

**Towards a Genealogy of Teenage Pregnancy in Britain,  
1955-1968**

**Goldsmiths College, University of London**

**PhD Thesis**

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I hereby declare that the work presented in this thesis is entirely my own and that it is on this work that I seek to be examined.

Ofra Koffman

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## **Abstract**

This thesis presents a genealogical enquiry into the emergence of the governmental field of teenage pregnancy. The enquiry focuses on governmental work with unmarried mothers during the late 1950s and 1960s, and identifies the changes in governmental discourses and practices associated with the emergence of the problematization of the teenage unmarried mother. The data is drawn from governmental publications and from the archive records of the London County Council. The thesis: (1) describes the two key problematizations of unmarried mothers in Britain during the late 1950s and 1960s: the moral and the psychological; (2) examines the place of the psychological concept of adolescence as a distinct developmental stage within these problematizations; (3) presents two case-studies of government and voluntary work with unmarried mothers and examines the influence of the moral and psychological perspectives; (4) charts the rise of governmental concern with the sexually active adolescent in the years following the Second World War; (5) describes the way in which the concern with the governance of the sexually active teenager contributed to the emergence of the teenage unmarried mother as a distinct field of governmental work; (6) outlines the characteristics of the problematization of the teenage unmarried mother and portrays the work of the first Mother and Baby Home which specialised in the care of schoolgirl unmarried mothers. It is concluded that the emergence of the teenage unmarried mother as an object of governmental concern was associated with two key discursive shifts: a shift from 'unmarried mother' to 'teenager' as the key term denoting a young woman's subjectivity; second, a shift from a notion of motherhood as a device for transforming a woman's subjectivity to a psychological discourse of motherhood concerned with a woman's ability to generate healthy development in her child.



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## Introduction

In Britain today ‘teenage pregnancy’ is a prominent field within governmental work. There is a Teenage Pregnancy Unit in central government and a National Teenage Pregnancy Strategy. Every local authority has a Teenage Pregnancy Partnership Board overseeing the effort of various governmental and voluntary bodies to meet government targets. A diverse group of professionals including youth workers, midwives, teachers, health advisers, counsellors and housing officers specialise in work with ‘teenage mothers’. Thus, an assortment of expertise, governmental strategies and technologies has at its centre the teenage girl who should be prevented from becoming pregnant and bearing children. At the same time, there is an associated set of expertise and techniques which is aimed at supporting those teenage girls who do become mothers, in order to ensure their well-being and that of their children.

The research presented in this thesis explores the emergence of ‘teenage pregnancy’ as a governmental field. The findings presented emanate from several straightforward questions: When did this governmental field come into being? What processes were involved in its emergence? What discourses and practices saw their demise in concurrence with its rise?<sup>1</sup>

In trying to explain the public and government concern with teenage pregnancy, scholars such as Monk<sup>2</sup>, Phoenix<sup>3</sup> and McIntyre and Cunningham-Burley<sup>4</sup> identify several issues as being central to the concern with which teenage pregnancy is associated. These include sexual morality, reproductive norms, and class and ‘race’ dynamics. However, we need to consider that once a problematization emerges there

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<sup>1</sup> The concept of discourse is used in a variety of ways within contemporary research. In this thesis, the term denotes a group of statements referring to an individual object.

<sup>2</sup> D. Monk, “Teenage Pregnancies and Sex Education: Constructing the Girl/Woman Subject,” in *Sexuality and the Law: Feminist Engagements*, eds. V. E. Munro and C. F. Stychin (London: Routledge-Cavendish, 2007), 201-221.

<sup>3</sup> A. Phoenix, “The Social Construction of Teenage Motherhood: A Black and White Issue?,” in *The Politics of Pregnancy: Adolescent Sexuality and Public Policy*, eds. A. Lawson and D.L. Rhode (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), 74-97; A. Phoenix, “Mothers Under Twenty: Outsider and Insider Views,” in *Motherhood: Meanings, Practices and Ideologies*, eds. A. Phoenix, A. Woollett and E. Lloyd (London: Sage, 1991), 86-102; A. Phoenix, *Young Mothers?* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991).

<sup>4</sup> S. Macintyre and S. Cunningham-Burley, “Teenage Pregnancy as a Social Problem: a Perspective from the United Kingdom,” in *The Politics of Pregnancy, Adolescent Sexuality and Public Policy*, eds. A. Lawson and D.L. Rhode (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), 59-73.

are processes contributing to its persistence.<sup>5</sup> Hence, in order to explore a problematization, it will not suffice to examine it synchronically; its diachronic development should be considered as well. Furthermore, we should not assume that concerns regarding sexual morality, reproduction patterns and welfare provision have remained constant across the decades. Instead, we should explore the problematization while taking into account the historicity of its features.

Social historical accounts of the emergence of governmental concern with teenage pregnancy in the U.S.A. provide a useful entrée to the discussion. Most of these studies looked at teenage pregnancy in relation to a previous concern with unmarried mothers. Several scholars proposed that the rise of teenage pregnancy was the result of a shift from a 'moral' to a 'scientific' problematization of young women's out-of-wedlock pregnancy. Others have suggested that the problematization of teenage pregnancy was a new way in which anxieties regarding young women's sexuality were expressed.<sup>6</sup>

The proposition regarding the shift from a moral to a scientific problematization and the proposition regarding the persistence of societal anxieties concerning young women's sexuality share a common ontological assumption. Underpinning these accounts is an ontological distinction between the realm of representation and the 'real': between the 'real' pregnancy, childbearing, lone motherhood and their depiction in terms such as 'unmarried mother' or 'teenage mother'. As a result of not accounting for the way in which discourses are involved in constituting phenomena, such an ontological position assumes a constancy in the object of problematization.<sup>7</sup> The present study is committed to a different ontological position following the path of a significant amount of literature that critiques the ahistorical conceptualisations of subjectivity, body and materiality and explores the way in which discourses are involved in constituting the objects they describe.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> The term problematization was first coined by Michel Foucault in M. Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (London: Allen Lane, 1977). I discuss this concept more extensively in Chapter 2.

<sup>6</sup> C. A. Nathanson, *Dangerous Passages: The Social Control of Sexuality in Women's Adolescence* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1991).

<sup>7</sup> P. Rabinow and N. Rose, "Introduction: Foucault Today," in *The Essential Foucault: Selections from Essential Works of Foucault, 1954-1984*, eds. P. Rabinow and N. Rose (New York: New Press, 2003).

<sup>8</sup> K. Barad, "Getting Real: Technoscientific Practices and the Materialization of Reality," *Differences* 10, no. 2 (1998): 87-128; J. Butler, *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex"* (New York: Routledge, 1993); B. Duden, *Disembodying Women: Perspectives on Pregnancy and the Unborn*

I focus predominantly on the conceptual formulations found in the work of Michel Foucault. The reason for this choice is a commitment to the strategy of using historical investigation as a way of destabilising contemporary practices that are seen as self-evident. The current prevalence of the figure of the teenage mother in governmental work, as well as in the tabloids, popular films and television has made its existence and the discomfort it arouses seem natural. An investigation into a time when the young mother was not immediately identified as a problem and when other figures were at the heart of governmental concerns is an effective way of critiquing its contemporary depiction.

I shall detail the key ontological and epistemological premises which have shaped this study. Drawing on Foucault's notion of genealogy, this historical enquiry's objective is not the discovery of the precise historical moment when the field of teenage pregnancy as we know it today came into being, rather the aim is to explore the 'beginnings'<sup>9</sup> of teenage pregnancy, the complex and contradictory processes through which it emerged. Hence, the research does not seek to identify a cause but to map a transformation which is the result of processes of emergence.<sup>10</sup> In addition, as Foucault suggests, in this approach 'One has to proceed by progressive, necessarily incomplete saturation'.<sup>11</sup> In brief, instead of trying to construct an exhaustive account, my purpose is to identify the key discursive shifts that marked the emergence of teenage pregnancy.

Since discourses are not seen as external to the object but as constitutive of it, the historicity of 'teenage' needs to be considered. The term teenager was first coined by an American market researcher in the 1940s to describe what was seen as a new social class with its own unique lifestyle. By the early 1950s, the term was popularised in Britain.<sup>12</sup> However, to this day there is no clear legal category defining the period between childhood and adulthood. In England and Wales, the age of criminal responsibility is ten, the age of consent is sixteen, while the age of

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(Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1993).

<sup>9</sup> I use the term beginnings here in the sense proposed by Michel Foucault in M. Foucault "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History," in *Aesthetics, Method, and Epistemology*, ed. J. D. Faubion (London: Allen Lane, 1998), 369-391. I discuss Foucault's notion of genealogy further in Chapter 2.

<sup>10</sup> M. Foucault "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History."

<sup>11</sup> M. Foucault, "Questions of Method," in *Power: Essential works of Foucault, 1954-1984, Vol. 3*, ed. J. D. Faubion (London: Penguin, 2002), 227.

<sup>12</sup> B. Osgerby, *Youth in Britain Since 1945* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1998).

majority is eighteen.<sup>13</sup> Furthermore, the terms ‘adolescence’, ‘youth’ or ‘young people’ are alternately used in governmental and professional discourses to denote the developmental stage between childhood and adulthood. The terminological variation to a certain extent corresponds to disciplinary boundaries: ‘adolescence’ is prominent in psychological and medical literature, while the terms ‘youth’ or ‘young people’ are frequently used by sociologists and government agencies. This, however, is not just the result of a different disciplinary tradition, but rather reflects a divide in the conceptualisation of this stage. By and large, psychologists argue that adolescence is a distinct psycho-social stage of development clearly marked by the physiological process of puberty, while sociologists focus on young people’s experiences, their position in society and their unique sub-cultures.<sup>14</sup>

Nonetheless, it is also necessary to consider the radical changes in adolescence or youth occurring from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century until the 1960s. Social histories of adolescence suggest that contemporary adolescence emerged at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and that significant transformations occurred in the period following World War II.<sup>15</sup> This has been linked to several legislative and societal changes. Post-war adolescents remained longer within the educational system. In 1947 the minimum school-leaving age was raised from fourteen to fifteen years and in 1973 it was further raised to sixteen. Over the course of the 1960s, university and higher education attendance expanded.<sup>16</sup> Finally, the proportion of adolescents in the general population increased as a result of the post-war ‘baby boom’. Their wages had significantly risen and they had a greater disposable income which was used to consume popular music and clothing.<sup>17</sup>

Societal preoccupation with teenagers during the 1960s gave an impetus to well-known sociological works. Stanley Cohen famously coined the term ‘moral panic’ to

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<sup>13</sup> R. Thomson, “Sexuality and Young People: Policies, Practices and Identities,” in *Sexualities: Personal Lives and Social Policy*, ed. J. Carabine (Bristol: The Policy Press, 2004), 95.

<sup>14</sup> J. Clarke et al. “Subcultures, Cultures and Class: a Theoretical Overview,” in *Resistance Through Rituals: Youth Subcultures in Post-War Britain*, eds. S. Hall and T. Jefferson (London: Hutchinson, 1976), 9-74; D. Hebdige, *Hiding in the Light: On Images and Things* (London: Routledge, 1988).

<sup>15</sup> J. F. Kett, *Rites of Passage: Adolescence in America, 1790 to the Present* (New York: Basic Books, 1977); J. R. Gillis, *Youth and History: Tradition and Change in European Age Relations, 1770—Present* (New York: Academic Press, 1974); Osgerby, *Youth in Britain Since 1945*; Clarke et al., “Subcultures, Cultures and Class.”

<sup>16</sup> Osgerby, *Youth in Britain Since 1945*.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*

describe the reaction to the teenage sub-cultures Mods and Rockers.<sup>18</sup> Other sociologists, among them Stuart Hall and Tony Jefferson, examined the way youth sub-cultures reflected class tensions.<sup>19</sup> An examination of the emergence of teenage pregnancy needs to take into account the nature and the meaning of ‘teenage’ at that particular time and to consider its conjunction with the so called ‘sexual revolution’.

During the 1950s, extra-marital sexual intercourse was still a widely condemned practice and contraceptive advice was not easily available to unmarried women.<sup>20</sup> However, technological innovation in the field of contraception and a series of permissive legislative steps in Britain in the early 1960s significantly changed this situation.<sup>21</sup> The contraceptive pill became generally available in the UK in 1961, and in 1964 the Brook Advisory Centre began giving contraceptive advice to unmarried women.<sup>22</sup> By the end of the 1960s, abortion was legalised, the divorce law liberalised and the age of majority was lowered from twenty-one to eighteen.<sup>23</sup>

These changes transformed the field of work with unmarried mothers. During the late 1950s and early 1960s, most unmarried mothers who sought the help of local authorities during their pregnancy entered a Mother and Baby Home run by a religious organisation. By the late 1960s, these institutions were closing down and the role of religious organisations in welfare provision was rapidly declining. In 1973 the National Council for the Unmarried Mother and Her Child changed its name to the National Council for One Parent Families and broadened its remit to include mothers and fathers who were divorced, separated or widowed. The Finer Report published the following year which outlined the recommendations for state support for One Parent Families, did not include the category of unmarried mother. The governmental field of the care of unmarried mothers had become extinct.

This study explores the beginnings of the governmental field of teenage pregnancy in the dual transformations of the 1960s: the decline of the governmental

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<sup>18</sup> S. Cohen, *Folk Devils and Moral Panics* (London: Routledge, 2002).

<sup>19</sup> Clarke et al., “Subcultures, Cultures and Class.”

<sup>20</sup> L. Hall, *Sex, Gender and Social Change in Britain Since 1880* (Basingstoke: Macmillan); C. Haste, *Rules of Desire: Sex in Britain: World War I to the Present* (London: Pimlico, 1994).

<sup>21</sup> J. Weeks, *Sex, Politics and Society: The Regulation of Sexuality Since 1800* (London: Longman, 1989).

<sup>22</sup> H. Cook, *The Long Sexual Revolution: English Women, Sex, and Contraception, 1800-1975* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

<sup>23</sup> K. E. Kiernan, H. Land, and J. E. Lewis, *Lone Motherhood in Twentieth-Century Britain: From Footnote to Front Page* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998).

field of work with unmarried mothers and the rise of governmental concern with the sexually active teenager. The key features of these governmental fields, as well as the influence of the psychological concept of adolescence in shaping governmental practice, are explored.

There is a certain drawback with regard to the timeframe of this study. I focus on the period 1955-1968. However, the disappearance of the care of unmarried mothers as a governmental field was closely linked to the liberalisation of the divorce law in 1969 and the establishment of greater state support for One Parent Families in the mid-1970s. It was in 1979 that the recommendations of a Joint Working Party on Pregnant Schoolgirls and Schoolgirl Mothers, established by the National Council for One Parent Families were published.<sup>24</sup> In order to fully describe the decline of work with unmarried mothers and the rise of the governmental field of teenage pregnancy, it is necessary to follow the developments up until the late 1970s. Nonetheless, examining the period 1955-1968 enables the identification of the key shifts in discourses and practices which marked the ‘beginnings’ of teenage pregnancy.

Up until now there has been no attempt to examine the emergence of teenage pregnancy in Britain. Histories of the governance of motherhood do not focus on its conjunction with the regulation of teenage sexuality while histories of debates regarding young people’s engagement in sexual activity do not focus on their intersection with discourses of motherhood.<sup>25</sup> Accounts of the politics of contraception in the 20<sup>th</sup> century such as Leathard’s *The Fight for Family Planning*, Leslie Hoggart’s *Feminist Campaigns for Birth Control and Abortion Rights in Britain*, or Latham’s comparison of French and British contraceptive history do not relate these developments to the emergence of teenage pregnancy.<sup>26</sup> Histories of sexuality such as those written by Jeffery Weeks, Hera Cook and Leslie Hall and accounts of the post-war development of sex education note the rise of anxieties

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<sup>24</sup> Joint Working Party on Pregnant Schoolgirls and Schoolgirl Mothers, *Pregnant at School* (London: National Council for One Parent Families, 1979).

<sup>25</sup> C. Smart, “Deconstructing Motherhood,” in *Good Enough Mothering? Feminist Perspectives on Lone Motherhood*, ed. E. Bortolaia Silva (London: Routledge, 1996): 37–57; M. Waites, *The Age of Consent: Young People, Sexuality and Citizenship* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005); Kiernan, Land, and Lewis, *Lone Motherhood in Twentieth-Century Britain*.

<sup>26</sup> A. Leathard, *The Fight for Family Planning: The Development of Family Planning Services in Britain 1921-74* (London: Macmillan, 1980); L. Hoggart, *Feminist Campaigns for Birth Control and Abortion Rights in Britain* (New York: Edwin Mellen Press, 2003); L. Latham, *Regulating Reproduction: a Century of Conflict in Britain and France* (New York: Manchester University Press, 2002).

regarding teenage sexual activity, but they do not examine in detail government practices, nor do they chart the way these developments affected work with unmarried mothers.<sup>27</sup>

The chosen perspective is not without its limitations. The research focuses on the role of ‘adolescence’ or ‘teenage’, steering other dimensions to the back. The most significant of those is gender. The governmental fields of teenage pregnancy and unmarried mothers focus almost exclusively on women.<sup>28</sup> Although both a man and a woman participate in a sexual act leading to a pregnancy, it is only the woman who becomes a governmental target. Despite the palpable role of gender, this aspect remains relatively implicit in my account. The reason for this was the wish to foreground the role of the psychological concept of adolescence in the problematization. In addition, the attempt was to explore the continuities and discontinuities in governmental practices associated with a shift in problematization. Since both governmental and voluntary work with unmarried mothers and the later work with teenage unmarried mothers were carried out with women alone, gender played a small role in the discursive shifts.

The second major dimension that remains implicit in the thesis is class. Although the terms ‘unmarried mothers’ and ‘teenage mothers’ are class-neutral on the surface, the fact that it is primarily working-class women who are continuously at the centre of governmental interventions could be seen as indicative of the continued role which class plays in British society.<sup>29</sup> However, it is problematic to explain the governmental concern with teenage mothers solely as another instance of the vilification of young working-class women’s sexual and reproductive capacities. While the fact that these women are continuously problematized is undeniable, we should not lose sight of the way in which the problematization of teenage pregnancy diverges from national class dynamics.

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<sup>27</sup> Weeks, *Sex, Politics and Society*.; Cook, *The Long Sexual Revolution*.; L. Hall, *Sex, Gender and Social Change*.; J. Hampshire and J. Lewis, “‘The Ravages of Permissiveness’: Sex Education and the Permissive Society,” *Twentieth Century British History* 15, no. 3 (2004): 290-312; R. Thomson, “Moral Rhetoric and Public Health Pragmatism: The Contemporary Politics of Sex Education,” *Feminist Review* 48 (1994): 40-60; J. Pilcher, “Sex in Health Education: Official Guidance for Schools in England, 1928-1977,” *Journal of Historical Sociology* 17, no. 2-3 (153): 185-208.

<sup>28</sup> There has been some discussion of young men who produced an illegitimate child in the professional literature in the 1950s and 1960s but this discussion was limited.

<sup>29</sup> B. Skeggs, “The Making of Class and Gender through Visualizing Moral Subject Formation,” *Sociology* 39, no. 5 (2005): 965-982.



Teenage pregnancy is a governmental field not only in Britain but in various Western countries such as the U.S.A., Canada and New Zealand. Furthermore, statistics of teenage conception and birth rates are being produced not only in North America and Western Europe but in Africa, Latin America and Asia.<sup>30</sup> Hence, an attempt to explain the transnational governmental field solely in terms of the national dynamics is inappropriate. It is only if we take account of the constitutive role of discourses do we have a chance of fully understanding the complex transnational dynamics involved in its formation.

This conceptualisation leads to the question: what is the ‘space’ in which one should examine the emergence of this governmental field? Social work and psychological literature on unmarried mothers in Britain in the 1950s and 1960s was highly influenced by the work of American practitioners. Similarly, governmental discussions of rising rates of venereal disease and illegitimacy among teenagers referred to research carried out in several European countries. The ‘space’ of medical, psychological and social work literature involved in the emergence of teenage pregnancy in Britain extended beyond the national bounds.

In contrast, legislation and policy broadly corresponded to national boundaries, although in Britain there was a distinction between Scotland, on one hand, and England and Wales, on the other.<sup>31</sup> Furthermore, local authorities were, to a significant extent, able to shape their provision. Although the guidance requiring local authorities to support unmarried mothers was national, each local authority made its own arrangement with voluntary organisations in its area.

Due to the inevitable resource limitation of a thesis study, it was necessary to develop a strategic approach to the investigation. The strategy taken involved studying governmental literature and complementing these findings by conducting archival research on the work of one local authority. The site chosen for the examination is the London County Council. This was a large local authority covering the area currently referred to as Inner London. The London County Council was a relatively influential local government organisation. The professionals who worked for the Council were often prominent in their field, and some of the Council’s senior

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<sup>30</sup> The World Health Organization regularly publishes adolescent fertility statistics from various countries across the world. See World Health Organisation, <http://www.who.int/en>.

<sup>31</sup> R. Davidson, “The Sexual State: Sexuality and Scottish Governance, 1950-1980,” *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 13, no. 4 (2004): 500-521.

officers held positions in other governmental organisations.<sup>32</sup> Hence, the records of this organisation are a useful entry to the study of the governmental changes occurring across the country.

Existing research on unmarried mothers looks at the work of specific Moral Welfare Associations or the National Council for the Unmarried Mother and Her Child while accounts of the rise of the concern with teenage sexual activity in the 1950s and 1960s are based on a study of governmental reports.<sup>33</sup> An examination of the work of the London County Council enables me to explore the conjunction of the diverse discourses and practices in one organisation. I examine a voluntary Mother and Baby Home used by the Council, a nursing home which was managed by the Council; I also chart the growing concern with teenage sexual activity within the Council's work and the emergence of the care of the teenage unmarried mother as a distinct field of governmental activity.

In line with the genealogical outlook, this thesis puts forward an account which makes visible the range of discourses and practices in operation during the period 1955-1968. This 'snap-shot' reveals that while transformations were taking place in certain sites, others remained unaltered by new developments. For instance, although within the work of the London County Council the teenage unmarried mother was emerging as a distinct concern from the late 1950s, St. Mary's House Mother and Baby Home, one of the institutions supported by the Council, continued to not distinguish teenage unmarried mothers from older unmarried mothers as late as 1968. Hence, the presentation of the chapters is arranged according to a thematic line rather than according to chronological progression.

The first chapter identifies the various ways in which scholars seek to explain the problematization of teenage pregnancy. I describe the claim that it is teenage mothers' violation of sexual mores or their divergence from reproductive norms that

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<sup>32</sup> For instance, Dr. Donald Gough who was appointed visiting psychiatrist to St. Christopher's Mother and Baby Home, had published several articles on unmarried mothers in academic journals and was a senior psychiatrist at the Tavistock Clinic. Hilary Halpin the Chairman of the London County Council's Children's Committee was also the Chairman of the London Juvenile Court and a member of the Council of the Management of the National Association for Mental Health. This is discussed in greater detail in Chapter 6.

<sup>33</sup> J. Fink, "Condemned or Condoned? Investigating the Problem of Unmarried Motherhood in England, 1945-60," (University of Essex, 1997); Ongoing ESRC funded project led by Professor Pat Thane titled "Unmarried Motherhood in England and Wales, 1918-1995"; J. Pilcher, "Sex in Health Education."

underpins their depiction as problematic. I also describe the argument that at the root of governmental concern is the economic burden that these young mothers place on the public. In the next section of the chapter, I depict the work of scholars who focus on the concept of ‘adolescence’ in their analysis of the problematization of teenage pregnancy. The following part outlines socio-historical accounts of the emergence of teenage pregnancy in the U.S. I focus on the work of scholars who argue that the emergence of teenage pregnancy reflects a shift from a moral to a scientific problematization of out-of-wedlock childbearing by young women.

The second chapter outlines the concept of genealogy and describes the key ontological and epistemological critiques of historical narratives found in Michel Foucault’s discussion of the concept. I note, in particular, the genealogical objective of using history in order to reveal the inessential nature of phenomena. In the following part of the chapter, I describe the conceptual devices that are drawn from Foucault’s oeuvre: ‘problematization’ and ‘technology’. I proceed to examine the relationship between archives and government, and link this discussion to the empirical material used in this study. Finally, I describe the empirical data and discuss its conceptualisation.

The third chapter begins with an account of government work with unmarried mothers in Britain during the mid-1950s and early 1960s. I depict the two key problematizations of unmarried mothers: the ‘moral’ and the psychological.<sup>34</sup> Each problematization is charted through considering several features: the ‘etymology’ of becoming an unmarried mother, the subjectivity of the unmarried mother, the conceptualisation of motherhood and the illegitimate child. In addition, I consider the way in which the adolescent unmarried mother was configured within these problematizations. I argue that according to the moral problematization, becoming an unmarried mother was an indication of a certain persistent subjectivity. The disciplinary regimes of the Mother and Baby Home were aimed at reforming the mother’s character. Significantly, motherhood (the responsibilities of having to care for a child) was seen as a device that would help achieve this objective. In contrast, within the psychological problematization unmarried mothers were understood to be suffering from a psychological disturbance that was a long-term feature of their

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<sup>34</sup> The notion of a ‘moral’ discourse or a ‘moral’ problematization is discussed in greater detail in Chapter 1.

personality. Unlike moral welfare workers, psychologists were preoccupied with whether or not the unmarried mother could become a 'good enough mother'<sup>35</sup> and they discouraged the practice of allowing unmarried mothers to raise their children themselves. I argue that there was an inherent tension between 'adolescence' and the psychological problematization of unmarried mothers as they were competing discourses of pathological subjectivity. Since the psychological concept of adolescence proposed that this was a stage of development characterised by mental disturbance, being an adolescent could in part explain the pathological act of becoming an unmarried mother. For this reason, several social workers concluded that in most cases adolescent unmarried mothers were less disturbed psychologically than their older counterparts.

The fourth chapter presents two case-studies of the work of governmental and voluntary institutions accommodating unmarried mothers. The first section of this chapter depicts the London County Council's work with unmarried mothers focusing on King's Mead, one of the Council's large nursing homes. I examine the practices through which the care of the mothers and their children was managed and their depiction in the reports written by the Council staff. The ambiguity of the distinction between unmarried mothers and lone mothers on one hand, and between adolescent unmarried mothers and older unmarried mothers on the other, is explored. I argue that it was primarily the moral problematization which shaped the work of King's Mead. Hence the psychological concept of adolescence did not influence its work. The second section of the chapter focuses on the work of St. Mary's House, a South London Mother and Baby Home. The case histories written by moral welfare workers and council officers are used to construct a picture of the lives of women who entered the Home as well as a picture of the governmental practices leading to their admission. I consider the care of those unmarried mothers who would currently be described as teenagers and the differential influence of the psychological and moral problematization on the work at this Home. As with King's Mead, I show how the work of St. Mary's House was also structured by the moral problematization. The psychological problematization had hardly any presence either in the work of staff at the Home or in the work of the referring moral welfare workers.

The fifth chapter commences with an account of the development of the

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<sup>35</sup> D. W. Winnicott, *Human Nature* (London: Free Association Books, 1988).

psychological concept of adolescence as denoting a distinct subjectivity. The role of this concept in governmental efforts to govern adolescent sex during the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century is portrayed along with some of the significant changes to adolescence occurring during this period. The second part of the chapter sketches the rise of governmental and professional preoccupation with the sexually active adolescent during the 1950s and early 1960s focusing on the work of the London County Council. I identify the focal points of this concern: promiscuity, venereal disease and illegitimacy.

The sixth chapter describes the characteristics of the problematization of the teenage unmarried mother and provides an account of the establishment of St. Christopher's Mother and Baby Home as the first Home to cater exclusively for schoolgirl unmarried mothers.<sup>36</sup> The ways in which the work of this Home diverged from the practices of other Mother and Baby Homes are examined. I propose that compared with other Homes, the work of St. Christopher's was characterised by the individualisation of care, the increased role of psychiatric knowledge in shaping its work and greater scrutiny of each resident. Against the backdrop of an expansion of governmental duties to protect the welfare of children and psychology's increased role in shaping governmental practices, the teenage unmarried mother surfaced as an obvious object of concern: she was seen as embodying two sets of children whose development into emotionally healthy citizens was at stake.

In the conclusion, I consider the decline of Mother and Baby Homes in the late 1960s and 1970s. I recount the processes identified as linked to the emergence of the care of the teenage unmarried mother as a distinct governmental field. These include the decline of the moral problematization of unmarried mothers and the notion of motherhood as transforming a woman's subjectivity. In addition, there had been a rise in the influence of psychological discourses on governmental work, an expansion of governmental networks around children and an increase in governmental concern with sexually active teenagers. Coupled with the psychological conceptualisation of adolescence as a state in which there is a mismatch between a sexually mature body and a subjectivity which is not 'fully grown up', these developments led the teenage unmarried mother to become a focal

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<sup>36</sup> This is according to the London County Council reports, more empirical research is necessary in order to establish this fact with certainty.

point of governmental work.

## **Chapter 1:**

### **The Problematization of Teenage Pregnancy: An Analysis of the Literature**

This opening chapter reviews the literature that seeks to explain public and government concern with ‘teenage pregnancy’. In addition, I examine research that tries to identify the processes associated with the rise of this concern. In the first part of this chapter I describe some of the current literature which locates teenage pregnancy in debates regarding sexual morality, reproductive norms and state welfare provision. I then describe arguments that place ‘adolescence’ at the centre of the problematization of teenage pregnancy. This includes discussing the work of several scholars who draw on the psycho-social notion of adolescence as a distinct developmental stage within the life cycle. This discussion is followed by an account of the work of scholars who argue that the problematization of teenage pregnancy is the result of the persistence of societal anxieties regarding female sexuality in light of the apparent liberalisation of sexual mores. The last section discusses the work of several scholars who claim that the emergence of teenage pregnancy represents a shift from a ‘moral’ to a ‘scientific’ problematization of out-of-wedlock childbearing by young women.

This chapter includes literature from the U.K. as well as the U.S., Canada and South Africa. There are several reasons for these inclusions. Firstly, there is a paucity of socio-historical accounts from the U.K. Secondly, many of the arguments place teenage pregnancy within the broad processes of modernity or secularisation and these arguments can be seen as pertinent to Western countries. Furthermore, some specifically post-war phenomena such as the ‘baby boom’ or the rise of teenage popular culture are also pertinent to most Western countries. Significantly, however, these phenomena did not take place in distinct social worlds (corresponding to the boundaries of nation states). For instance, the consumption of American popular culture was a key feature of post-war British ‘teenage’.<sup>1</sup> Similarly, governmental preoccupation with teenage rates of pregnancy and venereal disease was informed by research carried out in other European countries. Thus, at least in part, the processes

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<sup>1</sup> J. Davis, *Youth and the Condition of Britain: Images of Adolescent Conflict* (London: Athlone, 1990).

described in the international literature, particularly the U.S., were part of the processes occurring in Britain.

Nonetheless, research that examined America or South Africa cannot be directly applied to Britain. The purpose of reviewing this literature is the identification of arguments that could, in principle, be extended to the U.K. For example, Constance Nathanson argues that in the U.S., it is the persistence of anxieties regarding young women's sexuality that underpins the disquiet that teenage pregnancy arouses.<sup>2</sup> A similar argument is made with regards to the U.K. by Gail Hawkes.<sup>3</sup> However, Nathanson's work helps elaborate this perspective and complements Hawkes' more limited research. In addition, by examining the work of scholars who researched the U.S., Canada and South Africa, I was able to identify limitations that informed my own investigation of the emergence of 'teenage pregnancy' in the U.K.

### **1.1 Sexual Morality, Motherhood and the Welfare State**

Several scholars link the concern regarding teenage pregnancy to societal tensions around sexual mores, norms of parenthood and state welfare provision. These themes have been explored in different ways by different scholars: Angela McRobbie focuses on political discourses, Jean Carabine examines policy discourses, while Daniel Monk examines both. I begin by depicting the arguments put forward by these scholars and develop my critique at the end of this section.

Writing in the early 1990s, McRobbie uses the term 'moral panic' first coined in relation to teenagers by Stanley Cohen several decades earlier, to describe the public response to teenage mothers:

Since the early 1980s there has been a subdued moral panic simmering under the surface about young unemployed girls becoming pregnant, remaining single, and as a result extricating themselves from the whole business of looking for a job. Single parenthood means that financial dependency... shifts from the

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<sup>2</sup> C. A. Nathanson, *Dangerous Passages: The Social Control of Sexuality in Women's Adolescence* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1991).

<sup>3</sup> G. Hawkes, "Responsibility and Irresponsibility: Young Women and Family Planning," *Sociology* 29, no. 2 (1995): 257-273.



male partner to the state, and it is this which has caused stories to appear in the tabloids about teenage pregnancy being used as a means of receiving extra benefits, getting a council house, or at least of getting on to the council waiting list.<sup>4</sup>

The anxieties McRobbie describes concern women who are seen to be excluding themselves from the labour market and exploiting the welfare state by bearing children for which the state needs to provide. In a more recent article McRobbie argues that the 'Third Way', the ideological framework of the New Labour government developed by Anthony Giddens,<sup>5</sup> struggled with the same tensions generated by women's dual role as mothers and as participants in the labour market. Debates regarding welfare support for lone mothers and teenage mothers are instances where these tensions come to the fore.<sup>6</sup>

McRobbie identifies anxieties regarding state welfare expenditure as being at the root of the problematization of teenage pregnancy. Several other scholars claim that concern regarding sexual morality is an additional factor. In a recent article Monk argues that the prominence of teenage pregnancy in contemporary Western societies is a result of the fact that it is located at the centre of debates regarding poverty and morality.<sup>7</sup> Examining New Labour government policy, Monk identifies a shift from a moral preoccupation with the sexual activity of young people, to a preoccupation with the economic implications of their actions. While in the past, government policy had been shaped by a wish to preserve the sexual innocence of young girls, a sanctioning of the figure of the young sexual woman underlies new sex education policies put in place by the New Labour government. Furthermore, increased government support made available to teenage mothers in the field of education and employment was a sign that these young women were no longer to be seen as immoral and irresponsible teenagers, but as responsible citizens able to care for themselves and their children.

A similar argument is put forward by Carabine who examines the

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<sup>4</sup> A. McRobbie, *Feminism and Youth Culture from "Jackie" to "Just Seventeen"* (Basingstoke: Macmillan Education, 1991), 220.

<sup>5</sup> A. Giddens, *The Third Way: The Renewal of Social Democracy* (Oxford: Polity Press, 1998).

<sup>6</sup> A. McRobbie, "Feminism and the Third Way," *Feminist Review* 64 (2000): 97-112.

<sup>7</sup> D. Monk, "Teenage Pregnancies and Sex Education: Constructing the Girl/Woman Subject," in *Sexuality and the Law: Feminist Engagements*, eds. V. E. Munro and C. F. Stychin (London: Routledge-Cavendish, 2007), 201-221.

problematization of teenage pregnancy in New Labour policies and strategies.<sup>8</sup> While in the 1980s, a ‘moral traditionalist stance’ proposing that sexual intercourse should take place within marriage had been a key perspective through which teenage mothers were problematized, after 1999 New Labour policies revealed a different viewpoint. Within these policies teenagers have been reconfigured as knowing and responsible welfare citizens. No longer childlike subjects whose innocence should be protected, they were now depicted as citizens who should exercise agency, calculate risk and take responsibility.

In an earlier work Monk<sup>9</sup> addresses the question of the comparative role of ‘moral’ and ‘welfare’ concerns in a different way. Examining political discourse in Britain in the 1990s he argues that different political perspectives described in different ways the difficulty posed by teenage pregnancy. In neo-conservative discourse teenage pregnancy is seen as the marker of declining sexual morality. It is grouped with anxieties regarding the easy availability of contraceptives for young women and access to abortion. In neo-liberal discourse, however, the problem is pregnant teenagers’ dependency on state welfare. The key concern is not teenagers’ sexual impropriety, but the demise of the nuclear family as the basic unit of economic subsistence. In what Monk terms a ‘liberal democratic discourse’, the focus is on the pregnancy’s detrimental effect on the well-being of the mother and the child.

Monk does not examine the emergence of governmental concern with teenage mothers, nor does he identify the discursive shifts which marked its rise. It is precisely these processes that are the focus of the research presented in this thesis. In Chapter 3, I demonstrate that the preoccupation with protecting the health of the baby, which Monk links to a ‘liberal democratic discourse’ can be identified in the work of psychologists writing about ‘unmarried mothers’ in the 1950s and 1960s. However, most psychologists argued that the unmarried mothers were psychologically disturbed and that their disturbance was a long-term personality characteristic. They consequently recommended that these women’s children be adopted by married couples. It is only when there was a shift to a problematization of

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<sup>8</sup> J. Carabine, “New Labour’s Teenage Pregnancy Policy: Constituting Knowing Responsible Citizens?,” *Cultural Studies* 21, no. 6 (2007): 952-973.

<sup>9</sup> D. Monk, “Sex Education and the Problematization of Teenage Pregnancy: a Genealogy of Law and Governance,” *Social Legal Studies* 7, no. 2 (1998): 239-259.

teenage unmarried mothers that psychologists started to discuss the objective of protecting the well-being of both the mother and the child. Thus, Monk's claims should be historicised and the links between professional discourses and political discourses should be explored.

The supposition that the problematization of teenage pregnancy stems from certain societal tensions is further examined by Kirstin Luker in her book *Dubious Conceptions: The Politics of Teenage Pregnancy*.<sup>10</sup> Luker argues that the disquiet regarding teenage pregnancy in late 20<sup>th</sup> century American society is due to the fact that it constitutes a meeting point of underlying societal conflicts. One such conflict exists between the economic mode of societal relations in which people act in a self-interested manner, and the familial mode in which altruism is required. During the 19<sup>th</sup> century the division between the two modes of relations corresponded to the division between the private domain and the public realm as well as the division of labour between men and women. The public domain was inhabited exclusively by men acting in a self-interested manner, while women functioned in the realm of family relations, the area in which altruism and care were the guiding principles. During the 20<sup>th</sup> century this clear distinction became eroded due mainly to the increased participation of women in the workforce. Women were expected to operate in the two modes, as a rational self-interested economic actor at work, and an altruistic one in the private sphere.

The tension between the two modes, Luker argues, is manifested in the problematization of teenage pregnancy. Teenage mothers are alternatively portrayed as irrational actors or as rational economic actors. They are either seen as children who are not responsible for their actions, or as calculating agents motivated by financial incentives. Luker points out that it is not clear which notion is more disturbing; a child being born without any parental rational calculation and without any arrangements for its provision, or a child being born out of economic considerations. The notion of people who decide to bear children out of rational economic considerations is seen as negative since it violates the notion of familial relations governed by love and care. However, the notion of young women bearing children without considering their ability to provide for the child is disturbing from

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<sup>10</sup> K. Luker, *Dubious Conceptions: The Politics of Teenage Pregnancy* (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1997).

the point of view of a society which expects individuals to be economically self-reliant. In Luker's words:

These competing views of family and marketplace, of men and women, of rationality and morality, of rights and obligations are very much front and centre in nearly every aspect of American life these days. Teenage mothers and their babies reflect and illuminate these cultural and social wars because they pose so pointedly the contradictions inherent in our ways of thinking about them.<sup>11</sup>

While Luker explains the prominence of the concern with teenage pregnancy in terms of conflicts in late 20<sup>th</sup> century America, she links teenage pregnancy to a long-standing preoccupation with extra-marital childbearing. The emphasis and overtones of the problematization have changed along with the terms used to describe young extra-marital childbearing. 'Bastardy' was the prominent term during the period of English colonial rule. In later centuries the term 'illegitimacy' and subsequently the term 'out-of-wedlock' were prominent. It was only in the 1970s that 'teenage pregnancy' became the most widely used phrase. The rise of this term reflected the emergence of a novel configuration. The two novel aspects were the focus on adolescents and on pregnancy (as opposed to childbearing). Luker argues that the focus on pregnancy is the result of the availability of abortion on one hand, and the political contestation surrounding it, on the other.<sup>12</sup>

Luker raises several distinct claims. The first is the association of teenage pregnancy with the long-standing concern with out-of-wedlock childbearing. The proposition is that teenage pregnancy is a specific instance of this preoccupation, which represents a certain shift in emphasis to adolescents and to pregnancy. This claim implies a conceptualisation of illegitimate childbearing as a bodily occurrence that is regarded differently at different historical times. This relies on an ontological division between the bodily realm in which the pregnancy occurs and the realm of representations, attitudes and politics. This perspective may obscure the way in which societal processes and bodily processes are enmeshed: the way in which attitudes materialize, the way in which sexual actions are linked to historically

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 6.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

varying desires and anxieties, and the way in which technologies intervene in physiological processes and change the experiences of the body.

Luker's second key argument, as mentioned above, is that teenage pregnancy constitutes a meeting point of societal conflicts. In particular, she identifies a clash between two fundamental modes of social relations: the economic mode and the familial mode. However, I argue that the distinction between the economic and the familial modes is very broad and somewhat schematic. The complexity of different kinds of relationships is reduced to the dichotomy of self-interested and rational, on one hand, and caring and altruistic on the other. Furthermore, one might question whether rational and altruistic are rightfully classified as opposing sides of a dichotomy, or whether this dichotomy captures the complexity of human action and emotions. We might also question the broad categories of 'economic' and 'familial' and the lack of power dynamics in this portrayal of individual action. In the above description actions are the result of individuals' decisions and are not located in discourses or power dynamics.

In Monk's and Carabine's arguments the historical dimension of the problematization of teenage pregnancy is under-explored.<sup>13</sup> As will be discussed in Chapter 5, the concern with teenage sexuality has undergone changes during the course of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Similarly, reproductive norms have also been subject to significant change with the legalisation of abortion, the liberalisation of divorce law and the increase in state support for single mothers. I claim that it will not suffice to examine the interplay between 'moral' and 'welfare' concerns in contemporary policy, and that we should examine the period of a shift between the problem of 'unmarried mothers' and the later preoccupation with 'teenage mothers'. As the accounts I present in Chapter 3 and in Chapter 4 demonstrate, the notion of responsibility was a key feature of the moral problematization of unmarried mothers. Concurrently, a concern with the impact of illegitimate childbearing on the wealth and well-being of the nation as a whole was evoked as part of the psychological problematization of unmarried mothers. This indicates that a more complex historical

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<sup>13</sup> Carabine had previously examined the interplay between the 'moral' and 'welfare' concerns through a study of 19<sup>th</sup> century bastardy clauses of the New Poor Law Act and linked her findings to contemporary discourses of teenage pregnancy. However, she did not study the period in which there was a shift from a problematization of unmarried mothers to teenage pregnancy. See J. Carabine, "Constituting Sexuality through Social Policy: The Case of Lone Motherhood 1834 and Today," *Social and Legal Studies* 10 (2001): 291-314.

exploration of the claims currently associated with the ‘moral’ and ‘welfare’ discourses is called for. This examination could help reveal the continuities and discontinuities in discourses and practices associated with the emergence and persistence of the governmental field of ‘teenage pregnancy’.

## **1.2 Adolescence**

Several scholars centre their claims regarding the problematization of teenage pregnancy on the concept of adolescence. Employing the psychological notion of adolescence as a developmental stage, they depict the problematization of teenage pregnancy as stemming from the characteristics of this distinct stage. The first example of this can be found in the work of Franklin Zimring.<sup>14</sup> Zimring claims that adolescence is characterised by a gap between bodily and mental capacities. It is a state where one has the capacity to have sex and bear children but not the capacity to understand the full implications of these acts. The problematization of teenage motherhood is a result of the attempt to protect adolescents from making decisions for which they are not mature enough and which would have a lasting effect on their lives.

A different view is proposed by Beatrice Hamburg and Sandra Dixon.<sup>15</sup> They argue that during the 20<sup>th</sup> century there has been a decrease in the age at which girls become biologically able to bear children while at the same time there has been an increase in the age at which social majority is achieved. This creates a growing discrepancy between the biological and the social age. The disquiet that teenage pregnancy arouses is a result of this gap. In contrast with Zimring, Hamburg and Dixon do not propose an essential discrepancy within the adolescent, but support the idea that the source of the problematization is the existence of a gap between the adolescent body and the social norms.

A similar line of argument is put forward by Mark Testa. Testa argues that

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<sup>14</sup> F. E. Zimring, “The Jurisprudence of Teenage Pregnancy,” in *Early Parenthood and Coming of Age in the 1990s*, eds. M. K. Rosenheim and M. F. Testa (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1992), 150-162.

<sup>15</sup> B.A. Hamburg, S. L. Dixon, “Adolescent Pregnancy and Parenthood,” in *Early Parenthood and Coming of Age in the 1990s*, eds. M. K. Rosenheim and M. F. Testa, (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1992), 17-33.

teenage pregnancy is the result of the particular characteristics of adolescence in contemporary society. Economic changes during the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century led to the increased economic dependency of young people. The industrial economy paid unskilled and manual workers relatively well, whereas in the service economy of the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, a young person required an extended period of education in order to obtain a better-paid job. There are therefore more years of preparation before economic independence is achieved. There is a new social timetable and teenage pregnancy represents a deviation from the new norms. As Testa states:

Considered as a form of age grading, prevention of teenage parenthood can be subsumed under the broader set of adjustment problems that arise whenever a society undertakes to revise its age graded norms upward to limit youth's access to adult economic, social, political roles and privileges.<sup>16</sup>

In this sense there is an affinity between teenage pregnancy and juvenile delinquency. Juvenile delinquency is frequently linked to the failure to comply with age-based restrictions on activities such as car-driving and alcohol-drinking.

Each of the above three arguments proposes that the problematic nature of teenage pregnancy stems from a certain discrepancy: in Zimring's account it is a discrepancy between bodily capacities and mental capacities; for Hamburg and Dixon it is a discrepancy between the biological age and the social age; while Testa argues that there is a discrepancy between the industrial economy's social timetable and the contemporary social timetable. In all three arguments the identification of a discrepancy relies on essentialising the adolescent body. Zimring essentialises adolescence and proposes that it is the universal trait of this stage of development that one's mental capacities lag behind one's corporal capabilities. This claim is problematic if we consider the historicity of this conception of adolescence. Chapter 5 presents social historians' claim that the emphasis on the physiological development as underpinning the stage of adolescence only emerged at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>17</sup> Thus, claims such as Zimring's reflect a certain historically-

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<sup>16</sup> M. F. Testa, "Introduction," in *Early Parenthood and Coming of Age in the 1990s*, eds. M. K. Rosenheim and M. F. Testa (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1992), 7.

<sup>17</sup> J. F. Kett, *Rites of Passage: Adolescence in America, 1790 to the Present* (New York: Basic Books, 1977); J. R. Gillis, *Youth and History: Tradition and Change in European Age Relations, 1770—Present* (New York: Academic Press, 1981); M. A. Vinovskis, *An "Epidemic" of Adolescent*

formed conception of adolescence which should not be considered universal. Hamburg and Dixon essentialise the adolescent body by proposing that it is a body which is ‘trapped’ by social norms. According to this understanding, the adolescent body has certain urges and desires which develop in a realm separate to the social world, and which can be either restrained or expressed. I argue that Testa’s argument also relies on assuming a disparity between the body on one hand, and the current social timetable on the other.

The essential conception of the body has come under criticism in the work of historians and social theorists.<sup>18</sup> Judith Butler points to the role of signification and performativity in shaping the materiality of the body; Michel Foucault and Barbara Duden examine the historically changing body and Vicki Kirby focuses on criticising the notion of a mute body.<sup>19</sup> More specifically, the claim that the adolescent body was trapped by societal norms or that it was constrained by a changing social timetable was evoked by psychologists and government officers during the 1950s and 1960s. Rather than assume that this suggestion represents a universal fact, we should explore its historical trajectory and the role it played in shaping governmental practices.

### **The Critical Perspective**

In contrast with the perspective outlined by Zimring, Hamburg and Dixon and Testa, several scholars propose to look at the way in which adolescence, childhood and adulthood are *constructed*. The claim is that the problematic status ascribed to teenage pregnancy does not stem from a ‘real’ discrepancy, but from the disruption of a certain conception. One such claim is the proposition that teenage pregnancy disrupts the distinction between childhood and adulthood.<sup>20</sup> The unsettling character

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*Pregnancy?: Some Historical and Policy Considerations* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988).

<sup>18</sup> J. Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1999); M. Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Vol. 1, The Will to Knowledge* (London: Penguin, 1998); V. Kirby, *Telling Flesh: The Substance of the Corporeal* (New York: Routledge, 1997); B. Duden, *Disembodying Women: Perspectives on Pregnancy and the Unborn* (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1993).

<sup>19</sup> Kirby, *Telling Flesh.*; M. Fraser, “What is the Matter of Feminist Criticism?,” *Economy and Society* 31, no. 4 (2002): 606-625.

<sup>20</sup> S. E. Harari and M. A. Vinovskis, “Adolescent Sexuality, Pregnancy, and Childbearing in the Past,” in *The Politics of Pregnancy: Adolescent Sexuality and Public Policy*, eds. A. Lawson and D. L.



of the occurrence of teenage pregnancy has been described by Annette Lawson in the following words:

When the young adolescent becomes pregnant she confronts Western society with a dilemma: is she still a child, representing dependent innocence, or an adult, representing independent maturity?<sup>21</sup>

This argument has been presented more elaborately by Anne Murcott who claims that in contemporary society, childhood and adulthood are seen as separate and mutually exclusive states.<sup>22</sup> Teenage pregnancy disrupts this dichotomy as the pregnant adolescent could be seen as both a child and an adult. This disturbance is encapsulated in the notion of teenage mothers as ‘children having children’. In addition, teenage pregnancy undermines the notion of childhood as an ‘innocent’ i.e. sexless stage. Following Mary Douglas,<sup>23</sup> Murcott argues that teenage pregnancy can be seen as a type of ‘social pollution’.<sup>24</sup> Douglas argues that beliefs about pollution regulating the consumption of food and sex are found in every society and fulfil a universal social function. They mask ambiguities that could bring into question the existing social order. According to Murcott teenage pregnancy could be seen as corresponding to two types of social pollution identified by Mary Douglas. One type of danger is posed by objects which are located on the borderline between two categories. Teenage pregnancy is seen as located both at the margin of childhood and at the margin of adulthood. Secondly, it is a phenomenon which reveals an oxymoron within the established categorical system.

Catriona Macleod<sup>25</sup> makes a similar argument but locates the disruption caused by teenage pregnancy within a more linguistic conception drawing from the work of

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Rhode (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), 23-45; D. Monk, “Sex Education and the Problematization of Teenage Pregnancy.”; C. Macleod, “Teenage Pregnancy and the Construction of Adolescence: Scientific Literature in South Africa,” *Childhood* 10, no. 4 (2003): 419-437.

<sup>21</sup> A. Lawson, “Multiple Fractures: the Cultural Construction of Teenage Sexuality and Pregnancy,” in *The Politics of Pregnancy: Adolescent Sexuality and Public Policy*, eds. A. Lawson and D. L. Rhode (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), 117.

<sup>22</sup> A. Murcott, “The Social Construction of Teenage Pregnancy: A Problem in the Ideologies of Childhood and Reproduction,” *Sociology of Health & Illness* 2, no. 1 (1980): 1-23.

<sup>23</sup> M. Douglas, *Purity and Danger: an Analysis of the Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* (London: Routledge, 1991).

<sup>24</sup> Murcott, “The Social Construction of Teenage Pregnancy.”, 2.

<sup>25</sup> C. Macleod, “Teenage Pregnancy and the Construction of Adolescence.”

Jacques Derrida.<sup>26</sup> Macleod claims that there are certain words termed ‘undecidables’ whose meanings remain fundamentally ambivalent. These words traverse both sides of an opposition and fail to fully fit one term. Macleod argues that the term ‘undecidable’ can be used to describe the dynamics of the term adolescence: ‘adolescent’ does not fully fit the category of ‘child’ or that of ‘adult’ but is simultaneously associated with both. The notion of adolescence as a transitional stage is outlined by developmental psychology as an attempt to counteract this undecidability. When a teenager becomes pregnant, the transitional notion of adolescence is disrupted. This exposes the undecidability of adolescence that underlies the notion of adolescence as transition.

Nancy Lesko, similarly to Macleod, locates the problematization of teenage pregnancy in the disruption of the notion of adolescence as a transitional stage.<sup>27</sup> Lesko uses Homi Bhabha’s work and claims that modernity is characterised by a dichotomous hierarchy between past and present in which the past is surpassed by the present in a narrative of progress and development. Lesko draws parallels between Bhabha’s characterisation of modernity and the concept of adolescence. She argues that adolescence enacts modernity’s notions of development. As she states: ‘Adolescence is an emblem of modernity, and time is its defining mode’.<sup>28</sup>

Lesko argues that adolescent mothers could be described through appropriating Bhabha’s concept of ‘disjunctive present’. This concept denotes the disruption of the ordering of past and present whereby the past is not separated from the present but overlaps with it. The dominant concept of adolescence expressed in psychological and pedagogical literature is that it is a process of slow development. Adolescent mothers disrupt not only the normative order of development, but the notion that development is gradual. The growing up narrative which adolescent mothers embody is one of sudden maturation. This type of development exposes the contingency of the conception of adolescence as a gradual linear progress.

These accounts propose that teenage pregnancy is problematized because it disrupts certain prevailing conceptions and threatens to reveal their contingency. In Murcott’s account teenage pregnancy disrupts the dichotomous division between

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<sup>26</sup> J. Derrida, *Of Grammatology* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1965).

<sup>27</sup> N. Lesko, *Act Your Age!: a Cultural Construction of Adolescence* (London: Routledge, 2001).

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 137.

childhood and adulthood. This disturbance of the categorical system can bring to light the contingency of the social order. In Macleod's account teenage pregnancy disrupts the notion of adolescence as a state of transition and thereby reveals the fundamental ambivalence of the term. Lesko claims that teenage pregnancy undermines the prevailing conception of adolescence as a process of gradual development.

The key weakness of these arguments is that they are to a large extent disembodied. Implying a dichotomy between representations and 'real', these scholars locate the disruption caused by teenage pregnancy in the realm of categories and conceptualisations. The way in which conceptualisations materialise or in which practices shape discourses is not considered. The problematization is depicted as stemming purely from the relationship between concepts. Furthermore, these conceptualisations are seen as uniform across the social world. Reading these accounts one would picture the social world as one in which meaning and conceptions are fully coherent and fixed. Additional limitations of these arguments are that they do not describe how the problematization of teenage pregnancy came into being, nor do they address the possibility that power dynamics are involved in forming the categories they describe.

### **1.3 Historical Perspective: The Persistence of Moral Anxieties**

Some scholars argue that the reason for the problematization of teenage pregnancy is the persistence of societal anxieties with regard to female sexuality. This claim has been put forward by Constance Nathanson in her book *Dangerous Passages: The Social Control of Sexuality in Women's Adolescence*.<sup>29</sup> Nathanson argues that young and unmarried women's sexuality was a source of long-standing anxiety in American society and that teenage pregnancy was another manifestation of this concern. Government and public anxieties associated with teenage pregnancy stem from a conception of female adolescence that emerged in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The adolescent girl's sexuality was considered problematic since it was seen as a threat to the public order. Nathanson analyses teenage pregnancy within a series of public

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<sup>29</sup> Nathanson, *Dangerous Passages*.

campaigns taking place from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century to raise the age of consent, to eliminate prostitution and venereal disease. Nathanson proclaims:

Adolescent pregnancy is the curiously enigmatic label adopted by late twentieth-century Americans to signal and demand attention to a centuries-old problem: the departure of single young women from age and gender-based norms of sexual propriety.<sup>30</sup>

Thus, the key concern underpinning teenage pregnancy is not the occurrence of extra-marital childbearing but the occurrence of sexual transgression: 'It is the evocation of non-marital sexuality rather than non-marital childbearing that gives the adolescent pregnancy label its symbolic force'.<sup>31</sup>

In the more immediate historical context, Nathanson argues that the emergence of teenage pregnancy was underpinned by the medicalisation of birth control facilitated by the development of the contraceptive pill. Prior to the development of the contraceptive pill the medical profession was reluctant to include fertility control in its remit. Thus, the availability of a medically prescribed contraceptive tool was the driving force in the medicalisation of unwanted pregnancy. In addition, the politically contested nature of abortion gave an impetus to the programmes for the prevention of pregnancy.

Nathanson raises several key arguments. She argues that teenage pregnancy should be understood as the result of long-standing anxieties regarding young women's sexuality accompanied by periodical outbursts of social movements seeking to reinstate sexual control. Within the more particular historical context, Nathanson claims that a constellation of interests of the medical profession, the birth control activists and technological advancement created the conditions for the emergence of teenage pregnancy. Nathanson's proposition that it was the availability of a contraceptive pill which drove the shift towards teenage pregnancy raises important issues concerning the emergence of new problematizations. This account suggests that problematizations do not only arise out of lack (for instance an economic deficit) but can also arise out of the opening of new possibilities. According to Nathanson, the existence of medically-prescribed contraception contributed to the identification of unwanted pregnancy as a problem. As outlined in

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 4.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 5.

Chapters 5 and 6, the rise of the apprehensions regarding teenage illegitimate pregnancies in Britain preceded the broadening of contraceptive access and the legalisation of abortion. In order to explore more fully the effect that these developments had on the rise of teenage pregnancy further research needs to be undertaken.

A similar argument regarding the dynamics in Britain has been made by Gail Hawkes.<sup>32</sup> Interviewing family planning professionals Hawkes finds that eugenic and moralistic anxieties persisted underneath the apparent change in views. She detects this persistence through statements expressing apprehensions regarding the type of people who became parents and about young girls who had multiple sexual partners. These fears were rephrased and articulated through notions of responsibility and irresponsibility. Parenthood by young people from a lower socio-economic background was described as being irresponsible and selfish, while middle-class norms of childbearing were equated with responsibility.

However, Nathanson and Hawkes' arguments do not explain the changes that *did* occur. In the work of James Wong<sup>33</sup> William Arney and Bernard Bergen<sup>34</sup> which is reviewed below a link is made between teenage pregnancy and the preceding problem of unmarried mothers. Hawkes argues that there has been an apparent shift in values, but that this masked the continuation of the same anxieties. This perspective implies that the change in categories did not have any effect on the object. This thesis explores the changes in governmental practices, associated with the rise of the category of teenage or young unmarried mother. Even if the persistence of underlying concerns is accepted, the actual changes involved in shifting problematizations need to be recognised.

Furthermore, I argue that the proposition that the problematization of teenage pregnancy stems entirely from an underlying moral concern relies on a simplistic conceptualisation of the processes through which a problematization emerges. According to this proposition the emergence of a problem is not the result of a contingent process, but of a deep-seated and long-standing cause. This claim is based

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<sup>32</sup> G. Hawkes, "Responsibility and Irresponsibility."

<sup>33</sup> J. Wong, "The "Making" of Teenage Pregnancy," *International Studies in the Philosophy of Science* 11, no. 3 (1997): 273-288.

<sup>34</sup> W. R. Arney and B. J. Bergen, "Power and Visibility: The Invention of Teenage Pregnancy," *Social Science and Medicine* 18 (1984): 11-19.

on the assumption that there exists a close correspondence between the cause and the outcome. However, it fails to take into account the possibility of complex processes in which the outcome of an emergence is not solely the result of its original reasons.<sup>35</sup> The attempt in this study is not to identify a cause but to trace continuities and discontinuities in discourses and practices in specific sites.

#### **1.4 Historical Perspective: a Shift from a Moral to a Scientific Problematization**

One of the most frequent claims made about the emergence of teenage pregnancy is that it reflected a shift from a moral to a scientific conception of the problem of young unmarried mothers. This argument has been put forward by several scholars in slightly different ways. Most of these claims share several characteristics: they place the emergence of teenage pregnancy within the broad process of modernity and they identify a change in the institutions and methods used to govern deviant individuals. A critique of these arguments is developed in the following section.

Kathryn Addelson<sup>36</sup> is one of the scholars whose arguments describe a shift from a moral to a scientific problematization. Addelson claims that the emergence of teenage pregnancy was the result of two broad historical processes associated with the advent of modernity. The first was the process whereby the ‘authorities on procreation’ have changed from religious to professional. The second process, partly associated with the first, was the shift of problems of procreation from the private to the public realm. Until the 1970s, births by young unmarried women in the U.S. were considered a private affair. The practices of ‘shot-gun’ marriages and adoption enabled the issue of out-of-wedlock pregnancies to remain outside the political realm. It is only at certain historical moments that the matters of ‘sex’ and ‘reproduction’ spring into the public space. These eruptions were not the result of a changing reality but the result of a changing constellation of social forces.

The main difficulty in Addelson’s account is that it is built on distinguishing ‘real’ bodily processes such as ‘sex’ and ‘procreation’ from the changing societal world.

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<sup>35</sup> M. Foucault, “Nietzsche, Genealogy, History,” in *Aesthetics, Method, and Epistemology*, ed. J. D. Faubion (London: Allen Lane, 1998), 369-391.

<sup>36</sup> K. P. Addelson, “How Should We Live? Some Reflections on Procreation,” in *Teen Pregnancy and Parenting: Social and Ethical Issues*, eds. J. Wong and D. Checkland (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999), 81-98.

This division underpins her assertion of a shift in the ‘authorities on procreation’. Addelson puts in a kind of ‘black box’ the realm of sexuality and the process of pregnancy and birth thereby stymieing any attempt to think of the way in which discourses and practices link to the physiological processes of the body, such as the pace of maturation or the experience of pregnancy.<sup>37</sup> Furthermore, the claim of a shift in ‘authorities on procreation’ from religious to professional does not provide an exhaustive account of the shift in problematization. What notions of subjectivity, for example, characterise each problematization? What were the different practices through which the problem was to be acted upon? The empirical chapters of this thesis explore precisely these questions. The problematization of unmarried mothers is examined, noting the way in which the occurrence of the pregnancy was understood, the way in which the subjectivity of the mother was conceptualised as well as the practices through which the unmarried mother was cared for.

Arney and Bergen<sup>38</sup> hypothesise that the emergence of teenage pregnancy reflected a shift from a moral to a scientific conception of childbearing by young and unmarried women. Examining publications in the Readers’ Digest and in the American Journal of Public Health from 1940 until 1980, they claim that the term teenage pregnancy replaced the preceding moral term of ‘unwed mother’. During the 1940s, 1950s and early 1960s the key concern was that sexual desire would be expressed in sanctioned settings. Drawing from the work of Michel Foucault,<sup>39</sup> Arney and Bergen claimed that the moral regime was characterised by the exercise of punitive and exclusionary power. Women who deviated from the moral code were excluded from the community and sent to special maternity homes. During the 1960s the moral conception gradually gave way to a scientific one and this was associated with a shift to a normalising and corrective form of power. Arney and Bergen claim that the corrective practice is the result of the fact that within scientific thinking, problems are seen as technical and therefore amenable to correction.

Wong<sup>40</sup> concurs with Arney and Bergen in identifying teenage pregnancy with a shift from a moral to a scientific conception. However, unlike Arney and Bergen, the shift he identifies is not dichotomous and does not correspond to the emergence of

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<sup>37</sup> Duden, *Disembodying Women*.

<sup>38</sup> Arney and Bergen, “Power and Visibility.”

<sup>39</sup> Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Vol. 1.*; M. Foucault, *Madness and Civilization: a History of Insanity in the Age of Reason* (London: Routledge, 1989).

<sup>40</sup> Wong, “The ‘Making’ of Teenage Pregnancy.”

the term teenage pregnancy. Instead, scientific discourse first appeared within the moral discourse and anticipated the later change of terms. During the 1940s and 1950s social work literature began describing the unwed mother as suffering from psychological pathology. The role of professionals was to reinstate normalcy and pave the way for marriage by helping the girl give up her baby for adoption. The maternity home, which Arney and Bergen viewed as an example of exclusionary power, is in Wong's account part of a corrective practice. The exclusion of the unmarried pregnant girl was a strategy for her subsequent integration into social life.

Some of Wong's arguments are supported by an examination of work with unmarried mothers in Britain during the 1950s and 1960s. Chapter 3 depicts Mother and Baby Homes' disciplinary regimes aimed at reforming unmarried mothers' characters. However, in Britain, many professionals sought to encourage the mothers to raise their children themselves. In fact, the responsibility of raising a child was seen as having an important role in transforming mothers' characters. Wong's claims regarding the social scientific literature are wholly supported by the British literature. During the 1950s and 1960s, a significant section of the British social scientific literature claimed that producing a child out-of-wedlock was a sign of a psychological disorder.<sup>41</sup> Thus, the division between psychological health and pathology corresponded to the division between legitimate and illegitimate births. The intermixture of moral and the scientific discourses and of corrective and punitive practices undermines the division put forward by Arney and Bergen. In addition, Arney and Bergen's and Wong's claim that there had been a shift from a moral to a scientific problematization of young unmarried mothers raises questions regarding the persistence of this concern. One may raise the question, if the nature of the concern changed why did the object of concern remain the same?

Wong made further claims identifying several processes as contributing to the emergence of teenage pregnancy in the U.S. in the early 1970s. The first is the growth (in absolute numbers) of the teenage population as a result of the post-World War II 'baby boom'. Second, the invention of the birth control pill and the 'sexual revolution' of the 1960s led to a larger percentage of sexually active adolescents, many of whom were not fully knowledgeable about the implications of these new

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<sup>41</sup> L. R. Young, *Out of Wedlock: a Study of the Problems of the Unmarried Mother and Her Child* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1954).



developments. More white middle-class teenagers became pregnant, and the decrease by the mid-1960s of the popularity of ‘shot-gun’ marriages and maternity homes meant that their visibility had heightened. This increased visibility led to their recognition as a problem. Wong does not provide an explanation of why unmarried pregnant teenagers were seen as a problem within the scientific discourse apart from their increase in numbers.

The picture in the U.K. differs from the one portrayed by Wong. As I argue in Chapter 5 governmental concern with the sexually active adolescent preceded the so-called ‘sexual revolution’ or the invention of the contraceptive pill. While Britain shared with the U.S. the rise in the proportion of teenagers in the general population, its race and class dynamics were different. Yet in both countries teenage pregnancy emerged as a government problem in the decades following the end of World War II. This indicates that international professional and governmental discourses played an important role in the rise of this concern.

Prompted by the work of Ian Hacking, Wong discusses the dynamics following the creation of a new social scientific category.<sup>42</sup> A social scientific category, it is argued, does not merely represent a certain reality, but constitutes it. The term teenage pregnancy constitutes a type of person who is recognised, described and studied. It is a process of ‘kind-making’. Unlike objects of the natural sciences, the objects of social sciences are aware of their categorisation. This awareness can lead to behavioural changes on their part, which in return might lead to a change in the category, a process Hacking termed the ‘looping effect’. Wong argues that Hacking’s analysis of the dynamics of the ‘looping effect’ is too abstract and that a more socio-political analysis is needed in order to consider the impact of governmental measures.

Hacking’s notion of the ‘looping effect’ opens up for analysis the interaction between scientific knowledge, governmental intervention and the individuals affected by this knowledge. However, Hacking’s ‘looping effect’ seems to feature an individual who is outside any social context. The process whereby a person becomes aware of his or her categorisation is described as occurring to each individual in isolation, while it is always a group of people that is involved in ‘kind-making’. The

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<sup>42</sup> I. Hacking, “The Looping Effects of Human Kinds,” in *Causal Cognition: a Multidisciplinary Debate*, eds. D. Sperber, D. Premack and A.J. Premack (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), 351–394.

account that Wong suggests remains similarly abstract. The encounters occurring in concrete spatial-temporal settings between the subject of knowledge and the object of knowledge are not depicted. In addition, power relations are overlooked; in Hacking's formulation, the individual 'becomes aware' of the categorisation and 'reacts'. This formulation does not examine the possible struggle between the labelled object and the labelling subject. Furthermore the account focuses on the dynamics *after* the category is formed. This is manifested in the fact that Wong does not try to explain how and why 'shot-gun' marriages and maternity homes became less popular in the 1960s.

A different way of formulating the 'moral' to 'scientific' claim is outlined by Maris Vinovskis<sup>43</sup> and Susan Harari and Maris Vinovskis.<sup>44</sup> They place teenage pregnancy within the history of legitimate and illegitimate births by young women. Harari and Vinovskis argue that from the 17<sup>th</sup> until the 19<sup>th</sup> century illegitimacy was considered a problem while teenage childbearing was not. The reason for the disquiet regarding illegitimacy was the economic burden it represented, as it frequently required the community to provide for the mother and the child. Several long-term changes formed the background for the appearance of teenage pregnancy in the U.S. in the 1970s. The first was the development of adolescence as a distinct stage in the lifecycle during the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century. The second process was the change in the age at which women reached physiological maturation. The age at first menarche has dropped over the last centuries, most probably due to improved nutrition. The average age at first menarche during the 19<sup>th</sup> century was sixteen years; a fact which limited the duration of the period during which teenage girls could become pregnant. This process was accompanied by the opposite trend in which more adolescents remained in educational institutions for longer periods of time.

Harari and Vinovskis highlight the discrepancy between the actual birth rate among adolescents in the U.S., and the emergence of governmental preoccupation with teenage pregnancy. They claim that while the actual peak of adolescent births occurred in 1957 it only gained recognition as a problem in the second half of the 1970s. They conclude that adolescent pregnancy did not become a problem in the

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<sup>43</sup> M. A. Vinovskis, "An 'Epidemic' of Adolescent Pregnancy?"; M. A. Vinovskis, "Historical Perspectives on Adolescent Pregnancy," in *Early Parenthood and Coming of Age in the 1990s*, eds. M. K. Rosenheim and M. F. Testa (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1992), 136-149.

<sup>44</sup> Harari and Vinovskis, "Adolescent Sexuality, Pregnancy, and Childbearing."

1950s because most pregnant girls married the father of their baby. Until the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century most women did not assume a professional career after marriage but were expected to care for their children while being supported by their husband. Thus, early childbearing did not disrupt any career opportunities, nor was there a need for women to support themselves as divorce was uncommon. Harari and Vinovskis claim that the emergence of teenage pregnancy marked a shift from moral problematization that focused on marital status to a problematization based on age. This shift in terminology masked the fact that the object of concern was out-of-wedlock adolescent births. However, according to Harari and Vinovskis, this concern is not the result of moral considerations but of economic ones; out-of-wedlock births frequently lead to reliance on state welfare.

Harari and Vinovskis' analysis attributes a privileged status to economic factors in determining social processes; a contention that is questionable. In addition, the economic concerns are not historicised. It is assumed that concerns about provision for illegitimate children guided 17<sup>th</sup> century and 20<sup>th</sup> century Americans in the same way. Luker, in contrast, argues that economic considerations have become more important factors in the problematization of young unmarried mothers in late 20<sup>th</sup> century America than they had been in earlier periods.<sup>45</sup> Thus, Luker demonstrates that it is possible to historicise the processes underpinning public and government preoccupation with teenage pregnancy.

The second key shortcoming in Harari and Vinovskis' account is that it explicitly makes a division between the domain of the 'real' and the domain of representations. This supposition is most evident when they discuss the discrepancy between the 'real' peak in the rates of adolescent pregnancies and the peak of public anxiety regarding this occurrence. While the actual peak was in the late 1950s, public apprehension only emerged in the 1970s. This contention is highly problematic. Birth statistics do not occur in a domain distinct from the social world: they are shaped by historically and culturally specific classifications. The decision to bracket the teenage births as a category precedes the production of statistics demonstrating that an objective change in the birth rate has taken place.

As the account in Chapter 3 demonstrates, in Britain during the 1950s and 1960s,

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<sup>45</sup> Luker, *Dubious Conceptions*.

statistics of stillbirths and infant mortality compared babies of unmarried mothers with those of married mothers. These studies did not distinguish the teenage mothers from their older counterparts.<sup>46</sup> Charting the rise of the problematization of teenage pregnancy involves not only tracing changing birth rates but examining the change in categories used by professionals and government officers to produce statistical measurements of the population. Furthermore, as I shall demonstrate, the change in representations has ‘real’ effects in the world. The recognition of teenage unmarried mothers as a distinct group of unmarried mothers led to the establishment of specialised institutions dedicated to their care.

As in the work of Nathanson and Hawkes, the analysis of Harari and Vinovskis is limited by its reliance on the idea that a problematization has a distinct cause which could be classified as ‘moral’ or ‘economic’. As I describe in greater detail in the following chapter, the ontological picture underpinning this research proposes that instead of identifying causes one should detail processes of emergence. If we take historicity and contingency into account, then practices stemming from a ‘moral’ concern can persist and be re-deployed within an ‘economic’ concern. Rather than an analysis that seeks to identify the ultimate causal factor at play, this study aims to map the historical trajectories of different discourses and practices which converged at a certain moment in time to give rise to a new problematization.

Thirdly, in Harari and Vinovskis’ account the actual bodily process of childbearing is conceived as ontologically distinct from the attitudes regarding this phenomenon. This contention is highly problematic; childbearing does not occur in a domain distinct from the social world. Rather than assume an ahistorical nature to ‘teenage’, ‘sex’ and ‘childbearing’, my account takes into consideration the historically changing nature of bodies and discourses as well as the way in which ‘social’ and bodily process intermingle. In fact, Harari and Vinovskis do draw attention to a factor that most other accounts have neglected: the historically changing pace of sexual maturation reflected in the falling of the age at first menarche. However, rather than assume that this had objective consequences, in Chapter 5 and Chapter 6, I consider the way in which claims regarding the increased pace of sexual maturation were used in establishing the care of the teenage unmarried mother as a distinct governmental field.

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<sup>46</sup> J. Garrad, “Illegitimacy,” *Practitioner* 198, no. 184 (1967): 268-273.

An additional account, which, like Harai and Vinovskis examines the economic concerns with which teenage pregnancy is associated, can be found in the work of Catriona Macleod.<sup>47</sup> Similarly to Arney and Bergen, Macleod<sup>48</sup> uses Foucault's work, although she focuses on his account of the rise of the governmental strategy of 'security'. The South African social science literature on teenage pregnancy reviewed by Macleod consists of debates on the extent of the negative socio-economic outcomes of childbearing in adolescence. These discussions suggest that adolescent childbearing could pose a threat to the economic security of the nation by generating population growth that cannot be economically sustained. Macleod points out that this apprehension should not be considered natural or universal. The notion that reproductive behaviour could and should be measured in relation to the wealth and the well-being of a nation is historical and contingent. It is the result of a specific rationality and ethics of government characteristic of the West in the last several centuries.

Despite its contribution, Macleod's argument remains restricted in several ways. Her analysis focuses on the disembodied literature of teenage pregnancy. She refrains from analysing the policies and legislation of governments and the way in which changes in these might correspond to changes in teenage pregnancy. Furthermore, Macleod proposes that the emergence of teenage pregnancy can be explicated using Foucault's claims regarding the rise of a certain rationality of government. However, her argument does not explain why teenage pregnancy emerged in South Africa in the early 1970s and not in an earlier or later period. This leaves unanswered the question of identifying the transformations which produced teenage pregnancy at particular places and particular moments in time.

Macleod alludes to Foucault's proposition regarding the development of certain governmental strategies in modern Western political regimes. A more elaborate account of Foucault's claims regarding the advent of 'bio-power' is useful for reflecting upon the problematization of teenage pregnancy and upon the claim of a shift from a moral to a scientific problematization.<sup>49</sup> The problematization of teenage

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<sup>47</sup> C. Macleod, "Economic Security and the Social Science Literature on Teenage Pregnancy in South Africa," *Gender & Society* 16, no. 5 (2002): 647-664.

<sup>48</sup> Macleod, "Economic Security and the Social Science Literature."

<sup>49</sup> The relevance of Foucault's arguments presented in *The History of Sexuality, Vol. 1* to teenage pregnancy is mentioned in Nathanson's *Dangerous Passages* (mentioned above) but is not developed into a comprehensive argument.

pregnancy can be linked to the type of concern Foucault described as characteristic of the form of government which has developed in Western societies from the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Foucault identifies a shift from juridical sovereignty where the main objective was governing a territory, to a new form of government preoccupied with managing the life of the population in order to increase its prosperity and well-being. Characteristic of this new governmental concern were efforts to improve sanitation, increase the birth rate and longevity as well as improve education and raise the efficiency of economic production.<sup>50</sup>

This shift marked the entrance of 'life' into the political sphere. The body has been recognised as a force that can be modified and acted upon to achieve certain ends. Foucault coins the term bio-power to describe this form of power which focused on utilising the human body. 'Sex' has become important to government, because of its bearing on the productive capacities of bodies. Discourses on 'sex' have subsequently emerged in the fields of demography, biology, psychology, ethics and pedagogy. Foucault describes 'sex' as one of the objects through which bio-power progressed in the course of the 19<sup>th</sup> century: instead of understanding 'sex' as a force emanating from each individual and being suppressed by society, Foucault conceives of 'sex' as a transfer point for relations of power. Through it, relations of power between men and women, children and parents, teachers and students, governments and populations were formed.<sup>51</sup>

Foucault identifies four main assemblages of specific discourses concerned with 'sex'. The first is the assemblage referred to as the 'hysterization of women's bodies'. This denotes the process whereby the female body came to be seen as saturated with sexuality. It also became a medical object and was linked to the health of the nation through the figure of the mother. The second assemblage that Foucault identifies is the 'socialization of procreative behaviour'. The couple's reproductive activity became regulated through economic incentives and became imbued with political responsibility. This process was accompanied by the emergence of medical knowledge of birth control whose purpose was to counter reproductive pathologies. State welfare support based on the number of children can be seen as an example of the way in which procreation and political government can intertwine. This

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<sup>50</sup> M. Foucault, "Governmentality," in *The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality*, ed. G. Burchell, C. Gordon and P. Miller (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1991), 87-104.

<sup>51</sup> Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Vol. 1*.

conception explicitly diverges from Addelson's proposition of a shift in 'authorities on procreation', to the extent that the latter does not recognise their enmeshment, but assumes that procreation remains unaltered by the change of authorities. A third assemblage of 'sex' that Foucault identifies is the 'pedagogization of children's sex'. The assertion which underlies this assemblage is that children are prone to engage in sexual activity and that this engagement poses risks. On the basis of this premise, pedagogical practices, parental practices and medical practices were formed in order to try and prevent children from engaging in sexual activity. The fourth assemblage was the 'psychiatrisation of perverse pleasures' whereby 'sex' is understood as an instinctual drive that has both biological and psychic aspects and which could take on a perverse form.

From this perspective, teenage pregnancy can be located at the centre of three main assemblages of discourses concerned with 'sex': the discourse of women's sexuality, the concern with reproduction and the anxiety with regard to children's sexuality. As Foucault argues, the mother has become a key political figure, her reproductive and caring capacities being vital for the future success of the population. Teenage pregnancy can be seen on the pathological margins of this assemblage. The pregnant teenager is considered to be underage and often deviates from the norm of marital childbearing. Some of the pregnancies described by the term 'teenage pregnancy' denote pregnancies of girls under the age of sixteen, the age at which they can legally consent to sex. Even those who are not legally underage in this respect are underage in terms of their political rights. Thus, the pregnant teenager represents engagement in sexual activity and parenting by a person who is not yet an adult. The salience of governmental preoccupation with teenage pregnancy is elucidated if one considers teenage pregnancy as the point of convergence between three key sites in the 'surface network' of sexuality. These Foucauldian propositions are limited in as much as they pertain to broad historical processes. As I claimed in relation to Macleod's argument, locating teenage pregnancy within these governmental concerns does not explain why the concern with the teenage unmarried mother emerged in Britain during the 1960s and not in an earlier or later period.<sup>52</sup> In addition, the empirical investigation revealed finer nuances in the shifts between the problematization of unmarried mothers and the

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<sup>52</sup> Macleod, "Economic Security and the Social Science Literature."

subsequent shift to the teenage mother. These shifts are not captured by Foucault's broad claims.

### **1.5 Moral to Scientific Problematization: a Critique**

There is a fundamental problem running through the arguments proposing a shift from a moral to a scientific problematization. These arguments rely on assuming the continuity of the object of problematization. The identification of young unmarried pregnant women as the object of the two problematization regimes is the basis for identifying the shift. There are several difficulties with this assumption. First, there is a discrepancy between the governmental field of teenage pregnancy and governmental work with unmarried mothers during the 1950s and 1960s. The current governmental field of teenage pregnancy groups together the prevention of pregnancy and support for teenage mothers.<sup>53</sup> Governmental work with unmarried mothers included those who were no longer teenagers but who became pregnant out-of-wedlock. This shift was not only in representations but in the very scope and nature of governmental work.

Foucault's discussion of ethics in *The Use of Pleasure History of Sexuality Vol. 2* offers a different perspective from which to reflect upon the 'shift from moral to scientific' claim.<sup>54</sup> In this work Foucault draws a distinction between moral codes and ethics. Ethics does not refer to moral codes, but to the domain created by the way in which the codes are linked to a 'field of problematization'. Even when prohibitions and moral codes are identical, the ethical issues with which they are associated could be radically different. Foucault identifies four main categories through which the ethical configuration can be described. The first dimension is the ethical substance denoting the object on which ethical work is carried out. The second dimension is the 'mode of subjectivation': the way in which one relates and takes upon oneself to abide by a particular rule. An ethical practice could be undertaken as an individual choice or as an act of belonging to a group. The kind of work on the self that the ethical practice involves and the mode of being which the

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<sup>53</sup> Social Exclusion Unit, *Teenage Pregnancy: Report by the Social Exclusion Unit* (London: Her Majesty's Stationary Office, 1999).

<sup>54</sup> Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Vol. 2, The Use of Pleasure*.



practice aims at producing are additional variables. One could be recording one's thoughts, exercising in the gym, attending psychotherapy and this could all be part of an attempt to achieve self-mastery, health or spiritual purification.

This work is important since it outlines a way of exploring the relationship between science, morality and ethics. Arney and Bergen's<sup>55</sup> or Wong's<sup>56</sup> accounts imply that the scientific problematization is characterised by its lack of ethical consideration. This can be detected in Arney and Bergen's equation of scientific problematization with a technical approach and is implicit in Wong's description of scientific problematization. However, as the above discussion demonstrates, there is a variety of potential ethical 'fields of problematization'. The scientific conception might not necessarily be interpreted as the lack of ethical concerns. For instance, Reissman and Nathanson<sup>57</sup> describe the development of an ethical discourse of contraceptive responsibility among health professionals. More generally, the conjunction of health and ethics in contemporary culture has been described by Nikolas Rose.<sup>58</sup> It is possible that the problematization of teenage pregnancy will be both scientific and ethical. Furthermore, while it is possible that the same practices such as extra-marital sexual intercourse or out-of-wedlock childbearing will be seen as problematic within different ethical regimes, this does not provide an exhaustive account. A more comprehensive account is one that maps the relationships between behaviours, modes of being and fields of knowledge. The discussion of the concept of problematization is developed in the next chapter.

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<sup>55</sup> Arney and Bergen, "Power and Visibility."

<sup>56</sup> Wong, "The 'Making' of Teenage Pregnancy."

<sup>57</sup> C. K. Reissman and C. A. Nathanson, "The Management of Reproduction - Social Construction of Risk and Responsibility," in *Applications of Social Science to Clinical Medicine and Health Policy*, eds. L. H. Aiken and D. Mechanic (New Brunswick, N.J: Rutgers University Press, 1986), 251-281.

<sup>58</sup> N. Rose, "Medicine, History and the Present," in *Reassessing Foucault: Power, Medicine and the Body*, eds. C. Jones and R. Porter (London: Routledge, 1994), 48-72.

## 1.6 Conclusion

This chapter reviewed different ways in which the problematization of teenage pregnancy is explained. In section 1.1, I described the work of scholars who sought to consider the problematization of teenage pregnancy in relation to ‘moral’ and ‘welfare’ discourses. I argued that the distinctions found in contemporary discourses between ‘welfare’ concerns and ‘moral’ concerns are undermined by their historical examination. For instance, in Chapters 3 and 4 I demonstrate that the notion of responsibility which Monk and Carabine associate with the ‘welfare’ discourse was central to what I termed the ‘moral’ problematization of unmarried mothers in the late 1950s and 1960s. Hence, I argue that we should examine these discourses historically and render visible the continuities and discontinuities associated with the emergence of the governmental field of teenage pregnancy.

In section 1.2, I described Zimring’s, Hamburg and Dixon’s and Testa’s proposition that the problematic nature of teenage pregnancy stems from a certain discrepancy that characterises adolescence. For Zimring it is the discrepancy between body and mind, and for Hamburg and Dixon, and to a lesser extent Testa, it is the discrepancy between the adolescent body and the social norms. Considering the historicity of adolescence and, in particular, the historicity of the conceptualisation which Zimring, and Hamburg and Dixon employ, I argue that the idea that adolescence was characterised by a certain discrepancy should be subjected to critical interrogation.

The second group of arguments critically examines the concept of adolescence and attributes the problematization of teenage pregnancy to the way in which adolescence (as well as childhood and adulthood) are constructed.<sup>59</sup> These scholars claim that teenage pregnancy is considered problematic since it disrupts a certain prevailing conception or categorical system. The central weakness of these arguments is that they disembodiment teenage pregnancy. The material event plays no role in the problematization. In addition, these arguments do not consider the way in which discourses materialise and the way in which discourses might be shaped by the practices within which they develop. Instead, the focus in these accounts is on the

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<sup>59</sup> Macleod, “Teenage Pregnancy and the Construction of Adolescence.”; Murcott, “The Social Construction of Teenage Pregnancy.”; Lesko, “Act Your Age.”

clash of conceptual structures.

A similar division between the realm of the body and the 'social' can be found in the work of Luker<sup>60</sup> Addelson<sup>61</sup> and Harari and Vinovskis<sup>62</sup>. All of these scholars position teenage pregnancy within the history of illegitimate childbearing. I contend that conceptualising teenage pregnancy in this way relies on an ontological separation between bodily occurrences and the 'social' world. The former is thought to be ahistorical and universal while only the latter is considered worthy of historical examination. This division, as discussed with regard to each of these arguments, is achieved through overlooking the enmeshment of bodily and social processes.

The research presented in this thesis aims to avoid either disembodiment of teenage pregnancy or subscribing to a division between the 'social' and the bodily. In the existing literature the 'micro' dimension of the emergence of teenage pregnancy is largely absent. The detailed examination of the governmental discourses and practices which made up work with unmarried mothers and those associated with the teenage unmarried mother allows for the development of a more nuanced account.

The second central weakness discerned in the literature is that most arguments depict a relatively simple causal process. This is particularly apparent in the claim that the concern with teenage pregnancy is the result of persistent, deep-seated anxieties regarding female sexuality. This claim plays down the possibility of contingent occurrences by explaining the problematization through an underlying cause.<sup>63</sup> Furthermore, the tendency to underestimate the role of contingent processes can also be identified in the arguments proposing that the emergence of teenage pregnancy represented a 'shift from a moral to a scientific conceptualisation' of young unmarried mothers.<sup>64</sup> In these arguments as well, the possibility of contingent processes is not explored. Instead teenage pregnancy is located within broad processes, such as modernity, the decline of religion or the liberalisation of sexual mores in contemporary Western society. However, the most important limitation of the 'shift from moral to scientific' claim is that it implies the constancy of the object of problematization. It is only if it is assumed that the object of concern is young

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<sup>60</sup> Luker, *Dubious Conceptions*.

<sup>61</sup> Addelson, "How Should We Live?."

<sup>62</sup> Harari and Vinovskis, "Adolescent Sexuality, Pregnancy, and Childbearing."

<sup>63</sup> Nathanson, *Dangerous Passages*.

<sup>64</sup> Arney and Bergen, "Power and Visibility."; Wong, "The 'Making' of Teenage Pregnancy."

unmarried mothers that one can identify a shift from a moral to a scientific conceptualisation. This perspective reifies the object of problematization rather than traces the way in which it changed.

It is important to point out an additional shortcoming which can be detected in most of the arguments presented in sections 1.1, 1.2 and 1.3. They tend to focus on *explaining* the problematization of teenage pregnancy. They attempt to answer the question: ‘why is it that teenage pregnancy came to be considered a problem?’ However, the focus on the *concern* with teenage pregnancy obscures the question of *how* this governmental concern came into being: what changes in discourses and practices were associated with the emergence of this new problematization? What discourses and practices had to decline in order for the teenage mother to become a focal point of governmental activity? It is precisely these two questions which are at the centre of this investigation. In the following four empirical chapters, I examine the key discourses and practices shaping governmental work with unmarried mothers and explore the shifts that marked the rise of governmental preoccupation with teenage unmarried mothers.

## Chapter 2:

### Methodology

The title of this chapter is methodology. However, the ontological and epistemological outlook underpinning my study is in conflict with an attempt to define a formal methodology.<sup>1</sup> This does not stem from a lack of commitment to an effort to undertake a rigorous empirical investigation, but from subscription to a radical ontological critique which undermines the vantage point usually used to formulate a methodology.

As I outlined in the introduction, the ontological stance this research takes involves questioning the view that teenage pregnancy is a coherent, universal and ahistorical phenomenon. Instead, teenage pregnancy is understood as a heterogeneous and dynamic formation produced by the conjunction of certain bodies, discourses, technologies and practices. Since discourses are seen as involved in constituting the phenomena and not merely representing it, the rise of the governmental field of 'teenage pregnancy' is understood to be part of the production of teenage pregnancy. Hence, although this thesis focuses on the governmental field, it is seen as a contribution to the broader study of the way in which teenage pregnancy is made up.

Furthermore, in line with this ontological outlook, the governmental field of 'teenage pregnancy' is not seen to be essentially distinct from the discourses and practices constituting the field of 'unmarried mothers'. Hence, this thesis examines governmental work with unmarried mothers and explores the discursive shifts associated with the emergence of the concern with the teenage unmarried mother. The emergence of this field paved the way for the development of the governmental field of 'teenage pregnancy' which persists until this day. However, in order to fully chart the development of this field it is necessary to continue the account beyond 1968. During the late 1960s and early 1970s significant societal transformations took place. These include the widening of access to contraception, the legalisation of abortion, the liberalisation of the divorce law and the increase in state support for one

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<sup>1</sup> N. Rose, *Governing the Soul: The Shaping of the Private Self* (London: Free Association Books, 1999).

parent families. Undoubtedly, these transformations shaped the development of the governmental field of 'teenage pregnancy'. Nonetheless, I argue that several major discursive shifts that underpin 'teenage pregnancy' took place in the late 1950s and early 1960s. These shifts and transformations are the focus of this study.

The ontological outlook described above is informed by a literature that critiques essentialist conceptualisations of the subject and the body and attempts to offer an alternative to essentialist metaphysics.<sup>2</sup> However, I draw almost exclusively on the work of Michel Foucault in devising the critical engagement with the empirical material. The reason for this choice is that Foucault's work offers a useful way of exploring the relationship between discourses and practices and the complex interplay between the two that accompanies processes of change. Hence, it is particularly appropriate for the examination of governmental practices.

Foucault's oeuvre is extensive and I do not use all of his suggestions and conceptual tools. In this chapter I discuss solely the conceptualisations which are utilised in this study. These do not form an overarching framework but a 'tool-kit' of methodological prescriptions, conceptual devices and critical strategies. The chapter commences with an account of Foucault's concept of genealogy. The discussion includes a description of the concepts of 'beginnings' and 'descent' which are associated with the notion of genealogical research. The next part presents the conceptual tools of 'problematization' and 'technology' which guide the analysis of the data. The last section of the chapter outlines the empirical material used in the study and describes the way it is conceptualised.

## **2.1 Genealogy**

Foucault's development of the term 'genealogy' stems from his engagement with Nietzschean philosophy.<sup>3</sup> The discussion of genealogy began after several major

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<sup>2</sup> K. Barad, "Getting Real: Technoscientific Practices and the Materialization of Reality," *Differences* 10, no. 2 (1998): 87-128; J. Butler, *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex"* (New York: Routledge, 1993); B. Duden, *Disembodying Women: Perspectives on Pregnancy and the Unborn* (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1993).

<sup>3</sup> F. Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morality*, ed. K. Ansell-Pearson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

publications such as *Madness and Civilization*,<sup>4</sup> *The Order of Things*<sup>5</sup> and *The Archaeology of Knowledge*.<sup>6</sup> Assessing the continuity and discontinuity in Foucault's work has been the subject of extensive discussion.<sup>7</sup> The account presented in this chapter does not seek to add to that discussion, or to provide a definition of genealogy in Foucault's work. Instead, it aims to describe the key propositions which Foucault outlines in his discussion of genealogy that shape this study.

Foucault's account of genealogy does not yield a well-defined methodology in the positivist sense of the term but instead offers a philosophical critique and a series of methodological prescriptions for the conduct of historical research. The main source of reflections upon the genealogical method is found in the essay 'Nietzsche, Genealogy and History'.<sup>8</sup> The account in this chapter is primarily informed by this text. Other publications such as *Discipline and Punish*,<sup>9</sup> *The History of Sexuality Vol. 1*<sup>10</sup> and *The History of Sexuality Vol. 2*<sup>11</sup> and *The Archaeology of Knowledge*<sup>12</sup> are used to support this discussion as well as the account of the conceptual tools that are utilised in the study.

Genealogy is underpinned by an ontological contention that the world is characterised by conflictual and unstable dynamics. The world is described as 'a profusion of entangled events'<sup>13</sup> and as consisting of multiple and dynamic formations. A continuous power struggle is the backdrop to the incessant occurrences of domination and resistance. The instability of these formations results in moments of rupture where relations of power are reversed. Historical accounts, Foucault argues, should reflect this nature and describe the ruptures. They should be able to capture 'the events of history, its jolts, its surprises, its unsteady victories and

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<sup>4</sup> M. Foucault, *Madness and Civilization: a History of Insanity in the Age of Reason* (London: Routledge, 1989).

<sup>5</sup> M. Foucault, *The Order of Things: an Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (London: Tavistock Publications, 1974).

<sup>6</sup> M. Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (London: Tavistock Publications, 1972).

<sup>7</sup> H. L. Dreyfus and P. Rabinow, *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics* (Brighton: The Harvester Press, 1982); M. Dean, *Critical and Effective Histories: Foucault's Methods and Historical Sociology* (London: Routledge, 1994).

<sup>8</sup> M. Foucault, "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History," in *Aesthetics, Method, and Epistemology*, ed. J. D. Faubion (London: Allen Lane, 1998), 369-391.

<sup>9</sup> M. Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (London: Allen Lane, 1977).

<sup>10</sup> M. Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Vol. 1, The Will to Knowledge* (London: Penguin, 1998).

<sup>11</sup> M. Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Vol. 2, The Use of Pleasure* (New York: Pantheon, 1985).

<sup>12</sup> Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*.

<sup>13</sup> Foucault, "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History", 381.

unpalatable defeats - the basis of all beginnings, atavisms, and heredities'.<sup>14</sup> Foucault argues that historians often erroneously assume homogeneity and continuity where discontinuity and heterogeneity actually lie. Hence, he outlines several methodological prescriptions against erroneous suturing.

The first suggestion is that historians should discard teleological reasoning, the assumption of purposefulness and direction in the movement of history. Furthermore, maintaining a notion of the contingent and unstable nature of the world leads to the rejection of the notion of linear development. Hence, it should not be proposed that human history is marked by progressive technological development or by the development of morality or civility. With regard to the historical consideration of 'teenage pregnancy' this claim proposes that we should not place its emergence within linear or gradual processes, such as the secularisation of society or the rise in the influence of scientific knowledge. Narratives that construct stability and linear movement are inappropriate and instead we should assume that history consists of moments of rupture and processes of reversal.

Further erroneous assumptions of continuity are identified in the notion of 'period' or 'spirit of the age'. These assume a certain consistency between different phenomena based on their temporal and geographical proximity. Describing this view Foucault states:

It is supposed that between all events of a well defined spatio-temporal area, between all the phenomena of which traces have been found, it must be possible to establish a system of homogeneous relations; a network of causality that makes it possible to derive each of them, relations of analogy that show how they symbolize one another or how they all express one and the same central core; it is also supposed that one and the same historicity operates upon economic structures, social institutions and customs, the inertia of mental attitudes, technological practice, political behaviour and subjects them all to the same type of transformation.<sup>15</sup>

The above quote outlines several ways in which continuity can be assumed: one

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 373.

<sup>15</sup> Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, 10.



can presume the homogeneity of phenomena or attempt to find symbolic or causal affinities. Additionally, one can erroneously suppose uniformity in the pace and processes of transformation occurring in different fields such as economic relations, technology and politics. Rejecting these suppositions, genealogical research focuses on exploring the contingency which the term 'spirit of the age' masks. In the context of teenage pregnancy, this involves avoiding assumptions such as that the 1960s were characterised by a spirit of sexual liberalisation, or that anxiety regarding sexual mores prevailed in the British public. Instead, my research looks at changes in discourses and practices in specific locations and identifies links between the different sites. A further instance of imposing continuity occurs when contingent emergences are explained in terms of their outcome. Foucault asserts that one should not identify a certain transformation with the reasons for the change; what seems central in the final outcome may have played a small role in bringing about the change.<sup>16</sup>

I have so far described instances in which historical narratives can erroneously portray continuity, homogeneity or necessity. The philosophical critique from which genealogy stems takes a more radical step beyond merely pointing out erroneous suturing. This critique denounces the ontological stance which underpins many historical accounts and entails assuming that phenomena can have an essence or identity. This kind of historical research:

...assumes the existence of immobile forms that precede the external world of accident and succession. This search is directed to "that which was already there", the "very same" of an image of a primordial truth fully adequate to its nature, and it necessitates the removal of every mask to ultimately disclose an original identity.<sup>17</sup>

Historical narratives using metahistorical concepts such as 'sex', 'economic forces' or 'reason' should be replaced by a history 'without constants'.<sup>18</sup>

If we adopt these propositions and relate them to the discussion in the previous

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<sup>16</sup> Foucault, "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History."

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 371.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid, 380.

chapter, we can critique arguments such as those of Vinovskis,<sup>19</sup> Addelson<sup>20</sup> or Luker<sup>21</sup> where childbearing is assumed to be an immutable aspect of human existence. Instead as Barbara Duden argues in relation to pregnancy and ‘the unborn’,<sup>22</sup> the experience of the body and the materiality of the body vary historically in correspondence with changing conceptualisations and technologies. Similarly, social historical research argues that adolescence varied historically not only through changing societal practices but also through the changing pace of sexual maturation.<sup>23</sup>

The genealogical critique of essentialism further entails discarding the search for the origins of phenomena. The concept of origin proposes that a phenomenon has an identity which persists across its transformations and that can be clearly seen in its historical roots. The concept of genre captures this mode of relationship in which each singular instance contains the same core characteristics. It is precisely against this mode of association that Foucault articulates the notion of descent. This concept formulates a non-transcendental conception of continuity or affinity. Foucault states:

The analysis of *Herkunft* [descent] often involves a consideration of race or social type. But the traits it attempts to identify are not the exclusive generic characteristics of an individual, a sentiment, or an idea, which permit us to qualify them as “Greek” or “English”; rather it seeks the subtle, singular, and subindividual marks that might possibly intersect in them to form a network that is difficult to unravel.<sup>24</sup>

The analysis of descent does not reveal foundations but exposes the heterogeneity of what was thought to be consistent with itself. Whereas, in the concept of origin or genre, the key characteristics are maintained across the different singular manifestations, in descent, despite the continuities, no persistent identity can be

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<sup>19</sup> M. A. Vinovskis, *An "Epidemic" of Adolescent Pregnancy? Some Historical and Policy Considerations* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988).

<sup>20</sup> K. P. Addelson, “How Should We Live? Some Reflections on Procreation,” in *Teen Pregnancy and Parenting: Social and Ethical Issues*, eds. J. Wong and D. Checkland (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999), 81-98.

<sup>21</sup> K. Luker, *Dubious Conceptions: The Politics of Teenage Pregnancy* (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1997).

<sup>22</sup> B. Duden, *Disembodying Women: Perspectives on Pregnancy and the Unborn* (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1993).

<sup>23</sup> Vinovskis, *An "Epidemic" of Adolescent Pregnancy?*

<sup>24</sup> Foucault, “Nietzsche, Genealogy, History”, 373.

found. Through the notion of ‘descent’ we have an alternative formulation in which history intervenes in the ontology of the object. In Foucault’s words:

An examination of descent also permits the discovery, under the unique aspect of a trait or a concept, of the myriad events through which - thanks to which, against which - they were formed.<sup>25</sup>

Another term which Foucault puts forward as an alternative to the identification of origins is ‘beginnings’. The notion of ‘beginnings’ reflects the suggestion that rather than a coherent essence, a genealogical investigation reveals plurality of practices and accidents. Foucault states:

Where the soul pretends unification or the Me fabricates a coherent identity, the genealogist sets out to study the beginning – numberless beginnings whose faint traces and hints of color are readily seen by a historical eye.<sup>26</sup>

Against the philosophical concept of ‘soul’ which denotes an identity and essence, the genealogical perspective puts forward the notion of multiple contributing elements which make up the phenomenon. The account presented in this thesis reveals that there have been several contradictory ways in which discourses of ‘teenage’ or ‘adolescence’ intersected with discourses of ‘unmarried mothers’. The detailed examination of these associations enables us to chart the complex transformations associated with the emergence of teenage pregnancy.

The problematic nature of assuming the stability of the object of study has been discussed in relation to scholars who maintain that the emergence of teenage pregnancy represented a shift from a moral to scientific conceptualisation of young unmarried mothers.<sup>27</sup> This claim relies on essentialising the object of problematization and assuming it remains unaltered by history or by the way in which it is conceptualised. However, the genealogical point of view argues that even when the terms do not change, we should not assume that the phenomenon maintains its identity. Therefore, this study is not conceptualised as an attempt to follow the various historical manifestations of teenage pregnancies and births. Rather, it is an

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 374.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Addelson, “‘How Should We Live?’” J. Wong, “The “Making” of Teenage Pregnancy,” *International Studies in the Philosophy of Science* 11, no. 3 (1997): 273-288.

historical account that seeks to undermine the identity of ‘teenage pregnancy’ through unravelling the contingencies that brought it into being.

The proposition of a history ‘without constants’ points towards genealogy’s historicisation of subjectivity.<sup>28</sup> Foucault suggests discarding the metaphysical notion of a unified self. Contrary to theological and philosophical tradition the existence of an essence or an identity at the core of the subject is a fabrication. This does not mean rejecting the existence of subjectivity, but rather proposing that it is historical and inessential. As Foucault phrased it: ‘Nothing in man - not even his [*sic*] body - is sufficiently stable to serve as the basis for self-recognition or for understanding other men’.<sup>29</sup> The subject is not stable enough to be a transcendental subject, who is the source of meaning and the creator of her own world.

The renunciation of the transcendental subject, as the quote above suggests, is linked to the rejection of a substantive body. The body is not an ahistorical entity preceding the contingency of social relations. Instead it is shaped by regimes of rest and work, by the food consumed and by the moral regimes obeyed. Even presumed universal bodily characteristics such as instincts and drives do not remain constant across history. Foucault’s genealogical enquiries in *The History of Sexuality, Vol. 1*, *The History of Sexuality Vol. 2* and *The History of Sexuality Vol. 3* are examples of the attempt to study the way in which history and the body intertwine in ‘sexuality’.<sup>30</sup>

Despite Foucault’s proclaimed rejection of an essentialist notion of the body, his critics argue that such a conception can be detected in his writings. Minson claims that Foucault’s analysis ascribes to the body an ontological privilege.<sup>31</sup> The body is the focal point of historical analysis and conceived as the prime object of power. In addition, the body is described as a material entity upon which power operates, an account which implies a transcendental conception of the body. In a similar vein, Judith Butler criticises Foucault’s depiction of the body suggesting that it is seen as ontologically distinguished from the social domain.<sup>32</sup> Butler argues that while in texts such as *The History of Sexuality Vol.1* Foucault questions the ontological

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<sup>28</sup> Foucault, “Nietzsche, Genealogy, History”, 380.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Vol. 1*, Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Vol. 2*, M. Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Vol. 3, The Care of the Self* (New York: Pantheon, 1986).

<sup>31</sup> J. Minson, *Genealogies of Morals: Nietzsche, Foucault, Donzelot and the Eccentricity of Ethics* (London: Macmillan, 1985).

<sup>32</sup> J. Butler, “Foucault and the Paradox of Bodily Inscriptions,” *The Journal of Philosophy* 86, no. 11 (1989): 601-607.

existence of a body prior to discursive regimes, the account in ‘Nietzsche, Genealogy and History’ suggests a conception of the body as a surface upon which a repressive culture operates.<sup>33</sup> This conception is encapsulated in the term inscription which is used throughout the text and which implies an external power operating upon a (blank) surface.

Butler’s critique relies on the identification of the term inscription with an ontological distinction between the surface and the writing force. This distinction is the basis for Butler’s inscription paradox: if the writing force, or the cultural construction, is ontologically distinct from the body, then the body precedes its construction, and it cannot be said that the body is culturally constructed. Yet Foucault, as Butler notes, explicitly rejects such an ontological supposition. Although he uses the term inscription, he also argues that the body is not stable enough to have an identity that persists across time. In addition, the notion of power that Butler deduces from the term inscription is in contrast with Foucault’s productive conception of power and his proposition that resistance is an inevitable product of the exercise of power. Foucault suggests that:

...power is not exercised simply as an obligation or a prohibition on those who “do not have it”; it invests them, is transmitted by them and through them; it exerts pressure upon them, just as they themselves, in their struggle against it, resist the grip it has on them.<sup>34</sup>

Thus, while the *metaphor* of inscription might imply both a substantive body and a repressive notion of power, these are not congruent with Foucault’s explicit rejection of a metaphysical conception of the body or with his use of the term power.

The last element underpinning the genealogical perspective is the critique of disembodied and ahistorical conception of knowledge. Foucault criticises what he sees as the tendency in philosophy to conceive itself as disembodied. As he states: ‘among the philosopher’s idiosyncrasies is a complete denial of the body’.<sup>35</sup> Thus, the contention that there is no essence is also directed against reason; there is no pure or essential reason since reason is also intertwined with the body or ulterior motives:

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<sup>33</sup> Foucault, “Nietzsche, Genealogy, History.”

<sup>34</sup> Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 27.

<sup>35</sup> Foucault, “Nietzsche, Genealogy, History”, 382.

...devotion to truth and the precision of scientific methods arose from the passion of scholars, their reciprocal hatred, their fanatical and unending discussions, and their spirit of competition - the personal conflicts that slowly forged the weapons of reason.<sup>36</sup>

Genealogy undermines the essentialist conception of knowledge by revealing that it is rooted in motives other than the pursuit of truth. A further instance of criticising the notion of impartial knowledge can be found in the statement:

Knowledge [*savoir*] does not slowly detach itself from its empirical roots, the initial needs from which it arose, to become pure speculation subject only to the demands of reason, its development is not tied to the constitution and affirmation of a free subject; rather, it creates a progressive enslavement to its instinctive violence.<sup>37</sup>

It is in this sense that genealogy can be seen as ultimately leading to the 'sacrifice of the subject of knowledge'.<sup>38</sup>

Foucault criticises historical narratives that do not recognise their own historicity and claim to produce knowledge from a god-like perspective. Knowledge is a thing of this world, and as such it is implicated in relations of power and the contingency of history. This leads to the more radical formulation in which knowledge production and power dynamics are seen as inherently linked:

We should admit... that power and knowledge directly imply one another; that there is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time power relations.<sup>39</sup>

Critics question the epistemological grounding of these claims, pointing out that Foucault does not provide an epistemological criterion against which his own claims can be measured. Peter Dews argues that:

...if Foucault is claiming truth for his historical theories, while at

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 371.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 387-388.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 387.

<sup>39</sup> Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 27.

the same time insisting on an immanent connection between truth and power, he can only be claiming recognition for the particular system of power with which his own discourse is bound up.<sup>40</sup>

Todd May asserts that genealogy is an epistemological failure.<sup>41</sup> The notion of the ‘will to knowledge’ made knowledge inevitably reducible to power and therefore to ideology.

Both critiques rely on assuming an opposition between knowledge and power, the very conception that Foucault sets out to undermine. Therefore, they do not represent an immanent critique, but remain external to the conceptual system they examine. In May’s account, Foucault’s claim that knowledge is produced within power relations is equated with maintaining that knowledge is *determined* by power relations. Similarly, Dews argues that if Foucault himself is implicated in power relations then his claims are solely shaped by the interests of power. Both arguments imply that power and truth are mutually exclusive: if one is present, the other must be absent. However, this critique only holds if one supposes that there is an alternative – one which can find a privileged epistemological position from which knowledge can be produced. I would argue that Foucault convincingly demonstrates that such a position does not exist. There is no way to exist outside power relations just as there is no way to exist outside time.

Genealogy recognises these epistemological constraints and addresses them. However, the attempt is not to perform ‘epistemological corrections’ that will allow one to produce absolute knowledge. Rather, the prescription is a deliberate attempt to destabilise the socio-historical formation within which one is situated. Through this strategic effort one can come to recognise the contingency and singularity of what appears to be universal. As Foucault proposes in ‘What is Enlightenment?’:

The critical ontology of ourselves has to be considered not, certainly, as a theory, a doctrine, nor even as a permanent body of knowledge that is accumulating; it has to be conceived as an attitude, an ethos, a philosophical life in which the critique of what we are is at one and the same time the historical analysis of

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<sup>40</sup> P. Dews, *Logics of Disintegration: Post-Structuralist Thought and the Claims of Critical Theory* (London: Verso, 1987), 215.

<sup>41</sup> T. May, *Between Genealogy and Epistemology: Psychology, Politics, and Knowledge in the Thought of Michel Foucault* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1993).

the limits that are imposed on us and an experiment with the possibility of going beyond them.<sup>42</sup>

This suggestion attracts further criticism. Dews laments the fact that this critique cannot produce claims of misrepresentations.<sup>43</sup> Similarly, Cousins and Hussain<sup>44</sup> argue that the critical capacity of genealogy is limited and that exposing the contingency of knowledge leaves an unrequited need for a critical evaluation of discourses. However, Foucault's epistemological critiques lead to recognising the impossibility of producing the evaluative critique that Dews as well as Cousins and Hussain seek. This evaluation can only be based on the ability to have an external position from which to launch the evaluation. If we recognise our own historical perspectivism, then we can no longer maintain the assumption that we can produce such objective evaluations. Foucault outlines one possible response to the recognition of epistemological limits. This response, a strategic effort to undermine one's own conceptions, is both useful and viable.

## **2.2 Conceptual tools: Problematization, Technology**

### **Problematization**

The key concept drawn from Foucault's work is problematization. This concept is first used in *Discipline and Punish*<sup>45</sup> but is more frequently used in Foucault's later work such as *The History of Sexuality Vol. 2: The Use of Pleasure*.<sup>46</sup> Describing how he developed the concept, Foucault recounted his effort to outline a history of 'thought' as distinct from an analysis of representation on one hand, and from the history of attitudes and actions, on the other. Defining problematization Foucault states that it:

...does not mean the representation of a pre-existent object nor the

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<sup>42</sup> M. Foucault, "What is Enlightenment," in *The Foucault Reader*, ed. P. Rabinow (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1984), 50.

<sup>43</sup> P. Dews, "The Return of the Subject in Late Foucault," *Radical Philosophy* 51 (1989): 37-41.

<sup>44</sup> M. Cousins and A. Hussain, *Michel Foucault, Theoretical Traditions in the Social Sciences* (London: Macmillan, 1984).

<sup>45</sup> Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*.

<sup>46</sup> Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Vol. 2, The Use of Pleasure*.



creation through discourse of an object that did not exist. It is the ensemble of discursive and non-discursive practices that make something enter into the play of true and false and constitute it as an object of thought (whether in the form of moral reflection, scientific knowledge, political analysis, etc.).<sup>47</sup>

Foucault explores the way in which certain behaviour or a domain of action enters into the field of thought: when its meanings, its conditions and aims are questioned.<sup>48</sup> However, as I have discussed in the first chapter, the concept of problematization outlines a way of *mapping* a field of ethical concern. It enables broadening the description from only noting which behaviours or thoughts are deemed problematic to a description of the subjectivity which is problematized, the criteria according to which it is problematized, the substance on which the ethical practice aims to work and the experts involved in problematizing.

Drawing on Foucault's work, in his book *Governing the Soul*, Nikolas Rose puts forward an additional definition of the study of problematizations proposing that it should advance through examining each problematization along several dimensions.<sup>49</sup> The first dimension is the domain of concern, i.e. whether a problem is described as a moral concern, an economic concern or a military concern. Second, the institutions which are involved in defining a phenomenon as a problem should be identified. This includes specifying whether it is a scientific institution, a religious institution or an international non-governmental organisation which is playing a central role in defining a phenomenon as problematic. Finally, the criteria used in defining a phenomenon as a problem and the practices through which the problem is acted upon should also be identified. This straightforward analysis is more useful for this study than the one outlined by Foucault and it therefore played the central role in the analysis of the empirical findings.

In this thesis, the concept of problematization is used to distinguish the 'moral' from a psychological set of discourses and practices around the unmarried mother.

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<sup>47</sup> M. Foucault quoted in P. Rabinow and N. Rose, "Introduction: Foucault Today," in *The Essential Foucault: Selections from Essential Works of Foucault, 1954-1984*, eds. P. Rabinow and N. Rose (New York: New Press, 2003), 12-13.

<sup>48</sup> M. Foucault, "Polemics, Politics and Problematizations: An Interview with Michel Foucault," in *Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth, Essential Works of Michel Foucault, 1954-1984. Vol. 1*, ed. P. Rabinow (London: Penguin, 2000), 111-119.

<sup>49</sup> N. Rose, *Governing the Soul*.

The term problematization is most useful for this account since it enables us to map a certain formation: the criteria according to which the unmarried mother is defined as problematic, the conceptualisation of her pathology and consequently the practices through which she is cared for. The domain of one's relation to one's self which preoccupied Foucault in *The History of Sexuality Vol. 2: The Use of Pleasure*, is not examined.

Nonetheless, through the notion of problematization the relationship among certain discourses, practices and institutional arrangements can be illuminated. As the next chapter outlines, within both the moral and psychological problematizations, becoming an unmarried mother was understood to be a reflection of a certain enduring subjectivity. In the moral problematization it was the result of deficiency in Christian values and weakness of character. Within the psychological problematization, the illegitimate pregnancy was the result of a long-term psychological disorder. In the next chapter, I map out the two different problematizations describing their different views regarding the 'etymology' of the illegitimate pregnancy, the unmarried mother's subjectivity, motherhood and the care of the mother.

## **Technology**

Foucault's notion of technology draws on the Greek term of *techne*, which denotes a practical form of reason directed towards the achievement of a certain objective.<sup>50</sup> Technologies can attempt to work on human and non-human subjects; they can have as their aim certain material objectives or they could be defined in spiritual terms. Technologies are always grounded in certain suppositions about the nature of that on which they act. When a technology is designed to operate upon human beings, it involves certain assumptions about human nature and a certain ethical outlook. Rose offered the following definition of human technologies as:

...hybrid assemblages of knowledges, instruments, persons, systems of judgement, buildings and spaces, underpinned at the

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<sup>50</sup> N. Rose, "Identity, Genealogy, History," in *Questions of Cultural Identity*, eds. S. Hall and P. du Gay (London: Thousand Oaks, 1996), 128-150.

programmatic level by certain presuppositions and objectives about human beings.<sup>51</sup>

Technologies do not necessarily remain fixed to the space and the objectives in which they were formulated. Once they have been formed, they can disperse, mutate or be appropriated in a different context and for a different purpose. In *The History of Sexuality Vol. 1* Foucault describes the way in which the technology of confession spread from the Christian monasteries into other domains of social life.<sup>52</sup> A technology could form a lineage, rather than a single identical formula. This conceptualisation of ‘technology’ supports the ontological account which genealogy presents. The dynamics and unstable nature of the world is partly the result of this instability of technology: the fact that it is not fixed, not reducible to its original objectives, but mutable and dynamic.

Among the technologies that Foucault described were technologies involved in the production of subjectivity. Specifically, Foucault coined the term ‘anatomopolitics’ of the body to describe techniques which operate directly on the individual body with the aim of producing a certain effect.<sup>53</sup> Describing this modality of operation Foucault proclaims:

What I am trying to do is to show how power relations can get through to the very depths of bodies, materially, without having been relayed by the representation of subjects. If power affects the body, it is not because it was first internalised in people’s consciousnesses.<sup>54</sup>

Drawing on this perspective, in the next chapter I present an account of several technologies used in Mother and Baby Homes in order to transform the subjectivity of unmarried mothers. Nevertheless, this analysis has an obvious weakness. It focuses on governmental discourses and actions and leaves out women’s experiences. I examine changes in the way in which government officers conceptualised women and attempted to govern them but refrain from considering

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<sup>51</sup> N. Rose, *Inventing Our Selves: Psychology, Power and Personhood* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 26.

<sup>52</sup> Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Vol. 1*.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 139

<sup>54</sup> M. Foucault, “Power Affects the Body,” in *Foucault Live: Interviews, 1961-1984*, ed. S. Lotringer (New York: Semiotext (e), 1996), 209.

the way in which the women understood the regimes through which they were governed and sought to resist them. While this drawback is recognised, I argue that the investigation is nonetheless beneficial and opens the way for future research.

### **2.3 Archival Research**

This section describes the empirical data is used in this study and discusses its conceptualisation. The majority of the data consists of archive records produced by governmental and voluntary bodies in London between the mid-1950s and the late 1960s. Additionally, I used governmental publications as well as articles published in academic journals and in professional bulletins. In the first part of this account I discuss the conceptualisation of the archive and consider the epistemological implications of using archive records in sociological research. The following part describes the empirical material and reflects its epistemological status in light of the preceding discussion.

#### **Archive and Government: Epistemological and Methodological Considerations**

The following account locates the archive in a historical and sociological context, links it to the concept of genealogy and assesses the methodological implications for this research. I do not discuss the literature examining the archive in relation to memory and history,<sup>55</sup> or the way in which the archive functions as the basis for claims of scientific status.<sup>56</sup> The focus is on discussing the relationship between archives and government and outlining its epistemological and methodological implications.

In *Archive Fever* the philosopher Jacques Derrida offers a series of reflections on

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<sup>55</sup> C. Steedman, "The Space of Memory: in an Archive," *History of the Human Sciences* 11, no. 4 (1998): 65-83; P. Nora, "General Introduction: Between Memory and History," in *Realms of Memory: Rethinking the French Past, Vol. 1, Conflict and Division*, ed. P. Nora (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), 1-20.

<sup>56</sup> T. Osborne, "The Ordinarity of the Archive," *History of the Human Sciences* 12, no. 2 (1999): 51-64.

the nature of the archive.<sup>57</sup> Tracing the origin of the word to Ancient Greece, as Derrida suggests, reveals that the archive was closely associated with power and law: the Greek term *Arkheion* denoted the residence of the superior magistrates who had the right to guard the documents, to interpret them and to speak the law. Derrida further argues:

There is no political power without control of the archive, if not of memory. Effective democratization can always be measured by this essential criterion: the participation in and the access to the archive, its constitution, and its interpretation.<sup>58</sup>

Other scholars focus on considering the links between the modern archive and the modern form of political government, namely the nation state. Brown and Davis-Brown assert that the modern archive was associated with the emergence of the nation state and the rise of the distinction between the private and the public realm.<sup>59</sup> For this reason, the archive has become an important site of secular national memory.<sup>60</sup>

Similarly, Patrick Joyce is concerned with placing the modern archive within the history of the formation of liberal democratic regimes. He claims that the establishment of public archives and libraries in Britain during the 19<sup>th</sup> century played a central role in constituting the public. The public archive and library were accessible, in principle, to all citizens regardless of their class. They were also associated with some of the key liberal beliefs in the importance of self-governance and self-help. Joyce proposes that:

An understanding of the political nature of the archive, therefore might profitably consider it as a political technology designed to effect a particular political rationality, namely a liberal mode of governmentality. Such a mode concerned the constitution of political subjectivities designed to be self-observing and self-

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<sup>57</sup> J. Derrida, *Archive Fever: a Freudian Impression* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996).

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>59</sup> R. H. Brown and B. Davis-Brown, "The Making of Memory: the Politics of Archives, Libraries and Museums in the Construction of National Consciousness," *History of the Human Sciences* 11, no. 4 (1998): 17-32.

<sup>60</sup> Brown and Davis-Brown proclaim: '*As depositories of national history and memory, modern archives, libraries and museums... help to preserve a collective national memory and thence to constitute a collective national identity...*' *Ibid.*, 19.

governing.<sup>61</sup>

Joyce's reflections are derived from his experience of researching the history of archives and libraries in Britain. He found that the archive he is using as a source is also the object of his research. In this situation, the researcher realises that he is unable to position himself outside his object of study. Joyce proclaims: 'I write the history of liberalism by means of the liberal archive, and indeed within scholarly dispensation that can be called liberal'.<sup>62</sup> The archive is not a supra-historical source of data but the product of specific socio-historical formations. Furthermore, the archive and the researcher are both produced by the same socio-historical formation. In this sense, Joyce can be seen to illustrate genealogy's proposition of the inherent perspectivism of knowledge.

The difficulty which Joyce identifies can nevertheless be utilised. Foucault uses the historically specific characteristics of the modern archive as the basis for identifying governmental change.<sup>63</sup> He argues that from the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century there has been a rise in the creation and accumulation of documents in various institutional settings such as prisons, asylums and schools. In this process, ordinary individuals and mundane events were increasingly verbalized and documented; a process Foucault termed the lowering of the 'threshold of describable individuality'.<sup>64</sup> This accumulation of dossiers and files reflected a shift in the form of government. In this case, the files and the folders found in the archive are not merely the vehicle for studying external occurrences, but are the very process under examination. This outlines one way in which knowledge production can proceed not through the attempt to reach a perfect epistemological vantage point but rather by the utilisation of contingency.

Another significant proposition in this argument is that the dossier found in the archive can be understood as a technology of governance. This view is developed further by Alan Sekula in the essay *The Body and the Archive*.<sup>65</sup> Sekula looks at the

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<sup>61</sup> P. Joyce, "The Politics of the Liberal Archive," *History of the Human Sciences* 12, no. 2 (1999): 36-37.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, 36.

<sup>63</sup> I will not be using Foucault's discussion of the archive in *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (London: Tavistock Publications, 1972) where he claims that the archive should not be understood as an empirical concept i.e. as the actual sum of all the texts that a culture has preserved, but as the system governing the production of enunciations.

<sup>64</sup> Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 191.

<sup>65</sup> A. Sekula, "The Body and the Archive," *October* 39 (1986): 3-64.

way in which the photographic archive came into being during the 19<sup>th</sup> century through the intersection of certain technologies, practices and fields of knowledge:

The institution of the photographic archive received its most thorough early articulation in precise conjunction with an increasingly professionalized and technological mode of police work and an emerging social science of criminology.<sup>66</sup>

The creation of the photographic archive was linked to the belief that also underpinned the new disciplines of physiognomy and phrenology, that the surface of the body reflected an individual's inner character. However, crucially, the archive was linked to the development of the field of statistics and its use in producing social scientific knowledge. The modality of the archive corresponded to a statistical conception of population, deviance and normalcy. As Sekula describes this conception:

...it was only on the basis of mutual comparison, on the basis of the tentative construction of a larger, "universal" archive, that zones of deviance and respectability could be clearly demarcated.<sup>67</sup>

The accumulation of multiple individual cases in an archive was associated with the statistical mode of knowledge in which deviance is described in relation to the population as a whole. For this reason Sekula argues with regard to the photographic archive that '...the archive is both an abstract paradigmatic entity and a concrete institution'.<sup>68</sup> Sekula makes an important contribution to understanding the socio-historical context in which the modern archive was created by addressing issues that are absent in Foucault's argument. The first is the way in which, with the technology of photography, there was an attempt to record individuals' bodies and accumulate these records in the archive. Secondly, the archive was not only a concrete institution; it was also what Sekula termed a paradigmatic entity corresponding to the statistical conception in which a population is comprised of multiple individual cases.

The analysis of the archive in terms of its relation to paradigms of knowledge has

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<sup>66</sup> Ibid., 17.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid., 14.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid., 17.

been taken further by Thomas Osborne.<sup>69</sup> Osborne discusses Foucault's work on the archive in order to propose that the modern archive entails certain archival reason. Osborne claims that archival reason is akin to clinical logic, in that it highlights the single case: 'Archival reason is the form of reason that is devoted to the *detail*'.<sup>70</sup> He further asserts that archival reason valorises the mundane and ascribes to it a privileged explanatory role. Drawing on Foucault, Osborne argues:

If royal memory was a memory of the sovereign and great acts, then archival memory in its modern forms is a memory - even when it focuses on the great and the powerful themselves - of everyday detail; a style of memory that contains within itself the assumption that the everyday is a particularly revealing level on which to pose the question of memory.<sup>71</sup>

More significantly, Osborne claims that research which uses archives tends to reproduce this trait:

...one might say that the particular - *clinical* - effects we get from archival histories stem from the fact that the sovereign gaze of the historian, the reader of the archives, re-animates the discourses he or she discovers in the archives, giving them an aura of a certain rarity, a kind of extraordinary ordinariness.<sup>72</sup>

Osborne's argument raises significant methodological questions. He claims that the archive entails a certain aesthetic sensibility which affects the research that uses it as a source.<sup>73</sup> This argument should be considered in relation to the account presented in this thesis. According to Osborne's claim, this account could be profoundly shaped by the modern archive's aesthetic sensibilities. However, Osborne's proposition seems to articulate in a different way the same phenomenon which Foucault associated with a historically specific mode of government. It is a certain mode of governing based on the minute documentation of the everyday and the individual case, which produces the characteristics that Osborne identifies.

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<sup>69</sup> Osborne, "The Ordinariness of the Archive."

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, 58.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, 59.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, 62.

<sup>73</sup> Osborne clarifies that this 'aesthetic sensibility' is not only the result of the archive imposing its form of reason, but is characteristic of certain disciplines.



Osborne himself can be seen as supporting this interpretation when he argues that the archive always presumes a certain public consisting of researchers, government officers or citizens. This in itself can be seen as a certain technology of government – a technology in which the processes of government are made visible for a certain public. In this context, Osborne discusses the differences between archives in liberal regimes and archives in totalitarian political regimes. In totalitarian regimes, archives are created assuming that they will never be accessible to researchers or the public. In contrast, ‘with the liberal kind of archive there is always some other who can come along to re-interpret things’.<sup>74</sup>

This proposition raises an epistemological difficulty. In liberal regimes, archives are not naïve objects. By naïve I mean that they are not oblivious to their examination. The records held in the archive were often created with the author’s awareness that the document could be examined. As Osborne argues, the public that examines the archive material could be restricted to government officers or it could be broader and include the entire population of citizens.

In liberal regimes, the governmental records can be seen as a technology for making government processes amenable to inspection.<sup>75</sup> The archive is therefore implicated in the process of governance not only as a technology of governance but also as a tool for the regulation of governance. The government records in the archive are generated with an awareness of their future visibility. However, this potential epistemological weakness could be turned into a vantage point if the study’s aim is the exploration of governmental practices. In this case, it is not an external reality which is sought through the records, but the processes of government itself. Hence, they provide a direct source through which these processes could be observed.

This does not eliminate the possibility that the author’s knowledge of the future visibility of the record has shaped its content. However, this difficulty is not unique to archival records. A person filling in a survey or being interviewed is aware of the visibility (albeit protected) of the information they provide. The risk that this knowledge in some way shapes the information provided cannot be fully eliminated.

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<sup>74</sup> Ibid., 57.

<sup>75</sup> Consider for instance the Freedom of Information Act 2000 which gives the public greater access to information held by public authorities.

A further epistemological issue stems from considering the role of specific technologies in constituting the archive records. In *Archive Fever* Derrida maintains that the process of recording is not simply a process of representing something that already exists but that the technology of recording shapes the thing which it records:

...archival technology no longer determines, will never have determined, merely the moment of the conservational recording, but rather the very institution of the archivable event. It conditions not only the form or the structure that prints, but the printed content of the printing: the *pressure* of the *printing*, the *impression*, before the division between the printed and the printer.<sup>76</sup>

Whereas Foucault highlights the way in which documents function; the way in which recording can be a technology of government, Derrida draws attention to the way in which technologies of recording constitute the event being recorded. I discuss the implications of this suggestion in the account presented below.

## **2.4 Empirical Sources**

The choice of the archival records included in this study was shaped by the research aim, the ontological and epistemological perspective underpinning the research and by the records available. The examination of empirical data progressed along two main lines: examination of publications and of archival records. I shall describe each of these categories in the sections below.

### **Professional and Government Publications**

I examined a range of governmental publications: books written by clinicians working with unmarried mothers, articles published in the Moral Welfare Workers' Bulletin, government bulletins and academic literature. In addition, I studied the

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<sup>76</sup> Derrida, *Archive Fever*, 18.

annual reports of the Registrar General for England and Wales, Census reports as well as reports of the Ministry of Health.

### **Archival Records**

#### **Records of the London County Council**

I examined a limited number of Ministry of Health files created between the late 1950s and late 1960s. However, most of the archival investigation focused on the records of the London County Council created between 1955 and 1965. In particular, I scrutinized the records of the Council's Children's Committee, Welfare Committee and Health Committee. In addition, the records of the Welfare Committee's Visiting Sub-Committees, which were in charge of monitoring the work of Council-run nursing homes, were also studied. Emphasis was put on examining reports regarding the work of King's Mead: one of the large nursing homes accommodating unmarried mothers. This included studying the regular reports produced by the warden and matron of this institution which were submitted to the Welfare Committee's Visiting Sub-Committee responsible for overseeing the work of King's Mead. These records were used in order to examine the extent to which the moral or psychological problematization shaped the work of the Council with unmarried mothers. In addition, the Council records were used in order to identify the emergence of the concern with the sexually active teenager and the establishment of the care of the teenage unmarried mother as a distinct area in the Council's work.

In line with the discussion of the conceptualisation of the archival material, I shall describe the way in which different groups of records functioned within the Council's governmental processes. The first group of records includes the reports of members of the Visiting Sub-Committee as well as the reports written by the warden and the matron of King's Mead. These reports were produced on a regular basis and were part of the ongoing monitoring of the institution's work.

The second group of documents includes the reports and minutes of the Council's Children's, Health and Welfare Committees. These usually pertained to

new policies or new measures the Council took. They were not vehicles for monitoring work but a tool for establishing new governmental practices. Furthermore, these records functioned within a particular governmental arrangement. In order for a government action, such as a new policy or the allocation of financial resources to an institution to go ahead, an officer had to obtain the support of fellow members of the relevant Committee. Some privileged responsibility lay with the Chairman of each Committee who recorded the decision. This governmental structure shaped the reports. As a result most reports commenced with an account of a certain governmental problem, proposed ways in which this difficulty could be addressed and described the governmental rationale underpinning the suggested course of action. For instance, the Medical Officer of Health's report requesting the appointment of a Visiting Psychiatrist to St. Christopher's Mother and Baby Home consists of several parts. The first is an account of the claim that there was a need for psychiatric help in the Home; this included a discussion of the nature of young unmarried mothers and a discussion of the problems encountered by this group of young women. The report then outlines a programme for addressing these needs and subsequently discusses the financial costs of the suggested action and the timetable for its evaluation.

These reports were typed before being presented to the Committee. They were formal and carefully crafted statements. Once a recommendation outlined in a report had been approved it was signed and dated by the Chairman of the Committee. Derrida argues that the process of recording does not capture a pre-existing object but is also involved in shaping the object which it records. Applied to these archival records, Derrida's claim would lead to the conclusion that the fact that these reports were typed, paper documents, is not external to the object which is recorded, but had shaped it in certain ways. However, this claim could be taken even further, drawing on both Derrida's and Foucault's assertions. I argue that the very process of producing government records (the writing, typing, submission and circulation) constitutes the processes of government. Consequently, the study of the production and circulation of these records enabled the tracing of the processes of governance taking place within the London County Council in the period under examination.

## **Archival Records – Voluntary Organisations**

### **Moral Welfare Work Records**

This study included an examination of records associated with moral welfare work. The records examined were produced by South London Moral Welfare Associations and Mother and Baby Homes affiliated to the Church of England. These Homes, Stretton House, St. Mary's House and Putney Mother and Baby Homes were supported financially by the London County Council.<sup>77</sup> More specifically, I studied the annual reports of Stretton House Mother and Baby Home and the case histories of women referred to Putney Mother and Baby Home. However, the most detailed examination of moral welfare records was of the case histories of women who were admitted to St. Mary's House Mother and Baby Home, a total of 163 cases.

As will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 4, case histories were the biographical accounts written by a moral welfare worker or a council officer regarding each woman referred to a Mother and Baby Home. While recognising their epistemological limitations these records are used to construct a picture of the lives of young women in the London area who became pregnant out-of-wedlock in the years 1965-1968. The records of St. Mary's House Mother and Baby Home also included the residents' application form and the medical examination form, which every woman was required to complete before entering the Home. In addition, for many of the cases, a record of the correspondence between the moral welfare worker or the council officer and the matron of the Home was available. These letters frequently discussed the date of admission and any necessary arrangements associated with the process of admission. Some women's records contained the correspondence with adoption societies. As many of the women were supported by their local authority, the local authority forms declaring financial responsibility for the women were also enclosed.

These records, as the matron's and warden's reports of King's Mead nursing home, played a role in the day-to-day management of the Home. Hence they

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<sup>77</sup> The records of St. Mary's House pertain to the period after the dissolution of the London County Council; however, it was supported financially by the Council up until 1965.

constitute a reliable source for studying the governmental arrangements in the Home. They are used to construct a picture of the governance arrangement and working practices of St. Mary's House as well as of the professionals, i.e. moral welfare workers and council officers who referred young women to the Home.

### **The National Council for One Parent Families**

The archival records of this organisation which until 1973 was called the National Council for the Unmarried Mother and Her Child were included in the investigation. Founded in 1918 following a rise in illegitimacy during the First World War, the National Council for the Unmarried Mother and Her Child was the central voluntary body campaigning for the rights of unmarried mothers and their children.<sup>78</sup> The organisation provided financial support for unmarried mothers who sought its help but by and large was not involved in providing residential accommodation for these women. Pregnant women who sought the organisation's help were often referred to Moral Welfare Association in their area in order to subsequently be admitted into a Mother and Baby Home affiliated to the organisations.<sup>79</sup>

The National Council for the Unmarried Mother and Her Child was involved in research activities and co-operated with the government on various initiatives during the 1960s. In 1964, the organisation undertook a survey of the practices and policies of Mother and Baby Homes sponsored by the Ministry of Health and the Gulbenkian Foundation. The extensive survey, which was conducted by Jill Nicholson is referred to throughout the thesis. During the 1960s, the Council was involved in organising conferences for government officers and moral welfare workers discussing the care of unmarried mothers and their children. In addition, it published leaflets and monographs of experts in the field of social work or psychological work with unmarried mothers. The proceedings of the conferences organised by the Council, as well as the leaflets found in the deposit were drawn upon in the research. Additionally, I studied the records of the Joint Working Party on Pregnant

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<sup>78</sup> K. E. Kiernan, H. Land, and J. E. Lewis, *Lone Motherhood in Twentieth-Century Britain: From Footnote to Front Page* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998).

<sup>79</sup> St. Mary's House Case Papers, January 1965 to October 1967, ACC 2201/H23/2/1-166, City of London: London Metropolitan Archives.

Schoolgirls and Schoolgirl Mothers established in cooperation with the Community Development Trust in 1975.

## **2.5 Conclusion**

Using the concept of genealogy, I explore the ‘beginnings’ of the governmental field of ‘teenage pregnancy’. In line with the ontological and epistemological outlook guiding my research, I do not attempt to identify a concrete historical moment in which the current governmental field came into being. Rejecting metaphysical essentialism, the thesis depicts the range of discourses and practices deployed in governmental and voluntary work with unmarried mothers in the period 1955-1968. It then explores the discursive shifts associated with the emergence of the care of the teenage unmarried mother as a distinct governmental field. In addition, rather than presenting an exhaustive account, this thesis aims, through the analysis of a particular historical moment, to render the emergence of this governmental field intelligible and to open it up to further investigation.<sup>80</sup>

Taking into account the discussion of the epistemological position of the public archive in liberal democratic regimes, the archival records used in this study are recognised as being produced by multiple contingent processes. They can not be separated from the history of liberal political government in Britain within which they were produced. Furthermore, these records are mostly formal government documents. They were created in a local government organisation, with a dual function: governing and making governance processes visible. Thus, while it is recognised that they are not naïve objects they are nonetheless viewed as providing a reliable source for examining governmental processes since, to a significant extent, they constitute the processes under consideration. Recognising the inherent perspectivism of my investigation, the research is conceptualised as an attempt to explore certain conjunctions and disjunctions within a particular socio-historic governmental formation, researching it ‘from within’.

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<sup>80</sup> M. Foucault, “Questions of Method,” in *Power: Essential works of Foucault, 1954-1984, Vol. 3*, ed. J. D. Faubion (London: Penguin, 2002), 227.

### **Chapter 3:**

## **The Moral and Psychological Problematizations of Unmarried Mothers**

The aim of this chapter is to describe the discourses and practices which preceded the emergence of the teenage mother as a problem for professionals and government officers. Several scholars whose work was described in the first chapter located the antecedents of the governmental concern with teenage mothers in the preceding problem of unmarried mothers. This chapter portrays the two dominant problematizations shaping governmental work with unmarried mothers in Britain in the late 1950s and 1960s. I refer to these problematizations as the moral and the psychological. However, since the aim of the research is to examine the shift from the problematization of unmarried mothers to that of teenage mothers, one of the objectives of this chapter is to determine whether or not the psychological concept of ‘adolescence’ was a feature of these problematizations.

As will be described in Chapter 5, this psychological concept emerged at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and has influenced governmental work, particularly the development of youth work, during the first half of the century. During the 1950s, the term ‘teenager’, coined by an American market researcher a decade earlier, had become popular in Britain.<sup>1</sup> It is significant therefore to ascertain the extent to which this term, or the psychological concept of ‘adolescence’ influenced the work of professionals and government officers working with unmarried mothers, many of who were young women in their teens.

The texts examined in this chapter comprise moral welfare work literature, using, primarily, articles published in the Bulletin of Moral Welfare Workers Association. Some archival records, such as Annual Reports of Moral Welfare Associations and Mother and Baby Homes, were included. In addition, I examine psychiatric, medical and social work literature published in academic journals, professional magazines and

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<sup>1</sup> B. Osgerby, *Youth in Britain since 1945* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1998). The publication of *The Teenage Consumer* by Mark Abrams contributed to the popularisation of the term. M. Abrams, *Teenage Consumer* (London: London Press Exchange, 1959).



British governmental bulletins from the mid-1950s to the late 1960s. Most of these texts were written by practitioners involved in caring for unmarried mothers. They include writings by psychiatrists, midwives and medical officers working for local authorities.

This chapter commences with an account of governmental work with unmarried mothers in Britain in the period following World War II. I then provide an overview of moral welfare work and of the main institution associated with its work, the Mother and Baby Home. The account then proceeds to depict the moral problematization of unmarried mothers according to five central dimensions: a) the ‘etymology’ of the illegitimate pregnancy; b) the conceptualisation of the subjectivity of the unmarried mother; c) whether or not the concept of adolescence is employed; d) the conceptualisation of motherhood; and e) the conceptualisation of the illegitimate child. The second part of the chapter outlines the psychological problematization of unmarried mothers according to the same five dimensions. In the last part of the chapter I discuss the similarities and differences between the two problematizations.

The attempt to map the two central problematizations of unmarried mothers according to the five dimensions outlined above departs from existing literature. Kiernan et al.<sup>2</sup> and Lewis and Welshman<sup>3</sup> mainly examine the conceptualisations of unmarried mothers in the professional literature and the shifts in government provisions. Janet Fink and Martine Spensky<sup>4</sup> additionally study the work of voluntary and religious organisations using primary archive sources. In this literature, the key distinction being drawn is between portrayals of unmarried mothers as ‘bad’ as opposed to ‘mad’. This, however, does not present the full picture. The concept of problematization, as described in detail in the previous chapter, denotes the attempt to map a ‘field of problematization’: describing the authorities who problematize, the practices through which they problematize, the criteria according to which the phenomenon is rendered

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<sup>2</sup> K. E. Kiernan, H. Land, and J. E. Lewis, *Lone Motherhood in Twentieth-Century Britain: From Footnote to Front Page* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998).

<sup>3</sup> J. Lewis and J. Welshman, “The Issue of Never-Married Motherhood in Britain, 1920-70,” *Social History of Medicine* 10, no. 3 (1997): 401-418.

<sup>4</sup> J. Fink, “Condemned or Condoned? Investigating the Problem of Unmarried Motherhood in England, 1945-60,” (University of Essex, 1997); M. Spensky, “Producers of Legitimacy: Homes for Unmarried Mothers in the 1950s,” in *Regulating Womanhood: Historical Essays on Marriage, Motherhood and Sexuality*, ed. C. Smart (London: Routledge, 1992), 100-118.

problematic and the actions which are taken to address it.

Thus, the moral and the psychological problematizations can be mapped through a consideration of the five dimensions outlined above. It is through the examination of these dimensions that it is possible to identify the similarities and distinctions between them, as well as the features of the problematizations which are maintained and transcended in the shift to the problematization of the teenage unmarried mother.

### **3.1 Governmental Work with Unmarried Mothers: Post-World War II**

The governmental practice and provision for unmarried mothers in the post-war era was to a large extent shaped by circular 2866 issued in 1943 by the Ministry of Health. During the war there was a rise in the rate of illegitimacy prompting the government to take action.<sup>5</sup> The circular recommended that local authorities should form a scheme to support and reinforce the work of Moral Welfare Associations and other voluntary organisations that were assisting unmarried mothers. This recommendation led 281 local authorities to make arrangements with Moral Welfare Associations to care for unmarried mothers on their behalf and 108 local authorities to appoint social workers to undertake this task; 22 local authorities established their own Mother and Baby Homes.<sup>6</sup>

One of the milestones frequently discussed with regard to the post-war formation of the welfare state was the legislation following the publication of the Beveridge report in 1942. These legislative steps set up a social insurance system considered, at the time, a revolutionary measure of social policy. However, scholars who examine the issue of unmarried mothers are highly critical of this legislation. They claim that it discriminated against unmarried mothers as it was designed to cater for a nuclear family in which a man was the breadwinner and the woman raised the children. Within this legislation, a woman could be designated as either single and therefore 'worker' or married and a 'mother'.<sup>7</sup> The single mother did not fit into this scheme. Without a husband, she was

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<sup>5</sup> Fink, "Condemned or Condoned?."

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.; Lewis and Welshman, "The Issue of Never-Married Motherhood in Britain, 1920-70."

<sup>7</sup> Fink, "Condemned or Condoned?"; Spensky, "Producers of Legitimacy."

unable to claim benefits as a mother. This was particularly the case for the young unmarried mother since the receipt of benefits depended on previous national insurance contributions. The unmarried mother had a right to seek financial support from the putative father; however, these attempts were frequently unsuccessful.<sup>8</sup> Since the statutory benefits awarded by the National Insurance and Assistance Scheme did not provide adequate maintenance, most unmarried mothers were forced to take employment and raise the child, or rely on the means test of the Assistance Board.<sup>9</sup>

Nevertheless, several legislative measures significantly changed the statutory support which unmarried mothers were able to claim. The National Health Service Act in 1946 placed a duty on local authorities to care for all expectant and nursing mothers and their children. The 1948 National Assistance Act required local authorities to provide for persons in need of accommodation. Further services and welfare provisions were made available through the powers granted to local authorities by the Children Act 1948.

Different authorities used different acts as the basis for provision of residential accommodation for unmarried mothers. Welfare Departments in London used the National Assistance Act, while some Children's Departments had set up Mother and Baby Homes. However, it was chiefly the Local Health Authorities that provided care and accommodation for unmarried mothers.<sup>10</sup> In the London County Council, as the account in the next chapter details, it was the Health Department which supported religious Mother and Baby Homes under section 22 of the National Health Service Act, while the Welfare Department provided unmarried mothers with lodging under Part III of the National Assistance Act. While the religious Mother and Baby Homes specialised in the care of unmarried mothers and their children, the accommodation provided by the Welfare Department was less specialised. Most unmarried mothers who were assisted by this department were accommodated in large nursing homes alongside the old, the mentally disabled and the homeless.

As has been outlined above, following the 1943 government circular, most local

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<sup>8</sup> Fink, "Condemned or Condoned?."

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.; Kiernan, Land, and Lewis, *Lone Motherhood in Twentieth-Century Britain*.

<sup>10</sup> J. Nicholson *Mother and Baby Homes: a Survey of Homes for Unmarried Mothers* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1968).

authorities established working arrangements with Moral Welfare Associations and Mother and Baby Homes affiliated to a religious body. In 1959 only 16 local authorities had social workers whose main duty was to assist unmarried mothers.<sup>11</sup> As a result, moral welfare work remained central to the provision for unmarried mothers until the late 1960s.<sup>12</sup>

A variety of religious organisations were involved in work with unmarried mothers. The Roman Catholic Church, Church of England, and organisations such as the Salvation Army had set up their provision for unmarried mothers. The Salvation Army had uniform policies and guidelines which were consistently applied under their auspices. The work of Church of England Moral Welfare Associations was more diffuse. Each one of the Church of England dioceses was responsible for its own governance; dioceses were divided into branches and deaneries and each moral welfare worker was responsible for a small geographical area.<sup>13</sup>

The bulk of work with unmarried mothers was undertaken by moral welfare workers affiliated to the Church of England. In the late 1950s, there were about three hundred and fifty moral welfare workers across the country.<sup>14</sup> They were mostly employed by the Moral Welfare Association of their diocese, which was in turn affiliated to a central body, the Church of England Moral Welfare Council. The work of the London County Council suggests that although the Moral Welfare Associations and the Mother and Baby Homes were supported by annual grants from the local authorities and their services were regularly inspected, there was very little change in their work.

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Fink, "Condemned or Condoned?."

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Wimperis, *The Unmarried Mother and Her Child*.

## Mother and Baby Homes

Mother and Baby Homes were institutions specialising in the care of unmarried mothers. They originate from the 19<sup>th</sup> century penitentiaries in which unmarried mothers were incarcerated, frequently for a period of several years.<sup>15</sup> As described in the previous section, by the late 1950s and 1960s, much of moral welfare work had taken a less punitive approach to the unmarried mother. As a result of local authorities' reluctance to become directly involved in this work, Mother and Baby Homes continued to be run by religious organisations.

Most Mother and Baby Homes were run by a religious organisation affiliated to the Church of England. A survey carried out in the mid-1960s found that 138 out of 172 Mother and Baby Homes were run by church organisations.<sup>16</sup> Approximately 25 Mother and Baby Homes were run by Health Authorities. In 1966, thirty-two Mother and Baby Homes in England and Wales had their own maternity unit.<sup>17</sup>

In Britain in the 1950s and the 1960s when a woman became pregnant out-of-wedlock and decided to seek the help of a voluntary or governmental body, she usually approached the local moral welfare worker in her area. Some women approached the National Council for the Unmarried Mother and Her Child and were usually referred to a Moral Welfare Association. Others directly contacted local authority officers or were initially interviewed by a hospital almoner.<sup>18</sup> Most women would then be referred to a Mother and Baby Home. Many of the requests to enter a Home were described as stemming from young women's wish to hide the pregnancy from neighbours, friends and work colleagues.<sup>19</sup> Writing in the late 1960s, a Government Working Party on

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid.; C. Smart, "Deconstructing Motherhood," in *Good Enough Mothering? Feminist Perspectives on Lone Motherhood*, ed. E. Bortolaia Silva (London: Routledge, 1996), 37–57.

<sup>16</sup> Nicholson, *Mother and Baby Homes*.

<sup>17</sup> *Report of the Working Party of Officials on Illegitimacy and the Problems of Unmarried Mothers and Their Children*, Records of the Supplementary Benefits Commission (Surrey, 1968-1970), AST 36/593, The National Archives.

<sup>18</sup> I make this assertion based on the study of St. Mary's House Mother and Baby Home Case Histories, January 1965 to October 1967, City of London, ACC 2201/H23/2/1-166, London Metropolitan Archives.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

Illegitimacy and the Problems of Unmarried Mothers and their Children described the rationale of the Homes in the following words:

Whether she is still at school or a student or out at work the expectant mother or her family may feel that she must get away from the area where she is known and where the putative father may also live. Alternatively, she may have to move because of an unsympathetic landlady or employer when the pregnancy is becoming apparent.<sup>20</sup>

Martine Spensky argues that most women who entered a Mother and Baby Home came from the upper rungs of the socio-economic scale, as working-class parents were more willing to allow their daughters to remain at home during their pregnancy.<sup>21</sup> However, as will be described in the next chapter, the records of St. Mary's House Mother and Baby Home do not support Spensky's claim. The education and occupation of the young women who entered St. Mary's House Mother and Baby Home suggest that it was mostly working-class and lower middle-class women who were admitted to this institution. Describing the operation of these institutions, Spensky claims that during the 1950s they functioned as producers of legitimacy. Most of the girls who entered these Homes subsequently had their child adopted and this served to obliterate the occurrence of the illegitimate pregnancy. The baby was legitimated through the adoption by a married couple; furthermore, once the baby was removed the unmarried mother would be fit to marry and produce legitimate children herself.<sup>22</sup>

Spensky's argument appears at odds with the findings of Jill Nicholson and Janet Fink who claim that most Homes did not encourage the adoption of babies.<sup>23</sup> However, this apparent contrast could be explained if we assume that moral welfare workers encouraged mothers to raise their children themselves but helped arrange an adoption when that was the mother's choice. The case studies described in the next chapter do not support Spensky's suggestion that the majority of women had the child adopted.

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<sup>20</sup> *Report of the Working Party of Officials on Illegitimacy.*, 49.

<sup>21</sup> Spensky, "Producers of Legitimacy."

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>23</sup> Nicholson, *Mother and Baby Homes.*; Fink, "Condemned or Condoned?."

However, the scope of these case studies is limited and more empirical research is needed in order to reach more conclusive evidence.

It should be noted, however, that only a minority of unmarried mothers entered Mother and Baby Homes. In the mid-1950s it was estimated that a fifth of all unmarried mothers entered these Homes and a survey from the mid-1960s estimated the proportion as a sixth. In the mid-1960s approximately 11,000 out of the 70,000 unmarried mothers entered a Mother and Baby Home.<sup>24</sup> Thus, the governmental field of work with 'unmarried mothers' pertained to only a minority of those which could be categorised as bearing children out-of-wedlock.

Historians are currently examining the accuracy of the estimates regarding the number of unmarried mothers, noting that many of them could have avoided being recorded by government and voluntary bodies. Some unmarried mothers could have moved to a different city and claimed to be widows; others could have continued to live with their parents, their child being raised by the parents as one of their own.<sup>25</sup> Nevertheless, by the 1960s societal norms were beginning to change. Recognising this, in 1964 the Ministry of Health in co-operation with the Gulbenkian Foundation sponsored a research project undertaken by the National Council for the Unmarried Mother and Her Child that examined the policies and practices of Mother and Baby Homes. The survey revealed that there was confusion among moral welfare workers and government officers regarding their role and that this was reflected in the various regimes found in Mother and Baby Homes across the country. Nicholson claimed: 'Objectives of reform, accommodation and care were all apparent in the different ways the Homes were used'.<sup>26</sup> The staff in many Homes continued to employ the notion of the Home as a place where character was reformed, however, there were others who described the Home's main function as the provision of shelter.<sup>27</sup>

Two processes contributed to the rise of new views among moral welfare workers: the development and professionalisation of the discipline of social work; and the

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<sup>24</sup> Spensky, "Producers of Legitimacy."; Nicholson, *Mother and Baby Homes*.

<sup>25</sup> P. Thane "The Changing Experience of Lone Motherhood in Britain since 1918" (Paper presented at the conference New Perspectives on Lone Mothers, London, UK, 23<sup>rd</sup> of November 2007).

<sup>26</sup> Nicholson, *Mother and Baby Homes*., 43.

<sup>27</sup> Nicholson, *Mother and Baby Homes*.

increased influence of psychological discourse on governmental work. Nevertheless, these changes did not affect the practices of some moral welfare workers. Many moral welfare workers did continue to work in a traditional manner unaware of the psychological discourse.<sup>28</sup> This was in part a result of the fact that many of the moral welfare workers in the early 1960s were middle-aged women, largely single, whose world view and professional practice was shaped in the interwar period.<sup>29</sup> Thus, the period under examination was a period of transition in which both the moral and the psychological problematizations were employed by various professionals and organisations. Furthermore, the influence of both perspectives could often be detected in the publications of a single practitioner or a single organisation. It was not possible to link each one of the problematizations to specific disciplines, organisations or even individuals. Hence, although in the next section I proceed to describe each one of these problematizations separately, in practice, they were often employed concurrently.

The attempt to describe governmental discourses and practices of work with unmarried mothers during this period is met with yet another difficulty. There was considerable variation in discourses and practices across regions. Each local authority made its own arrangements either with moral welfare associations or within its own departments. Some had designated social workers, while others did not; some local authorities had established Mother and Baby Homes, while others relied solely on Homes run by religious organisations. Furthermore, as Fink<sup>30</sup> claims, there was a great degree of variation between various Church of England Moral Welfare dioceses. Due to this diversity of practices it would not be possible within the bounds of this thesis to offer a comprehensive account of governmental and voluntary work with unmarried mothers in the late 1950s and 1960s. Instead, I depict the moral and psychological problematizations in general and restrict the detailed examination of institutional practices to two case studies: a London County Council nursing home and a South London Mother and Baby Home affiliated to the Church of England.

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<sup>28</sup> Hall and Howes, *The Church in Social Work*.

<sup>29</sup> Fink, "Condemned or Condoned?."

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*



### **3.2 The Moral Problematization: Feckless Women and Rehabilitation**

In the following account I describe the key features of the moral problematization. These include the view regarding the 'etymology' of the illegitimate pregnancy, the conceptualisation of the subjectivity of the unmarried mother, the view regarding the way in which this subjectivity could be transformed, the role of motherhood in the rehabilitation of the unmarried mother and the technologies used in order to encourage the mother to take on the responsibility of raising her child herself. In addition, I describe the absence of adolescence as a term denoting a distinct subjectivity in this problematization.

Within the moral problematization, becoming an unmarried mother was the result of a moral error. Unmarried mothers were described as women whose moral stature and Christian values were at fault. The belief was that in order to prevent the occurrence of further pregnancies, the unmarried mother's character needed to be reformed. A period of residence in a Mother and Baby Home was seen as conducive to this change. In her survey of Mother and Baby Homes, Nicholson identified the persistence of the view that the stay in a Mother and Baby Home was an opportunity to 'put girls back on the right path'.<sup>31</sup> This view could also be discerned in the 1966 report of the Lewisham Moral Welfare Association. Describing the need for moral welfare work the report stated:

By all means let the State take over the responsibility for the unmarried mother if such welfare is to be purely sociological, and the providing of a pleasant home where she can be delivered of her child and perhaps later have it adopted in comparative secrecy, then to return to society, determined only to be more careful next time but with her fundamental beliefs, attitudes and values unchanged. If this is all Moral Welfare means the State could do it and no doubt do it better than the Church and the sooner we hand it over the better, but

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<sup>31</sup> Nicholson, *Mother and Baby Homes.*, 43.

one earnestly hopes that the Church goes further than this in the service of the compassion of Christ.<sup>32</sup>

Other statements articulated more clearly the aim of reforming the mother's character:

Happiness and success in life depend upon character rather than circumstance. The object of the Home must be character training, and so we must have a homely atmosphere, not institutional. We strive to make this house the home which so many have missed, where work is the fulfilment of God's purpose and, above all, where the essential good in each human soul is believed in.<sup>33</sup>

The belief that the Mother and Baby Home would reform the character of the unmarried mother through the provision of a homely atmosphere was reflected in the architectural arrangements of the Homes. Most Homes were located in quiet residential neighbourhoods and in large houses. They usually admitted between 12 and 20 expectant and nursing mothers. Guidelines published by the National Council for the Unmarried Mother and Her Child explicitly suggested that these arrangements were required in order to facilitate the rehabilitation of the unmarried mother.<sup>34</sup>

However, it was not only homely atmosphere which was used to reform the unmarried mothers' character. The Homes were characterised by a strict regime to which the residents were required to adhere. Nicholson found that:

The status of the residents compared unfavourably with that of other groups in residential care and the rules, restrictions and invasion of privacy which the residents were required to endure were said to be far in excess of any limitation on personal freedom to be found in

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<sup>32</sup> Lewisham Moral Welfare Association, "Who is My Neighbour?," Annual Report for the Year 1966 (City of London, 1966), ACC 2201/B15/2/1-32, London Metropolitan Archives.

<sup>33</sup> Anonymous Medical Officer, "The Work of a Mother and Baby Home," Bulletin of the Moral Welfare Workers' Association (City of London, May-June 1964), ACC 2201/M11/57-90, London Metropolitan Archives, 9.

<sup>34</sup> National Council for the Unmarried Mother and Her Child, "Standards in Mother and Baby Homes – Leaflet 1, Material Standards," (City of London, 1964), ACC2201/M2/1, London Metropolitan Archives.

other comparable residential services.<sup>35</sup>

One of the key features of the Homes' regime was the obligation of each girl to undertake housework duties. The entrance form to Putney Mother and Baby Home, a South London Home affiliated to the Church of England, included a section where each young woman signed a statement declaring her commitment to undertake her share of the housework duties.<sup>36</sup> Another indication of the importance of the regimes enforced on residents in Mother and Baby Homes is found in the statement of the matron of Stretton House, another South London Mother and Baby Home. Writing in the Home's annual report she stated:

Most, but not all, of these very young unmarried mothers betray a total lack of responsibility, and of experience in the more serious duties of life at home and an absence of sound religious upbringing, which makes it almost impossible for them to easily conform to the standards of conduct which must be expected in a Mother and Baby Home.<sup>37</sup>

A resident of a Mother and Baby Home had to follow a daily routine laid down by staff. The regime was primarily structured by the babies' feeding times; the housework duties were undertaken in the morning while the afternoon was dedicated to craftwork or other leisure activities broadly similar in all the Mother and Baby Homes. Many Homes restricted the young women's leisure activity by prohibiting the watching of television or the listening to records.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Nicholson quoted in *Report of the Working Party of Officials on Illegitimacy*, 54.

<sup>36</sup> Putney Mother and Baby Home Case Papers, City of London, ACC 2201/L11/2/1-74, London Metropolitan Archives.

<sup>37</sup> *Stretton House: Annual Report for the Year 1953-1954* (City of London, 1954), ACC 2201/E4/1-34, London Metropolitan Archives, 4.

<sup>38</sup> Nicholson, *Mother and Baby Homes*.

## The Absence of Psychological Discourse

In contrast with the problematization of the teenage unmarried mother which would follow it, within the moral problematization there was no deployment of psychological terminology. Matron and staff's roles were described in terms which did not affiliate them with either psychological discourse or a notion of social work as a professional discipline. For instance, the interaction between the matron and the residents in the Home was described in an article in the Bulletin of Moral Welfare Workers Association in the following way:

During their time of waiting, the girls' own attitudes to their situation gradually emerge. The Superintendent always wisely waits until the girl has gained enough trust and confidence in her to divulge her secrets of her own free will.<sup>39</sup>

The matron was not a social worker or a psychiatrist interviewing the young women in line with a prescribed professional procedure, but instead she was described as a confidant, who passively waits for the residents to seek her attention. Furthermore, staff were described as filling diverse roles which did not correspond to clearly defined disciplines or caring professions. Recounting staff's definition of their own work, the report of the Government Working Party on Illegitimacy and the Problems of Unmarried Mothers and their Children stated:

...staff were said to see themselves in the role of the home-maker, adviser, informant, group mediator, guide and comforter.<sup>40</sup>

Furthermore, despite her lack of medical training, the matron was in charge of watching the girl's health during the late stages of her pregnancy:

Besides the ante-natal examinations carried out by the hospital or in the Home, the Superintendent's watchful eye is always on the lookout for something going wrong, such as swelling of the legs,

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<sup>39</sup> Anonymous Medical Officer, "The Work of a Mother and Baby Home.", 9.

<sup>40</sup> *Report of the Working Party of Officials on Illegitimacy.*, 53.

undue fatigue, etc.<sup>41</sup>

Although Homes frequently had a Visiting Medical Officer, it was mainly the matron who was in charge of the women's health. Matrons rarely used the services of psychiatrists or psychologists.<sup>42</sup> As will be described in Chapter 6, this practice diverged from the practices found in St. Christopher's Mother and Baby Home, the first Mother and Baby Home to cater specifically for schoolgirl unmarried mothers. In the work of this institution, psychiatric knowledge and professional social work were the key constituents.

### **3.3 Motherhood as Rehabilitation**

Moral welfare work had historically viewed motherhood as contributing to the unmarried mother's rehabilitation. This was, in part, the result of the fact that moral welfare work developed at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and early 20<sup>th</sup> century in opposition to the workhouses and to the practice of forcing the unmarried mother to part with her baby.<sup>43</sup> Thus, one of the premises underlying the development of moral welfare work was the claim that the mother's wish to raise her child should be supported. However, this practice was also rooted in the belief in the transformative capacities of the self-sacrifice associated with being a mother. Motherhood was regarded as a way in which character training could extend beyond the bounds of the Mother and Baby Home. Due to the belief that the unmarried mother became pregnant because of her irresponsible character, it was seen as vital that she would be held accountable for her behaviour. Thus, it was the role of the matron and staff to teach the girls that they were responsible for the life they had created.<sup>44</sup> An instance where this approach may be discerned is that in a conference in the early 1960s regarding the care of the unmarried

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<sup>41</sup> Anonymous Medical Officer, "The Work of a Mother and Baby Home.", 8.

<sup>42</sup> Nicholson, *Mother and Baby Homes.*; "Case of MP," St. Mary's House Case Papers, January 1965 to October 1967 (City of London, 1965), ACC 2201/H23/2/1-166, London Metropolitan Archives.

<sup>43</sup> S. Ferguson and H. Fitzgerald, *Studies in the Social Services* (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1954).

<sup>44</sup> *Stretton House: Annual Report for the Year 1954-1955* (City of London, 1955), ACC 2201/E4/1-34, London Metropolitan Archives.

mother, it was proposed that the use of night-staff in Mother and Baby Homes should be stopped since it enabled the mothers to evade their responsibilities of looking after their babies.<sup>45</sup> This approach can also be discerned in the reports of the staff of the London County Council nursing home King's Mead, described in Chapter 4.

This view militated against adoption. Moral welfare workers in England as a rule did not encourage the adoption of the children. The only group encouraged to do so were married women who conceived illegitimately.<sup>46</sup> Fink's findings are reaffirmed by research carried out in the 1950s which found that:

Unless the mother was clearly unfit, mentally or morally, to have the responsibility for a child, she was encouraged to keep it.<sup>47</sup>

In line with the view of unmarried motherhood as sinful and the stay in the Mother and Baby Home as a period in which reformation of character should be undertaken, matrons viewed negatively those who became pregnant out-of-wedlock for the second or third time. Nicholson reported that:

Few matrons would readmit anyone who had previously been in their own Home, believing that if a resident had failed to learn anything from her first visit she was unlikely to benefit from a second.<sup>48</sup>

The rule in most Homes was that only women for whom it was the first illegitimate pregnancy would be admitted.<sup>49</sup> This rule significantly shaped the work of the London County Council. The Council provided accommodation for those pregnant women rejected by the religious Mother and Baby Homes. Council reports particularly noted their need to accommodate women who were pregnant out-of-wedlock and were recidivists.

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<sup>45</sup> Bulletin of the Moral Welfare Workers' Association (City of London, November-December 1962), ACC 2201/M11/57-90, London Metropolitan Archives, 5.

<sup>46</sup> Fink, "Condemned or Condoned?."

<sup>47</sup> Ferguson and Fitzgerald, *Studies in the Social Services*, 83.

<sup>48</sup> Nicholson, *Mother and Baby Homes.*, 47.

<sup>49</sup> Nicholson, *Mother and Baby Homes.*; Hall and Howes, *The Church in Social Work.*; Ferguson and Fitzgerald, *Studies in the Social Services.*, 82.

### **3.4 Facilitating Motherhood**

Several practices common to Mother and Baby Homes reflected the attempt to make unmarried mothers choose to raise their child themselves. Many Mother and Baby Homes expected the mother to breastfeed her baby.<sup>50</sup> This policy was clearly described as a way of making the mothers take on the responsibilities of motherhood. The second technology for making unmarried mothers raise their children was the postponing of arrangements regarding adoption. In many Homes, including St. Mary's House Mother and Baby Home described in the next chapter, women were not allowed to make plans for the future of the baby until it was two to three weeks old.<sup>51</sup> However, the most important technology for making the unmarried mother take on the responsibilities of looking after her baby was the 'six weeks rule'.

Mother and Baby Homes in the 1950s and 1960s required all mothers to care for their babies for a period of six weeks following the birth. This practice was, at least in part, reinforced by the requirements of the Adoption Act 1958. According to this Act, a minimum period of six weeks was necessary before a mother could decide to give up her child for adoption. Nonetheless, moral welfare workers' insistence that the mother *care* for her baby for six weeks could not be attributed to this legislation.<sup>52</sup> This requirement was linked to moral welfare workers' aim of reforming the character of the unmarried mother and facilitating her decision to raise her child herself.<sup>53</sup>

The 'six weeks rule' often created conflict with Council officers making requests for this rule to be overridden in special cases, or with parents who were keen for their girls to return home.<sup>54</sup> For instance, the matron of Stretton House noted in one of the Home's Annual Reports:

Many parents are co-operative and helpful and are most grateful for

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<sup>50</sup> Fink, "Condemned or Condoned?."

<sup>51</sup> Nicholson, *Mother and Baby Homes*.

<sup>52</sup> R. Elliott, "The Six Weeks Shibboleth," *Bulletin of the Moral Welfare Workers' Association* (City of London, May-June 1964), ACC 2201/M11/57-90, London Metropolitan Archives, 5-7.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>54</sup> "Case of JL," St. Mary's House Case Papers, January 1965 to October 1967 (City of London, 1965), ACC 2201/H23/2/1-166, London Metropolitan Archives.

the help given to their daughters, but some tend to think that the Home is a convenient place in which to hide until after the confinement and then the girl can return home as quickly as possible, in spite of promises made to abide by the rules at the initial interview.<sup>55</sup>

### **3.5 'Girls' not Adolescents**

The account presented below considers the place of the concept of adolescence within the moral problematization, but more specifically within moral welfare work. I argue that although the psychological concept of adolescence was occasionally used within moral welfare work, on the whole, adolescent unmarried mothers were not distinguished from older unmarried mothers. In fact, young women were often considered to be less problematic than their older counterparts. Since unmarried motherhood was understood to be the result of a 'lapse from grace', younger women were seen as less responsible for their erroneous behaviour and as having a better chance of being reformed.<sup>56</sup> The types of unmarried mothers considered most problematic were the women who had repeated illegitimate pregnancies, the married woman, the promiscuous and the delinquent.<sup>57</sup>

Despite the fact that Jill Nicholson's survey found that approximately half of the residents in Mother and Baby Homes were teenagers, in most Homes the term 'adolescence' was not used, nor was there any distinction according to age. In fact, one of the proposals put forward by Nicholson was that Homes should try and segregate the different age groups:

...Homes might find it easier to devise appropriate rules and routines if they limited their intake to particular age-groups, rather than

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<sup>55</sup> *Stretton House: Annual Report for the Year 1955-1956* (City of London, 1956), ACC 2201/E4/1-34, London Metropolitan Archives, 4.

<sup>56</sup> Wimperis, *The Unmarried Mother and Her Child*.

<sup>57</sup> Nicholson, *Mother and Baby Homes*.



admitting all ages as the majority do at present.<sup>58</sup>

Hall and Howes<sup>59</sup> reported a local initiative in which all cases of young unmarried mothers were to be dealt with by one specialised worker. This, however, did not represent a widespread view. Hall and Howes themselves reflected the marginality of this view when they stated:

...the wisdom of continuing a specialist appointment of this kind might be questioned, for it could be argued that the problems of the unmarried mother under 17 are not very different from those of the girl in the same predicament in her late teens and early twenties.<sup>60</sup>

Despite the absence of adolescence in moral welfare work, the practices found in Mother and Baby Homes formed a certain continuity with the practices associated with the problematization of the teenage unmarried mother, emerging in the early 1960s. When describing the status of the residents of the Home Nicholson wrote:

Perhaps the most apt term to suggest their status while in the home is 'girl', the word used by the staff of the Homes and the social workers. 'Girl' conveys the denial of adult status and responsibility, and the expectations of conformity and obedience to a regulated pattern of life...<sup>61</sup>

Regardless of their age unmarried mothers were referred to by the professionals caring for them as 'girls'. Their position in the Home was childlike: their daily routine and their weekly schedule were laid down by staff. The matron determined which leisure activities they could engage in and who was allowed to visit them. These practices continued in the work of the first Mother and Baby Home to specialise in catering for schoolgirl unmarried mothers.

Unmarried mothers were configured within the moral problematization as being irresponsible and morally-flawed women. However, this was seen as an *indulgence*, as something which could be given up. More importantly, taking on the responsibility of

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<sup>58</sup> Ibid., 86-87.

<sup>59</sup> Hall and Howes, *The Church in Social Work*.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., 182-183.

<sup>61</sup> Nicholson, *Mother and Baby Homes.*, 95.

caring for a child was understood as having the capacity to transform their character. If they were successfully rehabilitated, these women would become mature and responsible subjects. In the next section I describe a problematization which diverged from this perspective on most points.

### **3.6 The Psychological Problematization of Unmarried Mothers**

The account presented in this section depicts the psychological problematization of unmarried mothers and considers in particular its relationship with the psychological concept of adolescence. The key features of the problematization are outlined. These include the claim that unmarried mothers were psychologically disturbed and that this condition emanated from a difficulty in their early childhood relationships with their parents. Furthermore, the pregnancy was not seen to be the result of sexual pursuits but of an unconscious wish 'to have a baby without a husband'. I note the conflict between the psychological problematization of unmarried mothers and the concept of adolescence as a stage of development characterised by mental disturbance. However, the opposition between 'adolescence' and the notion of the unmarried mother as psychologically disturbed is further emphasised in what I refer to as the 'teenage sex' discourse evoked by some professionals. Within this discourse illegitimate pregnancies were described as the result of societal changes, in particular changes in norms and values as well as the natural sexual drives and the characteristics of teenagers.

The professional literature in which the psychological problematization can be discerned included work by psychiatrists, psychologists, social workers, paediatricians and public health specialists. The context for the development of this literature is the increased governmental involvement in work with unmarried mothers in the post-war period. More broadly, Nikolas Rose argues that with the advent of liberal democratic regimes the family became a tool used in the effort to govern the population. The family was a technology for producing mentally fit children who were likely to become healthy and productive citizens. A central element in ensuring the healthy development of children was their early relationship with their mother. Hence, maternal love became a

developmental device. As Rose put it:

Love was no longer merely a moral duty or a romantic ideal, it was the element in which were produced normal and abnormal children.<sup>62</sup>

Since according to psychological perspective the type of care a child receives in early childhood would have a lasting effect on his life, psychologists and government officers became preoccupied with a mother's subjectivity and the quality of the care she would provide for her child. They were particularly preoccupied with identifying whether or not an individual woman would become what Donald Winnicott termed a 'good enough mother'.<sup>63</sup> The 'good enough mother' was the mother who was capable of providing care which was sufficient to produce healthy development in her child. It was as part of the efforts to identify the mothers who produced maladjusted children that psychologists considered the case of the unmarried mother.<sup>64</sup>

The key debate within the social work, psychological and medical literature during the 1950s and 1960s centred on whether there was an intrinsic psychological quality which distinguished unmarried mothers from their peers. This debate was linked to discussions on whether unmarried mothers should be encouraged to raise their children, or whether adoption was the preferred solution. On one side of the debate was the literature which proposed that becoming an unmarried mother was a sign of psychological disturbance. One of the most outspoken proponents of this view was John Bowlby. Bowlby, one of the directors of the Tavistock clinic<sup>65</sup> was a prominent psychologist whose work influenced government policy in the post-war era.<sup>66</sup> Bowlby was mainly concerned with rearing practices and their effects on the future mental health of the child. His assertion was that inadequate rearing conditions in childhood produced delinquency and mental health problems in later life.

Bowlby maintained that the man and woman who produced an illegitimate child were

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<sup>62</sup> N. Rose, *Governing the Soul: The Shaping of the Private Self* (London: Free Association Books, 1999), 160.

<sup>63</sup> D. W. Winnicott, *Human Nature* (London: Free Association Books, 1988)

<sup>64</sup> Smart, "Deconstructing Motherhood."

<sup>65</sup> Bowlby was the Director of the Tavistock Clinic in London. See Lewis and Welshman, "The Issue of Never-Married Motherhood in Britain, 1920-70."

<sup>66</sup> D. Riley, *War in the Nursery: Theories of the Child and Mother* (London: Virago, 1983); Rose, *Governing the Soul*.

psychologically disturbed and that the illegitimate pregnancy was a symptom of their neurosis. This neurosis could frequently be linked to a pathological family dynamic in their own upbringings.<sup>67</sup> He claimed that the illegitimate child often ended up in foster or institutional care, which was highly damaging for his or her mental development. Therefore, in order to protect the child's future, it was necessary to prevent unmarried mothers from raising their own children. This approach contrasted with the common practice in moral welfare work and in the work of the National Council for the Unmarried Mother and Her Child, of encouraging mothers to raise their children. Bowlby had actively sought to persuade the leaders of these organisations to change their practice but these attempts were met with resistance.<sup>68</sup>

An indication of the influence of Bowlby's views on those employed in government can be found in the work of Christine Cooper. Cooper, a Consultant Paediatrician in Northumberland County Children's Department, described in vivid terms the unfortunate fate of the illegitimate child who was raised by his or her single mother:

The child is cared for in constantly changing circumstances being moved about among relatives and friends, taken round to different lodgings by the mother... he often has periods in the care of the local authority's Children's Department and finally may be removed from his mother's care to an institution or foster home. Here his behaviour is usually difficult or delinquent... The mother is usually vacillating in her attitude to the child, being alternately over-protective and neglectful. He is unable to attach himself permanently to his mother or reliable substitute, and develops into an affectionless, delinquent adolescent who, as Bowlby has pointed out, only too often produces illegitimate children himself and the cycle is repeated.<sup>69</sup>

Cooper followed Bowlby's argument which tied together illegitimacy, mental health problems and delinquency proposing that illegitimacy was repeated in a vicious cycle. The unmarried mother was portrayed as a pathological mother, one whose relationship

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<sup>67</sup> J. Bowlby, *Childcare and the Growth of Love* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1977).

<sup>68</sup> Fink, "Condemned or Condoned?."

<sup>69</sup> C. Cooper, "The Illegitimate Child," *Practitioner* 174, no. 1042 (1955): 489.

with the child is unstable. The argument follows that it is emotional difficulties which produce illegitimacy and that the only way to prevent this occurrence is for children to grow up in stable family homes.

Another influential proponent of the proposition that unmarried mothers were psychologically disturbed was Leontine Young, an American social worker. Young's book, entitled *Out of Wedlock*, was an influential text in British social work literature in the late 1950s and 1960s.<sup>70</sup> Like Bowlby, Young argued that becoming an unmarried mother was the sign of neurosis. It was an expression of the woman's unconscious wish to conceive a child illegitimately. Describing the woman who became an unmarried mother she stated:

The logical and seemingly inevitable result of her psychological development is an out-of-wedlock child, and, like a sleepwalker, she acts out what she must do without awareness or understanding of what it means or of the fact that she plans and initiates the action.<sup>71</sup>

Thus, the illegitimate pregnancy was not a random occurrence or an accident but a predictable action. Furthermore, the sexual act that brought about the pregnancy was not the result of sexual desire, but the derivative of the wish for an illegitimate baby. Robert Fliess, whose article was included in Young's book, described the sexual act leading to the illegitimate pregnancy as 'no more than an insemination'.<sup>72</sup> The implication of this position was that access to contraception or abortion was not seen as a central factor in the occurrence of illegitimate births.

The psychological pathology of the unmarried mother was her inability to combine the love for a partner and the parental wish. The 'unmarried father' was the psychological counterpart of the mother, himself showing the same difficulty in uniting sexual love, marriage and the wish for a baby into one relationship. Although this view attributed equal blame to the man and the woman who produced the illegitimate child,

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<sup>70</sup> Kiernan, Land, and Lewis, *Lone Motherhood in Twentieth-Century Britain*.

<sup>71</sup> L. R. Young, *Out of Wedlock: a Study of the Problems of the Unmarried Mother and Her Child* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1954), 36.

<sup>72</sup> R. Fliess, "On the Psychology of Two Types of Unmarried Mothers: a Psychoanalytic Postscript," in *Out of Wedlock: a Study of the Problems of the Unmarried Mother and Her Child*, ed. L. R. Young (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1954), 244.

the overwhelming majority of social workers and government officers continued to only discuss the woman. Considering further the psychological motivations of the unmarried mother Young argued that her wish for a baby could be understood as a symbolic action towards a parent: the baby was either a gift for her mother, a tool of revenge against her or an attempt to replace a domineering father.

A chapter of Young's book was devoted to the adolescent unmarried mother claiming that this group was distinguished from older unmarried mothers. Employing the concept of adolescence as a universal stage of development characterised by mental upheaval Young asserted:

The emotions, desires, and fears of the young child come again to the surface during adolescence; augmented by the rushing tide of puberty, they produce the confusion, emotional stress, and violence of feeling so characteristic of this age. The girl who at this time bears an out-of-wedlock child gives one expression of these problems.<sup>73</sup>

In Chapter 5, I provide a historical tracing of the conceptualisation of adolescence evoked by Young. This conceptualisation can first be identified in the work of American psychologist G. Stanley Hall published at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. At the centre of this conceptualisation was the suggestion that the physiological process of puberty marked the onset of this developmental stage. Hall further argued that this stage inevitably brought about a mental crisis. It was this conceptualisation of adolescence which enabled Young to argue that in some cases, the illegitimate pregnancy was a symptom of the mental difficulties experienced at this developmental phase.

However, it was not only the universal characteristics of adolescence which Young had identified as underpinning the out-of-wedlock pregnancy, but the effects of contemporary processes of societal transformation were considered too: society made adolescence particularly difficult since there was a gap between the intensity of sexual stimulation surrounding young people and their opportunities for a sexual outlet. Young stated:

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<sup>73</sup> L. R. Young, *Out of Wedlock*, 94.

The prolonging of adolescence in the form of economic dependence, the shifting standards of values and rules of conduct, and the postponement of sexual gratification create a difficult and hazardous period of life for most young people.<sup>74</sup>

Nonetheless, Young maintained that in most cases of adolescent unmarried mothers, the pregnancy was the result of an unconscious wish. However, in this case the neurosis was more likely to be the result of a temporary crisis than the result of a persistent personality trait. For this reason, adolescent unmarried mothers were usually less psychologically disturbed than their older counterparts and had better chances of recovering from their neurosis. As Young asserted:

Simply because they are adolescent and hence still in a formative and changing period of life, they have to be considered separately from the older group. They are in the midst of those conflicts and problems which in the older unmarried mother have worn subterranean grooves in her personality.<sup>75</sup>

Young's arguments demonstrate the tension between the notion of adolescence as a developmental stage characterised by mental disorder and the suggestion that the unmarried mother was psychologically disturbed. If adolescence caused disturbance, then this served to diminish the level of pathology attributed to an unmarried mother. The same logic led Young to argue that an unmarried mother from a higher socioeconomic background was more disturbed than the uneducated, lower class woman.

Young's work was influential; it was cited and used by several leading British practitioners working with unmarried mothers.<sup>76</sup> Jean Pochin a British moral welfare worker who was one of the editors of the Bulletin of Moral Welfare Workers' Association,<sup>77</sup> was one of those professionals.<sup>78</sup> Pochin was sympathetic to Young's

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<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid., 64.

<sup>76</sup> Kiernan, Land, and Lewis, *Lone Motherhood in Twentieth-Century Britain*.

<sup>77</sup> Bulletin of the Moral Welfare Workers' Association, City of London, ACC 2201/M11/57-90, London Metropolitan Archives.

<sup>78</sup> J. Pochin, *Without a Wedding-Ring: Casework with Unmarried Parents* (London: Constable, 1969)

assertions, although she avoided claiming that becoming an unmarried mother was *always* a sign of pathology. Instead she argued that psychological factors predispose certain women to become unmarried mothers. In this she did follow Young and Bowlby's claims that it was the early relationships with the parents that were crucial. However, she suggested that some women did not necessarily seek to have 'a baby without a husband' and that it was often a combination of psychological and 'social' factors that brought about the pregnancy.

Nonetheless, several of the features of the psychological problematization can be identified in her work. Affirming Young's proposition regarding the absence of sexual wishes in the 'etymology' of the illegitimate pregnancy she argued:

...many potential unmarried mothers seem to be unconsciously looking for conception without intercourse. For them, contraceptives are irrelevant; they are the answer to the other question, the question of sexual connection, and they are not interested in that.<sup>79</sup>

The view that the unmarried mother was seeking 'conception without intercourse' was associated with the assertion that a normal woman's sexuality was inherently linked to reproduction and the marital bond. Pochin argued that:

...the sexual experience is for a woman more likely to be a long-term process, not completed until the child she conceives has been born, suckled and weaned. Moreover, she tends to give more to her man than her body merely, and so for her fulfilment she needs the security of a permanent relationship.<sup>80</sup>

Women became predisposed to unmarried motherhood by their relationship with their parents. In particular, Pochin identifies a difficult relationship with the father as a factor precipitating engagement in sexual intercourse. Another factor which might lead to the pregnancy is a woman's search for love and affection. When these predisposing causes combine with the several precipitating factors, a pregnancy might result. Pochin proclaims that:

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<sup>79</sup> Ibid., 9.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid., 12.



...a host of more subtle factors may also help to tip the balance: jealousy of a married sister's pregnancy, spite, defiance of social conventions, rejection by another boy-friend or even a row with the boss at work, for it is often a single or minor incident or loaded word which triggers off the final reaction.<sup>81</sup>

Similarly to Young, Pochin provides a thoroughly psychodynamic account of the illegitimate pregnancy in which it is more closely associated with a 'row with the boss at work' than with sexual desire. Furthermore, like Young who argued that the unmarried mother wanted a 'baby without a husband', Pochin identified the deviation from the coupling of 'sex' and 'reproduction' with marriage, as the core of the unmarried mother's abnormality.

This depiction is in contrast with the 'teenage sex' discourse. In this discourse several arguments are evoked: that teenagers were experimenting, that they were irresponsible and that they were driven by a sexual urge. As Pochin argued: 'Countless teen-agers experiment out of curiosity, happily convinced that nothing will happen to them'.<sup>82</sup> Pochin asserts that in the case of teenagers social workers should not lose sight of the obvious biological urges and '...the overwhelming desire to give physical expression to love that so easily dominates the behaviour of young people'.<sup>83</sup>

Despite this account 'teenage' does not feature as a category in her typology of unmarried mothers. Instead, Pochin distinguished the 'under sixteen' as a category alongside other groups: those who are over thirty years old, those who have more than one illegitimate pregnancy, the middle-class women, the women living away from their homes and the married women who conceived out-of-wedlock. Pochin claimed that there was no difference in the processes bringing about the occurrence of the illegitimate pregnancy in the 'under sixteen' and the older unmarried mother.<sup>84</sup> The difference was that in the case of the 'under sixteen' there were additional complications associated with the fact that the girl became pregnant while being under the age of consent and that

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<sup>81</sup> Ibid., 10.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid., 9.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid., 10.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid.

until her fifteenth birthday she was entitled to receive full-time education. In addition, the young girl was not prepared emotionally for the task of motherhood.

Pochin, like Young, oscillated between two sets of arguments: the claim that all unmarried mothers regardless of their age were looking for ‘conception without intercourse’ and the claim that teenagers were driven by sexual impulses. Unlike Young, however, she singled out the unmarried mother under the age of sixteen arguing that this mother found it difficult to cope with the task of motherhood.

Jane Rowe, a prominent adoption worker<sup>85</sup> divided unmarried mothers into the following four categories: a) those who were co-habiting, b) those who marry after conceiving extra-maritally, c) those who do not marry but are not psychologically disturbed, and d) those who were psychologically disturbed. Rowe concurred with Young that some unmarried mothers wanted ‘a baby without a husband’ stating:

Whereas the normal girl wants to bear a child for her husband, the disturbed type of unmarried mother frequently wants a baby without a husband – even to the point of turning down offers of marriage.<sup>86</sup>

In contrast with this etymology, Rowe had also evoked the ‘teenage sex’ discourse identifying societal transformation, the features of ‘teenage’ and sexual desires as the key factors leading to illegitimate pregnancies:

Our present adult confusions about sexual behaviour, the utterly conflicting standards of church and cinema, school and advertising and our hypocritical adherence to one set of values while apparently condoning and even encouraging another are enough to make any teenager confused.<sup>87</sup>

Consequently, like Leontine Young, Rowe concluded that the teenage unmarried mother was usually less disturbed psychologically than the older unmarried mother. She suggested that when examining the individual case of a mother, social workers should ask themselves:

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<sup>85</sup> Kiernan, Land, and Lewis, *Lone Motherhood in Twentieth-Century Britain*.

<sup>86</sup> J. Rowe, *Parents, Children and Adoption: a Handbook for Adoption Workers* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1966), 19.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, 22-23.

Is she still an adolescent, caught up perhaps in a typical temporary rebellion against her parents' control, or with a group of unsuitable friends, but still basically healthy and able to mature? Or is she an older girl whose emotional difficulties are shown by her need to punish herself and/or her family by a pregnancy that makes no sense and might easily have been avoided? As a general rule (dangerous if applied literally), older unmarried mothers tend to be even more deeply troubled people than their teenage counterparts.<sup>88</sup>

### **3.7 Surveys of Unmarried Mothers**

The texts that have been presented and analysed thus far were based on the authors' experience gained in professional practice. A different strand of enquiry into the phenomenon of unmarried mothers consisted of studies which examined the occurrence of illegitimacy within a given population. These studies were mainly concerned with identifying differences between unmarried mothers and those who did not become unmarried mothers through the compilation of statistical data. An example of this strand of research was Thompson's 'Social Study of Illegitimate Maternities'.<sup>89</sup> Thompson, a member of the Obstetric Medicine Research Unit at the University of Aberdeen, studied all the occurrences of illegitimate pregnancies in Aberdeen between the years 1949 and 1952. The women who had illegitimate pregnancies were classified by their age, occupation and social class. Thompson found that it was mainly in the lower social classes that illegitimacy and pre-nuptial conception took place. This was associated with a difference in attitude to illegitimacy. The middle-class view was highly negative whereas in the lower classes a more tolerant approach was common. Nevertheless, Thompson's survey demonstrates the prominence of the view of unmarried mothers as psychologically disturbed. One of the characteristics measured alongside 'occupation' and 'age' was 'family background'. It was concluded that illegitimacy was facilitated by

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<sup>88</sup> Ibid., 24.

<sup>89</sup> B. Thompson, "Social Study of Illegitimate Maternities," *British Journal of Preventive & Social Medicine* 10, no. 2 (1956): 75-87.

unhappy family relationships.

Thompson incorporated a conception of adolescence into her etymology of illegitimate pregnancies. The happy family homes, she argued, would tend to produce children who coped better with the conflicts of adolescence and would therefore not indulge in unrestrained sexual activity. Here, the characteristics of the developmental stage of adolescence play a part in the occurrence of the illegitimate pregnancy; however, this is seen as secondary to the role of the family dynamics. Thompson claimed that the conflicts of adolescence are the moments in which the strength of the upbringing is revealed. Those who did not have a supportive family were more likely to become unmarried mothers. Other studies such as those of Barnsby and Elliot,<sup>90</sup> and Greenland,<sup>91</sup> identified the 'under twenty' population as having a higher rate of the occurrence of illegitimacy. They did not use a notion of adolescence to describe these findings and the measurement of age was just one measure alongside others, such as 'class' and 'occupation'.

Several of the population studies focused on examining the familial setting in which the illegitimate child was being raised. MacDonald, a Medical Officer of Health, studied all the occurrences of illegitimate pregnancies in Leicester and visited the same cases five years later to see whether the mothers were married, cohabiting or living alone with their child.<sup>92</sup> Garrad also examined the number of illegitimate children whose mother was cohabiting with a man.<sup>93</sup> As has been the case in Thompson's study the 'family background' of the mother was one of the characteristics that was considered alongside that of age and class.<sup>94</sup>

The comparison of the population of unmarried mothers and illegitimate children with the population as a whole included comparing the rates of premature births, accidents and infant mortality. Illegitimate children were found to have a higher rate of

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<sup>90</sup> E. R. Barnsby and R. Elliot, "The Unmarried Mother and Her Child," *Monthly Bulletin of the Ministry of Health* 18 (1959).

<sup>91</sup> C. Greenland, "Unmarried Parenthood I: Unmarried Mothers," *The Medical Officer* XCIX (1958): 265-286.

<sup>92</sup> E. K. Macdonald, "Follow-Up of Illegitimate Children," *Medical Officer* 96 (1956): 361-365.

<sup>93</sup> J. Garrad, "Illegitimacy," *Practitioner* 198, no. 184 (1967): 268-273.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*

infant mortality and a higher rate of stillbirths and prematurity.<sup>95</sup> In addition, illegitimate children were more likely to suffer an accident during the first year of their lives.<sup>96</sup> The unmarried mother was often late in seeking antenatal care, a fact which contributed to the health risks for the illegitimate child.<sup>97</sup> These findings would later be echoed in the literature on teenage pregnancy where the children of teenage mothers would be described as at greater risk of dying in infancy or suffering accidents.<sup>98</sup>

Despite the influence of the view of unmarried mothers as psychologically disturbed, there were several authors who voiced contesting opinion. One of the most outspoken critics of this view was Cyril Greenland.<sup>99</sup> Greenland, who was a psychiatric social worker, argued that most research had erroneously excluded pre-nuptial conceptions from the study of illegitimate pregnancies. The high incidence of pre-nuptial conceptions suggested that pre-marital intercourse was the norm rather than the exception. Greenland concluded that the key characteristic distinguishing the unmarried mother from her non-pregnant peer was her greater fertility. However, he further claimed that employment away from home as well as a sexual relationship with a married man contributed substantially to the likelihood of an out-of-wedlock birth. Greenland maintained that Leontine Young based her claims on examining only a minority of the population of unmarried mothers. She encountered a specific sub-group of unmarried mothers who sought the help of welfare agencies and whose characteristics did not correspond to those found in the wider population of women who had given birth out-of-wedlock.

### **3.8 Evaluating the Influence of the Psychological Problematization**

Scholars have attempted to assess the extent to which the claim that unmarried mothers were psychologically disturbed was successful in becoming the dominant view.

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<sup>95</sup> Barnsby and Elliot, "The Unmarried Mother and Her Child."; Garrad, "Illegitimacy."; Cooper, "The illegitimate Child."

<sup>96</sup> Cooper, "The Illegitimate Child."

<sup>97</sup> Garrad, "Illegitimacy."; Wimperis, *The Unmarried Mother and Her Child*.

<sup>98</sup> Social Exclusion Unit, *Teenage Pregnancy: Report by the Social Exclusion Unit* (London: Her Majesty's Stationary Office, 1999).

<sup>99</sup> C. Greenland, "Unmarried Parenthood: Ecological Aspects," *Lancet* 272, no. 6960 (1957): 148-51; Greenland, "Unmarried Parenthood I: Unmarried Mothers."

Kiernan et al.<sup>100</sup> as well as Lewis and Welshman<sup>101</sup> argue that it was the most prominent explanation of unmarried motherhood at the time. It is even claimed that it contributed to the rise in adoption rates during the 1960s and influenced changes in adoption legislation.<sup>102</sup> However, it was also found that while the literature might have been dominated by the view of unmarried mothers as psychologically disturbed, practitioners often did not employ this perspective in their daily work.<sup>103</sup>

Janet Fink<sup>104</sup> maintains that the psychological problematization never fully gained the support of opinion makers or welfare professionals. Among moral welfare workers there was resistance to the claim that unmarried mothers were psychologically disturbed and most workers continued to encourage unmarried mothers to raise their children themselves. As had been described above, Bowlby was highly critical of this practice and advocated the adoption of illegitimate children by normative families. Moral welfare workers' refusal to encourage adoption is seen by Fink as an indication of the failure of the psychological problematization to fully penetrate the field.

### **3.9 Discussion**

The findings presented in this chapter lead to several conclusions. The first is that the psychological concept of adolescence was not a feature of the moral problematization of unmarried mothers and did not influence moral welfare work. The distinctions that were made within the moral problematization were primarily between women who were having their first illegitimate pregnancy and those who were having their second or third illegitimate pregnancy. In addition, moral welfare workers distinguished the married woman from the single woman. They did not identify adolescent unmarried mothers as a distinct group that required a different method or degree of care. Therefore adolescent

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<sup>100</sup> Kiernan, Land, and Lewis, *Lone Motherhood in Twentieth-Century Britain*.

<sup>101</sup> Lewis and Welshman, "The Issue of Never-Married Motherhood in Britain, 1920-70."

<sup>102</sup> Kiernan, Land, and Lewis, *Lone Motherhood in Twentieth-Century Britain*.

<sup>103</sup> Lewis and Welshman, "The Issue of Never-Married Motherhood in Britain, 1920-70.," Wimperis, *The Unmarried Mother and Her Child*.; R. Ferguson "Support not Scorn: the Theory and Practice of Maternity Almoners in the 1960s and 1970s" *Oral History* 31, no. 2 (2003): 43-54.

<sup>104</sup> Fink, "Condemned or Condoned?."

unmarried mothers were frequently housed in Mother and Baby Homes alongside older unmarried mothers. Furthermore, the younger women were often viewed more favourably; their erroneous behaviour was more forgivable and their chances of rehabilitation considered greater.

Nonetheless, moral welfare work formed a continuity with the new governmental field of work with teenage or the young unmarried mother that is depicted in Chapter 6. While residing in Mother and Baby Homes, all unmarried mothers, regardless of their age, were referred to as 'girls'. They were required to follow a strict regime laid down by staff which included housework duties and caring for their babies. Hence, there was continuity between the discourses and practices through which unmarried mothers were governed and the practices found in the Home for young unmarried mothers. In both, residents' status was childlike and they were required to adhere to the Home's disciplinary regime.

The psychological problematization resembled the moral problematization in that becoming an unmarried mother was seen as an indication of a certain pathological subjectivity. However, within the psychological problematization becoming an unmarried mother was seen as the outcome of a persistent psychological disorder. Hence, in contrast with the efforts associated with the moral problematization, in the psychological problematization there was no attempt to transform the mother's subjectivity. The attention shifted instead to the effort to protect the mental health of her child.

In contrast with the moral problematization, in the psychological problematization the view was that sexual desire had an insignificant role in bringing about the illegitimate pregnancy. The claim was that the pregnancy was not the result of the mother's pursuit of sexual gratification but rather the result of an unconscious wish emanating from her relationship with her parents during the childhood years. The sexual act leading to the pregnancy was understood to be 'the logical and seemingly inevitable result of her [the unmarried mother's] psychological development'.<sup>105</sup> Rather than wishing to have a child within the marital setting, the unmarried mother was set on having 'a baby without a

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<sup>105</sup> L. R. Young, *Out of Wedlock*, 36.

husband’.

The psychological concept of adolescence as a distinct developmental stage featured in the work of several authors, such as Leontine Young, Jean Pochin and Jane Rowe. However, within these professionals’ work, one may discern a tension between the problematization of unmarried mothers and adolescence. Since becoming an unmarried mother was understood to be a manifestation of a long-term personality characteristic, the disturbance of the adolescent unmarried mother was thought to be less severe. Being an adolescent constituted mitigating circumstances for becoming pregnant out-of-wedlock. However, ‘adolescence’ was opposed to the psychodynamic explanation in another way. As well as claiming that the illegitimate pregnancy stemmed from an unconscious wish, the above-mentioned authors put forward another explanation in which societal forces, as well as sexual drives and the characteristics of teenagers led young women to become pregnant out-of-wedlock. Thus, two explanatory schemes were alternately evoked by professionals. In the first, the pregnancy was the result of individual pathology, and sexual wishes played no role in bringing about the pregnancy. In the second, it was societal change as well as the characteristics of teenage and sexual drives which led young women to become pregnant out-of-wedlock.

Importantly, the distinctions between the moral problematization, the psychological problematization and the ‘teenage sex’ discourse, could not be clearly linked to disciplinary or professional boundaries. Jean Pochin, one of the editors of the *Bulletin of Moral Welfare Workers’ Association*, expressed views congruent with the psychological problematization. In addition, most of the professionals who subscribed to the psychological problematization had also evoked the contradicting ‘teenage sex’ discourse. Therefore, it is not possible to identify a clear association between institutions, professions and discourses. The picture that emerges instead is one in which different professionals - moral welfare workers, psychologists, social workers and medical doctors - employ one or more of these three discourses.



## Implications for Contemporary Debates

The account presented in this chapter can be related to several groups of arguments explaining the problematization of teenage pregnancy. In the first part of this discussion I consider the implications of the empirical material in relation to the work of scholars who argue that the problematization of teenage pregnancy was the result of the characteristics of adolescence. I then note the implications for those who claim that the emergence of the problematization of teenage pregnancy was the result of the shift from a moral to a scientific problematization of young out-of-wedlock childbearing. The next part discusses the work which examines the problematization of teenage and lone mothers through 'welfare' and 'moral' discourses. In the final part I consider the implication of the findings for considering the role of the concept of adolescence in government policy.

First, the account of the problematization of unmarried mothers during the 1950s and 1960s sheds new light on the argument of scholars who propose that the problematization of teenage pregnancy was the result the characteristics of adolescence. Franklin Zimring<sup>106</sup> argues that adolescence is characterised by a gap between bodily and mental capacities and that teenage pregnancy is problematized as a result of the wish to protect adolescents from taking on roles for which they are not equipped to cope. However, the empirical findings described in this chapter suggest that, among many professionals working with unmarried mothers during the 1950s and 1960s, this conceptualisation of adolescence was not prevalent. Those employing the moral problematization of unmarried mothers did not try to ensure that adolescent unmarried mothers would be prevented from undertaking the role of mothers, but alongside older unmarried mothers, they were encouraged to take responsibility for the child they had brought into the world. Thus, although the psychological concept of adolescence which emerged at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and during the first half of the century influenced the development of youth work, the data shows that it did not affect the moral

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<sup>106</sup> F. E. Zimring, "The Jurisprudence of Teenage Pregnancy," in *Early Parenthood and Coming of Age in the 1990s*, eds. M. K. Rosenheim and M. F. Testa, (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1992), 150-162.

problematization and the work of Mother and Baby Homes shaped by this outlook.

Furthermore, theoretical arguments put forward in the literature regarding adolescence, can now be historicised. Hamburg and Dixon claim that adolescence is rooted in a discrepancy between the biological and social age<sup>107</sup> while Testa<sup>108</sup> claims that there was a discrepancy between the 'social timetable' and adolescents' wish to take on adult roles. The account presented in this chapter demonstrates that the arguments put forward by Hamburg and Dixon and Testa were already being made in the 1950s and 1960s.<sup>109</sup> As outlined in Chapter 5, government officers and psychologists at the time argued that contemporary teenagers were maturing physically earlier than preceding generations and that this led to a state in which there was a discrepancy between their physiological stage of development and their social position. This claim played an important role in the expansion of governmental networks around the sexually active adolescent.

Second, the analysis presented above also enables us to review critically the argument that the emergence of teenage pregnancy was a result of a shift from a 'moral' to 'scientific' problematization of young out-of-wedlock childbearing. This position has been put forward most compellingly by Arney and Bergen who argue that the moral regime was characterised by the exercise of punitive and exclusionary power. Mother and Baby Homes, or as they were called in the U.S., Maternity Homes, are described as an instance of exclusionary power in which those who deviated from sexual norms were removed from the community. The moral conception gradually gave way to a scientific one and this was associated with a shift to a normalising and corrective form of power.<sup>110</sup>

But, the account of the work of Mother and Baby Homes in Britain presented in this chapter paints an opposite picture. Moral welfare workers conceptualized the Homes as

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<sup>107</sup> B.A. Hamburg, S. L. Dixon, "Adolescent Pregnancy and Parenthood," in *Early Parenthood and Coming of Age in the 1990s*, eds. M. K. Rosenheim and M. F. Testa, (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1992), 17-33.

<sup>108</sup> M. F. Testa, "Introduction," in *Early Parenthood and Coming of Age in the 1990s*, eds. M. K. Rosenheim and M. F. Testa (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1992), 1-16.

<sup>109</sup> Chapters 5 and 6 will further demonstrate this point.

<sup>110</sup> W. R. Arney and B. J. Bergen, "Power and Visibility: The Invention of Teenage Pregnancy," *Social Science and Medicine* 18 (1984): 11-19.

institutions in which the character of the unmarried mother *could* be transformed. In this sense, Arney and Bergen's distinction between punitive moral regimes and scientific regimes in which the effort is to normalise and correct the subjectivity of those problematized, does not hold.

Furthermore, it is within the psychological problematization that there was only limited discussion regarding the possibility of correcting the unmarried mother. Precisely since psychologists argued that the unmarried mother suffered from a *long-term* psychological disturbance, they did not discuss ways of correcting her character. Instead the focus was on trying to ensure that she would not be allowed to raise her child.

Third, the findings presented in the chapter uncover some of the historical roots of contemporary discourses on lone mothers and teenage mothers. Bowlby and his followers argued that the environmental conditions which unmarried mothers were likely to offer their children would hinder their development. As a result of his or her disturbed development the illegitimate child was likely to grow up to be 'an affectionless, delinquent adolescent who... produces illegitimate children himself...'.<sup>111</sup>

This argument resonates with contemporary discussions on lone mothers and teenage mothers. Roseneil and Mann<sup>112</sup> argue that discourses on those matters in the 1990s suggested that these mothers produced delinquent children. Carabine further claims that single mothers and teenage mothers were problematized through a 'moral' and a 'welfare' discourse.<sup>113</sup> According to the 'traditional moral stance' that was influential during the years when the Conservative Party was in government, teenage mothers and single mothers were a threat to national mores. The 'welfare' discourse had alternatively described them as undeserving welfare recipients who produce children they could not support. Both Carabine and Roseneil and Mann identify the 'cycle of deprivation' claim which suggested that children of single mothers or teenage mothers were in turn likely

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<sup>111</sup> Cooper, "The Illegitimate Child.", 489.

<sup>112</sup> S. Roseneil and K. Mann, "Unpalatable Choices and Inadequate Families: Lone Mothers and the Underclass Debate," in *Good Enough Mothering? Feminist Perspectives on Lone Motherhood*, ed. E. Bortolaia Silva, (London: Routledge, 1996), 191-210.

<sup>113</sup> J. Carabine, "New Labour's Teenage Pregnancy Policy: Constituting Knowing Responsible Citizens?," *Cultural Studies* 21, no. 6 (2007): 952-973.

themselves to become dependent on welfare. Thus, the account of the work of Bowlby and those subscribing to his view, demonstrate that similar claims were already being made in the 1950s.

This line of thought can be taken a step further. The persistence of the ‘cycle of deprivation’ claim – across decades and across terminology i.e. from unmarried mothers to teenage and single mothers throws light on the distinction between ‘moral’ and ‘welfare’ discourses. In the 1950s and 1960s, the demarcation lines corresponded to the sexual and reproductive transgression of the marital boundary. However, the deviation from marital norms put unmarried mothers in a difficult economic situation as the welfare legislation of the 1950s was designed to cater for a nuclear family in which a man was the breadwinner and the woman raised the children.<sup>114</sup> At the time, there was no ‘welfare’ discourse since single mothers simply did not receive the state support available to them today.

Despite the fact that there was no ‘welfare’ discourse, the claim associated with the psychological problematization i.e. that unmarried mothers produced children who were likely to become delinquent and parents of illegitimate children themselves depicted them as a threat to national health. In addition, the account above demonstrates that notions of responsibility and independence, currently associated with the ‘welfare’ discourse, were part of the moral problematization of unmarried mothers. The resemblance in statements across the problematization of unmarried mothers and those of teenage mothers today is striking.

As mentioned above, writing in the mid-1950s, the matron of Stretton House complained:

Most, but not all, of these very young unmarried mothers betray a total lack of responsibility and of experience in the more serious duties of life...<sup>115</sup>

She also argued that the young women in her care should realise that they had ‘deep

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<sup>114</sup> Fink, “Condemned or Condoned?.”; Spensky, “Producers of Legitimacy.”

<sup>115</sup> *Stretton House, Annual Report for the Year 1953-1954* (City of London, 1954), ACC 2201/E4/1-34, London Metropolitan Archives, 4.

responsibility'<sup>116</sup> for the life which they had brought into the world. The effort to ensure that young women were 'responsible' subjects continues to this day. While opening a support centre for teenage mothers in 2003 the government minister Barbara Roche stated:

I particularly wish to congratulate the young women who access the project. In demonstrating your desire to take responsibility for your health and well-being – and the health and well-being of your children – and in demonstrating your interest in pursuing your ambitions with regard to learning and employment, you are leading the way for others to follow.<sup>117</sup>

The continued discourse of 'responsibility', in the 1950s within a moral problematization of unmarried mothers and currently within a discourse of welfare and citizenship<sup>118</sup> seems to support the suggestion that New Labour policies on teenage pregnancy were part of a 'new moral agenda': an attempt to develop a rhetoric of 'moral civility that will waylay and reinvent the wayward'.<sup>119</sup>

However, as the findings presented in this chapter reveal, in the 1950s and 1960s there was a tension between the 'moral' problematization of women who transgressed the boundaries of marital sexual relations and childbearing and adolescent mothers or young mothers. Since social scientific literature claimed that unmarried mothers had distinct subjectivity that was a lifelong characteristic, adolescence was a secondary indicator of subjectivity. This tension between two competing discourses of subjectivity does not seem to be revealed in contemporary problematization of teenage pregnancy and single mothers. Ann Phoenix and Angela McRobbie even argue that the figure of the teenage mother is often used in order to vilify single mothers more generally.<sup>120</sup>

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<sup>116</sup> Ibid., 5.

<sup>117</sup> B. Roche quoted in D. Monk, "Teenage Pregnancies and Sex Education: Constructing the Girl/Woman Subject," in *Sexuality and the Law: Feminist Engagements*, eds. V. E. Munro and C. F. Stychin (London: Routledge-Cavendish, 2007), 211.

<sup>118</sup> Carabine, "New Labour's Teenage Pregnancy Policy."

<sup>119</sup> E. Bullen, J. Kenway, and V. Hey, "New Labour, Social Exclusion and Educational Risk Management: the Case of the "Gymslip" Mums," *British Educational Research Journal* 26, no. 4 (2000): 445.

<sup>120</sup> A. McRobbie, "Feminism and the Third Way," *Feminist Review* 64 (2000): 97-112; A. Phoenix, "Social Constructions of Lone Motherhood: a Case of Competing Discourses," in *Good Enough*

Finally, the empirical findings cited in this chapter also contribute to the historical examination of the role of the psychological concept of adolescence in the governance of sexuality. While the relationship between notions of childhood and sexuality is frequently examined in the literature which considers teenage pregnancy and sex education,<sup>121</sup> the psychological concept of adolescence and its relation to sexuality receives more limited attention.<sup>122</sup> The writings of social workers such as Leontine Young and Jane Rowe demonstrate that the psychological concept of adolescence and the association between adolescence and ‘sex’ underpinned the suggestion that the adolescent unmarried mother was less disturbed psychologically than her older counterpart. The emergence of the psychological concept of adolescence is outlined in Chapter 5. I subsequently chart its influence on governmental efforts to govern ‘adolescent sex’. Although the psychological concept of adolescence was central to the development of youth work and government facilities for young people, it did not, as the next chapter demonstrates, penetrate a significant part of governmental and voluntary work with unmarried mothers.

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*Mothering? Feminist Perspectives on Lone Motherhood*, ed. E. Bortolaia Silva (London: Routledge, 1996), 175-190.

<sup>121</sup> Monk, “Teenage Pregnancies and Sex Education.”; R. Thomson, “Sexuality and Young People: Policies, Practices and Identities,” in *Sexualities: Personal Lives and Social Policy*, ed. J. Carabine (Bristol: The Policy Press, 2004), 86-122.

<sup>122</sup> One of the exceptions is J. Moran, “Childhood Sexuality and Education: The Case of Section 28,” *Sexualities* 4, no. 1 (2001): 93-109.

## **Chapter 4:**

### **Governmental and Voluntary Work with Unmarried Mothers in London, 1955-1968**

This chapter examines governmental and voluntary work with unmarried mothers focusing on two institutions accommodating these women during their pregnancy and after the birth of their baby. The first is King's Mead, one of the London County Council's large nursing homes. The second is St. Mary's House Mother and Baby Home, an institution affiliated to the Church of England which was supported financially by the Council. The work of both institutions is examined in order to establish the extent to which it was shaped by the moral and the psychological problematizations of unmarried mothers. The discourses and practices structuring the work of these institutions are considered in light of those found in the country's first Mother and Baby Home for schoolgirl unmarried mothers that I portray in Chapter 6.

The first part of this chapter depicts the London County Council's work with unmarried mothers and proceeds to portray in detail the work of King's Mead nursing home. I describe the governance arrangements regulating the women's stay in the Home, the way in which staff portrayed them in their reports, and the way in which their children's care was managed. In the second part of the chapter I present the results of an examination of the records of St. Mary's House Mother and Baby Home. The discourses and practices shaping the work of St. Mary's House are described. As well as describing the governmental arrangements, this account provides a picture, albeit an incomplete one, of young unmarried women in London in the mid- to late 1960s who had become pregnant and who sought the assistance of a voluntary or state institution. Their sexual and familial relationships and the social attitudes they encountered as well as the racial prejudice that some of them experienced emerge through the records documenting their cases.

The central argument put forward in this chapter is that it was the moral problematization which shaped the work of King's Mead and St. Mary's House. This was reflected in several of the features of these institutions' work: unmarried mothers were described as feckless women driven by an unrestrained sexual drive; they were described as being in need of rehabilitation, and motherhood was described as a technology through which their subjectivity could be transformed. The psychological problematization of unmarried mothers – the view that becoming an unmarried mother was the manifestation of a long-term psychological disorder - had virtually no role in these institutions' work. The absence of psychological discourses was particularly noticeable in two areas. First, the psychological concept of adolescence as a distinct developmental stage was entirely absent both in the work of King's Mead and in the work of St. Mary's House despite the fact that some of King's Mead residents and almost half of the residents of St. Mary's House were young women in their teens. Secondly, the psychological discourse of motherhood - the concern with the mother's ability to care for her baby in a way which facilitates its healthy development - was also missing from these institutions' work.

In Chapter 5, I depict the emergence of the modern notion of adolescence as a distinct developmental stage, noting, in particular, the development of the psychological conceptualisation. This conceptualisation had an important role in the development of youth work during the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. By the late 1950s an increasing number of governmental and professional publications were discussing an alleged rise in the rates of sexually active adolescents. In April 1961, the London County Council established St. Christopher's Mother and Baby Home as a specialised institution for the schoolgirl unmarried mothers. Increasingly, moral welfare workers and local authority officers were holding conference discussions specifically on the care of the young unmarried mothers and clinical examination of the characteristics of adolescent unmarried mothers was being developed.<sup>1</sup> The 'teenage' or 'young unmarried mother'

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<sup>1</sup> "The Unmarried Mother and Her Child in Residential Care," Conference Report, *Bulletin of Moral Welfare Workers' Association* (City of London, July-August, 1964), ACC 2201/M11/57-90, London Metropolitan Archives, 14 ; D. Gough, "Schoolgirl Unmarried Mothers," *Understanding Unmarried Mothers: Observations by a Psychoanalyst*, Archive of the National Council for One Parent Families (City of London, 1966), The Women's Library, 3-9; D. Gough, "Psychotherapy with Unmarried Mothers," *Understanding Unmarried Mothers: Observations by a Psychoanalyst*, Archive of the National Council



was emerging as the focal point of a new distinct professional and governmental field.

The account presented in this chapter demonstrates that even while these developments were taking place, a significant part of voluntary and governmental work with unmarried mothers remained unaltered by the new problematization. In King's Mead and St. Mary's House, adolescent unmarried mothers were accommodated together with older unmarried mothers and received identical care. Furthermore, there was no discussion of the capacity of the adolescent unmarried mother to care for her baby; instead, like other unmarried mothers, adolescent unmarried mothers were encouraged, either actively or by virtue of the procedures in the Homes, to raise their children themselves. The absence of the problematization of adolescence is further highlighted by the notice given to other characteristics as rendering mothers and babies problematic. Particularly, in the Council's work, a characteristic which was frequently considered by officers was that of 'race' and nationality. The ethnicity of the mothers and their babies was regularly noted in the Mother and Baby Unit and Homeless Families Unit reports. Alongside the account of the number of admissions and discharges from the Home, the reports specified whether these included any 'coloured' or 'Irish' mothers and babies. In addition, reports frequently detailed the number of babies born to mothers who were on probation or were mental health patients as well as the number of babies suffering from medical conditions.<sup>2</sup>

#### **4.1 London County Council Work with Unmarried Mothers 1955-1965**

London County Council's work with unmarried mothers during the 1950s and early 1960s was strongly shaped by the moral problematization. The pregnant women were categorised according to whether it was their first or second illegitimate pregnancy and

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for One Parent Families (City of London, 1966), The Women's Library, 10-16; D. Gough, "The Very Young Mother," in *Pregnancy in Adolescence: Report of a Conference Held on March 10th 1966*, Archive of the National Council for One Parent Families (City of London, 1966), The Women's Library.  
<sup>2</sup> "King's Mead Mother and Baby Unit Report," Papers of the Welfare Committee, London County Council (City of London, September 4, 1964), LCC/MIN/12,337, London Metropolitan Archives; "King's Mead Mother and Baby Unit Report," Papers of the Welfare Committee, London County Council (City of London, July 8, 1964), LCC/MIN/12,337, London Metropolitan Archives.

whether they appeared to be of ‘good’ or ‘bad’ character. In addition, women were categorised according to their marital status as ‘single’, ‘married’, ‘divorced’ or ‘co-habitee’. These distinctions affected the nature of the care they received from the Council including the type of residential accommodation allocated to them and the rules and practices according to which they were governed.

However, in contrast with moral welfare workers and with the staff of St. Mary’s House, Council officers were also in charge of accommodating lone mothers: mothers with no male partner, nor work or accommodation. These women did not necessarily become pregnant out-of-wedlock but were without a partner at the time they sought the Council’s help. By and large, Council officers did not distinguish unmarried mothers from the lone mothers whose children were legitimately conceived. All the mothers who required long-term assistance were placed in large nursing homes and were deemed in need of rehabilitation.<sup>3</sup>

As outlined in the previous chapter local authority provision for unmarried mothers in the post-World War II era was to a large extent shaped by Circular 2866 published in 1943 by the Ministry of Health.<sup>4</sup> The Circular urged local authorities to make arrangements to support unmarried mothers and their children. Provision during the 1950s was further reinforced by post-war welfare legislation. This included the National Assistance Act, which required Councils to provide accommodation to all those who needed it, and the Children’s Act that placed an obligation on local authorities to establish Children’s Departments and protect children at risk.<sup>5</sup>

The London County Council’s work with unmarried mothers consisted mainly of providing the women with residential accommodation during pregnancy or immediately after the birth of their child. The Council supported financially thirty moral welfare organisations which managed Mother and Baby Homes. These Homes catered for approximately 80% of the women seeking the help of the Council, a total of 1,000

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<sup>3</sup> Chief Officer of the Welfare Department, “Mothers and Babies – Accommodation,” Papers of the Welfare Committee, London County Council (City of London, November 2, 1962), LCC/MIN/12,310, London Metropolitan Archives.

<sup>4</sup> J. Nicholson, *Mother and Baby Homes: a Survey of Homes for Unmarried Mothers* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1968).

<sup>5</sup> J. Fink, “Condemned or Condoned? Investigating the Problem of Unmarried Motherhood in England, 1945-60,” (University of Essex, 1997).

applications per year during the years 1957-1961.<sup>6</sup> Mothers who were not admitted into a Mother and Baby Home run by a religious organisation were placed in residential accommodation managed directly by the Council. Similarly to the voluntary organisations, the Council accommodated expectant and nursing unmarried mothers in specialised residential accommodation. After the birth of their baby, women were expected to decide whether the child would be adopted, fostered or received into care or whether they would raise their child themselves.

Mother and Baby Homes affiliated to religious organisations exercised an admissions regime, usually catering for a specific religious denomination only and restricting admission to certain 'types' of unmarried mothers. The central distinctions were between women who had their first or second illegitimate pregnancy and between single and married women.<sup>7</sup> The Council accommodated those women who were refused admission by the religious Mother and Baby Homes. As a Council report stated:

In addition to the applications accepted by the voluntary organisations, there are a number of mothers who for various reasons are unacceptable to these organisations and for whom the Council is therefore required to provide accommodation. Broadly speaking, voluntary homes tend to admit only girls and women of reasonably good character; some, for example, will not take second-baby cases.<sup>8</sup>

This account supports the finding of Jill Nicholson's survey of Mother and Baby Homes described in the previous chapter in which it was found that only a few Mother and Baby Homes admitted women who had their second illegitimate pregnancy.<sup>9</sup> This statement further illustrates the way in which religious Homes' admission regimes shaped the population of mothers who entered the Council's accommodations. As a result of these Homes' preference for the single 'first pregnancy' woman, the report

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<sup>6</sup> Chief Officer of the Welfare Department, "Mothers and Babies – Accommodation," Papers of the Welfare Committee, London County Council (City of London, November 2, 1962), LCC/MIN/12,310, London Metropolitan Archives.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> J. Nicholson, *Mother and Baby Homes*.

proclaimed:

The mothers admitted to the Council's units are in many cases women who are married but apart from their husbands, deserted co-habitees, [*sic*] and those who have had two or more children by different fathers.<sup>10</sup>

In this sense, the Council's work was decisively structured by the demarcation lines drawn by religious Mother and Baby Homes as they were required to directly assist those women rejected by these organisations. However, the moral problematization was not only present in the Council's work as a result of the co-operation with religious Homes:

It is thus left to the Council to deal with the more difficult cases...some of the girls although difficult are amenable to influence and training.<sup>11</sup>

The Council's officers, as the two quotations illustrate, subscribed to the view which linked 'first baby mothers' with 'good character' and proposed that those with multiple illegitimate pregnancies were the more 'difficult' cases. Furthermore, in line with the moral problematization, unmarried mothers needed to undergo a process of rehabilitation which transformed their character. However, the Council's work did not correspond entirely to the moral problematization. In contrast with Mother and Baby Homes affiliated to religious organisations, the Council accommodated, alongside unmarried mothers, 'lone mothers'. The Council reports describe lone mothers as women who were raising their children, but were without accommodation, partner or a job. A 1959 Council report stated:

These families [lone mothers] are relatively few in number and the Committee in October 1956 decided to open a unit at King's Mead

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<sup>10</sup> Chief Officer of the Welfare Department, "Mothers and Babies – Accommodation," Papers of the Welfare Committee, London County Council (City of London, November 2, 1962), LCC/MIN/12,310, London Metropolitan Archives, 3.

<sup>11</sup> Chief Officer of the Welfare Department, "Mothers and Babies – Adoptions," Papers of the Welfare Committee, London County Council (City of London, May 10, 1960), LCC/MIN/12,305, London Metropolitan Archives, 1.

where they could be given individual attention.<sup>12</sup>

Thus, both unmarried mothers and lone mothers were accommodated by the Council in the same nursing homes and both groups of women were depicted as being in need of rehabilitation. The length of stay in King's Mead was long in comparison with religious Homes and often extended for a period of up to ten months.<sup>13</sup> In 1956 the Welfare Committee decided that the three months time limit imposed on 'homeless families' would not apply in the case of lone mothers. This was in order to allow for their rehabilitation and preparation for independent life outside the institution and in order to prevent their children coming into the care of the Council.<sup>14</sup>

The key distinctions between the women received into the Council's care were between the short-term cases and the long-term cases. The latter group were comprised of women who wanted to raise their children themselves but whose marital and habitation arrangements were unstable and whose economic position was feeble. It is these characteristics, rather than their children's legitimate or illegitimate status, which posed difficulty. Thus, one group of women were girls of 'good' character who had become pregnant out-of-wedlock for the first time and who subsequently married the putative father or who had had their baby adopted. The second group were those who had become pregnant for the second or third time and who wanted to raise their children despite the fact that they did not have a job or the financial support of a partner. It is the latter group which was the focus of the Council's concern.

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<sup>12</sup> Chief Officer of the Welfare Department, "Homeless Families" Papers of the Welfare Committee, London County Council (City of London, February 23, 1959), LCC/MIN/12,304, London Metropolitan Archives, 8.

<sup>13</sup> Chief Officer of the Welfare Department, "Mothers and Babies – Adoptions," Papers of the Welfare Committee, London County Council (City of London, May 10, 1960), LCC/MIN/12,305, London Metropolitan Archives.

<sup>14</sup> Chief Officer of the Welfare Department, "Arrangements for Rehabilitation of Certain Homeless Families," Papers of the Welfare Committee, London County Council (City of London, November 8, 1956), LCC/MIN/12,301, London Metropolitan Archives.

## **4.2 King's Mead Nursing Home**

Unmarried mothers were accommodated by the Council at five key sites.<sup>15</sup> Two of these sites, King's Mead and Hillside, were residential nursing homes that did not cater exclusively for this group. Alongside unmarried mothers, these institutions housed infirm men and women as well as healthy men and women who were in urgent need of housing. They did not have strict admission rules and accommodated the 'more difficult cases' of mothers.<sup>16</sup> During 1962 the Homes admitted 230 unmarried mothers, the majority of the mothers housed by the Council.<sup>17</sup> Those unmarried mothers who were deemed as having a better chance of rehabilitation were admitted into a specialised Mother and Baby Home, Carisbrooke.<sup>18</sup> The Council had further managed a hostel for rehabilitated mothers who were in full-time employment and needed childcare arrangements during the day.<sup>19</sup>

The following account describes the work of King's Mead. The reason for its choice as the case study for the Council's work with unmarried mothers is the richness of the data available on the actual working of this nursing home. The research material includes reports by the institution's matron and the warden, reports of the Visiting Medical Officer and the reports written by members of the Welfare Committee's Visiting Sub-Committee. In addition, as described above, it was at King's Mead and Hillside that the majority of unmarried mothers accommodated by the Council were

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<sup>15</sup> "Ballantyne" Mother and Baby Home was opened in the early 1960s.

<sup>16</sup> Chief Officer of the Welfare Department, "Mothers and Babies – Accommodation," Papers of the Welfare Committee, London County Council (City of London, November 2, 1962), LCC/MIN/12,310, London Metropolitan Archives; Chief Officer of the Welfare Department, "Mothers and Babies – Adoptions," Papers of the Welfare Committee, London County Council (City of London, May 10, 1960), LCC/MIN/12,305, London Metropolitan Archives.

<sup>17</sup> Chief Officer of the Welfare Department, "Mothers and Babies – Adoptions," Papers of the Welfare Committee, London County Council (City of London, May 10, 1960), LCC/MIN/12,305, London Metropolitan Archives.

<sup>18</sup> Chief Officer of the Welfare Department, "Residential Care of Unmarried Mothers," Papers of the Visiting Sub-Committee for Group 11 Establishments, London County Council (City of London, January 23, 1964), LCC/MIN/12,356, London Metropolitan Archives.

<sup>19</sup> Chief Officer of the Welfare Department, "Report of the Hostel for Mothers in Work, 6-8 Wadham Gardens Hampstead," Papers of the Visiting Sub-Committee for Group 11 Establishments, London County Council (City of London, January 23, 1964), LCC/MIN/12,356, London Metropolitan Archives.

housed.<sup>20</sup> Furthermore, since admission to Carisbrooke was often made through an application by a moral welfare worker, this institution can be seen as more closely associated with moral welfare work.<sup>21</sup> I therefore argue that the records of King's Mead represent a most appropriate source for studying the Council's work with unmarried mothers during the 1950s and 1960s.

King's Mead was located in Dovehouse Street in Chelsea, West London. It was comprised of seven wards: five wards housed elderly people and two wards accommodated unmarried mothers, lone mothers and their children.<sup>22</sup> The Mother and Baby Unit, located in ward B4, catered for twelve mothers who were admitted up to two months before their confinement. The Homeless Families Unit in West Block accommodated eighteen mothers and their babies.<sup>23</sup> The physical conditions at the Home were bleak. One report by a member of the Visiting Sub-Committee described the building as a 'typical 19<sup>th</sup> century Poor Law building' <sup>24</sup> while another reported that it was 'cheerless and inconvenient'.<sup>25</sup> There were no lifts or fireplaces in the building and many windows did not open except for the top ventilators.<sup>26</sup> It was probably due to these conditions that the units, particularly the Homeless Families Unit suffered persistent outbreaks of infectious diseases.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Chief Officer of the Welfare Department, "Mothers and Babies – Accommodation," Papers of the Welfare Committee, London County Council (City of London, June 6, 1963), LCC/MIN/12,311, London Metropolitan Archives.

<sup>21</sup> Chief Officer of the Welfare Department, "Residential Care of Unmarried Mothers," Papers of the Visiting Sub-Committee for Group 11 Establishments, London County Council (City of London, January 23, 1964), LCC/MIN/12,356, London Metropolitan Archives.

<sup>22</sup> "Report of a Visit to Kings Mead," Papers of the Visiting Sub-Committee for Group 5 Establishments, London County Council (City of London, January 23, 1960), LCC/MIN/12,336, London Metropolitan Archives.

<sup>23</sup> Chief Officer of the Welfare Department, "Residential Care of Unmarried Mothers," Papers of the Visiting Sub-Committee for Group 11 Establishments, London County Council (City of London, January 23, 1964), LCC/MIN/12,356, London Metropolitan Archives.

<sup>24</sup> "Report of a Visit to King's Mead," Papers of the Visiting Sub-Committee for Group 5 Establishments, London County Council (City of London, August 12, 1963), LCC/MIN/12,337, London Metropolitan Archives.

<sup>25</sup> "Report of a Visit to King's Mead," Papers of the Visiting Sub-Committee for Group 5 Establishments, London County Council (City of London, April 13, 1959), LCC/MIN/12,336, London Metropolitan Archives.

<sup>26</sup> "Report of a Visit to King's Mead," Papers of the Visiting Sub-Committee for Group 5 Establishments, London County Council (City of London, August 12, 1963), LCC/MIN/12,337, London Metropolitan Archives.

<sup>27</sup> See for instance "Report of the Visiting Medical Officer," Papers of the Visiting Sub-Committee for Group 5 Establishments, London County Council (City of London, May 7, 1959), LCC/MIN/12,336,

## Day to Day Management of King's Mead

The day-to-day management of King's Mead was carried out by a matron and a warden. Their work was, in turn, overseen by a Visiting Sub-Committee of the Council's Welfare Committee. Two members of the Visiting Sub-Committee visited the Home every three months for inspection and reported to the Chief Officer of the Welfare Department.<sup>28</sup> Their report usually entailed an account of the physical condition of the Home as well as the observed health and well-being of residents. These reports were not couched in psychological discourse, but employed instead a more general language of well-being referring to the Home's cleanliness and orderly state. An example of such a report is Anne Jones' account from the 29<sup>th</sup> of March 1962 which stated:

I visited the above establishment this afternoon and was taken around wards B.4 – mother and baby unit, B5- and A2 – Infirm Women ward. There were very few residents in the mother and baby unit, owing to the outbreak of dysentery. The ward was very clean and tidy. I chatted with quite a number of the old ladies in B5 and A2 wards, and they seemed quite happy and contented.<sup>29</sup>

Regular reports were also produced by a Visiting Medical Officer who was responsible for reviewing the health of the residents every three months.<sup>30</sup> In addition, both the Mother and Baby Unit and the Homeless Families Unit produced reports which detailed the number of admissions, discharges and the destination of the mother and the baby after their discharge from the Home.

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London Metropolitan Archives; "Report of a Visit to King's Mead," Papers of the Visiting Sub-Committee for Group 5 Establishments, London County Council (City of London, March 12, 1957), LCC/MIN/12,336, London Metropolitan Archives.

<sup>28</sup> Chief Officer of the Welfare Department and Clerk of the Council, "Joint Report," Papers of the Welfare Committee, London County Council (City of London, December 5, 1963), LCC/MIN 12,312, London Metropolitan Archives.

<sup>29</sup> A. Jones, "Report of a Visit to King's Mead," Papers of the Visiting Sub-Committee for Group 5 Establishments, London County Council, (City of London, 29 March, 1962), LCC/MIN/12,337, London Metropolitan Archives.

<sup>30</sup> C. Hunt, "Report of the Visiting Medical Officer," Papers of the Visiting Sub-Committee for Group 5 Establishments, London County Council (City of London, July 7, 1964), LCC/MIN/12,337, London Metropolitan Archives.



The matron and the warden of King's Mead produced bi-monthly reports in which the Welfare Committee was updated on different aspects of the work in the Home. The format of the report was fixed and comprised several regular items including an account of the deaths that had occurred in the institution, the sums paid to residents who carried out maintenance work, the amount of money spent on clothing for residents, the number of refused admissions and details of the gifts the institution had received. There were several annual events that King's Mead organised, including a summer trip for residents and Christmas celebrations. Christmas events were usually comprised of a visit by the Mayor and Mayoress of Chelsea on Christmas day as well as a concert and a tea party.<sup>31</sup>

The majority of the unmarried mothers admitted to King's Mead shared several characteristics: they were women who had concealed their pregnancy, had not made prior contact with a social worker and were often evicted from their residence. These women had frequently lost their jobs and accommodation due to their pregnancy.<sup>32</sup> Mothers and children at King's Mead received regular donations of clothing, shoes and toys.<sup>33</sup> Further anecdotal evidence of the mothers' weak financial position (as well as the institution's limited financial resources) was that on at least one occasion staff donated their own money in order to organise a tea party for the children in the Homeless Families Unit.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> "Report of the Warden and Matron," Papers of the Visiting Sub-Committee for Group 5 Establishments, London County Council (City of London, January 4, 1960), LCC/MIN/12,336, London Metropolitan Archives.

<sup>32</sup> Chief Officer of the Welfare Department, "Mothers and Babies – Accommodation," Papers of the Welfare Committee, London County Council (City of London, November 2, 1962), LCC/MIN/12,310, London Metropolitan Archives.

<sup>33</sup> "Report of a Visit to King's Mead," Papers of the Visiting Sub-Committee for Group 5 Establishments, London County Council (City of London, March 14, 1955), LCC/MIN/12,336, London Metropolitan Archives.

<sup>34</sup> "Report of a Visit to King's Mead," Papers of the Visiting Sub-Committee for Group 5 Establishments, London County Council (City of London, January 17, 1955), LCC/MIN/12,336, London Metropolitan Archives.

### **4.3 The Moral Problematization**

In the following section I shall demonstrate that it was primarily the moral discourse which shaped the work of King's Mead. This was reflected in the practices through which unmarried mothers were governed, the way in which their children's care was managed and the way in which staff portrayed them in their reports.

The view that the mothers' movement in and out of the Home should be governed by staff was expressed in several reports of members of King's Mead Visiting Sub-Committee. An example of this can be found in Miss Muriel Bowen's report on her visit to King's Mead on June 1962 which stated:

In the Mother and Babies selction [*sic*] I was surprised to hear that the mothers are free to come in at any hour of the night they choose, and that some of them do in fact come in at 2,3 and 4 a.m. In the interests of the welfare of their children and in fairness to the staff on which they already impose a heavy burden, can the Sub Committee impose a time limit for them to be indoors...?<sup>35</sup>

Another member had also noted the mothers' evening leisure activity in her report:

Most of the babies were in bed or being fed prior to being put to sleep. Many of the mothers seemed to be hurrying out for the evening: perhaps Friday is one of the most popular evenings for going out!<sup>36</sup>

The mothers were depicted as women whose pursuit of pleasure preceded their responsibility for their children. One report had even proposed that the ward's television could help keep mothers from leaving the institution during the evening:

The television set is not working. We suggest that it should be put in

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<sup>35</sup> "Report of a Visit to King's Mead," Papers of the Visiting Sub-Committee for Group 5 Establishments, London County Council (City of London, June 1962), LCC/MIN/12,336, London Metropolitan Archives.

<sup>36</sup> "Report of a Visit to King's Mead," Papers of the Visiting Sub-Committee for Group 5 Establishments, London County Council (City of London, September 30, 1960), LCC/MIN/12,336, London Metropolitan Archives.

order at once so as to interest the mothers and keep them at home in the evenings.<sup>37</sup>

These reports reflect two key notions of the moral problematization of unmarried mothers. The first is that unmarried mothers were ‘loose’ women who were ‘out for a good time’. It was felt that they did not wish to care for their babies and sought every opportunity to escape this responsibility in the pursuit of social / sexual pleasure. The second was that the duties and responsibilities of having to care for a child conflicted with the hedonistic pursuit. Importantly, the Council reports conveyed the conviction that the mothers were not capable of controlling these desires by themselves and it was therefore the responsibility of staff to find ways of restricting them in seeking satisfaction.

As Frank Mort and Lucy Bland<sup>38</sup> demonstrate, anxieties regarding women who were in search of sexual pleasure erupted at different periods in association with anxieties regarding the rates of illegitimacy and venereal disease. The young working-class girl in search of sexual gratification was at the centre of these apprehensions. The apparently class-neutral terms of ‘amateur prostitute’ and ‘good-time girl’ were, in fact, terms articulating anxiety regarding working-class women’s sexuality.

Evidence of the presence of the association made between unmarried mothers’ promiscuity and prostitution can be identified in a report written by Charles Hunt, King’s Mead Visiting Medical Officer. Although the officer employed some psychological terminology, depicting the mothers as ‘psychopathic’, his overall account reveals the persistence of the moral problematization. The officer reported:

Morale in the [Homeless Families] unit is low because there are a few ... aggressive psychopathic mothers in the unit who are ready to riot about anything which displeases them... several mothers are believed to be active prostitutes and the hours they keep tend [*sic*]

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<sup>37</sup> “Report of a Visit to King’s Mead,” Papers of the Visiting Sub-Committee for Group 5 Establishments, London County Council (City of London, February 14, 1961), LCC/MIN/12,336, London Metropolitan Archives.

<sup>38</sup> L. Bland and F. Mort “Look Out for the ‘Good Time’ Girl: Dangerous Sexualities as a Threat to National Health,” in *Formations of Nation and People*, ed. Formations Editorial Collective (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1984), 131-151.

to support such a theory.<sup>39</sup>

The mothers' pathology was their disobedience: their reluctance to follow the rules and demands laid down by staff. It was also their pursuit of night time leisure activity equated with promiscuity and prostitution. In a later report on July 1964, Hunt provided an account of the case history of a young mother which again revealed the pathologisation of these women:

One recent patient is thoroughly convinced that she has had a virgin birth. Close questioning reveals that she worked at Butlins Holiday Camp and can recall several evenings when she was not responsible for her actions due to alcohol. She says she does not recognise any friends in the face of her child and I think this is a good example of the somewhat sub-normal even pathetic intellect of some of these girls.<sup>40</sup>

The unmarried mother was prompted by the officer to speak about the circumstances of the pregnancy and recognise the father of the child through the child's face. Her lack of co-operation with this enquiry led to her description as having a 'sub-normal' intellect proposed as more broadly characteristic of unmarried mothers. This view was re-affirmed in a later report in which Hunt stated: '...I note that a significant proportion of the mothers in this [Mother and Baby] unit are of subnormal intellect (or perhaps high grade defectives)'.<sup>41</sup>

In the previous chapter I argued that the disciplinary regime found in Mother and Baby Homes, which included participation in daily housework duties, was seen to be an important feature in the rehabilitation of unmarried mothers. The supposition that one of the features of unmarried mothers' character was their lack of discipline and their

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<sup>39</sup> C. Hunt, "Report of the Visiting Medical Officer," Papers of the Visiting Sub-Committee for Group 5 Establishments, London County Council (City of London, August 31, 1962), LCC/MIN/12,337, London Metropolitan Archives.

<sup>40</sup> C. Hunt, "Report of the Visiting Medical Officer," Papers of the Visiting Sub-Committee for Group 5 Establishments, London County Council (City of London, July 7, 1964), LCC/MIN/12,337, London Metropolitan Archives.

<sup>41</sup> C. Hunt, "Report of the Visiting Medical Officer," Papers of the Visiting Sub-Committee for Group 5 Establishments, London County Council (City of London, November 2, 1964), LCC/MIN/12,337, London Metropolitan Archives.

idleness can be detected in the reports written by members of the institution's Visiting Sub-Committee. After one of the visits to King's Mead, a member of the Visiting Sub-Committee reported:

Desborough and I visited this afternoon and were shocked at what we heard at West Block and B 4. Matron and her assistant with Mr. Wasp are having very [*sic*] difficult time with the residents who treat the staff with insults and contempt, and act in complete disregard of rules that have been laid down. We both feel that some action should be taken at once to rectify this state of affairs.<sup>42</sup>

A similar portrayal of unmarried mothers' lack of discipline is found in another report which, however, outlined an explanation for their condition that placed some responsibility for their behaviour on the Council:

As I walked through this deplorable structure, West Block, I could not stop wondering how far the conditions under which these unfortunate women are freed to dwell are not in part responsible for their active disorder and their unwillingness to co-operate with the staff. In one room it was humiliating to see the occupants – all expectant mothers either lying on their beds smoking or sitting around a card table playing cards + smoking there at midday with nothing done on their part to make the room decent + tidy.<sup>43</sup>

The unmarried mothers were deemed disordered and conspicuously unproductive: playing cards, smoking and not contributing to the upkeep of their room. They were 'free to dwell'; they were free from responsibilities and the obligation to undertake work. This was further reinforced by the fact that while at King's Mead, mothers did not have to care for their children on their own but were helped by professional staff at the Home. A report of the Visiting Sub-Committee member described this arrangement:

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<sup>42</sup> "Report of a Visit to King's Mead," Papers of the Visiting Sub-Committee for Group 5 Establishments, London County Council (City of London, June 28, 1962), LCC/MIN/12,337, London Metropolitan Archives.

<sup>43</sup> "Report of a Visit to King's Mead," Papers of the Visiting Sub-Committee for Group 5 Establishments, London County Council (City of London, September 12, 1962), LCC/MIN/12,337, London Metropolitan Archives.

In West Block we saw the under fives having their midday dinner in the care of their mothers and nurses – it was a very happy little scene – every child ate up its meal, smiling and happy in a quiet orderly atmosphere.<sup>44</sup>

However, it was staff that were ultimately responsible for the children's care. A report on the working of the Mother and Baby Unit by the Home's Visiting Medical Officer stated:

A major reorganisation of infants' feeding has been completed. Babies... now have... earlier introduction to solid food and the response has been most encouraging ...<sup>45</sup>

It was professional staff who made decisions regarding the infants' feeding rather than the mothers themselves. This was, at least in part, supported by the proposition that the mothers were not adequate carers. In a report from July 1964 the Visiting Medical Officer proclaimed:

So far I have been impressed with the physical improvement of the babies, not due I fear to the attention given by the mothers, but to the remarkable interest and energy shown by S/N Gibbs and Nurse Gadd.<sup>46</sup>

According to this report the mothers were inattentive to their babies and it was only due to the enthusiasm of staff nurses that the babies had developed. However, revealing the prominence of the moral problematization, the mothers' inattentiveness was not seen as an indicator that their children should be prevented from being left in their care. Instead, Council officers sought to make the women take responsibility for their children's care. They sought to enable the mothers to resume 'independent life', i.e. live

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<sup>44</sup> "Report of a Visit to King's Mead," Papers of the Visiting Sub-Committee for Group 5 Establishments, London County Council (City of London, January 21, 1957), LCC/MIN/12,336, London Metropolitan Archives.

<sup>45</sup> C. Hunt, "Report of the Visiting Medical Officer," Papers of the Visiting Sub-Committee for Group 5 Establishments, London County Council (City of London, May 3, 1964), LCC/MIN/12,337, London Metropolitan Archives.

<sup>46</sup> C. Hunt, "Report of the Visiting Medical Officer," Papers of the Visiting Sub-Committee for Group 5 Establishments, London County Council (City of London, July 7, 1964), LCC/MIN/12,337, London Metropolitan Archives.

in their own accommodation, provide for their children and look after them.<sup>47</sup> The fear was that unless these women were rehabilitated, their children would come into care and the mothers would ‘remain free to continue an unsettled way of life’.<sup>48</sup> However, it was precisely the stay in the Home which enabled the women to enjoy the freedoms they had to give up as part of their rehabilitation:

Whilst the arrangements at King’s Mead have these objectives [rehabilitation] in view, the length of stay of many of the mothers in the home, during which they enjoy undue liberty while the major part of their duties to their children are undertaken by the nursery staff, militates against the successful outcome of the scheme. One of the weaknesses at King’s Mead is that the mothers have direct access to the street which makes it difficult to control their going out and coming in.<sup>49</sup>

This quote reveals the influence of three of the central features of the moral problematization of unmarried mothers. First, unmarried mothers were described as promiscuous women who are in an unrestrained pursuit of pleasure. Second, motherhood – responsibility of having to care for a child, was opposed to the hedonistic pursuit. Thirdly, motherhood had the capacity to transform the unmarried mother’s subjectivity. It could *make* the unmarried mother into a dutiful and responsible subject. Thus, it was the freedom from childcare responsibility, coupled with the failure to restrict their pursuit of sexual/social pleasure which constituted a hindrance to the effort to rehabilitate the unmarried mothers at King’s Mead. In King’s Mead, as well as in the other Council institutions such as Hillside, Carisbrook and Ballantyn,<sup>50</sup> mothers were not allocated residential accommodation according to their age. The young unmarried mothers who were in their teens were randomly grouped together with older unmarried

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<sup>47</sup> Chief Officer of the Welfare Department, “Mothers and Babies – Adoptions,” Papers of the Welfare Committee, London County Council (City of London, May 10, 1960), LCC/MIN/12,305, London Metropolitan Archives.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> Chief Officer of the Welfare Department, “Supply of Sweets and Tobacco to Mothers in Carisbrooke,” Matron’s Report, Ballantyne Mother and Baby Home, Papers of the Visiting Sub-Committee for Group 8 Establishments (City of London, June 26, 1964), LCC/MIN/12,313, London Metropolitan Archives.

mothers and were not singled out for attention.

During the years under examination, officers of the Children's Committee were increasingly employing psychological discourse in their work. The notion of adolescence as a psychological stage characterised by mental upheaval as well as the notion of 'deprivation' drawn primarily from John Bowlby's work, were being used to describe adolescent girls residing in Council institutions. From 1960 onwards the teenage unmarried mother was emerging as a distinct area of the Council's work. Statistics regarding the incidence of pregnancy among adolescent girls in care and among teenage girls more generally, were being collected, and the Council established a specialised Mother and Baby Home for schoolgirl unmarried mothers.<sup>51</sup>

The account presented above indicates that these developments did not affect the work of nursing homes run by the Welfare Department. Within the London County Council there was a division between the Children's Department and the Public Health Department on the one hand and the Welfare Department on the other. While the former departments' work drew on psychological discourse and distinguished teenage unmarried mothers from older mothers, the work of the latter continued to be shaped by moral problematization. In King's Mead's and St. Mary's House's, adolescent unmarried mothers were accommodated together with older unmarried mothers and received identical care. There was no discussion of adolescent unmarried mothers' ability to adequately care for their children. Like their older counterparts, adolescent unmarried mothers who entered King's Mead were conceived as 'loose' and feckless women who needed to be re-educated and rehabilitated in order to become responsible subjects capable of providing for their child. In the next section of this chapter I depict the work of another institution affiliated to the London County Council which, similarly, was predominantly shaped by the moral problematization.

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<sup>51</sup> I describe these processes in Chapter 5 and Chapter 6.



#### **4.4 St. Mary's House Mother and Baby Home: 1965-1968**

Most of the women who became pregnant out-of-wedlock and who sought the Council's help were referred to a Mother and Baby Home that was affiliated to a religious organisation but that was supported financially by the Council. Located in a residential house in Clapham, St. Mary's House Mother and Baby Home was one of these institutions. This Home, which was affiliated to Battersea, Clapham and Brixton Moral Welfare Association and more generally to the Church of England, accommodated up to sixteen expectant or nursing mothers and eight babies at any one time.

The account presented below is based on an examination of 163 case histories of women referred to St. Mary's House Mother and Baby Home during the years 1965 to 1968. The cases are spread almost equally between 1965, 1966 and 1967. Since the Home closed down early in 1968 there are only a few records of women admitted during that year. Although this sample is not exhaustive it represents the majority of admissions to St. Mary's House during this period. Almost half of the women depicted in these records could be defined as teenagers, i.e. under the age of twenty. The remaining cases were mostly of women in their early and mid-twenties with very few above the age of thirty.

The case histories of women who were admitted to St. Mary's House represent a different source of empirical material than that which was used to study the work of King's Mead. In King's Mead, it is the reports written by staff and by members of the nursing home's Visiting Sub-Committee that were drawn upon in producing an account of the governmental practices at the Home. The records available with regard to the work of St. Mary's House consist mainly of the detailed biographical accounts referring to each of the women who were referred to the Home. These were written not by the staff at the Home, but by the moral welfare workers and council officers referring women to the Home. While the length of these case histories ranged from a few lines to a few pages, there were several shared features. They described in detail the woman's life prior to the pregnancy: her education and occupational experiences, her parents'

occupation, her income, the number and gender of her siblings etc. In addition, they recorded the events leading up to the pregnancy: the circumstances in which the girl met the putative father, the length and nature of their association and particulars of their sexual relationship. The third component was an account of events following the pregnancy: the parents' response, the girl's current financial circumstances and her plans regarding the future of her child - whether she planned to care for the child herself, to have it fostered or to hand it over for adoption.

These records were produced by moral welfare workers and council officers in a wide variety of Moral Welfare Associations and local authorities in the London area and beyond. To name just a few, they included Moral Welfare Associations and local authorities in Lambeth, Hackney, Wandsworth, Richmond, St. Albans, Corydon, Hertfordshire and even West Suffolk. As the practices recorded in these case histories were most likely to have been applied to all the cases of unmarried mothers handled by these organisations, these records can be seen as providing a relatively broad view on voluntary and government work with unmarried mothers at the time.

Arising out of the analysis of the data my first proposition is that the work of St. Mary's House was shaped primarily by moral concerns. The pregnant women entering this institution were seen as having a certain moral deficiency.<sup>52</sup> In line with the view that the purpose of the stay in the Mother and Baby Home was to reform their character in order to prevent the occurrence of future pregnancies, a distinction between 'first baby' and 'second baby' cases was maintained. In addition, the records written by moral welfare workers and council officers reveal a conspicuous absence of psychological discourse. Nowhere is this absence more marked than in the discussion of the prospect that the unmarried mother would raise her child herself.

The second proposition, linked to the first, is that the notion of teenage or adolescence as denoting a distinct subjectivity, failed to penetrate a significant part of governmental work with unmarried mothers in London during the mid- to late 1960s. As mentioned above, almost half of the cases reviewed were of young women who could be

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<sup>52</sup> "Case of LK," St. Mary's House Case Papers, January 1965 to October 1967 (City of London, 1966), ACC 2201/H23/2/1-166, London Metropolitan Archives.

defined as teenagers i.e. under the age of twenty. Several cases were of fifteen-year-old girls who were still in full-time education at the time of their pregnancy, were also found. Despite the fact that the care of the teenage unmarried mother had already become a distinct governmental field within the London County Council's work, in St. Mary's House schoolgirl unmarried mothers and teenage unmarried mothers were not distinguished from older women and the care they received was identical.

#### **4.5 Referral and Admission to St. Mary's House**

The majority of women were referred to St. Mary's House by a moral welfare worker but in some cases, particularly of teenagers, they were referred by a council officer. There were also women who were first interviewed by another professional such as a General Practitioner or a hospital almoner, who referred them to a Moral Welfare Association near their home. In several cases, the women themselves initially approached the National Council for the Unmarried Mother and Her Child<sup>53</sup> and were subsequently referred to a Moral Welfare Association. Some of the pregnancies of the younger teenagers were discovered in school during a regular medical examination and in these cases the girl was usually received into the care of a local authority before being admitted to the Home.<sup>54</sup> Upon referral to a Moral Welfare Association, the young woman would be interviewed by the moral welfare worker. The notes from the interview were sent to the matron before a place in the Home was reserved.

After a girl had been interviewed by the moral welfare worker, an application form was filled in. The moral welfare workers then arranged the girl's antenatal appointments, her medical examination and the booking of a hospital bed for the confinement. The completion of a medical form was required before a girl would be allowed to enter the Home. The form was provided by the moral welfare worker and the examination was completed by the girl's General Practitioner or by a physician in a hospital clinic. There

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<sup>53</sup> "Case of BO," St. Mary's House Case Papers, January 1965 to October 1967 (City of London, 1965), ACC 2201/H23/2/1-166, London Metropolitan Archives.

<sup>54</sup> "Case of CH," St. Mary's House Case Papers, January 1965 to October 1967 (City of London, 1966), ACC 2201/H23/2/1-166, London Metropolitan Archives.

were two main sections in the form. In the first the woman's general state of health was detailed – whether she had previous physical illnesses, mental illness, epilepsy or previous pregnancies. However, the tests included in the second part of the form were aimed at excluding the presence of venereal infection.<sup>55</sup> A woman would only be allowed to enter the Home once she was found to be free from venereal disease.<sup>56</sup>

It was the moral welfare workers' role to try and arrange the funding required for covering the girl's stay at the Home. They contacted the relevant local authority, and tried to convince her parents and the putative father to make a financial contribution. These efforts were successful only in a minority of cases. It was usually the Welfare or Children's departments of a local authority, or the Medical Officer of Health who were responsible for covering most of the costs of the girls' stay at St. Mary's House. Women often also relied on their maternity allowance, and those who were not eligible for this allowance could apply to the National Assistance Board.

Local authorities accepted financial responsibility in accordance with the National Assistance Act 1948, while some girls were provided for by Councils under the National Health Service Act 1946. The councils would write to the matron accepting financial responsibility and requesting that she charge the girls a certain weekly maintenance fee which would be deducted from the charge made to the Council. Some teenage girls were paid for by Children's Departments, however, there was no uniformity in the division of responsibility and often girls in their early twenties could be provided for by Children's Departments while teenagers were provided for by a Welfare Department.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> "Case of DF," St. Mary's House Case Papers, January 1965 to October 1967 (City of London, 1965), ACC 2201/H23/2/1-166, London Metropolitan Archives.

<sup>56</sup> "Case of GR," St. Mary's House Case Papers, January 1965 to October 1967 (City of London, 1966), ACC 2201/H23/2/1-166, London Metropolitan Archives.

<sup>57</sup> "Case of SM," St. Mary's House Case Papers, January 1965 to October 1967 (City of London, 1965), ACC 2201/H23/2/1-166, London Metropolitan Archives; "Case of ME" St. Mary's House Case Papers, January 1965 to October 1967 (City of London, 1967), ACC 2201/H23/2/1-166, London Metropolitan Archives.

#### **4.6 Becoming an Unmarried Mother in late 1960s Britain**

While the late 1960s is a period often associated with a significant liberalisation of sexual mores, the case histories of women admitted to St. Mary's House reveal that during this time many families continued to conceal the occurrence of an illegitimate pregnancy.<sup>58</sup> Many of the referral letters specified the family's wish to prevent their neighbours from knowing of the pregnancy as one of the reasons for wanting the girl to enter a Mother and Baby Home. For instance, in the case of J, a nineteen year old student, whose family was described as being 'well known in their own district', the worker then wrote:

She is at the moment staying with her parents, although they are most anxious she should not remain too long as they are worried about the embarrassment caused to the family and neighbours.<sup>59</sup>

In the case of an unmarried eighteen year old who was having her second illegitimate baby the parents asked their daughter to go away as they felt they could not, for the second time, 'tolerate the hostile attitude and remarks of the neighbours'.<sup>60</sup> Whether due to their acquaintances' reaction or, at times a conflict with the parents, these reactions propelled young women to seek residence in a Mother and Baby Home.<sup>61</sup>

Young women went to great lengths to keep their pregnancy a secret. The matron was asked on one occasion not to send correspondence to a woman's home address so that her landlady would not find out about the pregnancy;<sup>62</sup> a college student who took time off in the middle of term, naming ill health as the reason, did not return to her course for fear that she might expose the falsity of the explanation she provided.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> J. Weeks, *Sex Politics and Society: The Regulation of Sexuality Since 1800* (London: Longman, 1989)

<sup>59</sup> "Case of JR," St. Mary's House Case Papers, January 1965 to October 1967 (City of London, 1965), ACC 2201/H23/2/1-166, London Metropolitan Archives.

<sup>60</sup> "Case of BC," St. Mary's House Case Papers, January 1965 to October 1967 (City of London, 1965), ACC 2201/H23/2/1-166, London Metropolitan Archives.

<sup>61</sup> On many occasions the girls were admitted to Grove House Hostel before they entered St. Mary's House.

<sup>62</sup> "Case of MM," St. Mary's House Case Papers, January 1965 to October 1967 (City of London, 1965), ACC 2201/H23/2/1-166, London Metropolitan Archives.

<sup>63</sup> "Case of SP," St. Mary's House Case Papers, January 1965 to October 1967 (City of London, 1966), ACC 2201/H23/2/1-166, London Metropolitan Archives.

Furthermore, it was not only the adult generation from whom girls wanted to hide the pregnancy but their friends too. One of the girls cancelled her booking at St. Mary's House because she was anxious that she might be seen by any of her acquaintances who lived in the area.<sup>64</sup> The persistence of traditional views regarding sexual mores could also be seen in the fact that some landlords would prohibit boyfriends from visiting young women in their flats<sup>65</sup> and would evict those who became pregnant.<sup>66</sup>

In most cases, the discovery of the pregnancy brought about a family crisis. Some parents' reaction to the pregnancy was very extreme. Describing the case of a nineteen year old typist, the moral welfare worker recounted:

Her parents had no idea she was pregnant until last Sunday and the mother was so shocked that she took an overdose and had to be admitted to hospital but is now all right.<sup>67</sup>

The moral welfare worker often tried to intervene in the family crisis. In the case of J, the worker wrote:

[J] has not let her parents know of her condition until last Monday. She is apparently very much afraid of her father and having met Mr.[R] I can well understand why!.

The worker proceeded to report to the matron:

I have not interviewed the girl yet as the parents called on me without an appointment today and I tried to persuade them to allow me to approach the moral welfare worker in Barnet. However, they cannot face the thought of this and have asked that I should make plans; but if you could accept Miss [R] I will ask one of the moral welfare workers who often help us out in this way to look after

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<sup>64</sup> "Case of BK," St. Mary's House Case Papers, January 1965 to October 1967 (City of London, 1965), ACC 2201/H23/2/1-166, London Metropolitan Archives.

<sup>65</sup> "Case of YR," St. Mary's House Case Papers, January 1965 to October 1967 (City of London, 1967), ACC 2201/H23/2/1-166, London Metropolitan Archives.

<sup>66</sup> "Case of YM," St. Mary's House Case Papers, January 1965 to October 1967 (City of London, 1966), ACC/2201/H23/2/95, London Metropolitan Archives.

<sup>67</sup> "Case of CR," St. Mary's House Case Papers, January 1965 to October 1967 (City of London, 1965), ACC 2201/H23/2/1-166, London Metropolitan Archives.

her.<sup>68</sup>

Most of the women admitted to St. Mary's House were employed in semi-skilled jobs. Among the most common occupations were clerk, typist, telephonist, shop assistant and factory worker. Others worked as cleaners, hairdressers and cashiers. This indicates that it was mostly lower middle-class and working-class women who entered the Home. Most of the teenage girls who entered St. Mary's House were employed and only very few, chiefly those who were fifteen years old, were described as schoolgirls.

Moral welfare workers were inclined to view middle-class girls as more mature and sensible than their working-class counterparts. Their description in the case history would frequently portray the middle-class women as being trustworthy, and any request they made was depicted as a sensible demand which should be accommodated. For example, in the referral letter of a grammar school graduate who worked in a bank, the moral welfare worker wrote:

She will be coming to see you before she comes in and she will be asking your permission to bring her car with her on the grounds that she can be useful to you rather than it would give pleasure to herself. I don't quite know what you think about this but it might be a good idea if she did have the car because she is a very sensible girl.<sup>69</sup>

In another instance, a worker seemed to have been impressed by a girl who had literary aspirations. In her letter to the matron of St. Mary's House she stated:

... [P] appears to be a very intelligent girl and thinks very deeply about most things. She tells me that she is at present in the middle of trying to write a book and would like to bring her typewriter with her so that when she gets odd moments she may continue her writing.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> "Case of JR," St. Mary's House Case Papers, January 1965 to October 1967 (City of London, 1965), ACC 2201/H23/2/1-166, London Metropolitan Archives.

<sup>69</sup> "Case of AW," St. Mary's House Case Papers, January 1965 to October 1967 (City of London, 1967), ACC 2201/H23/2/1-166, London Metropolitan Archives.

<sup>70</sup> "Case of PW," St. Mary's House Case Papers, January 1965 to October 1967 (City of London, 1966),

The respect showed to the educated young women from middle-class homes was accompanied by a disrespectful view of those of humbler origins. 'M', a young woman from British Guiana was described in the referral letter as 'attractive, but not very intelligent'. The moral welfare worker then went on to argue that the stay in the Home could provide her with valuable training since 'after all, she is a factory worker, and is probably not very domesticated'.<sup>71</sup>

### **Interrogating Sex**

In their initial interview with the referring moral welfare worker or council officer, the young women were required to provide an account of the sexual liaison leading to the pregnancy. The interviewing moral welfare worker or council officer recorded the account in their notes sent to the matron of the Home. The letter sent to the matron also included, beside the biographical account based on the interview, the moral welfare worker's comments on the case and her recommendation regarding whether or not the woman should be admitted to the Home. For instance in the case history of a fifteen year old the moral welfare worker noted:

A [the girl] herself cannot remember the exact date in the summer when she was with the alleged putative father... She knew the putative father for some three to four months but on one occasion during July or August was out very late. Her mother informed the Police that she was missing and A subsequently told the Police what had happened. It was assumed to be after this that she has become pregnant.<sup>72</sup>

As this account demonstrates, despite moral welfare workers' attempts to obtain a complete picture of the young woman's relationship with the putative father and the sexual encounter, many young women's accounts were not forthcoming. A seventeen

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ACC 2201/H23/2/1-166, London Metropolitan Archives.

<sup>71</sup> "Case of MM," St. Mary's House Case Papers, January 1965 to October 1967 (City of London, 1965), ACC 2201/H23/2/1-166, London Metropolitan Archives.

<sup>72</sup> "Case of AB," St. Mary's House Case Papers, January 1965 to October 1967 (City of London, 1966), ACC 2201/H23/2/1-166, London Metropolitan Archives.



year old girl told the worker that:

...she went to a party of young people and she got drunk and she does not remember anything at all and she does not remember who the man was.<sup>73</sup>

Similarly, describing the case of an eighteen year old seamstress the moral welfare worker wrote:

The history is that [S] did not know that she was pregnant until it was confirmed by her Doctor. She claims not to be aware of having had intercourse with anyone. She says that she had been going out with a girl friend to Pubs, & she supposes that intercourse must have taken place when she had been doped & did not know what she was doing. I have my doubts on this.<sup>74</sup>

As the above quote demonstrates there was often tension between the moral welfare worker and the woman who was being interviewed. Moral welfare workers resented young women's attempts to withhold information and the women in turn seem to have employed various strategies in their attempt to resist professionals' demands. Girls' claim not to remember engaging in intercourse was a particular source of tension between them and the professionals involved in their care.

As described in the first part of this chapter, Charles Hunt, the Visiting Medical Officer to King's Mead described a girl who claimed not to remember having had intercourse as having 'sub-normal' and 'pathetic' intellect.<sup>75</sup> In this case, as in the case of S, professionals assumed that the girls consciously misled them and did not consider the possibility that the girls had failed to admit their actions to themselves. This interpretation was at odds with the psychological problematization according to which the illegitimate pregnancy was the result of an *unconscious* wish. Leontine Young

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<sup>73</sup> "Case of FD," St. Mary's House Case Papers, January 1965 to October 1967 (City of London, 1965), ACC 2201/H23/2/1-166, London Metropolitan Archives.

<sup>74</sup> "Case of SL," St. Mary's House Case Papers, January 1965 to October 1967 (City of London, 1966), ACC 2201/H23/2/1-166, London Metropolitan Archives.

<sup>75</sup> C. Hunt, "Report of the Visiting Medical Officer," Papers of the Visiting Sub-Committee for Group 5 Establishments, London County Council (City of London, July 7, 1964), LCC/MIN/12,337, London Metropolitan Archives.

argued with regard to the unmarried mother that ‘like a sleepwalker, she acts out what she must do without awareness or understanding of what it means or of the fact that she plans and initiates the action’.<sup>76</sup> Hence, Young understood girls’ claims not to remember the events leading to their pregnancy to be the result of unconscious ‘acting out’.

It is obviously impossible to establish whether the women described in the cases above consciously misled the moral welfare workers. However, Lorna Sage’s autobiographical account of becoming pregnant out-of-wedlock in 1959 provides an indication that at least some young women were not fully conscious of their engagement in sexual intercourse. Recalling her experiences upon discovering, at the age of sixteen, that she was pregnant, Sage writes:

I did wonder if I was going mad. How could I have got it so wrong? Such was the irreality of the situation that I’d have been a lot more prepared to find myself pregnant if we’d actually used a condom, since that would have meant I had to know what we were doing (but then I wouldn’t have done it).<sup>77</sup>

Nonetheless, professionals’ suspicions were somewhat justified, as some girls deliberately withheld the correct information regarding the date when their pregnancy was conceived. The conflict was particularly fierce when the young girl was under the age of sixteen.<sup>78</sup> In these cases it was often the Child Care Officer who undertook the investigation into the circumstances in which the girl conceived. Since this young girl was legally below the age in which consent to intercourse can be given, the interrogation was part of an effort to identify the putative father and consider whether it was possible to legally charge him. In the case of sixteen-year-old, J, the children’s officer wrote:

From my first conversation with this girl and her parents it appeared likely that the E.D.D<sup>79</sup> would be December/January. However J’s Doctor has now stated that he feels this is likely to be 1<sup>st</sup> November.

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<sup>76</sup> L. R. Young, *Out of Wedlock: a Study of the Problems of the Unmarried Mother and Her Child* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1954), 36.

<sup>77</sup> L. Sage, *Bad Blood* (London: HarperCollins, 2001), 238.

<sup>78</sup> “Case of AB,” St. Mary’s House Case Papers, January 1965 to October 1967 (City of London, 1966), ACC 2201/H23/2/1-166, London Metropolitan Archives.

<sup>79</sup> Acronym for Expected Date of Delivery.

I have had a word with J since I learned this and she has admitted that intercourse with G was taking place earlier than she had led her parents and me to believe.<sup>80</sup>

It is likely that one of the reasons that J tried to mislead the officer was her young age and her wish to protect her boyfriend. In other cases of girls under the age of sixteen there were similar struggles between the girls and the professionals investigating their case. The girl would be interviewed by officers of her local authority's Children's Department and by the police. During the interview the officers would try to make her provide details regarding the identity of the putative father. An example of the tension this generated can be found in a Child Care Officer's account of the interrogation of a sixteen-year-old who had initially told him that she had had sexual intercourse with a fifteen-year-old boy. However, after the alleged putative father denied paternity and a medical examination revealed that her statement regarding the date of conception was incorrect; the Child Care Officer suspected that the father of the baby was a different man. He therefore arranged for another interview with the police. He then noted in his report:

The Police and I have interviewed M again intensively, but she has not yet, we feel, given a truthful answer. She has named about five other boys who it could be, but there remains a doubt that it could be someone far older than M. Consideration is being given to bringing her to Court as being in need of care and protection after the birth of the baby.<sup>81</sup>

As this quote illustrates, the officer in question was determined to pursue the question of the identity of the father. His claim that he considered committing the young girl into the Council's care, could have served as a threat, aimed at facilitating her cooperation in the enquiry. In this instance as well, there was a conflict between the unmarried mother and the professionals in charge of her care.

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<sup>80</sup> "Case of JL," St. Mary's House Case Papers, January 1965 to October 1967 (City of London, 1965), ACC 2201/H23/2/1-166, London Metropolitan Archives.

<sup>81</sup> "Case of MA," St. Mary's House Case Papers, January 1965 to October 1967 (City of London, 1966), ACC 2201/H23/2/1-166, London Metropolitan Archives.

Moral welfare workers' distrust of the young women's account extended to the cases in which the women argued that the pregnancy was a result of rape. They often expressed the view that it was the girl's responsibility to avoid putting herself in a situation in which she could be assaulted. Failing to do so was seen as the result of her secret complicity in the sexual act. This view can be discerned in a moral welfare worker's account of the case of a nineteen year old woman:

...the girl maintains that she was dragged into a car whilst out with her girl friend and they were both raped. I rather doubt this myself and think that what P thought would be an evening's joyride turned out rather more than she bargained for!<sup>82</sup>

Similarly, in her book *Out of Wedlock*, Leontine Young described her effort to make young women who claimed they were raped realise that they willingly participated in the sexual acts. According to Young, these women were unaware of their consent since their sexual wishes remained unconscious. Thus, whether it was attributed to conscious or unconscious processes many professionals working with unmarried mothers expressed the view that claims of rape or amnesia masked consensual sexual acts.

A similar blurring of the line between consensual and enforced sexual intercourse can be detected in the account written by a Tower Hamlets Child Care Officer who described the first sexual encounter of a thirteen year old girl in the following way: 'P was assaulted by a Spainard [*sic*] but admits to having gone with him willingly and to having enjoyed the experience'. Although the sexual intercourse is described as an assault, the officer argued that the girl (still under the age of consent) admitted to taking pleasure in the experience. He did, however, subsequently note in the report that the girl had been emotionally disturbed for a period of time following this incident.<sup>83</sup>

There were other cases where the moral welfare worker was more sympathetic and did not doubt the young woman's version of events. Miss L, a worker at the Reading and Bradfield association wrote:

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<sup>82</sup> "Case of PH," St. Mary's House Case Papers, January 1965 to October 1967 (City of London, 1966), ACC 2201/H23/2/1-166, London Metropolitan Archives.

<sup>83</sup> "Case of PL," St. Mary's House Case Papers, January 1965 to October 1967 (City of London, 1967), ACC 2201/H23/2/1-166, London Metropolitan Archives.

Apparently A only went to see the P.F. [putative father] as she heard he was upset about some trouble- she only knew him slightly. He forced her down & had intercourse. A was very dazed & was very upset to find she was pregnant as a result of this episode. She has no feeling at all for the man & certainly no desire to marry him. She thinks adoption would be best for the baby & is very afraid of becoming attached to her child - & has asked if the baby can be fostered from hospital.<sup>84</sup>

There is no indication in the records that women's claim that they were raped were reported to the police.

### **Interrogating the Identity of the Putative Father**

During the initial interview, moral welfare workers tried to make the woman reveal the identity of the putative father. As with the details of the sexual act, this was a point of conflict between the women and professionals caring for them. Many of the girls were reluctant to provide his surname or his address. Claims that the girl was not in touch with the putative father were met with suspicion. In the case of M, Mrs. C, the moral welfare worker, wrote:

When she visited this office, she said that she had lost sight of the Putative Father, but she had with her a West Indian man, who said twice that he was not the father of the baby, but that he was engaged to M., and that they would get married later on after the baby had been sent back to Grandparents back home. He works- with British Transport, and seems genuine but one never knows!<sup>85</sup>

When the name and address of the putative father was obtained, the moral welfare

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<sup>84</sup> "Case of SL," St. Mary's House Case Papers, January 1965 to October 1967 (City of London, 1966), ACC 2201/H23/2/1-166, London Metropolitan Archives.

<sup>85</sup> "Case of MM," St. Mary's House Case Papers, January 1965 to October 1967 (City of London, 1965), ACC 2201/H23/2/1-166, London Metropolitan Archives.

worker would try to contact him in order to get him to contribute to the costs of the woman's stay at the Home. The worker would try and arrange a meeting with the father; however, on many occasions he did not attend the meeting or failed to send the payments that had been agreed upon. The worker would in certain instances get involved in the volatile relationship between the girl and the putative father. On one occasion the moral welfare worker recounted to the matron conversations with the putative father who had called her

once to say that he was not the father of the child although he had been with D, the second time he said that he was not incriminating himself as to whether or not he was the father but he was going to take legal action against D to stop her worrying his wife.<sup>86</sup>

This illustrates the magnitude of the crisis which the occurrence of an illegitimate pregnancy generated and the extent of the moral welfare worker's involvement in trying to resolve this situation.

As in the case of the West Indian man mentioned above, the moral welfare worker frequently tried to ascertain the nationality, race or ethnicity of the putative father. In the case of seventeen year old, S, it was reported that she 'has been going out with a boy friend, said to be of mixed Gentile & Jewish parentage'.<sup>87</sup> In another case the worker wrote 'The putative father is JA a Parkistani [*sic*] from the Earls Court area...'.<sup>88</sup>

When the father was not British but of a different nationality such as Danish, Italian or Maltese this was recorded. However, it was not only the putative father's ethnicity which was recorded but the pregnant woman's too. 'Race' was seen as an important characteristic, often the first feature in the girl's description. J was described as 'a very beautiful coloured girl who lives with her grandmother',<sup>89</sup> while D was described as 'a

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<sup>86</sup> "Case of DM," St. Mary's House Case Papers, January 1965 to October 1967 (City of London, 1965), ACC 2201/H23/2/1-166, London Metropolitan Archives.

<sup>87</sup> "Case of SL," St. Mary's House Case Papers, January 1965 to October 1967 (City of London, 1966), ACC 2201/H23/2/1-166, London Metropolitan Archives.

<sup>88</sup> "Case of RP," St. Mary's House Case Papers, January 1965 to October 1967 (City of London, 1966), ACC 2201/H23/2/1-166, London Metropolitan Archives.

<sup>89</sup> "Case of JB," St. Mary's House Case Papers, January 1965 to October 1967 (City of London, 1967), ACC 2201/H23/2/1-166, London Metropolitan Archives.

very nice type of Indian girl'.<sup>90</sup> Racial stereotypes were frequently evoked in these accounts. Regarding the application of Y, Mrs. C, the moral welfare worker, stated that she was 'a nice little coloured girl and rather more intelligent than most'.<sup>91</sup>

The discussion of the pregnant girl's intelligence was not a usual feature of the referral letters and the marked notice taken with regard to the 'coloured' girls points to the existence racial prejudice. Furthermore, it should be noted that at the time, the practice of distinguishing people of colour was also present in the London County Council's work. This was reflected not only in the nursing homes' reports regarding illegitimate babies' nationality but also in the work of the Children's Department. This department's standardised case history form included a section titled 'any other basic information about the child' where officers were required to note whether the child was 'coloured'.<sup>92</sup>

#### **4.7 The Moral Problematization**

The prominence of the moral problematization in shaping the work of St. Mary's House can be discerned in several practices. First, there was a persistence of the distinction according to marital status. The application form which every woman was required to fill in recorded whether the woman was 'single', 'married', 'widowed', 'divorced' or 'separated'. The population of women who were referred to St. Mary's House reflected a preference for single women. Very few married or divorced women entered the Home and almost none of the women co-habited with the putative father. According to the women's case histories, although some were in a long-term relationship many pregnancies were the result of brief associations.<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>90</sup> "Case of DM," St. Mary's House Case Papers, January 1965 to October 1967 (City of London, 1965), ACC 2201/H23/2/1-166, London Metropolitan Archives.

<sup>91</sup> "Case of YJ," St. Mary's House Case Papers May 1967- March 1968 (City of London, 1968), ACC 2201/H23/3/1-10, London Metropolitan Archives.

<sup>92</sup> "Case of GA," St. Mary's House Case Papers, January 1965 to October 1967 (City of London, 1965), ACC 2201/H23/2/1-166, London Metropolitan Archives.

<sup>93</sup> "Case of JR," St. Mary's House Case Papers, January 1965 to October 1967 (City of London, 1965), ACC 2201/H23/2/1-166, London Metropolitan Archives; "Case of CH," St. Mary's House Case Papers,

St. Mary's House's religious affiliations were maintained. The Home was affiliated to the Church of England, staff were referred to as 'sisters', staff meetings were opened with prayers and the religious affiliation and religious development of every woman admitted to the Home was recorded.<sup>94</sup> Moral welfare workers' case histories reflect the role of Christianity and Christian view of sexual morality in shaping St. Mary's House work. One moral welfare worker wrote in her case history of a nineteen year old girl 'She comes from a good, Christian home and is a Communicant member of the Church of England'. The event of her pregnancy was described as a 'lapse from grace'.<sup>95</sup>

Similarly, in her referral of a nineteen year old woman, Miss Izzard, the moral welfare worker for Lambeth Moral Welfare Association wrote:

I gained the impression that she was a pleasant person anxious to please and the Health Visitor confirms this, she feels that [B] is certainly more "sinned against" than "sinning".<sup>96</sup>

If the woman had a family member who was also the parent of an illegitimate child, this fact was noted in her referral letter: 'There is one brother aged 23 who was the father of an illegitimate child in 1964, and I knew the [W] family then'.<sup>97</sup> In one case, the girl's mother herself had been an illegitimate child. She was described as nonetheless being a 'very moral woman' who 'was suffering deeply to think that her own legitimate daughter should be going to bring an illegitimate child into the world'.<sup>98</sup>

The women were expected to express feelings of shame or guilt with regard to their pregnancy and failure to do so was seen as an indication of a moral weakness on their part. Describing a twenty-two year old woman who became pregnant by a man she thought she would shortly marry, the worker wrote:

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January 1965 to October 1967 (City of London, 1966), ACC 2201/H23/2/1-166, London Metropolitan Archives.

<sup>94</sup> "Case of DM," St. Mary's House Case Papers, January 1965 to October 1967 (City of London, 1965), ACC 2201/H23/2/1-166, London Metropolitan Archives.

<sup>95</sup> "Case of LK," St. Mary's House Case Papers, January 1965 to October 1967 (City of London, 1966), ACC 2201/H23/2/1-166, London Metropolitan Archives.

<sup>96</sup> "Case of BW," St. Mary's House Case Papers, January 1965 to October 1967 (City of London, 1967), ACC 2201/H23/2/1-166, London Metropolitan Archives.

<sup>97</sup> "Case of DW," St. Mary's House Case Papers May 1967- March 1968 (City of London, 1967), ACC 2201/H23/3/1-10, London Metropolitan Archives.

<sup>98</sup> "Case of YR," St. Mary's House Case Papers, January 1965 to October 1967 (City of London, 1967), ACC 2201/H23/2/1-166, London Metropolitan Archives.



She appears to be a pleasant intelligent girl, but at the moment is unable to appreciate that she has done anything wrong. As far as she is concerned, the only fault lies with the man who has let her down, and her family, who are finding the situation difficult to accept.<sup>99</sup>

In line with the findings of Jill Nicholson's survey, the records of St. Mary's House demonstrate that most Mother and Baby Homes refused to admit unmarried women who became pregnant for the second time. Although, St. Mary's House admitted 'second baby' cases, this was to a large extent the result of financial difficulties and a downward turn in the number of applications.<sup>100</sup> Since many other Homes did make this concession, a significant number of women who were refused admission in other Homes were referred to St. Mary's House. In her letter to the matron of St. Mary's House, the Hertfordshire County Council's Area Children's Officer wrote:

You may remember when I spoke to you on the telephone I mentioned that two or three Mother and Baby Homes had refused to have [M] as this is her second confinement. I was most relieved to find that your own establishment does not make such a ruling.<sup>101</sup>

The letter the officer had previously written to the Salvation Army's Mothers' Hospital reveals the way in which she struggled to portray the girl as being of 'good' character despite becoming pregnant for the second time. The worker had to vouch for the girl and try and convince the matron that she was not a promiscuous young woman:

Up to now I have been hedging on the most important aspect of this girl's pregnancy – it is not the first ... I am sure if one looked at this case merely on the background one would feel this is a promiscuous sexy girl, but honestly this is not the case.<sup>102</sup>

St. Mary's House willingness to admit women who became pregnant for the second

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<sup>99</sup> "Case of JS," St. Mary's House Case Papers, January 1965 to October 1967 (City of London, 1967), ACC 2201/H23/2/1-166, London Metropolitan Archives.

<sup>100</sup> "Minutes of the Executive Committee Meeting of the Lambeth & District Moral Welfare Association," (London, 1967), ACC 2201/B6/1, London Metropolitan Archives

<sup>101</sup> "Case of MW," St. Mary's House Case Papers, January 1965 to October 1967 (City of London, 1966), ACC 2201/H23/2/1-166, London Metropolitan Archives.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid.

time does not mean that they were not problematized. A woman would be asked to hide the fact that she had previously been pregnant from the other residents at the Home. In the above case, the moral welfare worker wrote to the matron assuring her that the pregnant woman in question was aware of this requirement:

I have impressed upon her that she must not talk to the other girls about her other children and also that you are doing a great favour in taking her and that she must do all she can to co-operate so I hope she won't give any trouble.<sup>103</sup>

### **Discipline and Rehabilitation**

One of the tasks of the moral welfare worker at the initial interview was to evaluate the young woman's character. In particular, the worker tried to determine whether she was likely to adhere to the disciplinary regime in the Home or whether she was likely to be disruptive. Women who were seen as having a 'good' character were often described as being 'co-operative' or 'well-mannered' while those who were considered to have a 'bad' character were those who were deemed 'difficult'. For instance, seventeen year old F was described by her moral welfare worker as being 'a nice little girl'. The worker then assured the matron 'I do not think that she will give any trouble as she is quiet and well mannered'.<sup>104</sup> Some of the letters alerted the matron to girls who were seen as potentially 'difficult'. One worker wrote: 'I believe [R] has been a difficult girl though she seemed quite co operative when she came to see me'.<sup>105</sup>

Indeed, the co-operation of the young women was required, as during their stay at St. Mary's House they were obliged to participate in the housework. Referring a handicapped woman to the Home, the moral welfare worker wrote:

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<sup>103</sup> "Case of SF," St. Mary's House Case Papers, January 1965 to October 1967 (City of London, 1966), ACC 2201/H23/2/1-166, London Metropolitan Archives.

<sup>104</sup> "Case of FD," St. Mary's House Case Papers, January 1965 to October 1967 (City of London, 1965), ACC 2201/H23/2/1-166, London Metropolitan Archives.

<sup>105</sup> "Case of RW," St. Mary's House Case Papers, January 1965 to October 1967 (City of London, 1966), ACC 2201/H23/2/1-166, London Metropolitan Archives.

I think she will be unable to take part in the normal housework duties of the Home but she is a copy typist and I am sure she would be willing to do typing and needlework for you.<sup>106</sup>

Although the woman was deemed unable to participate in the housework duties undertaken by the other women, the moral welfare worker found it important, or believed that it was important for the matron, that the woman undertook alternative work.<sup>107</sup>

As argued in the previous chapter, the emphasis placed on participation in housework duties was linked to the proposition that this regime facilitated the unmarried mother's transformation into a responsible and productive subject. This notion, as the first section of this chapter described, was found in the reports of Council staff. The sight of mothers in a Council home 'lying on their beds smoking ... at midday with nothing done on their part to make the room decent + tidy'<sup>108</sup> had disturbed the member of the nursing home's Visiting Sub-Committee. At St. Mary's House as well, the view was clearly that unmarried mothers should not be allowed to be indolent.

In addition, the influence of the moral problematization can be discerned in the matron's control of the residents' visitors. The records of St. Mary's House indicate that the matron often attempted to sever the relationship between the woman and the putative father. While the girl's parents were often allowed to visit her during her stay, the putative father was prevented from doing so. On one occasion, the moral welfare worker from Croydon wrote to the matron: 'The putative father apparently travels abroad so with any luck, he will be out of the country for most of the time when J is with you. No doubt this will please you'.<sup>109</sup> Another worker wrote:

I wrote to tell him that you did not feel you could give your permission for him to visit V before the baby is born, and that I

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<sup>106</sup> "Case of ML," St. Mary's House Case Papers, January 1965 to October 1967 (City of London, 1965), ACC 2201/H23/2/1-166, London Metropolitan Archives.

<sup>107</sup> Fink, "Condemned or Condoned?."

<sup>108</sup> "Report of a Visit to King's Mead," Papers of the Visiting Sub-Committee for Group 5 Establishments, London County Council (City of London, January 21, 1957), LCC/MIN/12,336, London Metropolitan Archives.

<sup>109</sup> "Case of JB," St. Mary's House Case Papers, January 1965 to October 1967 (City of London, 1967), ACC 2201/H23/2/1-166, London Metropolitan Archives.

agreed with your decision. I hope he has not been telephoning V, and I hope she has not been getting in touch with him.<sup>110</sup>

### **Facilitating Motherhood**

The key feature of St. Mary's House's work in which the influence of the moral problematization is most clearly discerned is the approach to the prospect that the unmarried mother would take on the role of raising her child. As a rule, the woman's ability to care for her child was not discussed even in cases where the girl was a young teenager or was described as emotionally immature. Furthermore, it was the availability of financial and logistical resources, rather than her ability to care for a child, which was the key feature in determining whether professionals viewed a girl's decision to raise her child as 'sensible'. For example, when discussing the plans for the baby of a fifteen year old girl the child care and families' welfare officer wrote:

They [mother and daughter] both feel that it would be very difficult and almost impossible for A to keep the baby as, of course, Mrs. B is unable to give up work and A herself is keen to get a job. At the moment, therefore, A is almost sure that she wants to place the baby for adoption.<sup>111</sup>

'A', although fifteen years old, was not described as an adolescent, and the possibility that her age could affect her ability to care for a baby was not discussed. Instead, it was her mother's inability to give up her job and the girl's wish to enter employment that were the crucial factors in the decision whether to give up the child for adoption.

As this above example demonstrates, one of the factors contributing to the absence of apprehensions regarding young girls' ability to care for their children was that many

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<sup>110</sup> "Case of VD," St. Mary's House Case Papers, January 1965 to October 1967 (City of London, 1965), ACC 2201/H23/2/1-166, London Metropolitan Archives.

<sup>111</sup> "Case of AB," St. Mary's House Case Papers, January 1965 to October 1967 (City of London, 1966), ACC 2201/H23/2/1-166, London Metropolitan Archives.

of them still lived with their parents. Often when an illegitimate baby was raised by his young mother, the burden of care was shared with or maintained exclusively by her parents. The focus on financial considerations could also be the result of the harshness of the economic circumstances facing unmarried mothers at the time. As Kiernan et al. argue the number of unmarried mothers living in their own accommodation with their children increased significantly in the 1970s with the widening of social housing and state support for lone parents.<sup>112</sup> Prior to this time there was little state provision available for these mothers.

The regular procedure was for the woman to stay in the Home for six weeks after the birth and nurse her baby during that time. The way in which this requirement was described implies that it was seen as a potential difficulty which the woman and her family had to come to terms with. This was reflected in the fact that the moral welfare workers often noted in their referral letters that the woman was ‘aware’ or ‘realised’ that she would have to remain in the Home for six weeks after giving birth.<sup>113</sup>

Nevertheless, many of the young women who entered St. Mary’s House requested that their baby be put up for adoption. Although some asked for adoption to be arranged directly from hospital, this request was not always granted and girls were often required to care for the baby until adoption was arranged.<sup>114</sup> This practice could be attributed to the view, common among moral welfare workers, that mothers should be encouraged to raise their children. The belief was that the six weeks in which the mother cared for her baby increased the likelihood that she would become attached to her child and decide to keep it.

However, another view that was often evoked was that moral welfare workers should not try and directly influence the girl’s decision and that if she expressed the wish to have her child adopted, she should be supported. This view was articulated in an account

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<sup>112</sup> K. E. Kiernan, H. Land, and J. E. Lewis, *Lone Motherhood in Twentieth-Century Britain: From Footnote to Front Page* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998).

<sup>113</sup> “Case of JL,” St. Mary’s House Case Papers, January 1965 to October 1967 (City of London, 1965), ACC 2201/H23/2/1-166, London Metropolitan Archives.

<sup>114</sup> “Case of CS,” St. Mary’s House Case Papers, January 1965 to October 1967 (City of London, 1966), ACC 2201/H23/2/1-166, London Metropolitan Archives; “Case of IC,” St. Mary’s House Case Papers, January 1965 to October 1967 (City of London, 1966), ACC 2201/H23/2/1-166, London Metropolitan Archives.

of the work of a Mother and Baby Home which appeared in the Bulletin of the Moral Welfare Workers Association:

After their return, [from the hospital] the girls often come up against the greatest dilemma of their lives: Shall [*sic*] they, or shall they not, give up their baby? The Superintendent stands by, holding them in prayer, while they make this terribly difficult choice.<sup>115</sup>

As this quote illustrates the ethos of moral welfare work was that of allowing the woman to reach her own decision. This was despite the fact that the procedures and regulations of many Homes, such as the ‘six weeks rule’ reflected moral welfare work’s overall view that the unmarried mother should raise her child herself. The view that moral welfare workers should not try to directly influence the young woman’s decision regarding the future of her baby represented a very different vision from the one which was present in the work of St. Christopher’s Mother and Baby Home, the Home set up by the Council in order to cater for schoolgirl unmarried mothers. When a baby was considered for adoption, the mother was required by the adoption society to provide information regarding the father of the baby as well as the father’s family. In one case the child care secretary of the adoption society wrote to the moral welfare worker stating:

It is noted that she [the mother] knew him for 3 years, so something more about his characteristics would be helpful, and anything known of his best subjects at school and hobbies, although it seems that he did not talk about school according ... to the case paper. Are his brothers and sisters all younger than he is? Has she no idea of his father’s occupation? If she can remember any of these things it will be useful to us when preparing the case history, both for the Committee and later on for prospective adopters.<sup>116</sup>

This example indicates the level of detail that the adoption societies required as well

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<sup>115</sup> Anonymous Medical Officer, “The Work of a Mother and Baby Home,” Bulletin of the Moral Welfare Workers’ Association (City of London, May-June 1964), ACC 2201/M11/57-90, London Metropolitan Archives, 11.

<sup>116</sup> “Case of MM,” St. Mary’s House Case Papers, January 1965 to October 1967 (City of London, 1965), ACC 2201/H23/2/1-166, London Metropolitan Archives.

as the areas which they considered of significance for describing the heritage and heredity of the baby: his father's best topics at school, hobbies, the grandfather's occupation. It is not entirely clear whether there were any concrete hereditary theories behind the quest to obtain this information or whether these details were used in a more general way as an indication of the baby's likely characteristics. Nevertheless, certain children were considered unsuitable for adoption. In relation to B, a 'mentally retarded' mother, the moral welfare worker for Lambeth Moral Welfare Association, Miss Izzard, wrote:

The family can not cope with a baby and ask for adoption. This will be quite impossible, of course, but I do not think that there will be any difficulty in getting a committal to care by either Children's Dept [*sic*] or a Voluntary Society.<sup>117</sup>

There were also difficulties in arranging for the adoption of 'coloured' and mixed race babies and most moral welfare workers tried to convince girls to give up on this attempt. When adoption was arranged the moral welfare workers would escort the girl to her meeting with the adoption society and with the adoptive parents.<sup>118</sup> If the parents were satisfied with the baby they would take it home with them on that day. The matron was asked by the adoption society to ensure that the baby was brought to the meeting accompanied by his or her medical card, the welfare foods documents, a diet list, a tin of patent food, a parcel of clothes and napkins and a pre-prepared bottle and teat.<sup>119</sup> The mother was often discharged from the Home shortly after the adoption. Council officers frequently tried to keep track of the women's whereabouts and would keep details of their address and the address of the child.<sup>120</sup> Women often kept in touch with the moral welfare worker who assisted them and with the Home's matron, updating them on the developments in their lives.

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<sup>117</sup> "Case of BW," St. Mary's House Case Papers, January 1965 to October 1967 (City of London, 1967), ACC 2201/H23/2/1-166, London Metropolitan Archives.

<sup>118</sup> "Case of IC," St. Mary's House Case Papers, January 1965 to October 1967 (City of London, 1966), ACC 2201/H23/2/1-166, London Metropolitan Archives.

<sup>119</sup> "Case of MP," St. Mary's House Case Papers, January 1965 to October 1967 (City of London, 1965), ACC 2201/H23/2/1-166, London Metropolitan Archives.

<sup>120</sup> "Case of MW," St. Mary's House Case Papers, January 1965 to October 1967 (City of London, 1967), ACC 2201/H23/2/1-166, London Metropolitan Archives.

## The Absence of Psychological Discourse

In St. Mary's House, the matron was in charge of all aspects of the residents' well-being including their mental health. This practice diverges from the one found in St. Christopher's Mother and Baby Home, described in Chapter 6. Whereas in St. Christopher's, it was the Home's Visiting Psychiatrist who advised the matron regarding the residents' care, in St. Mary's House, it was the matron's responsibility to see to the women's mental health. One of the records reveals the matron's response to a girl's suicidal statements. The matron had written to the referring moral welfare worker asking her to enquire with the girl's General Practitioner regarding any previous mental problems. In reply the worker wrote:

I had a talk with her doctor this morning, and he says there is no history in her records of the symptoms you mention, nor was there any record of her having had any mental trouble. I asked him this as I wondered after I had read your letter about her statements that life was not worth living.<sup>121</sup>

The only instance in which psychological discourse was present in the work of moral welfare workers was with regard to the cases of delinquent young girls. There were several cases of teenage girls who had been in the care of the local authority when they were referred to the Home. These were girls who had grown up in care, were received into care as a result of delinquent or disturbed behaviour, or after becoming pregnant. Some teenage girls were received into care following truancy or promiscuous behaviour. These girls were subsequently placed in residential schools and in some cases were eventually returned to their parents' homes. There is some indication these measures related to class. Delinquent behaviour could lead to 'psychiatric' or 'criminal' responses and in the only explicitly-recorded middle-class case, the response was distinctly psychological: S was the daughter of a civil servant who at the age of fourteen became 'unruly'; however, rather than bringing her before the courts the girl was referred to the

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<sup>121</sup> "Case of MP," St. Mary's House Case Papers, January 1965 to October 1967 (City of London, 1965), ACC 2201/H23/2/1-166, London Metropolitan Archives.



Child Guidance Clinic and was subsequently admitted to the Adolescence Unit at the Cassell hospital.<sup>122</sup>

Among the girls who grew up in care, the case history often described a series of behavioural problems of both ‘psychiatric’ and ‘delinquent’ nature. For instance, sixteen year old P was first received into care when she was less than a year old, grew up in various foster-homes and at the age of thirteen began to show ‘problems of a sexual nature’.<sup>123</sup> By the age of fifteen she was promiscuous and after setting fire to her bedroom in a Family Group Home was removed to a Hostel and then to the Adolescent Unit of Bethlem Hospital. The concept of adolescence was absent in these case histories despite the fact that psychological discourse was employed. The girls were described as disturbed personalities who had difficulties in forming successful relationships and in maintaining long-term employment. For instance:

J is a typical deprived child. She has been in care for the best part of her life and has never managed to make a success of any relationship.<sup>124</sup>

She was further described as a ‘pathetic child’ who ‘like so many of her type is really her own worst enemy’.<sup>125</sup> It is only in the cases of some of these teenagers that social workers expressed doubts regarding the girl’s ability to care for a child. For instance, one officer wrote:

I think C is perfectly capable of giving day to day care to a baby and it is likely that she will love a child of her own very much indeed. I am doubtful, however, about her ability to sustain long term care when I think about the difficulty she has had for herself in keeping good employment and in being entirely reliable about

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<sup>122</sup> “Case of SL,” St. Mary’s House Case Papers, January 1965 to October 1967 (City of London, 1965), ACC 2201/H23/2/1-166, London Metropolitan Archives.

<sup>123</sup> “Case of PL,” St. Mary’s House Case Papers, January 1965 to October 1967 (City of London, 1967), ACC 2201/H23/2/1-166, London Metropolitan Archives.

<sup>124</sup> “Case of JC,” St. Mary’s House Case Papers, January 1965 to October 1967 (City of London, 1965), ACC 2201/H23/2/1-166, London Metropolitan Archives.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid.

money.<sup>126</sup>

In this case, the young woman's ability to look after her baby was discussed along with the possibility that she would marry her boyfriend. Up until 1969, those under the age of twenty-one required parental permission in order to marry.<sup>127</sup> It is in this context that the social worker became involved in C's relationship with her boyfriend and suggested to the young couple that 'if they wish to continue to see each other, as they clearly do, then they are expected to behave in a rather mature way'. The social worker further stated that 'I have tried to explain to [the couple] that if they want to be married they must prove that they are capable of acting in a more adult way'.<sup>128</sup>

#### **4.8 Conclusion**

The case histories of women who entered St. Mary's House reveal that even in the late 1960s, this institution's work was shaped almost exclusively by the moral problematization of unmarried mothers. The moral welfare workers referring unmarried mothers to the Home described the occurrence of the pregnancy as a 'lapse from grace' and expected women to show remorse for their actions. The regime according to which St. Mary's House was run aimed to transform the subjectivity of unmarried mothers; they were required to adhere to a strict regime laid down by staff and to undertake housework duties. In line with the objective of transforming mothers' characters so that they will not continue to produce illegitimate children, great importance was attributed to the distinction between 'first pregnancy' and 'second pregnancy'. Although the matron of St. Mary's House allowed women who had become pregnant out-of-wedlock for the second time to be admitted, this was the result of the financial difficulties the Home was encountering and due to its need to fill the beds. Furthermore, this practice

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<sup>126</sup> "Case of CS," St. Mary's House Case Papers, January 1965 to October 1967 (City of London, 1965), ACC 2201/H23/2/1-166, London Metropolitan Archives. This young girl was referred to Stretton House, the South London Mother and Baby Home specialising in caring for young women between the age of fifteen and twenty one.

<sup>127</sup> B. Osgerby, *Youth in Britain Since 1945*, Making contemporary Britain (Oxford: Blackwell, 1998)

<sup>128</sup> "Case of CS," St. Mary's House Case Papers, January 1965 to October 1967 (City of London, 1965), ACC 2201/H23/2/1-166, London Metropolitan Archives.

represented an exception as most Homes continued to admit 'first pregnancy' cases only.

As a result of the prominence of the moral problematization the notion of adolescence as denoting a distinct subjectivity had not influenced the work of St. Mary's House. Teenage expectant mothers were not separated from older mothers and the care they received was not distinctive. There were those cases of 'problem teenagers' – girls who had been in the care of the local authority prior to entering the Home. Even in these cases, where girls were often described as exhibiting disturbed behaviour, there was no mention of the psychological concept of adolescence as a stage of development characterised by rebellious or disturbed behaviour.

The key reason for the absence of the notion of adolescence in St. Mary's House's work is the more general absence of psychological discourse in moral welfare workers' and council officers' work. Although on certain occasions psychological language was employed to explain a girl's pattern of association with men or her relationship with her mother, psychological discourse was, for the most part, absent. Examining voluntary and governmental work with unmarried mothers in the years 1945 to 1960, Janet Fink<sup>129</sup> claims that there was an increase in the influence of psychological discourse on those working with unmarried mothers but that there was a resistance to the claim that they were psychologically disturbed.

The records of St. Mary's House Mother and Baby Home indicate that Fink's claim might have been overstated. Even in the late 1960s, psychological discourses had virtually no role in the work of many governmental officers and moral welfare workers in the London area. This could be most clearly detected in relation to motherhood. None of the moral welfare workers or the council officers discussed the ability of unmarried mothers to become 'good enough mothers' to their babies.

A similar picture emerges from the examination of the records of King's Mead. In this institution as well, it was primarily the moral problematization which shaped its work. Unmarried mothers were women who recklessly pursued their sexual desires and who therefore needed supervision and disciplining by staff. Importantly, however, Council officers' key objective was to prevent the situation whereby these mothers were

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<sup>129</sup> Fink, "Condemned or Condoned?."

released of the duties of having to care for their children and ‘remain free to continue an unsettled way of life’.<sup>130</sup>

I argue that the teenage unmarried mother could not become the focal point of governmental concern so long as the moral problematization was the prominent outlook. Within the moral problematization all unmarried mothers regardless of their age were described as morally tainted women in need of rehabilitation. However, crucially, the duties and responsibilities of motherhood were seen as capable of transforming women’s subjectivity: *making them* responsible and mature. In contrast, the psychological problematization of unmarried motherhood proposed that these women were psychologically disturbed and that this was an inherent feature of their personalities that was not amenable to change. At the centre of the psychological concern was not the reformation of the mother’s character, but assessing the woman’s subjectivity and its likely impact on her child.<sup>131</sup> Psychologists were concerned with determining whether an individual woman could become, in Donald Winnicott’s term, a ‘good enough mother’.<sup>132</sup>

In Chapter 3, I described the tension between the psychological discourse of adolescence and the notion of unmarried mothers as psychologically disturbed. Nonetheless, it was only when psychological discourses replaced the moral problematization that the concern with the teenage unmarried mother could emerge. Two shifts needed to occur: first, ‘adolescent’ or ‘teenager’ had to replace ‘unmarried mother’ as the key term denoting the young woman’s subjectivity. This was a shift from a subjectivity that one could give up to a universal process of development which is not seen to be a result of one’s choice. Second, the proposition that motherhood *transformed* a woman’s subjectivity needed to give way to a discourse in which motherhood was seen as an emotional ability that an individual woman might have or lack.<sup>133</sup> Third, this

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<sup>130</sup> Chief Officer of the Welfare Department, “Mothers and Babies – Adoptions,” Papers of the Welfare Committee, London County Council (City of London, May 10, 1960), LCC/MIN/12,305, London Metropolitan Archives, 3.

<sup>131</sup> J. Bowlby, *Childcare and the Growth of Love* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1977).

<sup>132</sup> D. W. Winnicott, *Human Nature* (London: Free Association Books, 1988).

<sup>133</sup> A slightly different claim is put forward by Catriona Macleod with regard to social scientific discourses of teenage mothers. Macleod argues that one of the features of the psychological discourse of motherhood was the notion of motherhood as a skill. C. Macleod, “Teenage Motherhood and the Regulation of Mothering in the Scientific Literature: The South African Example,” *Feminism and Psychology* 11, no. 4

different conceptualisation of motherhood was associated with a shift in the focus of government officers' concern. Rather than being preoccupied with the subjectivity of the unmarried mother, the key preoccupation became the mother's impact on the development of her child. Moving away from governmental work with unmarried mothers, the next chapter traces the historical trajectory of the psychological concept of adolescence and charts the rise of governmental concern with the sexually active teenager. As I shall demonstrate, this process contributed to the emergence of the governmental field of the teenage unmarried mother.

## **Chapter 5:**

### **Adolescence, Sex and Subjectivity: A Historical Perspective**

The previous chapter examined governmental and voluntary work with unmarried mothers in two institutions and considered whether the psychological concept of adolescence influenced their work. The investigation revealed that the notion of adolescence as a distinct stage of development between childhood and adulthood played virtually no role in these institutions' work. Unmarried mothers who were still in their teens were not distinguished from older unmarried mothers: they were accommodated alongside each other and received identical care. This was the result of the prominence of the moral problematization in shaping the work of these institutions. Within the moral problematization, becoming an unmarried mother was a sign of a certain persistent subjectivity. All unmarried mothers, regardless of their age, were seen as lacking in moral values and as being in need of rehabilitation.

Chapter 3 described the psychological problematization of unmarried mothers which can be identified in the work of several prominent social workers and psychologists. In this problematization the unmarried mother was described as neurotic and the illegitimate pregnancy was seen to be a symptom of her long-term disturbance. Unlike the proponents of the moral problematization, these professionals subscribed to the view that adolescence was a distinct developmental stage and that this needed to be taken into account when considering unmarried mothers. The psychological concept of adolescence suggested that it was a stage of development characterised by mental disorder led the proponents of the psychological problematization to the conclusion that adolescent unmarried mothers were less disturbed psychologically than their older counterparts.

The account presented in this chapter examines the historical trajectory of the concept of adolescence found in the work of the advocates of the psychological problematization. In addition, it explores the role which this conceptualisation had in shaping governmental practices. I begin with a short depiction of social historical

accounts of youth in pre-industrial Europe. The aim of this account is to reveal the historicity of 'adolescence', particularly the claim that the process of puberty was a universal marker of its onset. The second part depicts the emergence of the modern notion of adolescence in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century focusing on the development of the psychological concept. I note the way in which this conceptualisation links 'adolescence' with 'sex'; adolescence was defined both by the presence of sexual impulses and by the need to suppress them. I then identify the influence of the psychological concept on efforts to govern adolescent sex during the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The most central of these efforts was the development of youth work. The next part of the chapter examines the changes to the government of adolescent sex in the years following World War II. Focusing on the London County Council, I chart the spread of governmental concern with the sexually active adolescent. This concern had several focal points: the promiscuous teenager, the teenager afflicted by venereal disease and the distinctly feminine figure, the teenage unmarried mother. In the last section of this chapter I present a discussion of the findings.

### **5.1 The Rise of Adolescence**

In his well-known book *Centuries of Childhood*, Philippe Aries argues that pre-industrial Europe did not have an equivalent to the 20<sup>th</sup> century stage of adolescence. From the 14<sup>th</sup> century to the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the distinction between different stages of pre-adulthood was less clear. Aries points out, for instance, the interchangeable use of the Latin terms *puer* (child) and *adolescens* (adolescent) and the common use of terms such as 'enfant', 'lad' or 'son' to refer to children, adolescents or persons of inferior social status. This ambiguity of the terms is a sign of the absence of a clear distinction between children and adolescents. It further points to the lack of a clear distinction between those who were in an inferior position due to their age (children) and those who were of a lower social rank.

John Gillis makes similar claims arguing that the varied use of the terms 'garçon' or 'boy' could suggest that it denoted a certain subjectivity that was not closely associated

with a bodily state:

By the standards of today's biologically exacting vocabulary, the language of age in preindustrial Europe is hopelessly vague. Even as late as the eighteenth century, the French and German words *garçon* and *Knabe* referred to boys as young as 6 and as old as 30 or 40.<sup>1</sup>

However, the use of physiologically ambiguous terms varied along the lines of class. From the 17<sup>th</sup> century in upper classes, where the lower status of childhood was a temporary condition, there was a more restricted and precise use of the term. In the lower classes the imprecise usage persisted.

Gillis diverges from Aries' claim that pre-industrial Europe did not have a distinct stage of 'youth' and argues that it is possible to recognise in these societies a stage of semi-independence between childhood and adulthood. 'Youth' was a long period of transition starting as early as seven years of age and ending at marriage usually in one's mid- or late twenties.<sup>2</sup> Beginning at the age of seven or eight, it was common practice to send children to live in another household as servants or apprentices. In addition, Gillis identifies youth groups with distinct traditions and practices which distinguished them both from adults and from children.<sup>3</sup> However, there was no clear age at which one joined these groups, neither was there age segregation in schools or universities. The only institutions to practice age-grading were monasteries in which age was linked to stages of religious development.<sup>4</sup>

Thus, by and large, neither one's precise age nor the occurrence of puberty played a significant role in structuring the life of youth in pre-industrial Europe. Celibacy was required until marriage which usually occurred, as mentioned above, in one's mid- to late twenties.<sup>5</sup> Furthermore, puberty was not seen as causing difficulties. Neither schools, nor parents were concerned with the process of sexual maturation. This is in

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<sup>1</sup> J.R. Gillis, *Youth and History: Tradition and Change in European Age Relations, 1770-Present* (New York: Academic Press, 1974), 1.

<sup>2</sup> S. Szreter, *Fertility, Class and Gender in Britain, 1860-1940* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

<sup>3</sup> J. Davis, *Youth and the Condition of Britain: Images of Adolescent Conflict* (London: Athlone, 1990); J. Springhall, *Coming of Age: Adolescence in Britain 1860-1960* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1986).

<sup>4</sup> Springhall, *Coming of Age*.

<sup>5</sup> S. Szreter, *Fertility, Class and Gender in Britain*.



contrast with the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and 20<sup>th</sup> century notion of puberty as a process associated with physical and psychological disturbance. Gillis attempts to address this discrepancy found between 20<sup>th</sup> century experiences and conceptions, and pre-industrial ones. He proposes that the lack of tension associated with the process of puberty in the pre-industrial era was the result of the relatively minor consequence which this physical transformation carried. There was no associated change in status nor was there a change in external features such as clothing. The lack of external marks made the physiological process less troubling:

...children were accustomed to assuming adult sex roles very early and the attainment of puberty was not signified by change in dress or by other external manifestations of maturity.<sup>6</sup>

Gillis further asserts that puberty occurred on the average, at a later age, and that this may have contributed to the absence of emotional difficulties associated with puberty. Gillis' arguments are based on the attempt to find objective causes bringing about the variation in conceptions and experiences of puberty. His assumption that the beliefs at a certain time and place can be derived from certain objective societal or bodily conditions de-emphasises the contingency of both social and material processes. Nonetheless, what Aries' and Gillis' accounts make clear is that the idea that puberty inevitably marked the onset of a distinct developmental stage should not be seen as universal, but as historically specific.

Some social historians argue that adolescence emerged during the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and early 20<sup>th</sup> century and that this corresponded to the growth of networks of government around the adolescent and the growth of scientific literature asserting that this was a distinct developmental stage. Although historians disagree on the relative importance of different processes or the exact periodization of the change, there is agreement regarding the societal transformations contributing to its rise.<sup>7</sup> During the late 19<sup>th</sup> century there was an expansion of Boarding Schools; several legislative measures

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<sup>6</sup> Gillis, *Youth and History*, 6.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.; H. Hendrick, *Images of Youth: Age, Class, and the Male Youth Problem, 1880-1920* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990).

that were passed from the early 1830s until the late 1890s restricted child labour and broadened education provision. In 1899 compulsory schooling up to the age of twelve was established.<sup>8</sup> A wide variety of youth organisations and clubs were established, ranging from the Boys' Brigade and the Girls' Friendly Society to the Boy Scouts movement.<sup>9</sup> By the end of the century, separate courts for juveniles as well as youth employment and welfare services had been introduced.<sup>10</sup>

A key role in this process was played by the discipline of psychology and its developmental notion of adolescence.<sup>11</sup> During the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and early 20<sup>th</sup> century this notion of adolescence was advocated in scientific and popular publications and contributed to transformations in the practices of educators, doctors and youth workers. One of its key features was the significance attributed to the physiological process of puberty. The process of sexual maturation was seen as producing a state of emotional turmoil. Hence there was a need to replace the obscurity of this process with careful management by professionals, parents and adolescents themselves. A typical instance of the call for the management of adolescence was Elizabeth Blackwell's *Counsel to Parents on the Moral Education of their Children in Relation to Sex* first published in 1878. Blackwell urged parents to become more involved in guiding their children's maturation:

The physical growth of youth, the new powers, the various symptoms which make the transition from childhood into young man - and womanhood are often alarming to the individual. Yet this important period of life is entered upon, strange to say, as a general rule, without parental guidance.<sup>12</sup>

An impetus to the call for the government of adolescence were apprehensions regarding the government of 'sex'. The emotional turmoil individuals were believed to be undergoing and the degree of concern of parents and teachers was closely linked with

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<sup>8</sup> Springhall, *Coming of Age*.

<sup>9</sup> Davis, *Youth and the Condition of Britain*.

<sup>10</sup> Gillis, *Youth and History*.

<sup>11</sup> Hendrick, *Images of Youth*.

<sup>12</sup> E. Blackwell quoted in Gillis, *Youth and History*, 113. Gillis quotes from the second edition of the book which was published in 1879.

the sexual maturation occurring at this stage. The risk was that due to the parents' lack of attention, boys would learn hazardous habits from servants and peers. This included most and foremost, the practice of masturbation. This activity was described as carrying the risk of hindering one's development and leading to various symptoms such as acne, epilepsy, and even insanity.<sup>13</sup> Abstinence was to be maintained throughout one's adolescent years until marriage which usually occurred for women in their mid-twenties and for men in their late twenties.<sup>14</sup> The care and guidance of parents, teachers and doctors was considered essential in order to prevent adolescents from succumbing to these impulses which would impinge on their healthy development.

The notion of adolescence as a stage of emotional turmoil was not entirely novel. Already in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, Rousseau was articulating ideas similar to the psychological concept popularised at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The fourth book of *Emile* describes puberty and emerging sexual desires as bringing about psychological upheaval. Rousseau proclaimed:

As the roaring of the waves precedes the tempest, so the murmur of rising passions announces this tumultuous change... a change of temper, frequent outbreaks of anger, a perpetual stirring of the mind make the child almost ungovernable...this is the second birth I spoke of; then it is that man really enters upon life; henceforth no human passion is a stranger to him.<sup>15</sup>

In Rousseau's statement several propositions anticipating the late 19<sup>th</sup> century notion of adolescence can be discerned. First, it is claimed that puberty was a tumultuous process of bodily transformation. Second, this transformation produced a state of mental instability. Thirdly, the turmoil is associated, at least in part, with entrance into the world of 'sex' as it is stated: 'henceforth no human passion is a stranger to him'. Adolescence is described as a second birth, the birth of a sexually mature being.

The influence of Rousseau's ideas is apparent in the psychological publication often

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<sup>13</sup> S. Humphries, *A Secret World of Sex: Forbidden Fruit: The British Experience 1900-1950* (London: Sidgwick & Jackson, 1988); Gillis, *Youth and History*.

<sup>14</sup> S. Szreter, *Fertility, Class and Gender in Britain.*; Davis, *Youth and the Condition of Britain*.

<sup>15</sup> J. Rousseau quoted in Davis, *Youth and the Condition of Britain.*, 40.

described as decisive with regard to the emergence of adolescence at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>16</sup> In 1904 American psychologist G. Stanley Hall published a book titled: *Adolescence: Its Psychology and Its Relations to Physiology, Anthropology, Sociology, Sex, Crime, Religion and Education*. This publication was widely read in Britain and was circulated among teachers and youth workers.<sup>17</sup> Hall's ideas were further disseminated through the work of J.W. Slaughter and Sir Thomas Clouston. Slaughter, a pupil of Hall's, was the chairman of the Eugenic Education Society and the secretary of the Sociological Society. Through the work of these societies as well as the British Child Study Association, they sought to spread Hall's idea, particularly to youth workers.<sup>18</sup>

Drawing on German romantic literature, Hall maintained that adolescence was a stage of life characterised by 'Sturm und Drang' ('Storm and Stress'). The adolescent years were characterised by a: '... lack of emotional steadiness, violent impulses, unreasonable conduct, lack of enthusiasm or sympathy...'. According to Hall during this period: 'The previous selfhood is broken up... and a new individual [is] in the process of being born. All is solvent, plastic and peculiarly susceptible to external influences'.<sup>19</sup>

Hall also claimed that adolescence was characterised by the swinging between extreme and contradicting emotional states: energy and passiveness, happiness and melancholy, selfishness and self-sacrifice. This emotional turmoil was primarily associated with the rise of sexual impulses. There was a tension between the needs of the organism and societal norms and demands. It was the task of the individual to be able to control his or her sexual instincts in order to achieve a higher state of development. Subscribing to Rousseau's ontological proposition that each person's individual development recapitulates the development of humankind, adolescence was described as a necessary stage in which one transcended into a higher state of civilization.<sup>20</sup>

Thus, the viewpoint advocated by Hall and his followers was that adolescence was a

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<sup>16</sup> C. Griffin, *Representations of Youth: The Study of Youth and Adolescence in Britain and America* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1993); Hendrick, *Images of Youth*.

<sup>17</sup> C. Dyhouse, *Girls Growing up in Late Victorian and Edwardian England* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1981).

<sup>18</sup> Hendrick, *Images of Youth*.

<sup>19</sup> G. S. Hall quoted in Davis, *Youth and the Condition of Britain*, 61.

<sup>20</sup> Griffin, *Representations of Youth*.; Gillis, *Youth and History*.; Dyhouse, *Girls Growing up in Late Victorian and Edwardian England*.

universal developmental stage which was characterised by a state of mental abnormality. For instance, Hall claimed that during adolescence, mental illnesses were more common than at any other stage in the life cycle, and it was a time when it was difficult for individuals to control morbid and criminal impulses.<sup>21</sup> Even healthy middle-class boys, Hall argued, could in their adolescent years be easily steered into crime. These abnormalities were nonetheless seen as part of the normal and necessary process of development.

Hall's claims regarding adolescence differed along gender lines. He maintained that women, as opposed to men, never outgrew the adolescent stage and it was this characteristic that constituted their appeal and femininity. Against the background of feminist activity and debates regarding women's increased participation in education, Hall argued that it was necessary for the girl to refrain from intensive studying in order to preserve the energy of the body needed for regular menstruation. This view was reiterated by some of his followers in the British Child Study Association. The influence of this proposition is reflected in the custom of appointing medical officers to schools in order to carry out regular physical examinations. Where this programme was implemented, each girl's growth was closely monitored and recorded in order to identify any potential divergence from healthy development.<sup>22</sup>

One aspect of the psychological concept of adolescence was the negative approach to precocity. This viewpoint, which was popular among youth workers and social reformers at the turn of the century, represented a break with early 19<sup>th</sup> century attitudes. During the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, parents and teachers often favoured precocity.<sup>23</sup> An example of that can be found in the views of Thomas Arnold, the Boarding School headmaster and the person associated with the 19<sup>th</sup> century reformation of public schools. Arnold argued that whenever possible the pace of maturation and transition from childhood to manhood should be quickened. He proclaimed that: 'If the change from childhood to manhood can be hastened safely, it ought to be hastened; and it is a

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<sup>21</sup> Hendrick, *Images of Youth*.

<sup>22</sup> Dyhouse, *Girls Growing up in Late Victorian and Edwardian England*.

<sup>23</sup> Gillis, *Youth and History*.

sin in everyone not to hasten it'.<sup>24</sup> As a result, Boarding Schools did not segregate different age groups but chose to have a diverse age range of boys in close contact with one another. By the end of the century, however, precociousness was seen as a dangerous characteristic associated with juvenile delinquency and working-class youth more generally. The activities of youth clubs and Boy Scouts were specifically aimed at preventing precocity – postponing as much as possible young people's involvement in the adult world and helping to maintain their sexual innocence.<sup>25</sup>

Thus, the wish to govern adolescent sex was an important factor underpinning the development of youth work. The activities organised by youth organisations were designed to prevent adolescents from forming heterosexual ties which might lead to illicit sexual relations or early marriages.<sup>26</sup> They were sex-segregated and an attempt was made to minimize contact between girls and boys.<sup>27</sup> In addition, the physical activities they carried out were part of an attempt to instil a certain bodily discipline seen as contributing to one's ability to control one's sexual impulses. The focus of youth workers was on working-class youth who had entered paid employment and were seen to be at risk of precocity. For instance, Lily Montagu, one of the early advocates of youth work with girls, claimed that girls who had left school and entered employment were 'most seriously in need of training and protection' as '[t]heir precocious self-dependence in itself menaces their proper development'.<sup>28</sup>

In conclusion, during the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and early 20<sup>th</sup> century 'adolescence' emerged as an object of concern for educators, parents and youth workers. Although arguably not the only issue, a focal point of these various practices and discourses was adolescents' 'sex'. The process of puberty and sexual maturation was linked by psychological theory to a state of mental instability. In order for healthy development to be achieved, it was considered necessary to prevent masturbation and maintain abstinence throughout the adolescent years. This belief shaped the practices of doctors

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<sup>24</sup> T. Arnold quoted in *ibid.*, 106.

<sup>25</sup> Hendrick, *Images of Youth*.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 173-174.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*; Humphries, *A Secret World of Sex*.

<sup>28</sup> Dyhouse, *Girls Growing up in Late Victorian and Edwardian England*, 105.

and schools, and contributed to the establishment of youth organisations.

Historians identify different processes as the key factors contributing to the rise of 'adolescence'. Gillis asserts that it was the result of the spread of Boarding School education in England during the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, while Springhall argues that it was anxieties caused by the relatively independent urban working class youth.<sup>29</sup> The key difficulty in explaining the emergence of adolescence in the 19<sup>th</sup> century as the result of certain objective conditions is that it does not explain the shape which the concern with adolescence took, i.e. the focus on puberty and masturbation as well as the way in which these were linked to the destiny of the nation. Claims regarding precisely these components of the emergence of adolescence can be found in Foucault's *The History of Sexuality Vol. 1*.<sup>30</sup> The concern with 'sex', it is argued, should be seen as part of a long-term process whereby bodies and bodily capacities became an object of political governance and a part of political strategy. It is through the preoccupation with 'sex' that 'bio-power', the form of power focussed on the body, advanced. 'Sex' was a surface network of societal relations shaping the dynamics of the relations between parents and their children, teachers and their students as well as doctors and their patients.

This argument suggests that the emergence of the apprehensions regarding the process of puberty and adolescence can be seen as part of the advent of the 'apparatus of sexuality'. Adolescence might be an additional site of these processes; one that partly overlaps with the key assemblages that Foucault identifies including what he termed 'the pedagogisation of sex'. In particular, Foucault notes the emergence of a preoccupation with masturbation, a concern which is central to the emergence of adolescence. However, this argument is very broad and does not propose an account of the more specific dynamic of practices and discourses which have brought about the specific configuration of adolescence at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Furthermore, Foucault identifies sites where the advent of 'sex' can be recognised, but this does not explain why these sites became intensified areas of concern. Lastly, there is a divergence

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<sup>29</sup> Gillis, *Youth and History*; Springhall, *Coming of Age*.

<sup>30</sup> M. Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Vol. 1, The Will to Knowledge* (London: Penguin, 1998).

between the instrumental governmental objective of maximizing the wealth and the well-being of a nation and some of the sites of the advent of 'sex'. While the concern with 'sex' is associated with instrumental regulation around the issue of reproduction and health, it exceeds instrumentality in areas such as masturbation or children's 'sex'. Pointing to the overall trend of bio-power and the advent of the apparatus of sexuality does not fully answer the question of why certain phenomena, such as adolescence, have become an object of concern at a certain moment in time.

Nevertheless, one aspect that Foucault's account addresses is the transnational character of the emergence of adolescence. Whereas historical arguments primarily explain the process in terms of dynamics within Britain or even England,<sup>31</sup> Foucault's argument pertains to processes taking place in Western countries. Adolescence emerged and spread not only in England or Britain, but in other European countries and in the U.S.<sup>32</sup> The spatial dimension of the emergence of adolescence raises important considerations with regard to the processes involved in this event. If adolescence emerged in Europe, England and the U.S. at the same time, then the key factors in this process should be identified in all these countries or should be recognised as transnational processes. This pertains not only to the emergence of adolescence in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, but also to changes in adolescence in the decades following the Second World War. In both periods, changes in adolescence were occurring in several Western countries. It is beyond the scope of this chapter to analyse in detail and explain the emergence of adolescence. I suggest that although the detailed dynamics bringing about this process will not be discussed, it is possible to identify the features of this emergence and to trace its consequences in 20<sup>th</sup> century Britain.

In principle, the psychological concept of adolescence and the effort to govern adolescent 'sex' pertained both to working-class and middle-class youth. However, working-class youth were the focus of anxieties. This was, at least in part, the result of the differences in the length of education. Whereas the lower sections of the working

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<sup>31</sup> Gillis, *Youth and History.*; Springhall, *Coming of Age.*; Hendrick, *Images of Youth.*

<sup>32</sup> Gillis, *Youth and History.*



class entered the labour market as unskilled labourers from the age of twelve, middle- and upper-class youth often remained in school until they were at least sixteen years old.<sup>33</sup> During the first two decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the majority of those above the age of fourteen were in full-time employment. This pattern continued during the 1920s and 1930s. It is estimated that in 1931, 75.1% of adolescent girls and approximately 90% of adolescent boys between the age of fourteen and twenty were employed.<sup>34</sup> The sexuality of working adolescents continued to be a source of anxiety as they were seen to be beyond the reach of professionals and education authorities.<sup>35</sup> Oral history accounts provide some support for the contention that entrance into work was detrimental to a young person's sexual 'innocence'; factory floor culture was often characterised by the explicit public discussion of sexual matters and involved sexual initiation rituals.<sup>36</sup>

During the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in Britain, most young people did not marry until their mid-twenties. During the Edwardian period, the average age of marriage was at a peak of twenty-seven years for men and twenty-six for women. Although there was a subsequent decrease, age at marriage was still usually around one's mid-twenties.<sup>37</sup> There were class differences in the age of marriage: the unskilled and semi-skilled working class tending to marry in their early twenties, while the professional middle class postponed their marriage to their late twenties. As Steve Humphries notes, parents exerted considerable influence over young people's choice of spouse. Young people were required to introduce their selected future partner to the parents for approval. If the parents approved the choice of partner the couple were said to be 'keeping company' or 'going steady'.<sup>38</sup> Up until 1969, those under the age of twenty-one required their

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<sup>33</sup> Springhall, *Coming of Age*.; Gillis, *Youth and History*.

<sup>34</sup> P. Tinkler, *Constructing Girlhood: Popular Magazines for Girls Growing up in England, 1920-1950* (London: Taylor & Francis, 1995).

<sup>35</sup> Davis, *Youth and the Condition of Britain*.

<sup>36</sup> Humphries, *A Secret World of Sex*.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>38</sup> There was also the custom of 'becoming engaged' which entailed a celebration party in which the man gave a ring to his future bride. Humphries, *A Secret World of Sex*.; P. Tinkler, "Sexuality and Citizenship: the State and Girls' Leisure Provision in England, 1939-45," *Women's History Review* 4, no. 2 (1995): 193-217.

parents' permission in order to marry.<sup>39</sup>

Although since 1885 the age of consent for heterosexual relations had been sixteen years of age, the norm advocated by religious and professional authorities was that young people should remain abstinent until marriage.<sup>40</sup> This view was promoted in sex education books, self-help manuals as well as pamphlets issued by professional and religious groups.<sup>41</sup> As a result, it was difficult for unmarried people to obtain contraception, as doctors and pharmacists refused to provide contraceptive advice. Even during the 1920s when contraceptive access improved as a result of the opening of Marie Stopes' clinics, contraceptive advice to unmarried people remained prohibited in these clinics.<sup>42</sup>

Oral history accounts and birth registries provide evidence that many did engage in pre-marital sex. Working-class youth often had sex in dark alleys, in the outskirts of villages or in public parks.<sup>43</sup> It is estimated that in Edwardian Britain, one in five brides was pregnant on her wedding day. In addition, a Registrar General estimate from 1939 suggested that a third of all mothers conceived their first-born prior to the marriage. The proportion of illegitimate births remained relatively constant at 4-5% from the early 20<sup>th</sup> century until the late 1950s with the exclusion of the periods of war. This figure represents approximately 25,000-35,000 births each year.<sup>44</sup>

During the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the life experiences of adolescents were undergoing significant change as successive legislation expanded compulsory education. School-leaving age was raised to fourteen in 1921 and to fifteen in 1947.<sup>45</sup> The 1959 Crowther Report recommendation to raise the school-leaving age to sixteen was implemented in 1973. The notion of adolescence as a developmental stage was often used in order to call for the expansion of education. Evidence of this can be found in succeeding education reports such as the Board of Education, 1917 and the 1926 Hadow

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<sup>39</sup> B. Osgerby, *Youth in Britain Since 1945* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1998).

<sup>40</sup> Humphries, *A Secret World of Sex*.

<sup>41</sup> F. Mort, *Dangerous Sexualities: Medico-Moral Politics in England Since 1830* (London: Routledge, 1998).

<sup>42</sup> Humphries, *A Secret World of Sex*.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>45</sup> S. Todd, *Young Women, Work, and Family in England, 1918-1950* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005); Davis, *Youth and the Condition of Britain*.

Report. For instance, the 1917 Board of Education report stated:

Can the age of adolescence be brought out of the purview of economic exploitation and into that of the social conscience?...Can it be established that the educational purpose is to be the dominating one, without as well as within the school doors, during those formative years between twelve and eighteen?<sup>46</sup>

The idea that adolescence was a formative stage in which the guidance and supervision of professionals was needed continued to provide an impetus to the development of youth work. Up until World War II, youth work was primarily funded and carried out by voluntary youth organisations. However, during the first few decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century there was an increase in governmental involvement and funding. The 1918 Education Act empowered local education authorities to support voluntary youth organisations and provide leisure facilities for young people according to the initiative of the particular authority.<sup>47</sup> In November 1939, partly prompted by anxieties associated with the war, the Board of Education decided that leisure activities of youth were to be a government responsibility. In the Board's circular 1486 'Service of Youth' a service catering for those between the ages of fourteen and twenty-one was established.<sup>48</sup> The provision of recreational facilities for youth subsequently became a legal duty of Local Education Authorities as part of the 1944 Education Act.<sup>49</sup> Governmental investment in youth work continued to increase after World War II.

The psychological concept of adolescence as denoting a distinct state of subjectivity continued to influence teachers, youth workers and commentators.<sup>50</sup> Some views diverged from Hall's emphasis on the bodily process in favour of the suggestion that the characteristics of adolescence were due to the 'social' factors of transition from school to work, or societal change such as a decline in moral constraints. Nonetheless, the idea that the characteristics of adolescence were underlain by the physiological process of

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<sup>46</sup> Board of Education quoted in Davis, *Youth and the Condition of Britain.*, 68-69.

<sup>47</sup> Osgerby, *Youth in Britain Since 1945.*

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., P. Tinkler, "Cause for Concern: Young Women and Leisure, 1930-50," *Women's History Review* 12, no. 2 (2003): 233-260.

<sup>49</sup> Osgerby, *Youth in Britain Since 1945.*

<sup>50</sup> Tinkler, "Cause for Concern."

maturation was still prominent. Examining the portrayal of adolescents in literature from the 1920s through to the 1940s, Penny Tinkler claims:

The most striking feature of the construction of adolescence was the centrality attributed to puberty. The onset of puberty was established as the key to adolescence and the attainment of sexual maturity was the central event ascribed to this stage.<sup>51</sup>

A further claim put forward by Tinkler was that adolescence was seen as a primarily masculine phenomenon. Psychological literature from the 1920s frequently argued that in comparison with boys, girls experienced a more limited psychological crisis during adolescence. Their major psychological task during this stage was accepting their inferior position to men and preparing themselves for marriage and motherhood.<sup>52</sup>

The wish to govern adolescent sex continued to facilitate the development of youth work.<sup>53</sup> In England, between the 1920s and 1950s, youth work was often described as a response to the dangers posed by the ‘sex energies’ of adolescence. The sexual impulses generated a state of emotional instability in which the young person required professional guidance. Youth workers aimed to provide this vital guidance particularly to those girls most at need: working-class girls. During the late 1930s and 1940s, there was mounting anxiety regarding sexual delinquency, a form of delinquency seen as linked primarily with girls.<sup>54</sup> Certain forms of leisure activity associated with working-class adolescents, such as the cinema and the dance hall, were depicted as facilitating sexual delinquency. An example of this viewpoint is found in Pearl Jephcott’s 1943 account of the risks of sexual stimulation posed by the dance hall. Jephcott, who was a Girls’ Club leader, proclaimed:

The syncopated music... the lowered lights, and the excitement of all the new contacts mean that for many young adolescents, the sex instinct is being over-stimulated at precisely the age when this

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<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 242.

<sup>52</sup> Tinkler, “Sexuality and Citizenship.”

<sup>53</sup> Tinkler, “Cause for Concern.”

<sup>54</sup> J. Giles, *Women, Identity and Private Life in Britain, 1900-50* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1995); Tinkler, “Sexuality and Citizenship.”

should be avoided.<sup>55</sup>

Thus, up until the early 1940s, an important aspect of youth work was the effort to offer an alternative to leisure activities that were seen as inciting adolescents' sexual impulses. The adolescent continued to be configured as a subject who is both defined by the presence of sexual impulses and by the need to suppress them. This conceptualisation was soon to be challenged by the rise of the so called 'sexual revolution'.

## **5.2 The Governance of the Sexually Active Teenager**

During World War II, government officers were increasingly alarmed by what was described as a growing number of young people who were engaging in sexual activity. Anxieties focused in particular on young women. For example, a 1941 mass observation report claimed:

For the young woman there is a world of new employment, new danger, complete lack of security outlets, and an accumulated decay of the restraints on normal conduct.<sup>56</sup>

These anxieties prompted the development of sex education. Up till then, no government guidance on sex education was issued. The School Medical Service that was responsible for issuing health education guidance notes refrained from discussing matters relating to sexual activity. As a result, prior to World War II only a few schools in England provided any form of sex education.<sup>57</sup> Following a rise in governmental anxieties regarding the sexual activity of young people during the war years, in 1943, the Board of Education issued the guidance *Sex Education in Schools and Youth Organisations*. Among the dangers identified at the time was a rising incidence in

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<sup>55</sup> P. Jephcott quoted in Giles, *Women, Identity and Private Life in Britain, 1900-50.*, 127.

<sup>56</sup> Tinkler, "Cause for Concern", 244.

<sup>57</sup> J. Pilcher, "Sex in Health Education: Official Guidance for Schools in England, 1928-1977," *Journal of Historical Sociology* 17, no. 2-3 (153): 185-208; Humphries, *A Secret World of Sex*; J. Hampshire, "The Politics of School Sex Education Policy in England and Wales from the 1940s to the 1960s," *Social History of Medicine* 18, no. 1 (2005): 87-105.

venereal disease among girls and a perceived promiscuous trend. As the war ended, these anxieties subsided and post-war editions of the health education guidance did not advocate the provision of sex education.<sup>58</sup>

It was only in 1956 that the Board of Education's guidance for health education again included a section on sex education. The guidance described puberty as a period of profound changes and stated that in secondary schools sex education was 'the single most immediate problem to be considered from the point of view of health education'.<sup>59</sup> Sex education was described in terms that aligned it closely with married life. The title of the chapter on sex education was called 'School and the Future Parent'. The view that the guidance advocated was that adolescents and all unmarried young people should remain celibate until marriage. It was not until 1968 that guidance on sex education proposed to teach adolescents about contraception.<sup>60</sup> Even then, however, sex education was not mandatory and individual schools could choose whether or not to provide it.<sup>61</sup>

Most historians and sociologists who examine the politics of adolescent sex focus on the development of sex education. Histories of sexuality such as the accounts of Jeffrey Weeks<sup>62</sup> and Cate Haste<sup>63</sup> describe the rise of governmental and public anxieties regarding the rate of venereal disease and illegitimacy among teenagers. Primarily, what remains unexplored in these accounts is the way in which apprehensions regarding sexually active teenagers contributed to the emergence of the care of the teenage unmarried mother as a new governmental field. I argue that the emergence of this field was part of the development of 'teenage pregnancy', a field that persists until the present day. The account presented below is an attempt to explore this process. It focuses on the work of the London County Council and on the period between 1957 and 1965. This period was carved out for examination since it enables us to chart the spread of governmental concern with the sexually active teenager prior to the major broadening of

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<sup>58</sup> Pilcher, "Sex in Health Education."; J. Hampshire and J. Lewis, "'The Ravages of Permissiveness': Sex Education and the Permissive Society," *Twentieth Century British History* 15, no. 3 (2004): 290-312.

<sup>59</sup> Board of Education quoted in Pilcher, "Sex in Health Education.", 194.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*; Hampshire and Lewis, "'The Ravages of Permissiveness'."

<sup>62</sup> J. Weeks, *Sex, Politics and Society: The Regulation of Sexuality Since 1800* (London: Longman, 1989).

<sup>63</sup> C. Haste, *Rules of Desire: Sex in Britain: World War I to the Present* (London: Pimlico, 1994).

contraceptive access to unmarried people and to the legalisation of abortion.<sup>64</sup>

There were several propositions that frequently appeared in government and professional literature that supported the preoccupation with teenagers. These correspond to the ‘teenage sex’ discourse I described in Chapter 3.<sup>65</sup> It was argued that contemporary teenagers had more liberal attitudes towards sexual relations than their parents’ generation and were more inclined to engage in sexual activity. In addition, the development of the distinctly teenage commercial market and the increased discussion of sexual matters in the media contributed to the propensity of teenagers to engage in sexual activity.

The most important part of the ‘teenage sex’ discourse was the evocation of adolescence as a developmental stage in which there is a mismatch between bodily and mental development. According to this idea, adolescents possess the body of adults – bodies that are sexually mature, while their subjectivity was lagging behind. The claim put forward in many professional and popular texts during the 1950s and 1960s was that there was a growing gap between the physiological and mental development of contemporary teenagers. This argument referred to research which argued that the average age of the onset of menstruation in Western countries had declined from around seventeen in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century to around thirteen in the late 1950s.<sup>66</sup> However, the increased pace of physical maturation was not seen as an indication that they were prepared for adult life; on the contrary, it was seen as a sign that they needed further governance by teachers, parents and youth workers. For instance the 1959 Crowther report which advocated the expansion of compulsory education up to the age of sixteen stated:

...the onset of puberty is earlier than it used to be... menstruation in girls has over a long period of years gradually been beginning earlier ... and there is no doubt that boys also mature earlier... But

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<sup>64</sup> H. Cook, *The Long Sexual Revolution: English Women, Sex, and Contraception, 1800-1975* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004)

<sup>65</sup> I use the term ‘teenage sex’ to describe the discourse concerned with the features of 1960s teenagers. This should be distinguished from ‘adolescent sex’ that denotes the object at the centre of governmental efforts.

<sup>66</sup> Davis, *Youth and the Condition of Britain*.

this is not true of the emotional and social consequences of puberty...<sup>67</sup>

The proposition that teenagers were ‘grown up physically’ but not ‘mature emotionally’ gave an impetus to the apprehension regarding the sexually active teenager. Had teenagers remained affiliated to childhood and had not been seen as sexual subjects then there would have been less of a concern with their ‘sex’. In turn, if in line with their mature bodies they were considered adults then they would be expected to govern their body. Thus, it is precisely the proposition of their sexual maturity and their childlike subjectivity which called for the intervention of professionals and government officers in the governing of their sexual and reproductive capacities.

The intensified professional and governmental concern with the sexually active adolescent can be identified in a variety of publications issued in the late 1950s and early 1960s. In the Ministry of Health Chief Medical Officer’s Report of 1958 particular attention was devoted to a rise in the number of teenage prostitutes who were admitted to H.M. Prison Holloway during the years 1957 and 1958.<sup>68</sup> In 1959 the British Medical Association chose the ‘Medical and Social Problems of Adolescence’ as its annual subject. The key preoccupation of the Association was the sexual activity of adolescents – the report discussed their alleged promiscuity and reported on doctors’ support for the expansion of sex education.<sup>69</sup> In October 1959, Joan O’Hare addressed the International Union against Venereal Disease and Treponematoses in London in a speech titled ‘The Road to Promiscuity’. She presented the results of her study of 100 teenage girls who were described as habitually promiscuous. O’Hare claimed that promiscuity was a form of delinquency and a disturbance which could be brought about by troubled emotional ties between the girl and her parents:

The promiscuous girl is a social misfit, in rebellion against the disciplines of civilization or unfit to conform to the community’s demands...Lack of intelligent and affectionate approach by the

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<sup>67</sup> Ministry of Education, *15 to 18: Report of the Central Advisory Committee for Education (England)*. Vol. 1 (London: Her Majesty’s Stationery Office, 1959), 109-110.

<sup>68</sup> A. J. King, “The Problem of Venereal Disease,” *Moral Welfare* (City of London, January 1960), ACC 2201/M11/2-56, London Metropolitan Archives.

<sup>69</sup> Hampshire, “The Politics of School Sex Education Policy.”



parents is a predisposing factor.<sup>70</sup>

As discussed in Chapter 3, the psychological problematization of unmarried mothers proposed that the sexual act leading to the illegitimate pregnancy was not the result of sexual impulses, but of an unconscious wish rooted in familial relationship in early childhood. Similarly, in Joan O'Hare's speech, promiscuity was also described as being associated not with sexual wishes but with a 'Lack of intelligent and affectionate approach by the parents', i.e. with a disturbance in familial relationships.

In January 1961 the Council of the British Medical Association decided to appoint a special committee to examine the increase in the rates of venereal disease, and devote particular attention to the incidence among young people.<sup>71</sup> The Committee concluded that there had been a marked increase in venereal disease among young people and argued that this rise was the result of their increasing promiscuity. Like Joan O'Hare, the Committee suggested that promiscuity was underpinned by a failure in one's upbringing.<sup>72</sup>

In the same year, government officials had also turned their attention to the rate of the incidence of venereal disease among teenagers. The 1961 Ministry of Health Report stated that it was 'a disquieting feature' that there had been an:

...increase of gonorrhoea amongst adolescents between the ages of 15 to 19 years. This has been occurring for some years and is a sign of profound social malaise in that section of the population.<sup>73</sup>

This quotation suggests that it was not primarily the anxieties regarding the state of the public health that underlay the concern with adolescent rates of venereal disease but the notion of a certain social illness afflicting teenagers. Furthermore, as I shall

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<sup>70</sup> O'Hare quoted in King, "The Problem of Venereal Disease."

<sup>71</sup> The term 'young people' was defined in the report as those under the age of 25 and was not restricted to teenagers. See Medical Officer of Health, Acting Education Officer, "Incidence of Venereal Disease in Adolescents," Papers of the Health Committee, London County Council (City of London, November 21, 1963) LCC/MIN/6623, London Metropolitan Archives, 5.

<sup>72</sup> K. E. Kiernan, H. Land, and J. E. Lewis, *Lone Motherhood in Twentieth-Century Britain: From Footnote to Front Page* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998).

<sup>73</sup> Ministry of Health quoted in Medical Officer of Health, Acting Education Officer, "Incidence of Venereal Disease in Adolescents," Papers of the Health Committee, London County Council (City of London, November 21, 1963), LCC/MIN/6623, London Metropolitan Archives, Appendix A.

demonstrate below, adolescents contributed only a small amount to the overall prevalence of venereal disease and therefore the anxiety which these cases aroused should take into account that this attention was not called for by the actual statistical data.<sup>74</sup>

Nevertheless, this concern continued to spread. On 18 July 1961, it appeared for the first time in the work of the London County Council. At the Council Board meeting held on that day, a member of the public, Mr. Lawrence, directed a query to the Chairman of the Health Committee. Mr. Lawrence inquired:

Has there been a serious increase in the incidence of venereal disease after a period during which it was thought to have ceased to rise? (ii) if so (a) Has the increase been very marked among teenagers including pupils attending secondary schools, (b) what steps do they propose to take to alert the public and in particular schools, youth organisations, parents and teachers to this grave danger...<sup>75</sup>

The behaviour of the teenage group was described as a grave danger which parents, teachers, and youth organisations needed to address. The Chairman replied to Mr. Lawrence's question reporting that they had some evidence of an increase in the incidence of venereal disease among teenagers and confirmed that the Council would expand its support to schools and youth organisations in providing health education.

In January 1963, the incidence of venereal disease among adolescents was raised again at a London County Council Board meeting when two members of the Council moved a motion requesting information on the work which the Council was carrying out to tackle this issue. The Health Committee was asked, in particular, to consider whether 'The remedy for such an incidence involves not so much medical as social factors'.<sup>76</sup> This request was based, word for word, on the 1961 Ministry of Health Report that described venereal disease as a 'social malaise' whose remedy 'involves not so much

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<sup>74</sup> Ministry of Health, *On the State of The Public Health: The Annual Report of the Chief Medical Officer of the Ministry of Health for the Year 1965* (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1966).

<sup>75</sup> "London County Council Board Minutes," (City of London, July 18, 1961), London Metropolitan Archives.

<sup>76</sup> "Minutes of the Health Committee," Papers of the Health Committee, London County Council (City of London, January 28, 1963), LCC/MIN/6586, London Metropolitan Archives.

medical as social factors'.<sup>77</sup> Later that year, in July, the Council established a working party consisting of teachers, education and public health officers whose task was to examine this issue in greater detail.

In November the Medical Officer of Health and the Acting Education Officer jointly presented a report titled *Incidence of Venereal Disease in Adolescents*.<sup>78</sup> The report included a summary of the national statistics according to which there had been a 67.3% rise in cases of gonorrhoea among males aged fifteen to nineteen years and a 65.4% increase in these cases among females between the years 1957 and 1960. Despite the relatively high increase in percentages, the actual rise in the number of cases was relatively small: the number of teenage boys had increased from 828 to 1,385 and the number of teenage girls had increased from 939 to 1,553. According to the 1961 census figures, England and Wales had a population of over million-and-a-half young men between the age of fifteen and nineteen and a similar number of young women. The rise of several hundred cases considering the overall size of the populations of teenage girls and boys is extremely minor.<sup>79</sup>

The report linked the increase in the rates of venereal disease to a rise in illegitimacy and in crime. This was not mentioned merely in passing; the appendix included several tables which detailed the number of illegitimate births to mothers 'under 20' in England and Wales as a whole, as well as the number of illegitimate live births to mothers 'under 20' specifically in London. Thus, the concern with venereal disease was closely associated with another evil thought to be prevalent among teenagers: illegitimacy.

The work on tackling venereal disease among adolescents was diffused to numerous Council committees and bodies. The Council Youth Service and various Borough Youth Committees discussed ways of confronting this phenomenon and the London Youth Committee organised weekend conferences for youth leaders and members of youth

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<sup>77</sup> Ministry of Health quoted in Medical Officer of Health, Acting Education Officer, "Incidence of Venereal Disease in Adolescents," Papers of the Health Committee, London County Council (City of London, November 21, 1963), LCC/MIN/6623, London Metropolitan Archives, Appendix A.

<sup>78</sup> Medical Officer of Health and Acting Education Officer, "Incidence of Venereal Disease in Adolescents," Health Committee Papers, London County Council (City of London, November 21, 1963), LCC/MIN/6623, London Metropolitan Archives.

<sup>79</sup> General Register Office, "Age, Marital Condition and General Tables," *Census 1961 England and Wales*, (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1964), 27.

groups on the topic of 'Friendship, Courtship and Marriage'. In one instance, the Council organised a conference on venereal disease for head teachers, social workers, education officers and officers of the Children's Department.

Despite the evidence to the contrary, government officers persisted in discussing the association between adolescents and the increase in the rate of venereal disease, even if it was only to conclude their relatively minor role in the soaring rates. In the 1965 report, G.E. Godber, the Chief Medical Officer for England and Wales claimed that:

The prevalence of venereal disease is not due to promiscuous teenagers – distressing as it is to find so much among them – it is due to endemic infection among older people...<sup>80</sup>

The majority of cases of venereal disease, the report went on to assert, was found among those who were over the age of twenty-five. Nonetheless, the following year's report continued to discuss teenagers in relation to the incidence of venereal disease and even claimed that due to adolescent promiscuity, there was a need to expand the guidance available to young people on sexually transmitted diseases:

We must certainly press on with improved contact tracing and with health education in the younger age groups. These diseases are mainly the result of promiscuous extra-marital sexual intercourse; this fact and the genuine dangers associated with venereal disease should be known to the adolescent. Boys and girls in their teens are ... totally ignorant of this particular hazard of promiscuity because it is not discussed as any other infection might be...<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> Ministry of Health, *On the State of The Public Health: The Annual Report of the Chief Medical Officer of the Ministry of Health for the Year 1965* (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1966), 6.

<sup>81</sup> Ministry of Health, *On the State of The Public Health: The Annual Report of the Chief Medical Officer of the Ministry of Health for the Year 1966* (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1967), 8.

### 5.3 The Teenage Unmarried Mother

The intensification of apprehensions regarding promiscuous teenagers and those afflicted by venereal disease was linked to the development of a new governmental field, the care of the teenage unmarried mother. However, at this point, there was no decisive definition of the object and the terms used alternated between ‘young unmarried mother’, ‘teenage’ and ‘schoolgirl unmarried mother’.

In April 1960, the journal *Moral Welfare* published the results of a survey which was conducted by the Church of England Moral Welfare Council of cases of unmarried mothers who were under the age of sixteen. In 1959 according to the records of moral welfare workers there were 782 girls who conceived before their sixteenth birthday. This number reflected a rise of 187 cases over the number of girls (595) who became pregnant during the previous year.<sup>82</sup> The problematization of these young unmarried mothers becomes apparent at this early point. The article described the rise in cases in terms of the relative percentage rise it reflected; a rise of 31%. The 1961 census of England and Wales does not have an ‘under sixteen’ category, but it does state that there were over a million-and-a-half girls between the ages of ten and fourteen and a similar number of girls between the age of fifteen and nineteen. Although no clear estimate of the ‘under sixteen’ population can be deduced from these figures, they do provide a crude indication of its expected size. As with the increase in venereal disease, the rise in the number of ‘under sixteen’ unmarried mothers is almost negligible in view of the overall size of the population. Describing the increase in terms of the relative percentage rise served to raise an alarm.

Concurrently with these developments, officers of the London County Council were also developing an interest in the rates of illegitimacy among teenage girls. In March 1961 the Children’s Officer initiated an inquiry into the rate of pregnancies among adolescent girls who were in the Council’s care. A month later, in April, the Council had established St. Christopher’s Mother and Baby Home in Lambeth, as a Mother and Baby

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<sup>82</sup> R. F. Neuss, “Pregnant Girls Under Sixteen Years of Age: Report on the Results of an Inquiry Conducted by the Church of England Moral Welfare Council for the Year 1959,” *Moral Welfare* (City of London, April 1960), ACC 2201/M11/2-56, London Metropolitan Archives.

Home specialising in the care of schoolgirl unmarried mothers.<sup>83</sup> The Council claimed that it was the first Mother and Baby Home in the country to offer such specialised care.<sup>84</sup>

By the end of 1961 the Chief Officer of the Welfare Department and the Chief Officer of the Children's Department had started to report to the Council on the number of young unmarried mothers (under the age of eighteen) they were supporting. According to his report there were 82 such mothers in 1961, a number which represented a rise from the 59 mothers cared for the previous year. Again, the way in which this rise was described reveals an effort to heighten the alarm. Although the increase was of 23 cases, the rise was described in the magnifying term of percentile increase: 39% over the figures of the previous year.<sup>85</sup>

In January 1963 Michael Schofield, the Research Director of the Central Council for Health Education approached the London County Council requesting information regarding the number of illegitimate births to teenage mothers which took place within its remit. In July 1963 Schofield approached the Council again requesting permission to interview fifty adolescent girls about their sexual experience and knowledge of sexual matters. This was part of an extensive national research initiated by the Central Council for Health Education into the sexual behaviour of young people aged fifteen to nineteen.<sup>86</sup> The Council's Children's Committee had subsequently decided to approve Schofield's request.<sup>87</sup> This research examined adolescents' sexual behaviour as part of a

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<sup>83</sup> Medical Officer of Health, Education Officer and Children's Officer, "St. Christopher's Mother and Baby Home," Papers of the Children's Committee, London County Council (City of London, June 21, 1963), LCC/MIN/2714, London Metropolitan Archives; The work of this Mother and Baby Home and the way in which it diverged from the practices found in other Mother and Baby Homes is explored in the next chapter.

<sup>84</sup> Medical Officer of Health, Education Officer and Children's Officer, "St. Christopher's Mother and Baby Home," Papers of the Children's Committee, London County Council (City of London, 23 May, 1962) LCC/MIN/2713, London Metropolitan Archives, 2.

<sup>85</sup> Chief Officer of the Welfare Department, "Mothers and Babies – Accommodation," Papers of the Welfare Committee, London County Council (City of London, November 2, 1962), LCC/MIN/12,310, London Metropolitan Archives.

<sup>86</sup> Medical Officer of Health and Acting Education Officer, "Incidence of Venereal Disease in Adolescents," Health Committee Papers, London County Council (City of London, November 21, 1963), LCC/MIN/6623, London Metropolitan Archives.

<sup>87</sup> Children's Officer, "Central Council for Health Education – Research," Papers of the Children's Committee, London County Council (City of London, July 9, 1963), LCC/MIN/2714, London Metropolitan Archives.

wider investigation into the leisure habits of the young. The adolescent girls in care were asked to provide information not only on sex education and sexual experience but on engagement in drinking and gambling.

By the end of 1963 the care of the young unmarried mother was established as a distinct area of the Council's work. It was at that time that the Council had produced a report titled '*Young Unmarried Mothers: Numbers for which Education, Children's and Welfare Departments were financially responsible during the year ended 30 September 1963*'. The report defined young unmarried mothers as mothers under the age of seventeen and detailed the breakdown of maternity statistics according to the age of the mother. During 1963, the London County Council cared for 279 young unmarried, the majority of whom were referred to the Council by Moral Welfare Associations.<sup>88</sup> The appendix of the report included a table detailing illegitimate live births in London by the mother's age in the years 1961 and 1962.<sup>89</sup> The figures presented in the table make it apparent that anxieties regarding the rate of illegitimate pregnancies in the teenage group were not supported by the actual figures the Council produced. There were approximately twice as many illegitimate pregnancies among women between the age of twenty and twenty-four than there were among teenage girls.

Nevertheless, the concern with the teenage unmarried mother continued to gather pace. In March 1964 a motion was passed at the Council's Board meeting requesting the Health Committee to examine the reasons for the increasing level of illegitimate births in London with an emphasis on this occurrence among teenagers. In order to tackle the task, Council officers composed a questionnaire for pregnant schoolgirls designed to be administered by the doctors who conducted their ante-natal examinations. The questionnaire included questions regarding the number of sexual partners a young woman had and her birth control practices. The girl was further asked whether the intercourse leading to the pregnancy took place as a result of one of the following causes: 'drink, seduction, passion, curiosity, the done thing, other (state)'.<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> Medical Adviser's Department, Statistics on the Incidence of Illegitimacy, Child Health Files, Greater London Council, City of London, GLC/MA/B2/1/2, London Metropolitan Archives.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid.

In the following September, the requested report was presented to the Council.<sup>91</sup> The report reflected the association between the problematization of illegitimacy, promiscuity and venereal disease by discussing the three concerns alongside each other. In the section of the report titled ‘young unmarried mothers’ a significant increase in recent years in the numbers of teenage unmarried mothers throughout England and Wales, was reported. The figure quoted for England and Wales was of 1,111 girls under sixteen who had illegitimate children in 1962 compared with 186 such cases in 1954. Taking into account the size of the teenage population and the proportion of ‘under sixteen’ births among the overall number of illegitimate births, this rise was small. Furthermore, in England and Wales as a whole, the teenage group had the lowest percentage of illegitimate births for the population of single women: there were approximately 12,000 illegitimate births in a population of almost a million-and-a-half single girls. Despite presenting these findings, the report still claimed that there had been ‘a marked increase in the numbers of “teenage” unmarried mothers’.<sup>92</sup>

Some government officers expressed recognition that the problematization of the teenage unmarried mother was not justified by the statistical findings. The report of the Registrar General’s Statistical Review of England and Wales for the year 1964 stated:

Although more than a third of the illegitimate births to unmarried women are to teenage unmarried women, more than half of all unmarried women aged 15-44 are teenagers, so that the illegitimacy rate (the probability of having an illegitimate child) is actually relatively low for unmarried teenagers and is three times as high for the 25-29 group.<sup>93</sup>

Despite the recognition of the contentious nature of the teenage illegitimacy scare, it transformed governmental practices. Subsequent to the motion made in the Council in March 1964, the Acting Medical Officer of Health organised meetings with various

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<sup>91</sup> Acting Medical Officer of Health, “Illegitimate Births in London,” Papers of the Health Committee, London County Council (City of London, September 25, 1964), LCC/MIN/6626, London Metropolitan Archives.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

<sup>93</sup> General Register Office, *The Registrar General’s Statistical Review of England and Wales for the year 1964*, Part III, Commentary (London: Her Majesty Stationery Office, 1967), 67.



voluntary organisations including the London Diocesan Council for Moral Welfare, the Southwark Diocesan Association for Moral Welfare as well as representatives of the National Council for the Unmarried Mother and Her Child, the Family Planning Association and the Brook Advisory Centres. The representatives at the meeting agreed to extend research on unmarried mothers and expand sex education provision. The Council established a Standing Advisory Committee on Health Education,<sup>94</sup> increased its financial support for organisations providing family planning advice and contraception and tried to arrange a meeting with the Minister of Health.

The evocation of what I termed the ‘teenage sex’ discourse could be detected in the Council discussions of the need to expand sex education. A Council Working Party had in 1963 decided to revise the 1949 Council pamphlet ‘*Some Notes on Sex Education*’. Four key reasons were described as underlying the need to revise the 1949 edition of the pamphlet. Echoing the suggestions made in the Crowther report, the committee claimed that the need to expand sex education was linked to the decline in the age at which sexual maturation was achieved and the concurring expansion of compulsory education. As a result the school was likely ‘to encounter an increasing proportion of the troubles of later adolescence’.<sup>95</sup> The second reason which similarly relates to the nature of adolescence is that the commercial exploitation of the teenage market had adversely influenced the attitudes of young people. Thirdly, the report asserted that the current environment of nuclear threat encourages young people to ‘anticipate experiences of which they fear they may be cheated’ and that growing representation of sex in the popular media was contributing to the likelihood that teenagers would choose to engage in sexual activity.<sup>96</sup>

The Joint Committee on Health Education appointed by the Central and Scottish

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<sup>94</sup> Acting Medical Officer of Health “Illegitimate Births in London,” Papers of the Health Committee London County Council (City of London, September 25, 1964), LCC/MIN/6626, London Metropolitan Archives; The Standing Advisory Committee on Health Education in Schools was established in 1963 and consisted of teachers and doctors engaged in health education. See Education Officer’s Department, “Minutes of the Standing Joint Advisory Committee,” London County Council (City of London, October 18, 1963), London Metropolitan Archives.

<sup>95</sup> “Some Notes on Sex Education,” Standing Joint Advisory Committee Papers, Education Officer’s Department, London County Council (City of London, October 18, 1963), London Metropolitan Archives, 1.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*

Health Services Councils led by Lord Cohen which published its recommendations in 1964 gave another impetus to the expansion of sex education provision. The Committee claimed that the development of health education was necessary in order to combat ‘unwanted pregnancies and venereal disease in teenagers’.<sup>97</sup> In May 1964 the Ministry of Health requested the Council’s comments on the recommendations outlined in the Cohen report and as a consequence, the report and its recommendations were thoroughly discussed by the Health Committee.<sup>98</sup>

The Department of Education and Science started an enquiry into the phenomenon of schoolgirl unmarried mothers during the mid-1960s. It found that approximately 200 schoolgirls had given birth during the years 1963 and 1964. The report revealed the presence of both the psychological problematization of unmarried mothers and the ‘teenage sex’ discourse. The research found that these young unmarried mothers had a relatively high rate of disturbed family backgrounds. Among the factors identified was having an authoritarian father or coming from a family which experienced physical or mental health difficulties. The conclusion of the report stated:

Even the limited amount of information available about these 200 girls showed how much insecurity and unhappiness as well as domestic responsibilities beyond their years were features in the lives of some of them.<sup>99</sup>

However, at the same time the ‘teenage sex’ discourse identifying sexual drive and the characteristics of teenagers as factors bringing about the illegitimate pregnancy, was also employed. Young people, it was argued, were trying out adult experiences including sexual intercourse without knowledge or ability to fully comprehend the implications of their actions. Some had not received adequate sex education or were simply curious. The tension identified in Chapter 3 between the two competing discourses: the psychological

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<sup>97</sup> Hampshire, “The Politics of School Sex Education Policy.”, 97.

<sup>98</sup> “Ministry of Health Letter to William Hart C.M.G.,” Papers of the Health Committee, London County Council (City of London, June 23, 1964), LCC/MIN/6625, London Metropolitan Archives; Medical Officer of Health, “Health Education – The Report of the ‘Cohen’ Committee,” Papers of the Health Committee, London County Council (City of London, June 16, 1964), LCC/MIN/6625, London Metropolitan Archives.

<sup>99</sup> “Extracts from the Report of the Chief Medical Officer of the Department of Education and Science on the Health of the School Child 1964 and 1965”, Archive of the National Council for One Parent Families (City of London, 1967), 5/OPF/05/4/05, The Women’s Library.

problematization and the 'teenage sex' discourse, can be identified in the depiction of the schoolgirl unmarried mother in this government report. The psychological explanation depicted the individual family pathology as the cause of the pregnancy, while according to the 'teenage sex' discourse the causes were the natural sexual drives and the universal characteristics of teenagers.

Professionals and governmental officers continued to discuss teenage unmarried mothers in various conferences and events. In May 1965, a conference held at the National Institute for Social Work Training devoted time to a discussion of the care of the schoolgirl mother. The speaker at this conference, Miss Carberry, an Inspector in Child Care for the London County Council talked about the needs of this type of unmarried mother and the practices of caring for her.<sup>100</sup> At a moral welfare workers conference later that year a study group was held to examine the issue of 'the very young unmarried mother'. It led to the recommendation that in each region there should be a Home specialising in the care of teenage unmarried mothers.<sup>101</sup> The psychological concept of adolescence as a stage between childhood and adulthood was also playing a part in professionals' suggestion that the schoolgirl unmarried mother required special attention. In 1965 the Moral Welfare Workers Bulletin published an article titled 'should the schoolgirl mother keep her baby?' Becoming a mother while still in school was described in the article as incongruous. The young mother:

... has crossed the line between childhood and adult experience, without the usual process of time which gives her the opportunity to pass from one to the other in the adjusting period of adolescence

The writer then continued to pose the question 'Can a girl so young face this dichotomy of personality; at school a child, at home a mother?'<sup>102</sup> The author of the article concluded that in the case of young unmarried mothers the adoption of the child

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<sup>100</sup> "The Unmarried Mother and Her Child in Residential Care," Conference Report, *Bulletin of Moral Welfare Workers' Association* (City of London, July-August, 1964), ACC 2201/M11/57-90, London Metropolitan Archives, 14.

<sup>101</sup> *Bulletin of Moral Welfare Workers' Association* (City of London, November- December, 1964), ACC 2201/M11/57-90, London Metropolitan Archives, 9.

<sup>102</sup> A. Harris, "Should the Schoolgirl Mother Keep Her Baby?," *Bulletin Moral Welfare Workers' Association* (City of London, January- February, 1964), ACC 2201/M11/57-90, London Metropolitan Archives, 26.

might be the preferred solution.

#### **5.4 Discussion: Teenage, Sex and Moral Panic**

The above account outlined the spread of governmental concern with the sexually active teenager which facilitated the development of the governmental field of ‘teenage unmarried mother’. Although not an exhaustive account, it does sketch out the spread of anxieties regarding teenagers’ engagement in sexual activity and provides a detailed picture of the way this preoccupation permeated the work of the London County Council.

As I have already mentioned, the contention that there was a significant rise in the rate of pregnant teenagers and venereal disease was not unequivocally supported by the statistical figures. Historians of sexuality note this gap and offer several possible explanations for it. Weeks explains the increased alarm regarding the rate of venereal disease as displaced anxieties regarding the societal transformation that was taking place at the time, particularly the rise of new youth cultures.<sup>103</sup> Haste makes a similar argument linking anxieties regarding adolescent sex with wider crises of values and mores. Lucy Bland and Frank Mort note the gendered nature of the governmental concern; it was the ‘good time girl’ rather than the boy who was depicted as being one of the key sources for the spread of venereal disease.

Societal preoccupation with teenagers in post-war Britain has received considerable academic attention. In his book *Youth and the Condition of Britain: Images of Adolescent Conflict*, John Davis argues that during the 1950s and early 1960s the term ‘teenager’ was a topic of unprecedented preoccupation:

The richness of connotation present in the discussion and representation of Teenagers at around the period of their emergence and rise to prominence has largely disappeared, as indeed has the sheer volume of what was then a major obsession in the media and

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<sup>103</sup> Weeks, *Sex, Politics and Society*.

elsewhere throughout society.<sup>104</sup>

According to Davis, the figure of the teenager was associated with the societal transformation which Britain was undergoing and in particular with the trend towards greater democratisation and increased prosperity among the previously less advantaged groups. John Clark, Stuart Hall et al. argue that societal preoccupation with 'youth' in post-war Britain was a result of the fact that this group symbolised the societal changes taking place at the time, while Bill Osgerby maintains that the increase in the size of the teenage population and teenagers' relative affluence contributed to their problematization.<sup>105</sup>

However, in order to fully unpick the rise of governmental concern with the sexually active teenager and consequently the emergence of the teenage unmarried mother as a distinct governmental field, it is necessary to consider the psychological conceptualisation of adolescence as denoting a stage of development between childhood and adulthood. As described in the above account, one of the most important features underpinning the spread of governmental networks around the sexually active adolescent was the idea that this was a developmental stage characterised by a mismatch between physiological and mental development. This was expressed through the frequent evocation of the suggestion that as a result of the increased pace of sexual maturation there was a gap between adolescents' mature bodies and their still developing subjectivity.

Examining the factors contributing to the heightened concern with 'youth' during the 1960s, Weeks reiterates this very claim. He argues that young people at the time were spending longer in education as the school-leaving age was raised to fifteen and then in the early 1970s to sixteen. In addition, the average girl reached menarche by the age of thirteen-and-a-half during the early 1950s, compared with the average age a century earlier which stood at sixteen or seventeen. Although there was a downward trend in the age of marriage, a discrepancy remained between the age at which one achieved sexual

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<sup>104</sup> Davis, *Youth and the Condition of Britain.*, 159.

<sup>105</sup> J. Clarke et al. "Subcultures, Cultures and Class: a Theoretical Overview," in *Resistance Through Rituals: Youth Subcultures in Post-War Britain*, eds. S. Hall and T. Jefferson (London: Hutchinson, 1976), 9-74; Osgerby, *Youth in Britain Since 1945*.

maturity and the age at which one married. Weeks argues:

So a large gap remained between economic independence and sexual maturity on the one hand and emotional independence and sanctioned sexual activity on the other. It was this gap that constituted the core of the perceived sexual crisis.<sup>106</sup>

The gap which Weeks identifies as being the core of the perceived sexual crisis resembles the conceptualisation of the crisis of adolescence evoked in different ways by psychologists, doctors and government officers at the time. When discussing the adolescent unmarried mother, Leontine Young's made the following claim:

The prolonging adolescence in the form of economic dependence, the shifting standards of values and rules of conduct, and the postponement of sexual gratification create a difficult and hazardous period of life for most young people.<sup>107</sup>

Both Young and Weeks identify a certain mismatch at the heart of adolescence. Weeks describes a gap between sexual maturity and the achievement of 'emotional independence', while Young identifies a discrepancy between sexual maturity and the achievement of economic independence.<sup>108</sup> However, both of them describe a gap between the time one reaches sexual maturation and the time at which sanctioned sexual activity can take place.

This claim of a mismatch between the adolescent body and subjectivity was prominent during the 1950s and 1960s and was frequently employed by government officers. In trying to trace the psychological conceptualisation of adolescence, I described its emergence at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in the work of G. Stanley Hall. Hall was the first to formulate the claim that adolescence was a universal stage of development marked by the onset of puberty. Furthermore, in his conceptualisation, adolescence was the developmental stage in which one had to battle the upsurge of

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<sup>106</sup> Weeks, *Sex, Politics and Society*, 252-253.

<sup>107</sup> L. R. Young, *Out of Wedlock: a Study of the Problems of the Unmarried Mother and Her Child* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1954), 94.

<sup>108</sup> It is likely that the difference between Young and Weeks stems from referring to different countries. Young had American adolescents in mind, while Weeks referred to youth in Britain.

sexual impulses. Managing not to indulge sexual impulses was necessary for healthy development into adulthood. Thus, 'sex' was a central feature of the psychological concept of 'adolescence'.

As discussed in Chapter 2, the concept of genealogy proposes that instead of looking for the origin of a phenomenon, one should attempt to chart a phenomenon's 'descent'. 'Descent' denotes a non-transcendental conception of continuity or affinity in which one cannot identify a core which persists throughout the different manifestations. The identification of 'descent' produces an account of the 'subtle, singular, and sub-individual marks that might possibly intersect ... to form a network that is difficult to unravel'.<sup>109</sup> Hence, G. Stanley Hall's conceptualisation of adolescence is not identical to the concept of adolescence used by government officers during the 1950s and 1960s but continuity between these ideas of adolescence can be identified. Both conceptualisations employ a notion of the adolescent as a split subject who is sexually mature yet still in the process of development. This notion was central to governmental preoccupation with the sexually active teenager and to the emergence of the governmental field of the care of the teenage unmarried mother. In the next chapter I examine the characteristics of the problematization of the teenage unmarried mother and consider the shifts in discourses and practices with which its formation was associated.

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<sup>109</sup> M. Foucault "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History," in *Aesthetics, Method, and Epistemology*, ed. J. D. Faubion (London: Allen Lane, 1998), 373.

## **Chapter 6:**

### **The Problematization of the Teenage Unmarried Mother**

In the previous chapter I described the spread of governmental and professional concern with the sexually active teenager. This preoccupation included both young boys and young girls who were described as promiscuous or were afflicted by venereal disease. However, as part of this process a growing number of professionals and governmental bodies were starting to study the characteristics of teenage girls who became pregnant. In this chapter, I examine the features of the emerging problematization of the teenage unmarried mother. In addition, I examine the work of the first Mother and Baby Home to specialise in caring for schoolgirl unmarried mothers and explore the shifts in institutional discourses and practices associated with the new problematization. The governmental practices found at this Home are compared with those found at King's Mead and St. Mary's House.

#### **6.1 Pregnancy in Adolescence**

On the 10th of March 1966, a one-day conference entitled 'Pregnancy in Adolescence' was held in Caxton Hall, Westminster. The event was so well attended that about two hundred people were turned away. Chairing the conference was Hilary Halpin, the chairperson of the London County Council's Children's Committee. She was well-positioned to address the audience of local authority officers, psychologists and social workers who gathered for the event as she was not only a senior Council officer and the chairperson of the London Juvenile Court, but a member of the Council of the Management of the National Association for Mental Health as well. She was also one of the founders of the Young People's Consultation Centre formed in Hampstead several years earlier.

Although the title of the conference was 'Pregnancy in Adolescence' Halpin's opening statement suggested that the main concern was more narrowly defined:



We talk at the moment about the school-girl mother. The figures in 1963 were 1,163 school-girl mothers, but what we must all bear in mind is that when the school-leaving age is raised to sixteen, the figure then will be raised to something in the region of 3,425.<sup>1</sup>

Halpin described the phenomenon in forewarning terms, but more significantly she revealed the tentative boundaries of the emerging problematization. Halpin's definition fluctuated in nomenclature between 'teenage' and 'adolescent unmarried mothers' to 'schoolgirl mothers' who were under the age of fifteen and, pending a change in legislation, to mothers under sixteen.<sup>2</sup> Nevertheless, proceeding to describe the key feature of the problem she stated:

What we are all confused about in relation to these girls is our own feelings about them. We are confused about whether we should take action for the girl, or whether we should take action for the baby...<sup>3</sup>

This dilemma was generated by the uncertainty regarding the identity of the person who was to be at the epicentre of the concern. Was it the young unmarried mother or her baby? With whose welfare and well-being should government officers and professionals be most concerned? The next speaker, Dr. Gough a psychiatrist at the Department of Children and Parents at the Tavistock Clinic, attempted to explicate the basis for this dilemma. He described the pregnancy of the young girl as a sad occurrence since: '... it is often very doubtful whether these two sets of children can be assured the provision for

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<sup>1</sup> *Pregnancy in Adolescence: Report of a Conference Held on March 10th 1966*, Archive of the National Council for One Parent Families (City of London, 1966), The Women's Library.

<sup>2</sup> As described in the previous chapter successive legislation expanded compulsory education in Britain between the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and 1973. From 1921 the school-leaving age was fourteen and from 1947 it became fifteen. In 1959 the Crowther Report recommended raising the school-leaving age to sixteen. This recommendation was supported by the Newsom and Robbins Reports of 1963 and finally implemented in 1973. During the 1950s and 1960s the number of students who remained in school beyond the minimum school-leaving age was on the increase. In 1951 only 12.5% of students remained in school beyond the age of fifteen; this rate rose to 19.6% in 1961 and to 30% in 1968. See S. Todd, *Young Women, Work, and Family in England 1918-1950* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), J. Davis, *Youth and the Condition of Britain: Images of Adolescent Conflict* (London: Athlone, 1990) and B. Osgerby, *Youth in Britain Since 1945* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1998).

<sup>3</sup> D. Gough, "The Very Young Mother," in *Pregnancy in Adolescence: Report of a Conference Held on March 10th 1966*, Archive of the National Council for One Parent Families (City of London, 1966), The Women's Library, 3.

normal emotional development'.<sup>4</sup> The professional confusion Hilary Halpin described stemmed from having to care for 'two sets of children' whose best interests might be at odds with one another.

As outlined in Chapter 3, the psychological problematization of the unmarried mother described her as the product of disturbed familial relationships. Originating in their early disturbed relationship with their own parents, it was claimed that the young mother and father of an illegitimate child had an unconscious wish to produce a child out-of-wedlock. Since this wish was seen as an enduring characteristic of their personalities, proponents of this view, notably John Bowlby, focused their attention on 'the next generation', their children. Bowlby maintained that the child-rearing conditions which an unmarried mother could offer her child were likely to severely affect his or her mental development. This was a result not only of the disturbed personality of the mother, but of the economic difficulties she was likely to encounter which could lead her child into foster-care or into the care of a local authority. Bowlby, therefore, criticised voluntary organisations for encouraging unmarried mothers to raise their children themselves. He supported the adoption of these children by families that could provide an environment more conducive to normal development.<sup>5</sup>

The problematization of the teenage unmarried mother drew from the psychological problematization of unmarried mothers. However, in the case of the teenage unmarried mother it was not only the baby's psychological development which professionals were preoccupied with but also that of the mother's. Halpin appealed to the audience:

...what we must think about is how we can help these girls to mature, through this experience. We cannot just see it as an incident, having a baby and then going back to school and forgetting about it. We have got to see it as a movement of growth in the direction of maturity.<sup>6</sup>

The illegitimate pregnancy, which in the psychological problematization was an

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 5.

<sup>5</sup> J. Fink, "Condemned or Condoned? Investigating the Problem of Unmarried Motherhood in England, 1945-60," (University of Essex, 1997).

<sup>6</sup> *Pregnancy in Adolescence: Report of a Conference Held on March 10th 1966*, Archive of the National Council for One Parent Families (City of London, 1966), The Women's Library.

indicator of a persistent disorder, was incorporated into the process of normal development. In Chapter 3, I explored the tension between the notion of adolescence as denoting a stage of development characterised by mental disorder and the claim that unmarried mothers were psychologically disturbed. Both the term 'adolescent' and 'unmarried mother' denoted two competing pathological subjectivities. The illegitimate pregnancy could be seen as primarily the result of the disturbance of 'adolescence' or primarily the result of the long-term psychological disturbance found in all unmarried mothers. In the writings of many professionals, however, it was ultimately the notion of unmarried motherhood as denoting pathological subjectivity that took precedence. Consequently, prominent professionals such as Leontine Young concluded that even in adolescence becoming an unmarried mother was the result of a psychological disorder. However, adolescent unmarried mothers were less disturbed than their older counterparts and had better chances of recovering from their neurosis. Halpin's statement, however, reveals that a shift took place in the balance between the terms 'adolescent' and 'unmarried mother'. The adolescent unmarried mother was now seen primarily as an adolescent. As a result, the illegitimate pregnancy was portrayed as a developmental disturbance amenable to treatment.

Another characteristic of this novel configuration was that at its centre was a hybrid creature, a young woman whose body is mature but who was nonetheless not fully grown-up. This depiction posed an obvious governance question: who should take responsibility for managing the sexual and reproductive capacities of these young girls? The answer proposed by all the speakers at the conference was unanimous; it was not the girls themselves or their parents but the audience gathered at Caxton Hall: professionals and government officers who were in charge of guarding the welfare of children and the future health of the nation as a whole.<sup>7</sup>

Underpinning the emerging problematization of the teenage unmarried mother was a broader process whereby during the course of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, governmental networks around children had intensified and, after World War II, were increasingly shaped by

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<sup>7</sup> Gough, "The Very Young Mother."

psychological discourse.<sup>8</sup> Halpin's involvement in the development of psychological services as well as her role at the London Juvenile Court and the London County Council point to the way this process was associated with the problematization of the teenage unmarried mother. An additional factor underlying the rise of this concern was the Children and Young Persons Act 1963 whose implementation was widely discussed by Halpin's employer – the London County Council. Under this legislation local authorities were given extended powers and duties for the promotion of the welfare of children. Local authorities were required to take action to prevent children from coming into care, remaining in care, or being brought before a juvenile court.

Two main discourses described in Chapter 3 and Chapter 5 were employed in the problematization of the teenage unmarried mother. The first located the illegitimate pregnancy within a discourse of pathologies produced by disturbed familial relationships. A key feature of this discourse was the elimination of 'sex' as a causative factor in the 'etymology' of the pregnancy. According to this view, the illegitimate pregnancy was not the accidental result of the pursuit of sexual gratification, but a psychological symptom emanating from psychological processes. Dr. Gough expressed this view at the conference when he argued:

It is also too simple to think that we have explained the whole difficulty in the individual case if we say that sexual activity is biologically natural and exciting and that our young people are now maturing physically much earlier than before.<sup>9</sup>

Instead he maintained:

Most of the pregnant schoolgirls that I have seen have been seeking in sexual activity and motherhood ways of dealing with anxiety and feelings of deprivation ... They hoped to satisfy their wish to feel needed, loved, and good, not only in the arms of their boy friends but also through their babies' need and love of them...<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> N. Rose, *Governing the Soul: The Shaping of the Private Self* (London: Free Association Press, 1999).

<sup>9</sup> Gough, "The Very Young Mother", 6.

<sup>10</sup> D. Gough, "Psychotherapy with Unmarried Mothers," *Understanding Unmarried Mothers*:

Gough went even further than claiming that sexual activity was only a device for becoming pregnant when he depicted sexual activity itself as a symptom – ‘a way of dealing with anxiety and feelings of deprivation’. As a result of this position, he proposed that access to contraception or extended sex education would not prevent some of these pregnancies. He found further support for this claim in the fact that many of the girls whom he interviewed said that it had not occurred to them that they might fall pregnant. Within the moral problematization, girls’ claims of not remembering engaging in sexual activity or not realising the consequences of such activity were interpreted as attempts to deny responsibility or conceal willing participation in sexual activity. However, within the psychological problematization, failure to remember the incident or consider its consequences was seen as proof of the unconscious nature of the psychological processes leading to the pregnancy.

The second discourse employed by speakers at the conference was the ‘teenage sex’ discourse. This discourse located the illegitimate pregnancy in the conjunction between the so called ‘sexual revolution’ and the characteristics of contemporary teenage. The claim was that contemporary Britain was undergoing a process of liberalisation of sexual mores leading to a rise in the representation of ‘sex’ in the mass media. This, in turn, led to a stimulation of sexual impulses, particularly among young people. Since contemporary teenagers were reaching sexual maturity earlier than any other generation in history, they were particularly liable to the risk of early pregnancy. Articulating this view Dr. Gough proclaimed:

I think we are putting a tremendous strain on our young teenagers because we expose them to, or allow them to be exposed to a barrage of idealised sexuality, and turn a blind eye to what is going on much of the time. It is not surprising that a number of girls find this responsibility too much for them.<sup>11</sup>

Similarly, Mr. Kingdom, an administrative officer of the Inner London Education appealed to the audience:

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*Observations by a Psychoanalyst*, Archive of the National Council for One Parent Families (City of London, 1966), The Women’s Library, 13.

<sup>11</sup> Gough, “The Very Young Mother.”, 6.

...consider the sexual stimuli, some overt, some cunningly contrived, to which our young people are exposed in advertisements, salacious reading material and so on; consider the fact that our girls are reaching physical maturity some two years earlier than was the case a couple of generations ago...<sup>12</sup>

Under these circumstances, Kingdom argued, the rise in the number of teenage unmarried mothers would seem relatively low. This view led its supporters to advocate the expansion of sex education and access to contraception as a way of tackling these pregnancies.

The 'teenage sex' discourse put forward by Gough and Kingdom highlighted the interaction between societal processes and physiological processes. The quickening pace of sexual maturation interacted with the increased representation of 'sex' in the media to produce a higher rate of illegitimate pregnancies. Whereas in psychological discourse, the illegitimate pregnancy was associated with a disturbance in familial relationships, in the 'teenage sex' discourse it was linked to the adolescent girl's body: a precocious and sexually-stimulated body. This discourse configured the pregnancy, not as the result of individual psychology and a single family's emotional economy but as the product of all-engulfing societal trends.<sup>13</sup>

Implicitly drawing on the psychological concept of adolescence, both discourses portrayed the teenage unmarried mother as 'not fully grown-up' psychologically, despite having matured physiologically. Within the 'teenage sex' discourse, this notion of a split between psychological and physiological was implied by the claim that the increased pace of physiological maturation created a surplus of years in which teenage girls could become pregnant. Furthermore, this discourse aligned adolescents with children by claiming that their engagement in sexual activity was the result of the influence of the mass media. During the late 1950s and early 1960s, there were widespread anxieties

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<sup>12</sup> H. A. Kingdom, "The Young Mother and Education," in *Pregnancy in Adolescence: Report of a Conference Held on March 10th 1966*, Archive of the National Council for One Parent Families (City of London, 1966), The Women's Library, 20.

<sup>13</sup> Rose, *Governing the Soul*.

regarding children and young people's consumption of the mass media.<sup>14</sup> The link to the broader apprehensions regarding media consumption, as well as the depiction of teenagers as the victims of exposure to sexual representations, associated them with children.

## **6.2 St. Christopher's Mother and Baby Home**

I have so far described the key discourses comprising the emerging problematization of teenage unmarried mothers. However, the conference held in March 1966 was also significant in pointing out the link between these emerging discourses and the new institutional practices being developed at the time. The chairman of the conference as well as two of the speakers were associated with the work of a Mother and Baby Home in South London. St. Christopher's Mother and Baby Home was proclaimed by the London County Council to be the first Home in England and Wales to specialise in caring for pregnant schoolgirls. Although this fact was not conveyed to the conference audience, Hilary Halpin, Dr. Donald Gough and Sister Dora King were all closely involved in the work of St. Christopher's. Sister King had been the Matron of the Home in the late 1950s, Dr. Gough was its Visiting Psychiatrist, and as Chair of the London County Council's Children's Committee, Halpin was responsible for overseeing its work.<sup>15</sup>

I argue that an examination of the work of this Home allows the identification of the key shifts in discourses and practices associated with the emergence of the problematization of the teenage unmarried mother. The influence of this institution extended beyond the bounds of the London County Council as the Home admitted young girls from local authorities across England. Furthermore, according to the Council, the Home was renowned for its innovative practices and attracted visitors from

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<sup>14</sup> D. Oswell, "And What Might Our Children Become? Future Visions, Governance and the Child Television Audience in Postwar Britain," *Screen* 40, no. 1 (1999): 66-87.

<sup>15</sup> *St. Christopher's Building Inspections*, London County Council, City of London, GLC/MA/SC/8/1, London Metropolitan Archives.

across England and Wales.<sup>16</sup> Thus, the work of St. Christopher's is suggestive of the discourses and practices emerging around the figure of the teenage unmarried mother.

The establishment of St. Christopher's in its specialised capacity was first discussed by the Council in March 1959. The Children's Committee discussed a proposal to develop an experimental scheme for pregnant girls in the Council's care. It was suggested that this scheme could replace the current practice of referring these cases to religious Mother and Baby Homes. In these early discussions it is possible to identify the central role of psychological discourse: it was proposed that one of St. Christopher's purposes was to provide a setting in which the young women would be supported in 'coping with their problems'.<sup>17</sup>

The Council organised a meeting with representatives of religious and voluntary bodies in which it was decided that a Mother and Baby Home specialising in caring for school-aged mothers should be established. Describing the need for this Home, the Medical Officer of Health argued 'For obvious reasons it is not desirable that these children should be placed in Mother and Baby Homes with adult unmarried mothers'.<sup>18</sup> This statement reveals that the reason for the separation was that schoolgirl mothers were considered children, and that this was seen as necessitating their separation from adult unmarried mothers. He further argued that in the case of schoolgirls there was a need to enter residential accommodation earlier than permitted by religious Mother and Baby Homes. Although this was not explicitly stated, the need to admit schoolgirls to a Mother and Baby Home earlier than older mothers stemmed from the fact that they were not allowed to attend school throughout the pregnancy. The account presented in Chapter 4 revealed that even in the late 1960s, there were still Mother and Baby Homes which did not separate the teenage unmarried mothers from their older counterparts. In St. Mary's House Mother and Baby Home and in King's Mead, adolescent unmarried

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<sup>16</sup> Medical Officer of Health, Education Officer and Children's Officer, "St. Christopher's Mother and Baby Home," Papers of the Children's Committee, London County Council (City of London, May 23, 1962), LCC/MIN/2713, London Metropolitan Archives, 2.

<sup>17</sup> Children's Officer, "Illegitimate Children and Pregnant Girls – Reception and Retention in Care," Papers of the Children's Committee, London County Council (City of London, March 12, 1959), LCC/MIN/2710, London Metropolitan Archives.

<sup>18</sup> County Medical Officer of Health and Principal School Medical Officer, "Annual Report of the County Medical Officer of Health and the Principal School Medical Officer for the Year 1961," London County Council, City of London, London Metropolitan Archives.



mothers, often as young as fifteen, were accommodated alongside older unmarried mothers and received identical care. The suggestion that young unmarried mothers should be accommodated separately from 'adult' unmarried mothers represented a break with existing practice in many Mother and Baby Homes across England and Wales.<sup>19</sup>

St. Christopher's Mother and Baby Home, located at 179 Tulse Hill in Lambeth, was chosen to host the new arrangement. The Home had been run by the Church Army since 1948 and was re-opened in April 1961 in its specialised capacity. The overwhelming majority of young women who entered the Home were in the Council's care prior to their admission. Some were in care when they became pregnant, while others were committed into care by the courts following their pregnancy.<sup>20</sup> Most girls were fourteen years of age; others were as young as twelve or as old as sixteen.

The work of St. Christopher's was shaped by three problematizations: the moral and the psychological problematizations of unmarried mothers and the discourse of 'teenage sex'. The key novelty in St. Christopher's work was the staff's use of psychological and social work techniques which were grafted on to the moral techniques commonly used in religious Mother and Baby Homes. This entry of psychological techniques into the work of the institution was associated with three broad changes: residents of St. Christopher's were more closely observed than residents of other Homes; a greater number of social workers and council officers were involved in their care; and the care that each girl received was determined by social workers' assessment of her individual needs.

In addition, the establishment of St. Christopher's as a specialised Home was marked by a more complex governmental arrangement in comparison with other institutions used by the Council to accommodate unmarried mothers. Most unmarried pregnant women who sought the Council's assistance were provided for by Mother and Baby Homes affiliated to religious organisations. These were supported by annual grants made

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<sup>19</sup> The findings from King's Mead and St. Mary's House are supported by the results of Jill Nicholson's nation wide survey of Mother and Baby Homes described in Chapter 3.

<sup>20</sup> Although there had been a rise, the overall number of girls involved was relatively small – between 1961 and 1963 the annual number of pregnant girls in care ranged from 82 to 111. See Acting Medical Officer of Health, Education Officer and Children's Officer, "St. Christopher's Mother and Baby Home," Papers of the Children's Committee, London County Council (City of London, November 20, 1964), LCC/MIN/2716, London Metropolitan Archives, 1.

by the Health Committee under section 22 of the National Health Service Act.<sup>21</sup> Nonetheless, the moral welfare workers running these Homes and the Moral Welfare Associations to which they were affiliated were free to determine Homes' admission regimes and regulations. Pregnant women who were refused admission by religious Mother and Baby Homes were admitted into nursing homes that were managed by the Welfare Department. Although 'mothercraft' training provided in the Homes was undertaken in co-ordination with the Children's Department, on the whole, the institutions' work was the sole responsibility of the Welfare Department.<sup>22</sup>

In contrast with these Homes which were run by a single authority, St. Christopher's was jointly run by the Church Army authorities, the resident staff at the Home and three council departments: Health, Education and Children's Departments. The responsibility for the day-to-day running of the Home lay with the staff affiliated to the Church Army. However, the Council was represented in the Home's management committees and senior Council figures such as the Chief Inspector of Child Care and the Divisional Medical Officer regularly attended these meetings. Council reports regarding the work of the Home were jointly written by the Chief Officers of the three departments involved and were discussed by the corresponding committees. Furthermore, the financial arrangements were complex: the Home was established by the Church Army, the cost of its adaptation to the specialised capacity was covered by the Public Health Department and its full-time teacher was financed by the Education Department.

In many ways the operation of St. Christopher's resembled that of other Mother and Baby Homes. During their stay the girls were visited by a minister of their denomination<sup>23</sup> and were offered a programme of leisure activities, such as painting and

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<sup>21</sup> Medical Officer of Health, "National Health Service Act, 1946- Section 22: (a) Grants to Voluntary Organisations Controlling Mother and Baby Homes (b) Grants to Moral Welfare Associations," Health Committee Papers, London County Council (City of London, May 7, 1963), London Metropolitan Archives.

<sup>22</sup> Children's Officer, "Guidance to Mothers in Welfare Establishments," Papers of the Children's Committee, London County Council (City of London, February 10, 1955), LCC/MIN/2705, London Metropolitan Archives.

<sup>23</sup> Medical Officer of Health, Education Officer and Children's Officer, "St. Christopher's Mother and Baby Home," Papers of the Children's Committee, London County Council (City of London, May 23, 1962), LCC/MIN/2713, London Metropolitan Archives.

craft work.<sup>24</sup> The Home's architectural arrangements were in line with common practice. The Home was set in a detached house with a large back garden.<sup>25</sup> It had the usual layout which included dormitories for residents and staff, a seating room and a nursery. It accommodated approximately 12 expectant and nursing mothers and four babies at any one time as was the practice recommended by the National Council for the Unmarried Mother and Her Child.<sup>26</sup>

Nonetheless, in several ways arrangements at St. Christopher's were innovative. Girls were usually admitted as soon as their pregnancy was diagnosed and not only six weeks before the delivery. Their stay at the Home was, as a result, much longer and lasted five to six months on average. In addition, it appears that residents of St. Christopher's were not required to undertake housework duties. The Council reports describing the work of St. Christopher's did not mention the residents' requirement to undertake housework. This requirement was a central feature of the regime in most Homes, as it was seen as an important part of the rehabilitation of the unmarried mother. As mentioned in Chapter 3, some Homes even required girls to sign a declaration prior to their admission in which they vowed to complete their allocated share of the housework duties.<sup>27</sup> Although the possibility that residents at St. Christopher's were required to carry out housework could not be excluded, the absence of reference to this issue in the Council's reports is an indication that this was not awarded the importance it had in many other Mother and Baby Homes.

However, the key characteristic setting St. Christopher's apart from other Homes was the increased role played by psychological and social work techniques. The Council described 'intensive casework' with the girls and their families as a 'vital' part of the

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<sup>24</sup> Acting Medical Officer of Health, Education Officer and Children's Officer, "St. Christopher's Mother and Baby Home," Papers of the Children's Committee, London County Council (City of London, November 20, 1964), LCC/MIN/2716, London Metropolitan Archives, 5.

<sup>25</sup> *St. Christopher's Building Inspections*, London County Council, City of London, GLC/MA/SC/8/1, London Metropolitan Archives.

<sup>26</sup> National Council for the Unmarried Mother and Her Child, "Standards in Mother and Baby Homes – Leaflet 1, Material Standards," (City of London, 1964), ACC2201/M2/1, London Metropolitan Archives.

<sup>27</sup> Putney Mother and Baby Home Case Papers, City of London, ACC 2201/L11/2/1-74, London Metropolitan Archives.

Home's work.<sup>28</sup> A series of professional case-conferences were held in relation to each girl shortly after admission, before the confinement and after the confinement. Additional intermediate case-conferences were arranged on an ad hoc basis. These conferences brought together the group of professionals involved in the girls' care: the residential staff at the Home, the girl's child care officer, her teacher and the Council's child care inspector. In these case-conferences, professionals determined and monitored the care that each girl received. However, the network of professionals involved in monitoring the residents spread beyond the bounds of the institution. '*Close relationships*' were said to have existed between the resident staff at the Home and the staff at Lambeth Hospital where the girls received their ante-natal treatment and were later confined.<sup>29</sup> The Home's staff also kept in close contact with girls' former schools in order to ensure continuity in their education.<sup>30</sup>

The procedure established in St. Christopher's whereby each girl's care was reviewed through a series of case-conferences was the application in an intensified form of a technology deployed by the Council in relation to all children in care. In November 1961, the Children's Committee approved several measures which extended care provision, individualised it and intensified its monitoring. The Council decided to extend after-care provision, rearrange the care around the individual child and intensify the care review process. The use of case-conference review developed as a way of meeting the latter requirement. Residential establishments would regularly hold case-conferences in which all the staff involved in a child's care would meet and discuss the child's needs, progress and future plans. The case-conferences were described by a Council report as 'an ideal technique' for reviewing the care a child received since they enabled:

- (a) joint regular consideration by all concerned of all aspects of casework and forward-planning for each child;
- (b) improved communications between child-care officers, residential staff and others; and
- (c) the encouragement of an exchange of ideas as a form

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<sup>28</sup> Acting Medical Officer of Health, Education Officer and Children's Officer, "St. Christopher's Mother and Baby Home," Papers of the Children's Committee, London County Council (City of London, November 20, 1964), LCC/MIN/2716, London Metropolitan Archives, 2.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

of training in the job.<sup>31</sup>

The use of case-conferences in provision for schoolgirl unmarried mothers marked the entrance of this technology into the field of work with unmarried mothers. This process, alongside the individualisation of care and professionals' greater involvement in planning the girl and her baby's future represented a break from the arrangements found in other Mother and Baby Homes. In most Homes girls were interviewed once by the referring moral welfare worker or council officer before their admission. Rather than a team of professionals, it was the matron and some of her assistants who were responsible for all aspects of care: the girls' medical condition, their emotional well-being and their baby's health. The most significant difference was in the approach to the girls' plans for the period after their discharge from the Home. At St. Christopher's, it was professionals rather than the girl herself or her family who were the primary decision makers with regard to the plans for the young girl's future and that of her child.<sup>32</sup> This practice diverged from that found in religious Homes where it was the girl, often as young as sixteen, who was responsible for making these decisions.<sup>33</sup>

The use of social work and psychiatric practices intensified approximately a year into the Home's operation. The Council's report from 22<sup>nd</sup> of March 1962 noted the request made by the Home's Local Management Committee to retain the services of a Visiting Psychiatrist. In his report recommending the authorisation of this request the Medical Officer of Health wrote:

Very special problems arise in an establishment of this kind and it is considered... that the allocation of psychiatrist [*sic*] sessions would be justified, not only to advise the staff generally on how to cope with the problems, but also to deal with individual cases as and when necessary.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Children's Officer, "Care of Adolescents," Papers of the Children's Committee, London County Council (City of London, May 17, 1963), LCC/MIN/2714, London Metropolitan Archives, 3.

<sup>32</sup> Medical Officer of Health, Education Officer and Children's Officer, "St. Christopher's Mother and Baby Home," Papers of the Children's Committee, London County Council (City of London, May 23, 1962), LCC/MIN/2713, London Metropolitan Archives, 3.

<sup>33</sup> St. Mary's House Case Papers, January 1965 to October 1967 (City of London, 1966), ACC 2201/H23/2/1-166, London Metropolitan Archives.

<sup>34</sup> Medical Officer of Health, "St. Christopher's Mother and Baby Home," Papers of the Health

A later report elaborated further on the rationale –

Many of the girls are so young that they really require mothering and their separation from their parents under these circumstances frequently results in a need for psychiatric help.<sup>35</sup>

This account alluded to Bowlby's notion of 'maternal deprivation'<sup>36</sup> by asserting that the untimely separation from parents brought about the need for psychiatric support. Furthermore, it reinforced the depiction of the teenage unmarried mother as a subject who was still growing up despite having a fully mature body. Although in physiological terms, she was shortly to become a mother herself, psychologically she was still in need of mothering.

While it was argued that the need for psychiatric guidance stemmed from the conditions following the pregnancy, the involvement of psychiatric expertise in the care signified the rising influence of the proposition that the illegitimate pregnancy *in itself* was a psychiatric symptom. The decision to appoint Dr. Gough was a step in this direction. Dr. Donald Gough was described in the reports as having specialised in work with unmarried mothers. Although it is not specified how the Medical Officer came to know of it, it is likely that he was familiar with Dr. Gough's publications on this issue. A year before his appointment, Gough had already expressed in stark terms his support of the view that unmarried mothers were psychologically disturbed. In an article published in the journal *The Almoner* he stated:

A girl in our society who starts a pregnancy with a man whom she is either unwilling or unable to marry has shown herself to be a disturbed personality, and I think that we are entitled to look upon an illegitimate baby as the living proof of his mother's severe emotional difficulties.<sup>37</sup>

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Committee, London County Council (City of London, March 22, 1962), LCC/MIN/6617, London Metropolitan Archives.

<sup>35</sup> Medical Officer of Health, "St. Christopher's Mother and Baby Home," Papers of the Health Committee, London County Council (City of London, December 31, 1962), LCC/MIN/6620, London Metropolitan Archives.

<sup>36</sup> J. Bowlby, *The Making and Breaking of Affectional Bonds* (Oxford: Routledge, 2005).

<sup>37</sup> D. Gough, "Work with Unmarried Mothers," *Almoner* 13, no. 12 (1961): 491.

The application of psychological discourse to work with schoolgirl unmarried mothers is further explicated if we consider the way in which adolescence, sexual activity and mental disturbance were being used in the Council's work with adolescent girls in care. More specifically the psychological concepts of 'adolescence' and 'deprivation' were being employed to portray sexually active girls. In 1956 the Children's Committee report discussing 'Difficult Adolescent Girls in Care' proposed that the mental upheaval associated with the developmental stage of adolescence, combined with the psychological weaknesses stemming from having a 'deprived' background, provided fertile grounds for the development of girls who exhibited disturbed behaviour.<sup>38</sup> The report proclaimed:

At adolescence there is a tendency for early childish needs to reassert themselves, and especially for troubles to arise out of such of those early needs as were unsatisfied at the appropriate time. The girls are experiencing the strains and changes of adolescence, and these produce tensions which in normal home conditions would be absorbed by the natural affections and security of the home... Even in normal good homes, this period of adolescence can produce behaviour problems – all the more so then, with "deprived" children.<sup>39</sup>

One of the sub-categories of the behavioural problems identified by the report was precocious behaviour and engagement in sexual activity.

The deployment of psychological discourse to problematize sexually active girls in care elucidates the decision to appoint a Visiting Psychiatrist to St. Christopher's. In the first several months of his tenure, Dr. Gough visited the Home on a fortnightly basis and held regular group discussions with staff and residents. He also held individual counselling sessions when a need was identified. According to Council officers, the initiative was met with a positive response:

The group discussions are appreciated by both the staff and the girls as they provide an opportunity for the girls to discuss their problems

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<sup>38</sup> Children's Officer, "Difficult Adolescent Girls in Care," Papers of the Children's Committee, London County Council (City of London, February 28, 1956), London Metropolitan Archives.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

and their tensions are often relieved in this way...<sup>40</sup>

In contrast with the practice found in St. Mary's House, in St. Christopher's, the matron was not handling women's difficulties alone. The Council report stated: 'As Dr. Gough knows all the girls he can advise the Matron on difficult cases and on the rehabilitation of girls into their homes or into school'.<sup>41</sup>

At first, the psychiatric visits were considered an experimental arrangement but after a year into Dr. Gough's tenure the Medical Officer of Health wrote in his report:

In recent months... the extent to which individual girls have benefited either by direct help from Dr. Gough or indirectly through his discussions with the staff of the Home has been so marked that I am now entirely satisfied that a valuable service is being provided and should be extended.<sup>42</sup>

The decision was made to increase the frequency of Dr. Gough's visits to the Home to a weekly basis. Psychiatric input extended even further when Gough started to visit each girl in hospital immediately after the birth. He argued that in the short period after giving birth girls were particularly accessible to psychotherapy and that psychological help received at this unique time could have profound influence on the girl's future development as well as that of her child.<sup>43</sup> In an article published in the Moral Welfare Workers Association Bulletin Gough claimed:

Much work can be done while the girl is waiting for her baby to be born, but she is most in need of help after the birth of the baby. I have been enormously impressed by the dramatic change that occurs in unmarried mothers immediately after childbirth. While they are

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<sup>40</sup> Medical Officer of Health, "St. Christopher's Mother and Baby Home," Papers of the Health Committee, London County Council (City of London, December 31, 1962), LCC/MIN/6620, London Metropolitan Archives, 1.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> "St. Christopher's Mother and Baby Home 179 Tulse Hill, S.W.2 Lambeth (Norwood) Electoral Division," Papers of the Health Committee, London County Council (City of London, July 4, 1963), LCC/MIN/6586, London Metropolitan Archives.

<sup>43</sup> Acting Medical Officer of Health, Education Officer and Children's Officer, "St. Christopher's Mother and Baby Home," Papers of the Children's Committee, London County Council (City of London, November 20, 1964), LCC/MIN/2716, London Metropolitan Archives, 9.



waiting for their babies they often succeed in laughing about their trouble and denying them in other ways. When the baby is first born, they drop these defences against anxiety and are for a time very much more in touch with their deeper feelings...<sup>44</sup>

The mothers at first reversed their decision to part with their baby as they became in touch with their previously unconscious wish to have a child. The psychologist's intervention is described as assisting the girl to 'work through' her conflicting feelings and come to terms with the implications of her decision.<sup>45</sup>

The increased influence of the psychological perspective led to another innovative practice – the abolition of the 'six weeks rule'. In most Mother and Baby Homes, girls were required to care for their babies for a period of six weeks following their confinement. This requirement was strictly enforced despite frequent resistance on the part of the women and their families. Stretton House, the south London Mother and Baby Home for girls under the age of twenty-one, required its residents to care for their babies for a minimum period of three months. For girls under the age of sixteen a longer stay of up to five months was the rule.<sup>46</sup>

In contrast, a significant section of St. Christopher's residents did not return to the Home after the birth. Others returned without their baby or stayed for a short period of up to three weeks.<sup>47</sup> Furthermore, the suggested rationale for the post-natal stay was rather piecemeal:

This short period in St. Christopher's after the confinement helped the girls to readjust in a relaxed and familiar atmosphere as they gradually recovered full physical fitness. Some found it easier, whilst among their friends at the home, to come to terms with the idea of permanent separation from their baby. Equally important, the

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<sup>44</sup> D. Gough, "Schoolgirl Mothers," *Bulletin of the Moral Welfare Workers' Association* (City of London, January-February, 1966), ACC 2201/M11/57-90, London Metropolitan Archives, 23.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 24.

<sup>46</sup> *Stretton House Annual Reports 1956-1959* (City of London, 1956-1969), ACC 2201/E4/16-19, London Metropolitan Archives.

<sup>47</sup> Acting Medical Officer of Health, Education Officer and Children's Officer, "St. Christopher's Mother and Baby Home," *Papers of the Children's Committee*, London County Council (City of London, November 20, 1964), LCC/MIN/6587, London Metropolitan Archives.

presence of mothers who had been safely confined... did more than any other single factor to promote morale...<sup>48</sup>

There was no reference to the 'six weeks rule' nor any assertion that caring for the baby was useful from the point of view of the mother. Somewhat paradoxically, this change was associated with an increased discussion of girls' competence as mothers. While the moral problematization focused on the effect of the responsibilities of motherhood on a woman's subjectivity, within the psychological perspective the focal point was the mother's likely effect on her child. However, conflicting views on this matter were expressed. While Gough argued:

Their ability to mother their babies varies considerably with their age, temperament and intelligence, but most of them soon learn to be very competent little mothers.<sup>49</sup>

Sister Dora King claimed:

...the very young mother cannot cope for long with the care of her child, even with all the support we can give her. We must recognise her needs in this, as well as the effect it will have on the baby.<sup>50</sup>

The question of the mother's competence was linked to two main decisions: whether to encourage mothers to care for their babies in the first few weeks of their baby's life and whether to encourage them to raise their child themselves. Dr. Gough's position on these matters was not fully consistent. He questioned the usefulness of requiring girls to care for babies that would be adopted. At the same time he maintained that by caring for their babies for several weeks girls could possibly become reconciled with their choice of giving their baby up for adoption.

However, these apparent inconsistencies are explained by the fact that Gough's primary objective was expanding the role of psychologists in the decision-making process:

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<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>49</sup> Gough, "The Very Young Mother," 12.

<sup>50</sup> D. King, "The Care of the Very Young Unmarried Mother," in *Pregnancy in Adolescence: Report of a Conference Held on March 10th 1966*, Archive of the National Council for One Parent Families (City of London, 1966), 14.

...all too often, the mother and baby are just stuck together and left to get on with it. This tends to produce either a disastrously unsatisfactory nursing couple or a 'tender trap' in which it is very difficult for the mother to see things clearly. I have seen many cases in which things seemed to be going seriously wrong with an infant's development and response to mothering as the result of endless battles with a young mother who was incapable of providing 'good enough' mothering, but who was, nevertheless, compelled to go on tending him, for six or more weeks.<sup>51</sup>

The problem for Gough was not a young mother's decision to care for her child or to give it up for adoption, but the lack of psychological input into the process. As long as professionals would be there to help the mother 'work through' her difficulties, a positive outcome could be ensured. In practice, approximately a quarter of babies born to the residents of St. Christopher's were placed for adoption, others were received into care or kept by their mothers.<sup>52</sup>

St. Christopher's was to become not just a hub of clinical activity, but also an experimental site where knowledge was gleaned and subsequently applied. A year into the Home's operation, the Council report declared:

Information about the girls is now being systematically recorded and follow-up enquiries are being started: it is hoped thereby to gather information of value which will help to guide the work in future and throw some light on the many problems involved.<sup>53</sup>

The recorded information included details regarding each girl's home background,

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<sup>51</sup> Gough, "Schoolgirl Mothers.", 24.

<sup>52</sup> Acting Medical Officer of Health, Education Officer and Children's Officer, "St. Christopher's Mother and Baby Home," Papers of the Children's Committee, London County Council (City of London, November 20, 1964), LCC/MIN/6587, London Metropolitan Archives; Medical Officer of Health, Education Officer and Children's Officer, "St. Christopher's Mother and Baby Home," Papers of the Children's Committee, London County Council (City of London, June 21, 1963), LCC/MIN/2714, London Metropolitan Archives.

<sup>53</sup> Medical Officer of Health, Education Officer and Children's Officer, "St. Christopher's Mother and Baby Home," Papers of the Children's Committee, London County Council (City of London, May 23, 1962), LCC/MIN/2713, London Metropolitan Archives, 2.

family history, health, school record and attitudes.<sup>54</sup> The report then outlined the plan to conduct:

...a comprehensive study of all aspects of the work with the girls at St. Christopher's and their progress afterwards, on a more objective basis than would otherwise have been possible.<sup>55</sup>

The survey's questions as well as the analysis of its results reveal the presence of both the psychological problematization of unmarried mothers and the 'teenage sex' discourse. The survey examined the girls' family background and found that the overwhelming majority of them had grown up in a disturbed family setting. However, the surveyors cast the net very wide – a family was considered to be of a disturbed makeup if the parents were separated or if one of them was a step-parent. In their analysis of the survey's results the Acting Medical Officer of Health, the Education Officer and the Children's Officer stated:

Although they apparently get along fairly well with their parent(s), underlying this relationship is a disturbed family pattern or background which makes them vulnerable. The probability is that they will be "latch key" girls with their mothers out at work at least part of the time.<sup>56</sup>

In line with the psychological preoccupation with the 'good enough' mother, the survey examined the quality of care that the girls provided for their babies and found that 'Most of the girls cared for the baby well or adequately: four cared for the baby poorly and two erratically'.<sup>57</sup> Nevertheless, several of the premises of the 'teenage sex' discourse were also employed. The extent of the girls' sex education and knowledge of human physiology were examined. In addition, the final section of the survey titled conclusion stated:

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<sup>54</sup> Medical Officer of Health, Education Officer and Children's Officer, "St. Christopher's Mother and Baby Home," Papers of the Children's Committee, London County Council (City of London, June 21, 1963), LCC/MIN/2714, London Metropolitan Archives, 3.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> Acting Medical Officer of Health, Education Officer and Children's Officer, "St. Christopher's Mother and Baby Home," Papers of the Children's Committee, London County Council (City of London, November 20, 1964), LCC/MIN/6587, London Metropolitan Archives, 5.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., 7.

The background against which the problems of pregnant girls should be seen is one in which successive generations of children in this country are growing up more quickly than their parents did, are taller and heavier on a weight for age basis, and mature physically at an earlier stage of life. Thus puberty and age of menarche is reached sooner, and the girls are liable to pregnancy at an earlier age of life than hitherto.<sup>58</sup>

In contrast with the earlier depiction, this quote described the pregnancies as the outcome of a bodily process creating a surplus of years in which the girls were 'liable to pregnancy'.

The Council took pride in St. Christopher's pioneering work and claimed that its reputation as a centre of governmental and clinical innovative practice was spreading among practitioners in the field:

A great deal of interest is still being taken in St. Christopher's as the first home in the country to cater specially for pregnant schoolgirls, and visitors come from all parts of the county. Care has been taken to encourage this interest without allowing the number of visitors to get out of proportion.<sup>59</sup>

St. Christopher's was followed by other Homes and in 1962, ten Mother and Baby Homes in England and Wales were offering educational services to their schoolgirl residents.<sup>60</sup>

In October 1966, Caxton Hall was again filled with an audience. The occasion was the Annual General Meeting of the National Council for the Unmarried Mother and Her

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<sup>58</sup> Ibid., 8.

<sup>59</sup> Medical Officer of Health, Education Officer and Children's Officer, "St. Christopher's Mother and Baby Home," Papers of the Children's Committee, London County Council (City of London, May 23, 1962), LCC/MIN/2713, London Metropolitan Archives, 2.

<sup>60</sup> Bulletin of the Moral Welfare Workers' Association (City of London, July-August 1962), ACC 2201/M11/57-90, London Metropolitan Archives, 15.

Child. Addressing the audience was Kenneth Robinson the Minister of Health.<sup>61</sup> In his speech Robinson evoked several of the key features of the problematization of the teenage unmarried mother. He identified teenage unmarried mothers as a distinct group of mothers who required additional support, and expressed the view that the phenomenon of the unmarried mother involved two figures whose welfare and well-being should be guarded: the mother and her child. Robinson's speech revealed that there was still a struggle between the 'teenage sex' discourse and the psychological problematization. Employing the propositions associated with the 'teenage sex' discourse he argued that contraceptive provision and sex education should be made more widely available. However, he also evoked the psychological problematization claiming that the frustration experienced by illegitimate children could lead them to delinquency in later life. Noting that many young unmarried mothers refused to comply with Mother and Baby Homes' regulations he argued that there was an urgent need to develop other techniques of provision for this group of young women and children.

### **6.3 Conclusion**

The conference 'Pregnancy in Adolescence' in March 1966 and Kenneth Robinson's speech in October 1966 depict the rise of the problematization of the teenage unmarried mother. At the time, however, the definition of this emerging concern was still shifting - the terms 'adolescence' 'schoolgirl' and 'young unmarried mother' were alternately used. Nonetheless, two main discourses were consistently being employed in relation to this figure. The first was the psychological problematization of unmarried mothers that portrayed the teenage girl's pregnancy as the result of disturbed family relationships. The second was the 'teenage sex' discourse. This discourse made links between the characteristics of teenagers and several societal forces. It was argued that it was teenagers' exposure to commercial forces and the forces of the mass media as well as their own suggestibility that increased their propensity to engage in sexual activity. At

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<sup>61</sup> Ministry of Health, "Unmarried Mothers – Need for Special Care" (City of London, October 4, 1966), Family Planning Association Archive.

the centre of this discourse was the teenage girl said to reach reproductive capacity at an earlier age than in any other historical period. Crucially, however, the claim was that the increased physiological pace of maturation was not matched by the girls' psychological maturation. Hence, the teenage unmarried mother was depicted as a subject who although physiologically mature was nonetheless still in the process of growing up.

Examining the work of St. Christopher's enables us to view the way in which these discourses were deployed by professionals and government officers in devising their treatment of teenage unmarried mothers. I contend that within the London County Council's work, the differentiation of the young unmarried mother from older unmarried mothers was associated with several inter-related processes: the rising role of psychological knowledge in structuring care provision, the intensification of the professional scrutiny of residents, the individualisation of care and the increase in the number of professionals and organisations involved in the care. These were processes transforming Council provision for children in care more generally, and it was in part through the figure of the adolescent girl in care that these processes affected work with unmarried mothers.

Based on the account presented in Chapter 3 and in this chapter, it is possible to identify several discursive shifts associated with the emergence of the problematization of the 'teenage' or 'young' unmarried mother. First, there was a shift from 'unmarried mother' as the primary category according to which the subjectivity of the 'teenage' unmarried mother was delineated to 'adolescence' or 'youth' taking precedence. This shift marked a break with the moral problematization in which it was engagement in extra-marital intercourse which marked women's subjectivity. Crucially, however, in contrast with the moral problematization's view that the unmarried mother's subjectivity could be altered, the notion of 'teenage' implied a subjectivity that one could not change. Whereas according to the moral problematization unmarried mothers could choose to give up their erroneous ways, being a 'teenager' was not the result of one's choice.

Second, in line with the greater influence of the psychological problematization,

there was a shift from a conceptualisation of motherhood as a technology for transforming a reckless, pleasure-seeking woman into a responsible subject to a conceptualisation of motherhood as an ability which an individual woman might possess or lack.<sup>62</sup> The primary concern was no longer the transformation of the unmarried mother's subjectivity, but ensuring that the illegitimate child is cared for by a 'good enough mother'.

However, the problematization of the teenage unmarried mother was also distinguished from the psychological problematization of unmarried mothers. In contrast with the psychological depiction of the unmarried mother as suffering from a life-long psychological disorder, the teenage unmarried mother's disturbance was described as being a part of the universal process of development. In contrast with older unmarried mothers, this young woman might still be able to develop into a healthy citizen.

Finally, since the teenage unmarried mother herself was not fully grown up, it was her mental health, as well as that of her child, that should be guarded. Hence, governmental efforts no longer focused on trying to make these young women take responsibility for providing for themselves and for their children. Instead, professionals and government officers wanted to take responsibility for ensuring that, as Dr. Gough described it, 'two sets of children' grow up to be emotionally healthy citizens.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> C. Macleod, "Teenage Motherhood and the Regulation of Mothering in the Scientific Literature: The South African Example," *Feminism and Psychology* 11, no. 4 (2001): 493-510.

<sup>63</sup> Gough, "The Very Young Mother.", 5.



## Conclusion

In the summer of 1967 the Executive Committee of the Lambeth and District Moral Welfare Association was discussing the increasing number of vacancies at St. Mary's House Mother and Baby Home.<sup>1</sup> The Committee members agreed that this lower occupancy was not the result of a decline in the number of illegitimate births but attributed it to the growing tolerance within society towards unmarried mothers. More women who became pregnant out-of-wedlock were now able to stay in their parents' home during their pregnancy and this inevitably led to a decrease in the number of applications for a place in an institution.

The management of Stretton House, another South London Mother and Baby Home encountered a similar situation arising out of too many empty beds. In her 1970 Annual Report, the Home's matron reported a decline in the number of admissions and complained that it led to an alteration of the Home's clientele:

As the better type of girl is accepted back into the family circle, even if she has had an illegitimate baby, so we seem to be admitting more of the genuine dropouts of society.<sup>2</sup>

During the course of the last months of 1967, the management of St. Mary's House discussed various measures which might keep the Home from closing. Despite the staff's attempts to revert the downward trend, in January 1968 the Executive Committee finally reached an agreement that the Home should be closed down.<sup>3</sup> It was decided, however, that St. Mary's House would be re-opened as a supervised housing facility for young mothers and their babies. Elizabeth Izzard, one of the leading moral welfare workers of Lambeth and District Moral Welfare Association, was to move in and supervise the first group of mothers.

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<sup>1</sup> "Minutes of the Executive Committee Meeting of the Lambeth & District Moral Welfare Association," (London, July 25, 1967), ACC 2201/B6/1, London Metropolitan Archives.

<sup>2</sup> *Stretton House Annual Report for the Year 1970* (City of London, 1971), ACC 2201/E4/20-34, London Metropolitan Archives.

<sup>3</sup> "Minutes of the Executive Committee Meeting of the Lambeth & District Moral Welfare Association," (London, January 19, 1968), ACC 2201/B6/1, London Metropolitan Archives.

A similar process was occurring in other Mother and Baby Homes throughout the country. During the early 1970s, many of them were closing down. Between 1968 and 1974, the number of Homes decreased from 172 to 65.<sup>4</sup> Several Homes, like St. Mary's House, were converted into hostels offering supervised accommodation to single mothers. The organisations previously responsible for Mother and Baby Homes were now managing the new facilities. During the 1950s and most of the 1960s, Stretton House's work was shaped by the moral problematization of unmarried mothers. Although most of the Home's residents were teenagers, it was the concern with young women's lack of responsibility and religious values that structured the work of the Home. The declared role of the Home was to rehabilitate these young women transforming them into responsible subjects with sound moral values.

By the mid-1970s, the terms used to portray teenage unmarried mothers had radically changed. Describing the objective of her organisation's activities, Janet Evanson, a senior moral welfare worker with the Southwark Diocesan of Wel-Care stated:

The girls who need our help today, like many of their forerunners in Stretton House, are unsupported and alone in the world at the time of the birth of their baby, are likely to be under 20 years old, to have had family troubles and sometimes to have been brought up in care of the Local Authority. The father of the baby may also be a teenager and not in a position to provide a home for the young mother and baby...<sup>5</sup>

The typical mother supported by the organisation was described as a teenager. In contrast with the tradition of moral welfare work, the mothers were not described as lacking in religious virtue but as young women who had grown up in an emotionally disturbing environment. The employment of psychological discourse was even more salient in Evanson's account of the predicament of the teenage unmarried mother:

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<sup>4</sup> K. E. Kiernan, H. Land, and J. E. Lewis, *Lone Motherhood in Twentieth-Century Britain: From Footnote to Front Page* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998).

<sup>5</sup> *Stretton House Annual Report for the Year 1976* (City of London, 1977) ACC 2201/E4/20-34, London Metropolitan Archives.

As a result of her unhappy relationships with one or both parents, the young mother may find difficulty in showing affection and gentleness towards her baby. She is likely to feel rejected and depressed and to see little hope of future happiness and personal fulfilment.<sup>6</sup>

Evanson evoked two central psychological premises – that relationships with one’s parents shaped future relationships and that therefore women who grew up in disturbed family settings would have difficulty in becoming caring and affectionate mothers. Instead of admitting the teenage unmarried mother into a Mother and Baby Home in order to reform her character, her need for supervised accommodation was being linked to the protection of her mental well-being and that of her baby, as Evanson continued:

It is not always the answer to an unsupported young mother’s problems simply to re-house her in a flat on her own. She may be desperately lonely, totally inexperienced in home-building, and unable to care for her baby properly.<sup>7</sup>

Thus, even within moral welfare work, the shift to the problematization of the teenage mother was now complete.

Some thirty years after Evanson articulated her concern, public preoccupation with the teenage mother fails to die down. Vicky Pollard, the ‘chav’ teenage mother created and played by comedian Matt Lucas is one of the most famous comic characters in contemporary British popular culture. American independent film makers have recently offered the British public a more sophisticated image of the teenage mother in the successful film ‘Juno’. Recognising the apparently insatiable public interest in the phenomenon, the entertainment channel MTV will soon be launching a reality television programme that follows a sixteen-year-old girl expecting the birth of her child. However, it is not just the popular imagination that is captivated by the teenage mother. The sexually active teenage girl and the teenage mother remain focal points of

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

governmental activity.

As Angela McRobbie points out, public preoccupation with the teenage mother is part of a broader political impasse on the question of the extent to which the state should assist women who want to raise their children without the financial support of a partner.<sup>8</sup> This question's potency emanates from several significant transformations that occurred in the post-war decades. By the end of the 1960s, women's control of their fertility had radically improved as a rising number of women were able to obtain both effective contraception and abortion. Following the liberalisation of the divorce law, the number of mothers raising their children without a partner significantly increased, and during the 1970s the scope of state support available to these mothers was enhanced. In the several decades that followed, women's participation in the labour market rose considerably.<sup>9</sup> Women's dual role as mothers and workers, as well as the changing patterns of sexual and familial relationships produce the ongoing debate around the figure of the single mother.<sup>10</sup>

However, while teenage mothers are undeniably a feature of these broader debates, it is also problematic, to unite the categories of 'teenage mothers' and 'single mothers' as McRobbie and Phoenix do. Both McRobbie and Phoenix depict the teenage mother as a stereotype through which the wider population of single mothers is stigmatised.<sup>11</sup> The question of the relationship between the problematization of the teenage mother and the problematization of single mothers is linked to the attempt of scholars such as Daniel Monk and Jean Carabine to identify the reasons behind their problematization: is it a concern with sexual mores, or perhaps a concern with the financial burden placed by single mothers on the welfare state? Could it be linked to the violation of a certain notion of personal responsibility that is seen as central to liberal regimes?

American social historians who consider the emergence of teenage pregnancy raise

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<sup>8</sup> A. McRobbie, "Feminism and the Third Way," *Feminist Review* 64 (2000): 97-112.

<sup>9</sup> Kiernan, Land, and Lewis, *Lone Motherhood in Twentieth-Century Britain*.

<sup>10</sup> D. Monk, "Teenage Pregnancies and Sex Education: Constructing the Girl/Woman Subject," in *Sexuality and the Law: Feminist Engagements*, eds. V. E. Munro and C. F. Stychin (London: Routledge-Cavendish, 2007), 201-221.

<sup>11</sup> A. McRobbie, "Feminism and the Third Way.," A. Phoenix, "Social Constructions of Lone Motherhood: a Case of Competing Discourses," in *Good Enough Mothering? Feminist Perspectives on Lone Motherhood*, ed. E. Bortolaia Silva (London: Routledge, 1996), 175-190.

similar questions regarding the relative role of ‘moral’ or ‘economic’ concerns in the problematization of teenage mothers. They also consider whether there has been a transformation of societal concerns. Have sexual mores, gender relations or class relations changed, or have there been only apparent transformations masking the persistence of ‘old’ anxieties?

In the first chapter I critiqued the ontological grounding of several of the key arguments put forward by scholars in response to these questions. I argued that to claim that apprehensions regarding ‘teenage mothers’ are merely another expression of anxieties regarding women’s sexual transgressions or working-class women’s reproductive capacities is to devoid the term ‘teenage’ of any role in the phenomenon. Similarly, those who suggest that there has been a shift from a ‘moral’ to a ‘scientific’ problematization of young out-of-wedlock childbearing assume that the change of discourses did not alter the object of problematization. Both arguments imply an ontological division between ‘representations’ on one hand, and ‘real’ phenomenon on the other.

The research presented in this thesis stemmed from a rejection of this ontological position. Drawing on Foucault’s notion of genealogy, it used historical investigation in order to identify the taken-for-granted discourses and practices underpinning the governmental field of teenage pregnancy. In order to be able to recognise them, it was necessary to construct a picture of the discourses that preceded the emergence of this governmental field. It is through the examination of the discourses and practices that had to fade out in order for the problematization of the teenage mother to become viable, that it becomes possible to identify the discourses and practices underpinning this governmental field.

The investigation explicitly focused on examining the notion of ‘teenage’ as a term denoting subjectivity and on exploring its entry into governmental work. In Chapter 5, I described how, at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, American psychologist G. Stanley Hall published the first psychological study on ‘adolescence’. The conceptualisation of adolescence put forward in this work is that it is a distinct developmental stage between childhood and adulthood marked by the onset of puberty and the emergence of sexual

impulses. Hall argued that in order to successfully develop into an adult, it was necessary to conquer one's sexual impulses and maintain abstinence throughout the adolescent years. This conceptualisation was directed primarily to men, because Hall argued that women never fully grew out of their adolescent stage. Nonetheless, the idea of adolescence as a universal stage of development marked by the onset of sexual impulses had been laid down. Adolescence was defined both by the rise of sexual feelings and by the need to suppress them.

This conceptualisation influenced governmental work. During the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the government supported the development of youth work and the construction of leisure facilities for youth. Although not the only concern, these efforts were motivated by the attempt to prevent adolescents from engaging in sexual activity. It was believed that youth work and the state-sponsored leisure facilities could help 'channel' the sexual impulses into morally-sanctioned activities and provide an alternative to morally-corrupting forms of leisure, such as the dance hall and the cinema. Educationalists and youth workers were mostly preoccupied with working-class youth who were seen as particularly prone to engage in sexual activity at a young age.

During World War II, a growing number of government reports discussed a perceived trend of increased sexual activity among young women. Consequently, in 1943, the Board of Education issued the first sex education guide to teachers. At the same time, the rising rates of illegitimacy prompted the government to become further involved in providing accommodation and financial support for unmarried mothers. The increased provision was reinforced by several legislative steps made in the years following the War. While some unmarried mothers who sought local authorities' help were accommodated in Council nursing homes, most unmarried mothers were referred to Mother and Baby Homes run by a religious organisation.

Chapter 3 examined the features of the two key problematizations which shaped voluntary and governmental work with unmarried mothers in the late 1950s and 1960s: the moral and the psychological. One objective of this examination was to consider the extent to which the psychological concept of adolescence influenced governmental and voluntary provision for unmarried mothers. The second objective was to map the 'field

of problematization' of the two perspectives. I argued that within both problematizations becoming an unmarried mother was seen as indicating a certain persistent subjectivity. Within the moral problematization unmarried mothers were depicted as morally tainted women in need of rehabilitation. They were seen to be *indulging* their desires and therefore it was believed that they could *give up* this conduct in favour of a life of duty.

In contrast, the psychological problematization regarded becoming an unmarried mother as a sign of a long-term psychological disturbance. This disturbance was described as emanating from the mother's early relationship with her own parents. The pregnancy was understood in psychoanalytic terms either as a symbolic act of revenge against the mother or the father. Alternatively, it could symbolise a present for one of the parents. Another proposition was that the women who became unmarried mothers were driven by an unconscious wish to have 'a baby without a husband'. Whereas in a normal developmental path, the romantic love for a partner and the wish to become a mother were united, in the unmarried mother the two wishes were split. Thus, it was claimed that becoming an unmarried mother was not an accident but the manifestation of a persistent subjectivity. Unmarried motherhood, similar to homosexuality, was a life-long propensity. Several of the social workers and psychologists who employed the psychological problematization of the unmarried mother also employed the psychological concept of adolescence as denoting a distinct stage of development.

However, within the psychological problematization there was an inherent tension between 'adolescence' and 'unmarried mother' as two competing terms denoting pathological subjectivity. Since adolescence was seen as a stage of development characterised by mental upheaval, being an adolescent could partly explain the act of becoming an unmarried mother. Consequently, proponents of the psychological problematization of unmarried mothers argued that, as a rule, adolescent unmarried mothers were less disturbed than their older counterparts.

The tension between the concept of adolescence as denoting a distinct subjectivity and the proposition that the unmarried mother was psychologically disturbed was also reflected in the different ways in which the relationship between sexual desire and the illegitimate pregnancy were conceptualised. One of the features of the psychological

problematization of unmarried mothers was the claim that sexual desire had no role in bringing about the illegitimate pregnancy. Proponents of this view were adamant that the unmarried mother did not engage in sexual intercourse in order to satisfy her sexual desire.

In contrast with older unmarried mothers, in certain instances, professionals described adolescent unmarried mothers as being driven by sexual impulses. Another argument put forward was that the rising rate of illegitimacy among teenagers was the result of a crisis in societal mores. Instead of an individual pathology stemming from early familial relationships, the teenage girl's illegitimate pregnancy was depicted as the result of sexual desire and shifting sexual mores.

Chapter 4 presented two case-studies of institutions providing residential accommodation for unmarried mothers. The first was King's Mead nursing home, one of the large nursing homes in which the London County Council accommodated unmarried mothers. The investigation revealed that it was primarily the moral problematization of unmarried mothers that shaped the work of this institution. Staff supervised mothers' movement in and out of the building and managed the care of their babies. In this institution, adolescent unmarried mothers were accommodated alongside older unmarried mothers. They were not singled out for attention and the care they received was identical to that given to older women. However, unmarried mothers were also not distinguished from 'lone mothers': mothers who might have conceived 'within wedlock' but were without a partner, accommodation or a job at the time they approached the Council. These 'lone mothers' were placed in Council nursing homes alongside 'unmarried mothers'. Reflecting the influence of the moral problematization, Council staff described unmarried mothers and 'lone mothers' as women who recklessly pursued their sexual desires. The sexual pursuits were linked to a more general avoidance of work and responsibility. As a result of this view, Council reports expressed the concern that if their children were received into the Council's care, these mothers would be free 'to continue an unsettled way of life'.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Chief Officer of the Welfare Department, "Mothers and Babies – Adoptions," Papers of the Welfare Committee, London County Council (City of London, May 10, 1960), LCC/MIN/12,305, London Metropolitan Archives, 3.



In the second part of Chapter 4, I portrayed the work of St. Mary's House Mother and Baby Home. The Home was affiliated to Lambeth and District Moral Welfare Association and more generally to the Church of England. This institution's work was also shaped primarily by the moral problematization. As in King's Mead, unmarried mothers who entered St. Mary's House were required to adhere to a disciplinary regime seen as conducive to their rehabilitation. A significant part of the regime was the requirement to take responsibility for the upkeep of the institution and the care of the babies. As in King's Mead, adolescent unmarried mothers were not distinguished from older mothers. Girls as young as fifteen were accommodated together with women in their thirties. They were not described as 'teenagers' and the care they received was identical to that of the older residents in the Home.

The absence of reference to the term 'teenager' in St. Mary's House was part of a more general absence of a psychological discourse. Nowhere was this clearer than in their approach to the possibility that the unmarried mothers admitted to the Home would decide to raise their children themselves. All of the women who were admitted to St. Mary's House Mother and Baby Home were required to continue caring for their baby for a period of six weeks after the birth. This was a technology whose aim was to make women choose to raise their child. The assumption was that after caring for their baby for six weeks, many women would find it hard to give it up for adoption. However, in contrast to this practice, the declared position of several moral welfare workers was that they should not try to influence the unmarried mother's decision regarding the future of her child. Significantly, the mother's subjectivity was not discussed when the plans for the future of the baby were made, even when she was a young teenager or was described as being emotionally immature. It was the availability of financial resources and a 'spare set of hands' that were at the forefront of moral welfare workers' assessment of whether or not the young woman's decision to raise her child was appropriate.

However, undeniably, one of the factors contributing to the lack of concern with the young teenager's mothering skills was the fact that many young women who were admitted to Mother and Baby Homes returned to their parents' home after their discharge. It was only in the 1970s with the rise of social housing and benefits for lone parents that a growing number of single mothers were able to live autonomously in the

community.<sup>13</sup> By the time that Janet Evanson was writing in 1976, many more young mothers were able to move into a place of their own. This was the backdrop to Evanson's claim that an unsupported young mother should not be left alone in her flat.

Nonetheless, I suggest that it was not the change in the housing provision for single mothers that was at the root of the difference between the 1960s and the 1970s depiction of the teenage unmarried mother. The difference stems from the fact that during the 1960s it was the 'moral' problematization of unmarried mothers that was central to governmental and voluntary work, while in the mid-1970s, it was the psychological problematization of the teenage mother that was prominent.

Chapter 5 charted the rise of governmental preoccupation with the sexually active teenager during the years following World War II. Focusing on the late 1950s and early 1960s, I described the increased interest in promiscuity and in the rates of venereal disease among teenagers, and showed that it was as part of this broader disquiet that governmental preoccupation with the teenage unmarried mother intensified.

In Chapter 6, the lines of the emerging problematization of the teenage unmarried mother were sketched. Unlike the moral problematization, in this problematization the young woman's subjectivity was described as being primarily that of a 'teenager'. Drawing from the psychological problematization depicted in Chapter 3, professionals linked the pregnancy to emotional difficulties and were preoccupied with protecting the well-being of the illegitimate child. However, since the young girl was now primarily described as a 'teenager', the pregnancy was seen as an event that was part of the uneasy process of psychological development. Both the teenage unmarried mother and her baby became subjects whose welfare and well-being should be protected in order to ensure the health and well-being of the nation.

The account presented in this chapter continued with an examination of the work of St. Christopher's Mother and Baby Home, the specialised Mother and Baby Home for schoolgirl mothers established by the Council in 1961. This Home, which Council officials claimed was the first of its kind in the entire country, became a hub of

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<sup>13</sup> Kiernan, Land, and Lewis, *Lone Motherhood in Twentieth-Century Britain*.

professional and governmental innovation. One of the features distinguishing St. Christopher's from other Mother and Baby Homes was its governmental arrangements. Although the Home was run by a religious organisation: the Church Army, the London County Council was highly involved in its management. Three of the Council's departments - Education, Public Health and the Children's Department - oversaw the activity of the Home. In addition, the work of St. Christopher's was characterised by the individualization of care, the intensification of professional scrutiny of each young girl and by the dominance of psychiatric discourses.

In summary, the empirical findings presented in this thesis enable the identification of several processes contributing to the emergence of the care of the teenage unmarried mother as a governmental field. The first is a shift from 'unmarried mother' being the key term denoting a young woman's subjectivity to 'teenage' being the principle term. As long as a woman's subjectivity was denoted according to whether or not she had given birth out-of-wedlock, less importance was attributed to the age at which this transgression occurred. Second, instead of motherhood being conceptualised as a technology for transforming the unmarried mother's subjectivity, there was a shift to a psychological discourse of motherhood concerned with the effect of the mother's subjectivity on the mental health of the child. Third, governmental work was increasingly influenced by the psychological concept of 'adolescence' as a stage of development in which there is a mismatch between a sexually mature body and a subjectivity that is not fully matured. In addition, during the late 1950s and 1960s there was a growing governmental concern with the sexually active teenager and an expansion of governmental remit to protect the welfare of children. In these circumstances, the individual teenage unmarried mother, seen as literally embodying *two sets of children*, became a conspicuous focal point of governmental effort.<sup>14</sup>

Returning to the question of the discourses through which teenage mothers are problematized, this thesis demonstrates that is not enough to describe them as 'moral',

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<sup>14</sup> D. Gough, "The Very Young Mother," in *Pregnancy in Adolescence: Report of a Conference Held on March 10th 1966*, Archive of the National Council for One Parent Families (City of London, 1966), The Women's Library, 5.

'welfare' or 'scientific' discourses. Instead we should examine the entire 'field of problematization' and the corresponding regimes of subjectivity. The shift from a moral problematization of unmarried mothers to a psychological problematization of teenage mothers should not be described as a shift from a 'moral' to a 'scientific' depiction of young women's out-of-wedlock childbearing. First, as demonstrated in Chapter 3, a scientific discourse of psychological disorder developed around the 'moral' distinction between legitimate and illegitimate births. Second, the discursive shifts affected the object of the problematization. Most importantly, however, the transformations did not constitute a shift from a traditional, punitive regime to a progressive one. Although the 'moral' problematization described unmarried mothers as being morally flawed, it also proposed that they could change. This belief that the unmarried mother could transform herself was lost in the transition to the psychological problematization of unmarried mothers. The suggestion that 'teenagers' were still not fully grown up led psychologists and government officers to claim that these young women should be supported and protected. However, this support came at a cost. The claim that young women's subjectivity is decisively determined by the fact that they are teenagers excludes the possibility that some are mature and able to become 'good enough mothers'. Furthermore, it rules out the possibility that the experience of caring for their child could profoundly alter them; it could *make them* grow up. In attempting to understand the emergence of the teenage mother as a governmental field of work, it is important to consider the implicit regimes of subjectivity underpinning it. More importantly, however, is to be aware of the way in which these regimes affect what young women can achieve and the extent to which they can change.

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