stand as a guarantor as is often the case, there is a lot family breakdown there
Interviewer
Do you think their needs differ from other clients you have worked with?

Carol
Erm... I don't know whether their needs differ. I think it is different because they
erm... if you are working with just single young people, you are mainly aiming to get
them into independent living and work and moving them on that way. Whereas with
erm... young women with babies, you're not often trying to get them to get a job, but you
are more trying to get them into college maybe. If someone was 20 / 22 something like
that and they could go do something like that, on a course, often they sort come through
that I've just left school and I don't want to go back, when they've got a bit older, they've
got to the stage where they are thinking, cor, I should've done this at school I wish I
could go back.

So, I think really they are targeting the wrong age group there. I know they want to get
them into college and some of them do it.

Interviewer
Do you feel the Government, some of these government issues that have come out, have
affected them?

Carol
If everyone took them up, they would be really effective wouldn't they (laughs). But,
because if there, with this care to learn you can only go on it if you are between 16 and
18. If you sign up before you are 18, I think they will carry on till older, I think... you
couldn't if you've left school when you are 16 then and you've got a baby, you're gonna
be over 16 you've gotta get into care to learn, you possibly would have to do - say you
wanted to go to University which some young girls do, you wouldn't have the time in
there to get better GCSEs, do your A Levels and get to University in that timescale,
where someone is paying for you to go. Because, they couldn't afford to pay to go.

Interviewer
So, if they wanted to go to University, they would have to fund it themselves?

Carol
I suppose. They have to.... one of the young girls I was working with went on the care to
learn scheme to do 2 A Levels. But, by the time she finishes the A Levels she will be 19
nearly 20 probably. I don't think she can go on to University under the care to learn,
which is what she wants to do.

Interviewer
Whose responsibility do you think it is to meet these needs?

Carol
Erm... gosh, that's a difficult question, isn't it, because.... if you... it's not always
Government responsibility to meet these needs. If someone wants to go to University,
say, it's not necessarily the Government's responsibility to make that an easy option for
you. But, I don't know, I think it's starting at the wrong age. They should be starting all
this in year 1, when they first start school, making sure everyone gets a decent education
in Year 1 and erm... not everyone wants to go on to University. Not everyone wants to
go back to college. But everyone should have the opportunity to do what they wanna do
and erm... whether it might be some vocation or training then they should be encouraged
to do that. Rather than all this academic...

Interviewer
But what about if they have got a baby then it seems to me that there is something to take
into consideration, I suppose?
Carol
Yeah. It is a need and...if you are asking me whose responsibility that is, I can’t answer
that because it’s (sighs heavily) I don’t know.

Interviewer
Do the young mothers take responsibility, do you feel?
Carol
For the babies? Yeah, yeah they do take responsibilities for their lives. Most of them do
take responsibility for themselves and their babies. How things are going to happen.
What they are gonna do, what’s gonna happen with the baby, they do take on that
responsibility. They are pretty good, I think really, from coping with the situation like
that and being homeless as well, living in a shared house, living with people they have
never met before. It’s pretty difficult really.

Interviewer
But there are those that don’t cope with it, that expect you to take on the responsibility,
expect you to deal with it all really?
Carol
Those that don’t take the responsibility it is never their fault. Whatever happens they
always see it as being someone else’s fault. The reason that this happened is because that
person is stupid, or didn’t...often, the reason why this happened is because that person
sent them a letter and it was ignored and if, say for instance, if a benefit doesn’t come on
a Thursday, it’s like where’s my benefit, oh my God it’s my pay day and I haven’t got my
benefit. Oh my God, what am I gonna do now! Get onto Sue – Sue I haven’t got my
benefit, what I am gonna do? Ok, I’ll ring up the benefits agency – oh, yeah we did send
them out a letter and we haven’t heard from them so the benefit has been stopped and it’s
like, well I haven’t had any letter. But, they have had the letter. They just can’t, they
won’t take the responsibility for it. Even though when I do have meetings I always say to
them, if you have any letters from housing benefit or benefit or any letters that you don’t
understand, that you want me to deal with let me have a look at them and we’ll get them
sorted. It’s always someone else’s fault. It’s...I don’t know, I just think that’s the way
some people are, isn’t it?

Interviewer
Some of the girls that I interviewed felt that people in the benefits office and the housing
people discriminate it against them?
Carol
I think they do feel like that. But, I don’t think that is the case. I really don’t think that is
the case at all. They...I think at the Benefits a lot of things go wrong, that is true. A lot
of things go wrong and it is frustrating. And, if you are expecting you’re expecting your
money let’s say on a Thursday and it doesn’t come and you’ve got no money, how
frustrating is that? But...it’s...they always, can I say “go off on one” (laughs) to people
at the Benefits, when it’s not actually that person that they are talking to’s fault. Often,
when they are dealing with people at the Benefits they don’t know how to deal with the
situation and just lose it and then no one will deal with them. Because, you can’t do
anything – no- one will deal with...the Benefits agency, if you start swearing at them
donw the phone they will put the phone down on you, which is fair enough, I say to the
young people I work with, I usually sort their benefits out for them. But, if they have to
ring, don’t lose your temper with that person, tell them exactly what has happened. Be
friendly with them, because they are friendly on the other end. But, if they haven’t got
their money, then it’s that person’s fault. And when they go down to Housing Benefit
who are dealing with problems everyday and they know it happens, and if they went in
there and were—you know this has happened, this has happened do you think you could
tell me why this has happened? They would be fine, but they don’t, they go in there and
go absolutely “raa” at the person behind the counter and (exasperated laughter) a massive
breakdown in communications.

Interviewer
Is that because they are expecting them to discriminate against them?

Carol
Maybe they are expecting to be discriminated against. Maybe because they have been on
benefits for quite a while and a lot of things happen, because you have to change benefits
when you have a baby. 11 weeks before your baby is due you change from JSA to
Income Support. Often that becomes a problem. You claim a Maternity Grant, often you
have to ring up to see where it is? Your Income Support comes when you have had the
baby. You have to go down with all the stuff again and all that gets messed up.
Sometimes, they’ve been through 3 and 4 mess ups on their benefit. And, it is, they are
frustrated and you can see why. But, losing your temper….I think some people at the
Benefits maybe, not discriminate against young women with babies. I think some people
at the Benefits discriminate (starts laughing) against anyone that turns up for a benefit,
because they get so much hassle down there from people

Interviewer
It is interesting because the media have this representation of what it is to be a teenager
mother and we get so much from the press these days. Do you think it is a fair
representation?

Carol
Well, I…often you hear about people say oh she only got pregnant to get a flat and
erm…oh, yeah she’s living on the state for this and doing that for that. Well, I think there
possibly are a few people like that. But, I don’t think I ever worked with anyone that had
a baby to get a flat. Most of the people that I’ve worked with that are pregnant, it’s
been…it’s not been a planned thing. They haven’t said ooh I need a flat, I think I’ll have
a baby. That’s not how it’s gone, it’s oh my God, I’m pregnant. Now, Im homeless, now
I need somewhere to live and the council have a duty to house them, eventually. They
come to people like us, or some other project and erm….eventually, they are in a house.
But, what would people want them to do, live on the streets with a baby!

Interviewer
Do you think people still stereotype?

Carol
Yeah, I think some people do

Interviewer
I’m wondering where it comes from?

Carol
Well, it’s obvious where it comes from isn’t it. It’s the Daily Mail (laughter)

Interviewer
I’m just wondering why they would present that view though?

Carol
Because that’s what people like to think. I think they like, you know, these people that
have these babies are getting this benefit and we’re paying for it. It’s not the majority of
young people, they are sorting themselves out. There are a few people that can’t do that
or find themselves in circumstances whereby it is difficult for them to do that. If you
were 16 with a baby, would you be earning a decent living to pay for a flat, to get a job to
get a childminder to look after your baby? Some people…. I mean, it’s fair enough, a lot
of people aren’t aware of what these young people’s family lives have been like. A lot of people go through nice family, got 2 children who both go to University and they get decent…that’s great, but that’s not everyone. Not everyone can be like that!

Interviewer
The other representation that’s there in Society is once you have a baby as a teenager, that’s your life ruined

Carol
Exactly! And, that’s not the case.

Interviewer
What’s your experience of it then?

Carol
I think why would that ruin your life because they’re still, you’ve still got your life. There’s still loads for you to do. You could still move…ok, you’ve got a baby but it hasn’t ruined your life. There’s still…if you’ve got somewhere to live, you’ve moved out and a flat to live in, you could go to college. There’s loads of things around that people can pick up on. They can go to work, the child goes to school. What difference is it that maybe they are in local authority housing. Loads of people live in local authority housing and why should that mean that their life is ruined. Ok, so they’re not earning hundreds of thousands of pounds, they live a different life to me. But, that is their life and it’s not a ruined life.

Interviewer
Some of the girls I’ve spoken to say it has bettered their life, that it has improved their lives

Carol
I can see that. Because, we got....some people are positive about the situation.

Interviewer
Some girls believe it has got them out of rut? Or away from a lifestyle that probably wasn’t a healthy lifestyle?

Carol
Probably. Yep that is the case, yep…well, that is a positive move really. I didn’t have that baby to get out of that lifestyle. The fact of the matter is they’ve had a baby and then thought oh gosh I can’t take my baby where we’re all popping pills or...then to take on some form of responsibility and changed their life and there is positive and a lot of young women do that really. They drop some of their peer groups because they...

TAPE ENDS ON ONE SIDE

Interviewer
Now, have they erm…have you ever had that with any of your clients. It is a positive style that they have moved away from, er, bad influence or influences?

Carol
I think they probably – they don’t always move right away from those bad influences. But they actually see or realise that they are bad influences. Whereas, before when they were in that peer group they weren’t looked on as negative influences. But, when they’ve got their babies, they often do change the way that they think. They still see those people possibly. Maybe not as much as they used to and they know that it’s not a positive and yet they probably do move away from them eventually. They probably withdraw a bit from them. I don’t think they lose them all together. But, yeah, they realise they have a baby to look after and they are positive about their babies most of them.

Interviewer
Do they tend to hang around with other young mothers then?
Carol
Yeah. Yeah, and I think living in the house as well, very often like recently it was...we had a group of young people in there that really got on well together and they’ve all moved on but all still each other. Go round to each other’s houses, go off into town together and it’s, and they all actually were moved near to each other which, and its really nice to see them. And, I’ll go round and see one, I can hear what the other one has been up to and it’s really good.

Interviewer
Do you think teenage mothers can be good mothers?
Carol
Yeah. Definitely they can be good mothers – yeah, most of them are good mothers really. They often...they don’t necessarily mother their children in the way that I might have mothered mine. But, that’s not to say that they’re not good mothers. Who’s to say who is a good mother? But, what they do with their babies is look after, love them and they’re fed, played with, nurtured. They’re all those things. They couldn’t do anymore with them

Interviewer
So, those that are bad mothers are more, they’re not the norm?
Carol
I don’t think so. Not that I’ve worked with

Interviewer
So, it’s down to the person, not the circumstances?
Carol
I think so. Yeah, often the circumstances breeds the person, can I say that? How, can I put that? Do you know....sometimes....there is a person that you think I’m never gonna get anywhere with this person and whatever you do is not gonna work. But, they’re not the norm. Most of them it’s a positive experience and they all love their babies – 99% of them love their babies. You couldn’t ask for a lot more than that really, could you? I mean I know they’ve got to do positive parenting and things like that. But, you’ve got to love the baby to start of with.

Interviewer
And, from most of our research most of them are totally in love with their children
Carol
I think so, they are definitely. Yeah

Interviewer
What do you think prevents them from doing that?
Carol
What, to be a positive parent?

Interviewer
Yes

Carol
Probably, I don’t know for certain but influences in their childhood often. The way they’ve been brought up, they way their parents are with the way things have happened in their lives. Some of them have such a terrible childhood, you wonder how they got this far. But some of the stories that you hear are just oh dear...

Interviewer
Has your view of young mothers changed since you’ve been working with them?
Carol
I’ve been working with them for such a long time really. I don’t think….maybe a bit. I’ve worked with young mothers for quite a long time, for about 10 years now and yeah maybe from when I very first started, maybe I didn’t have as much of a clue as I do now. I think when they’re really young maybe I expected them not to be able to cope. But, I don’t expect that now. Most of them cope really well. Maybe it’s because if I think to myself, gosh when I was 16 there is no way I could’ve coped with that or even 18, even 20! I couldn’t have coped. But, I think really that is your perception because if you had to, you would.

Interviewer
That’s great. Thank you very much

Carol
In years to come this is what is going to happen. People…young person with a baby is on benefit, they’ve got their flat, they’ve got their life going exactly how they want it. Young professional person has got a job, they can’t afford to give up work when they have a baby. The young person on benefit has got the luxury of being at home, with their baby until they start school. Also, I think that is a Government initiative that when they start school they might have to look for a job. But, until they start school they can be at home with their baby looking after that baby, doing whatever they want with their baby. This professional person might have a mortgage, might have to go back to work because they can’t afford to stay at home. But they still want a baby. So, they’ve gotta…their baby has to be looked after by someone else and they haven’t got the luxury of being able to be at home for 5 years.

Interviewer
But do they not opt to go on Benefits?

Carol
Possibly, but if they’ve got a mortgage how could they do that. They couldn’t. The only way they could do that is to sell up and they still couldn’t go on benefits because they wouldn’t be on a low enough income to go onto benefit. Then, maybe what will happen in the future is that (starts to laugh) these people are at home, and the young professional people their babies are looked after by these people that are at home because they think – oh, I’ll do a bit of childminding maybe while I’m at home. They’ve got the benefit of being at home all the time. This person that has to work sees their baby for a couple of hours while they are trying to get it to bed. They’re absolutely shattered at the end of the day and if they’ve got a partner that is earning loads of money then that’s fine, maybe they could do part time. But, most people that have gone on and got their degree. I’m thinking about my daughter that she did 4 years doing her degree and she’s 25. When she wants to have a baby and not that she’s thinking about it yet. But when she does, that is gonna be a major, major decision for her because she’s got to think what’s going to happen to that baby because I can have so much time off work and then I’ve gotta go back. Because, I need to earn money to keep up this lifestyle.

Interviewer
So, do you think it is a positive thing to have a baby, young?

Carol
In a way, it must be musn’t it. That’s…it’s what it is becoming… what it’s becoming almost is that you gonna have – I hate to say this class thing. But, what is gonna happen is these people that are gonna have less and less children and all the children will be here, do you see what I mean?
Interviewer
Yes,
Carol
...with the families that are living on benefits and at home. I’m not....I don’t want to be negative about it because I think there’s nothing wrong with these people having....I’m just thinking about how these people’s children that have – what’s gonna happen to them?

Interviewer
Do you think this is where the stigma comes from then?
Carol
Maybe that’s it. Maybe there’s these people that haven’t got the children and-can’t have their children till they are 30, 35 something like that and thinking phwar, I wish I could have had my children at this...I wish I could stay at home all the time and look after my child. I wish I could get a little part time job somewhere and be there when they come out of school

Interviewer
Do the girls see it like that do you think? The young mothers? Are they aware of their situations?
Carol
The young mothers that I work with, no I don’t think so.

Interviewer
Do you think they’d rather have more money?
Carol
I think they’d like to have more money. But they’re also stuck because as soon as they start earning money it affects their benefits and then they think – oh it’s not worth going out to work because I’m gonna lose all my housing benefit unless they can get a job that where... working tax credit is better – is making it better for them I think. Especially, if they’ve got partners, that makes it better for them. So, maybe that will work, working tax credit. Maybe these people will come into the working tax credit bracket the next...you know...the next people up who aren’t earning loads of money but are earning too much to be on benefits, maybe? I don’t know. I’d have to be Prime Minister..........
Appendix VI

Ethics Approval

25 July 2006

Ms Hilary Bruffell
PhD Student
Department of Psychology
University of Surrey

Dear Ms Bruffell

Identity construction and evaluation amongst young mothers
(ACE/2002/72/Psych)

I am writing to inform you that the Advisory Committee on Ethics has considered the above protocol (and the subsequent information supplied) and has approved it on the understanding that the Ethical Guidelines for Teaching and Research are observed. For your information, and future reference, these Guidelines can be downloaded from the Committee’s website at http://www.surrey.ac.uk/Surrey/ACE/.

This letter of approval relates only to the study specified in your research protocol (ACE/2002/72/Psych). The Committee should be notified of any changes to the proposal, any adverse reactions, and if the study is terminated earlier than expected, with reasons.

Date of approval by the Advisory Committee on Ethics: 25 November 2002
Date of expiry of approval by the Advisory Committee on Ethics: 24 November 2007

Please inform me when the research has been completed.

Yours sincerely

Catherine Ashbee (Mrs)
Secretary, University Advisory Committee on Ethics

cc: Chairman, ACE
    Dr E Lyons, Supervisor, Dept of Psychology