

**Child Rearing Practices And Attitudes Of Adolescent Fathers**

**by Simon Lalonde, B.A. M.A.**

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## Abstract

There has been considerable interest and sometimes concern for teenage parents. This interest has developed for two reasons, firstly, it has been viewed that teenage parents are inappropriately young to have children, and secondly, it has popularly been thought that the number of female teenagers becoming pregnant and subsequently giving birth to children has dramatically increased over the last twenty years. Much of this attention has focused on the young mother, because she has been thought to shoulder the major responsibility for looking after the child. This is not untypical of research on parenting which has adopted a mother biased approach, although there has been a more recent interest in the fathers. The object of this study was to examine the experiences of one hundred young fathers, aged seventeen to twenty two, who were regularly involved with their infant. The fathers were interviewed at home and data was collected on all aspects of their family participation.

Younger fathers appeared to be an extremely disadvantaged group, many had few or no formal qualifications and during a period of high general unemployment a disproportionate number of the sample were unemployed. The financial responsibilities of fatherhood placed added burdens on this group and restricted many of the opportunities that should have been available to men of this

age.

Contrary to popular opinion the young fathers interviewed often had long standing relationships with the mother and were highly psychologically involved with their children; although they were not always highly participant in child care activities. As with research on older fathers, younger fathers were shown not to take on the major responsibilities of caring for children, even though some (those who were unemployed) had a greater opportunity to do so.

They reported being interested and involved at every stage of the child's life, even during the periods when circumstances made it more difficult for them to be highly participant; the nature of this involvement changed as the needs of the mother and the child altered. However because of their age, and as a consequence their lack of preparation, many young fathers and mothers had to negotiate a turbulent period which was sometimes very stressful. This study suggests that although being young in itself does not necessarily cause younger parents to be qualitatively different from older parents, it does indicate that they face more problems which because of their age they may be more vulnerable to.



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## Chapter One

### Introduction

Teenage parenthood is not a recent phenomenon, although during the last decade and a half it has received a great deal of attention in terms of the media, research and general discussion. Much of the research has centered on investigating the negative consequences of becoming a parent when young, and has also concentrated on the mother rather than the father. For example, in a recent article by Ros Meek entitled "The Children Who Become Parents"<sup>1</sup> the author considers the poor educational achievement of young mothers and the likelihood of their children having problems in their speech and language development. Although evidence is given to support these reports there is little examination of why this might occur. A significant omission in this article is also the failure to mention the fathers of the children, even though fathering has been increasingly viewed as an important and essential area to examine.

Young motherhood has typically been portrayed as a lonely

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<sup>1</sup>Ros Meek, "The Children Who Become Parents," *Nursery World*, 10 Mar. 1988: 10-11.



and unhappy experience. In articles such as Ros Meek's there are normally statistics concerning the likelihood of the young mother becoming pregnant again before the first baby is two years old. However, there is little recognition that at some stage men have to be involved and that they may continue to be involved. The major objective of this particular study has been to examine what happens to the male partners of teenage mothers, with particular reference to those who are themselves young and who remain involved. Thus much of the study could be described as exploratory.

A reason for young mothers being of research and media interest is that entering parenthood at an early age "feels" to professionals as if it ought to attract problems and as a consequence there has been some concern about the quality of childcare a young mother or young father can provide. However, there has been a lack of methodologically sound research examining whether young parents are qualitatively different in terms of their parenting skills; also, a lack of research which addresses the reasons for any supposed "deficit" in parenting skills. This study has attempted to examine the characteristic patterns experienced by young couples having children, i.e. where they live, their employment, education and social circumstances. It has recorded their feelings and attitudes to becoming parents and how they approach and put into action their parenting. The other aim has been to try to disentangle the effects and implications of being young when having to take on the



responsibilities of caring for children.

This introductory chapter is divided into five sections. Firstly, I wish to examine the extent of the "problem" by investigating birth statistics and attempt to put these statistics into context by comparing them with statistics from a more normative age range. I also wish to examine the relationship between abortions, illegitimate and legitimate births. The second section considers the psychological and medical explanations for why young adolescents have children. These first two sections concentrate on the young mother for a number of reasons; most obviously because birth statistics are nearly all based on the mother and secondly because, as has been noted, research on adolescent parenting has often centred on the mother. It is relevant here to describe the young mother research as all the young fathers in this sample had remained involved with their young partners. Much of this young mother research has had important implications; writers discussing the effects of age on young fathers have drawn parallels between the mothers and fathers, without really considering whether there are gender differences or whether other social circumstances are more important. However, I felt it important to review this material as it is indicative of how young parents have been researched and puts into context how researchers have viewed adolescent parenthood.

The next section takes a cursory glance at historical references to teenage fathers, and then examines contemporary research on

the relationship between mothers and fathers, discussing a number of myths surrounding how permanent the relationships of these parents are.

The fourth section looks at young fathers' transitions to parenthood, and considers how younger men react to the stresses and strains associated with entering fatherhood. Furthermore, it attempts to explore whether there are any special consequences of being young and having to cope with what has often been viewed as a period of great change.

The fifth section investigates young father participation in the light of research on older fathers, but also considers the psychological impact of social and economic circumstances such as unemployment.

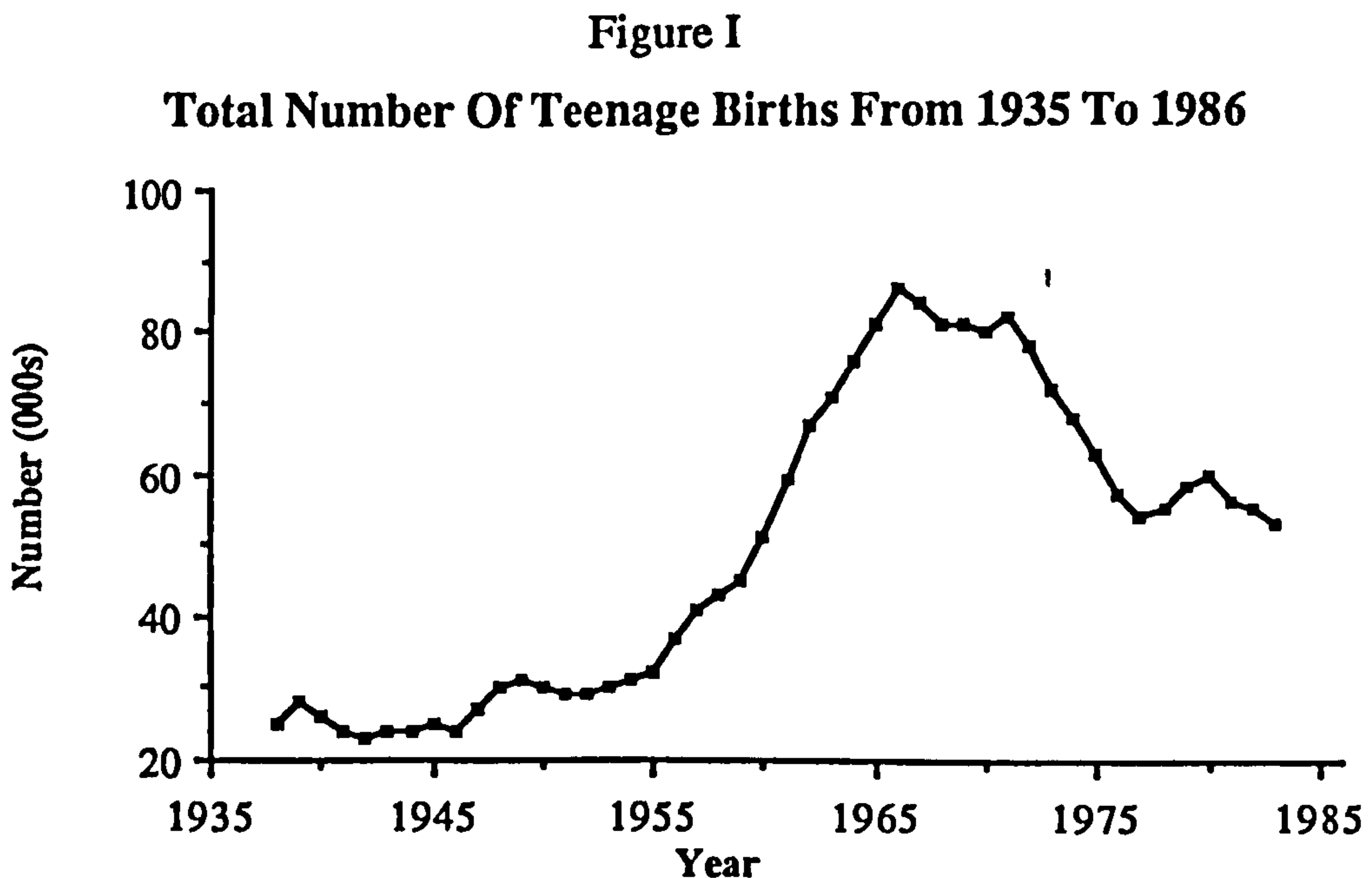
The final section of the chapter evaluates research on young father sensitivity to children's needs, especially in relation to physical child abuse, and questions whether many of the "negative" findings relating to adolescent parents are indeed valid when methodological and research considerations are taken into account.

### Teenage Birth And Abortion Statistics

From Figure 1 it is possible to see that the number of children

## Introduction - Teenage Birth Statistics

born to women aged between sixteen and nineteen years at the time of delivery has gone through two distinct phases. From around 1950 to 1967 there was a dramatic increase in the number of children born to teenage mothers. Approximately eight thousand babies each year were born over and above the number which had been born the previous year. This rapid increase in the number of children born to young mothers however changed to a sharp decline from 1967 onwards.



The decline is almost certainly due to the change in the Abortion Laws, as until 1967 it was illegal to terminate a foetus. This ruling was then altered to permit certain terminations to be allowed. During the following ten years the number of abortions performed both inside and outside the National Health Service

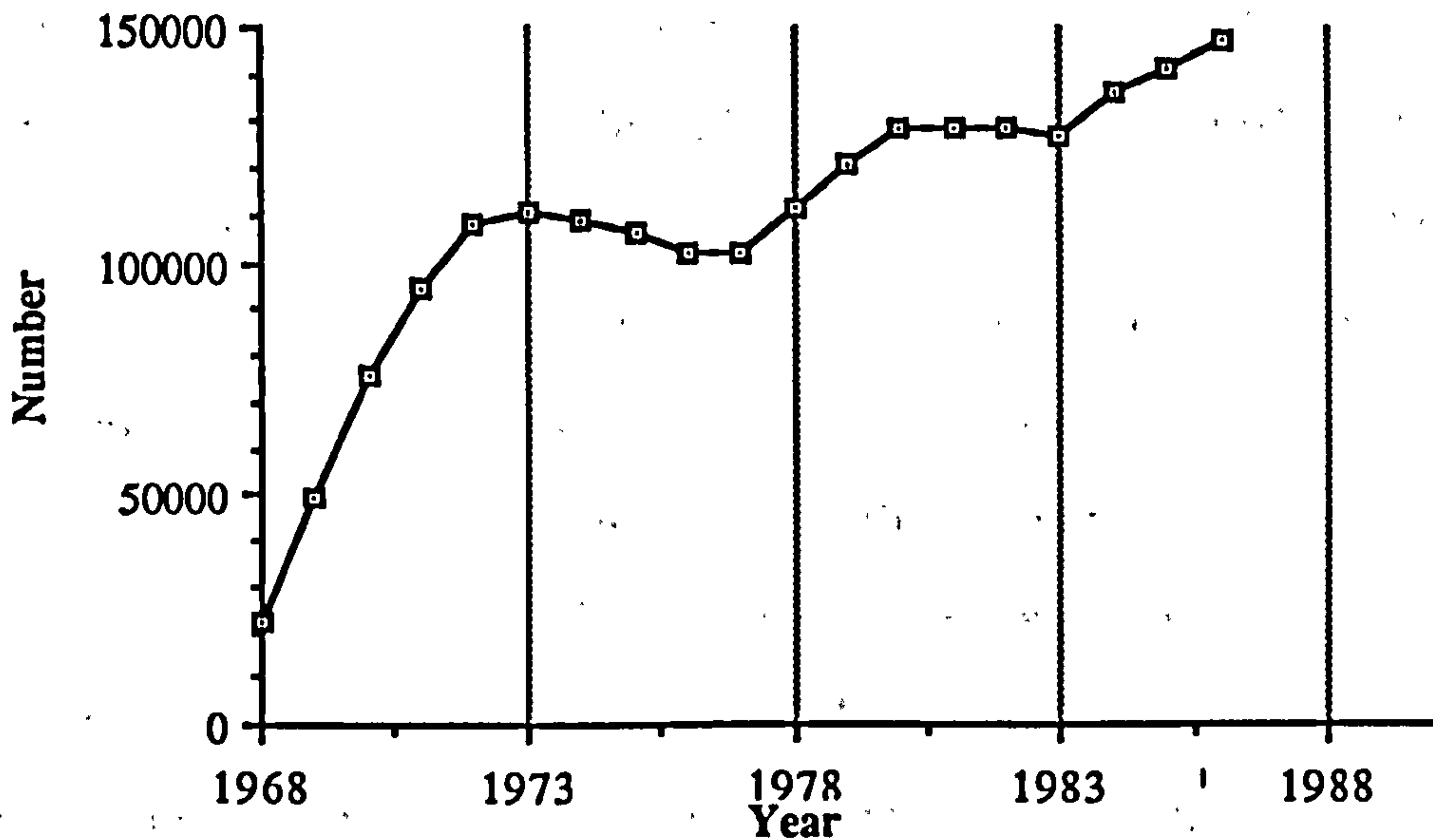


## Introduction - Teenage Birth Statistics

grew dramatically and then began to level off<sup>2</sup> (see Figure II).

Figure II

### Total Number Of Abortions In England And Wales From 1968 To 1986



A large proportion (approximately a quarter) of the total number of abortions in 1986 were performed on women aged under nineteen years (see Figure III). The proportion of young women who continued the pregnancy until the birth (8% of all births) in 1986 was far smaller than the proportion of women aged under nineteen who had an abortion (26% of all women having abortions). The other striking difference between the young mother population and the total population is that from 1967, when abortions were first permitted, the number of abortions given to young women steadily grew each year;

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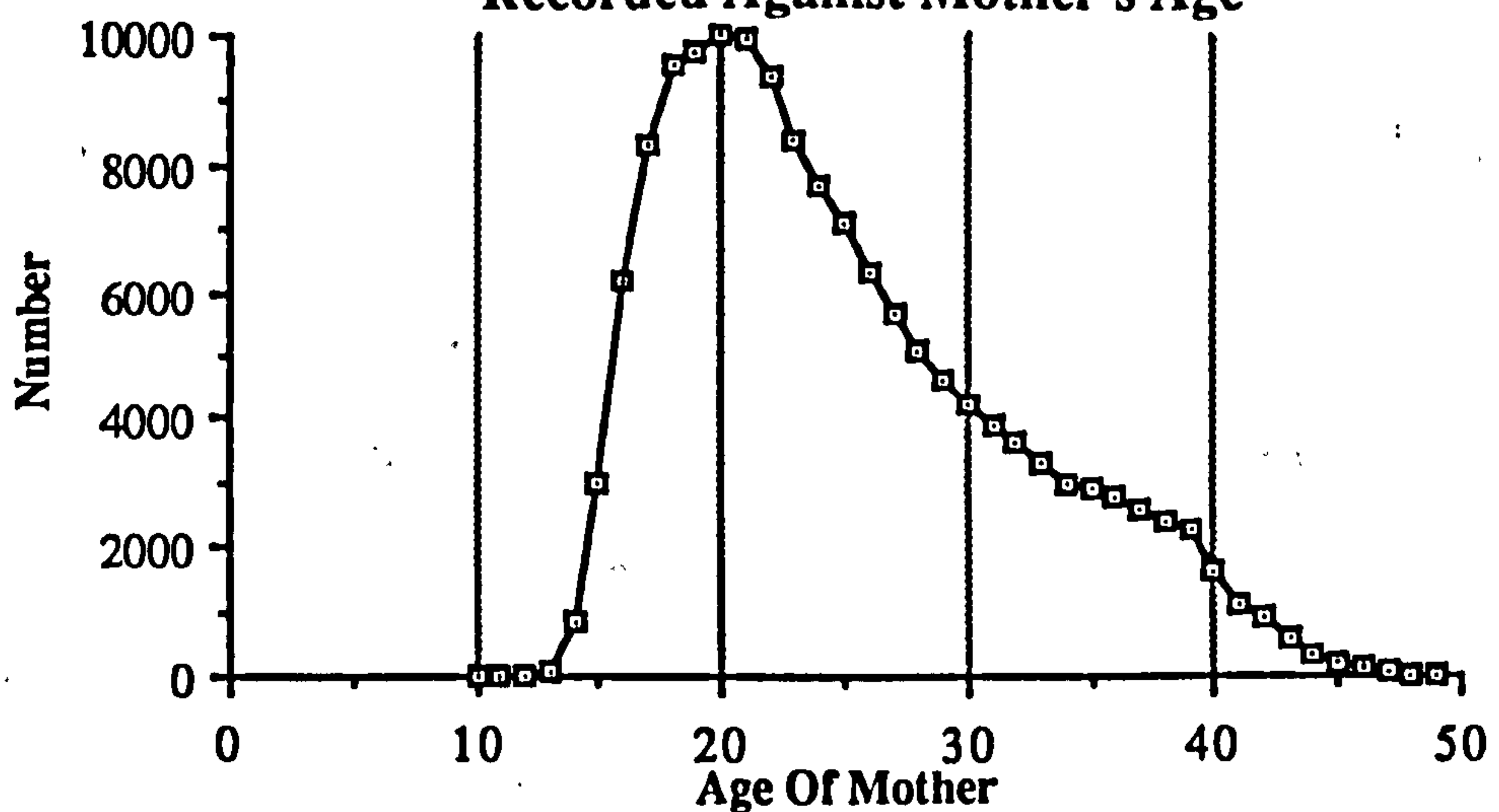
<sup>2</sup>Office of Population Censuses and Surveys, *Abortion Statistics*, (London: 1968-1986).

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whereas abortions within the total population have fluctuated in line with fluctuations in the birth statistics. The reason for this difference is not altogether clear; it may be that an increase in the number of abortions reflects an economic change which in itself alters attitudes towards having children. For instance, during times of recession parents may defer having children, either by using contraceptives or by aborting (however during times of recession both the individual and the state are going to have less money to finance such an operation), whereas during times of economic growth couples may happily have children with the realization that they can afford the financial burdens which accompany parenthood. However the reasons for, and the reasons surrounding, the abortion are likely to be very different depending on the mother's age and marital status.<sup>1</sup>

Figure III

### Number Of Mothers Having Abortions In 1986 Recorded Against Mother's Age



## Introduction - Teenage Birth Statistics

In particular women who have abortions when aged under twenty years are usually unmarried: 82% of the young women who had abortions in 1986 were not married whereas those older women who had abortions were more likely to be married e.g. 62% of 40-44 year old women and 63% of 35-39 year old women were married at the time of abortion. This implies that younger women are likely to have an abortion because firstly, they feel they are not ready to have children (whether mentally or physically); secondly, other people may view them as being too young; and thirdly, they may not have a partner, or a partner who wishes to take on the responsibilities of children. Older women, however, are more likely to have other children and so have abortions for economic and/or career reasons.

The comparatively recent changes in frequency of marriage, abortion, pregnancy etc. have led to greater variety or constellation of "families" than was evident one hundred years ago. That is not to say that we are behaving in a fundamentally different way from "families" in past centuries, but we do at least seem to establish and then categorise relationships in a more flexible manner. The most obvious attitude change relates to unmarried motherhood. For many centuries both church and society have seen sexual relationships outside marriage (especially those which lead to the production of children) as being sinful. It is difficult to determine how frequently such relationships took place, but certainly those women who became pregnant, and did



not have partners at the time of the birth, were viewed with disgust and often seen as lowering moral standards.

It would seem likely that there was a considerable class difference in the way mothers and fathers dealt with their illegitimate offspring. Mothers from poor families were unlikely to be able to support the child and themselves without the financial help of the father and if, as was usual at that time, the father was not in evidence for fear of a shared stigma (see footnote 48) it was likely that mother and child would be doubly stigmatised from a financial and a social perspective. However, it was not always the case that illegitimate children were viewed in such a negative and moralistic way; until the Sixteenth Century certain illegitimate children (most notably those of the aristocracy) were seen in a different light.

"Men took care of their bastards, were indeed often proud of them and in many cases brought them home to their wives or mothers to be brought up. Children born out of wedlock were thus to be found growing up in their father's house with their half-brothers and sisters without a hint of disgrace either to themselves or to their natural parents."<sup>3</sup>

Recently attitudes and provision for illegitimate children and young parents have changed yet again. There have been notable

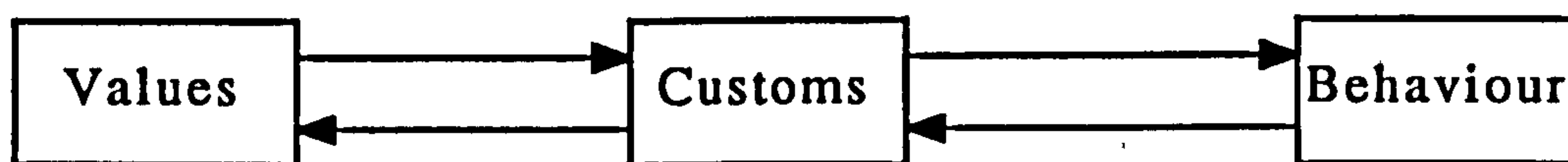
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<sup>3</sup>Ivy Pinchbeck and Margaret Hewitt, *Children in English Society Volume I, From Tudor Times to the Eighteenth Century*. (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1969): 201.



shifts in the way society views illegitimacy, marriage, divorce and abortion. It is difficult to evaluate whether the changes in attitude to moral institutions such as marriage have come about before changes in behaviour. Richardson and Guttmacher<sup>4</sup> have conceptualised the relationship between values, customs and behaviour in the following way:

Figure VI  
The Relationship Of Behaviour, Customs And Values As  
Conceptualised By Richardson And Guttmacher



Furthermore they have explained this relationship and stated "Values tend to change as social, economic and technological conditions change. They are also influenced by new knowledge, and at the same time, the directions in which knowledge is sought are influenced by values."<sup>5</sup> Changes in either individual or group behaviour, brought about by society's shift in social values, is likely to have a bearing upon those values themselves.

When considering teenage pregnancy the issue of whether behaviour or attitude govern each other becomes more

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<sup>4</sup>Stephen A. Richardson and Alan F. Guttmacher, *Childbearing - its social and psychological aspects*, (Baltimore: The Williams and Wilkins Company, 1967).

<sup>5</sup>Richardson et al., *op. cit.*, 1967: xiii.

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complicated as the pregnancy is not necessarily planned, and one gets into the complicated argument of whether a relaxation of social mores is brought about by the unplanned consequences of change in behaviour.

In Twentieth Century society not only has there been a greater emphasis on childhood but also an increased interest and preoccupation with the long term consequences of the way in which actions can and do alter events in the future. In the area of child care, the long term consequences of parenting (or non-parenting -especially in terms of what is viewed as appropriate for a young child) has at times become an obsession, particularly considering that there are unlikely to be any "real" answers.

There is a view in our society, held by groups and individuals, that we have become a more tolerant, caring and open society. In respect to marriage, sexuality and parenthood there does appear at first sight to be a considerably more tolerant attitude towards couples whether living together or merely having sexual relationships. Although there is obvious evidence of such change, there are still many restraints within a particular context which impel people to behave in idiosyncratic ways. Indeed, we may view ourselves as being a more tolerant and flexible society, but that perception may change when in the position of making decisions concerning abortion, adoption etc. For instance, if we consider the options open to a young unmarried pregnant woman, there are a number of viable alternatives: abortion, adoption, or motherhood. In reality, the social and personal circumstances are



likely to dictate what the woman should do. Although social attitudes have drastically changed, there still remains a social stigma which bears upon all those who are involved in making or helping to make any such decision. The reaction to the "stigma" of having a child when young is likely to be idiosyncratic and there will also be social class reactions which bear upon any individual's decision on how to deal with a situation for which she was not prepared. If one considers the data available on teenage pregnancies (in Figure I) it is very apparent that the number of young women who become pregnant has dramatically increased since World War II; although the actual number of all women giving birth to children has decreased since the advent of legal abortions. Though the frequencies have thus increased, the number of babies born to young mothers from a middle class background is relatively low. Russell<sup>6</sup> in his study of pregnant adolescent mothers in the Newcastle upon Tyne area found girls from upper socio-economic backgrounds were more likely to choose abortion than those from lower socio-economic backgrounds. He found only 25% of the young pregnant mothers wanted to continue the pregnancy when from families of class I and II background as compared with 42% of young pregnant mothers from families of classes III, IV and V. This has been a common finding amongst other researchers especially in the United States.<sup>7</sup> Overall, then, the number of teenage mothers

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<sup>6</sup>J.K. Russell, *Early Teenage Pregnancy*, (Edinburgh: Churchill Livingstone, 1982).

<sup>7</sup>S. Fischman, "The pregnancy-resolution decision of unwed adolescents," *Nursing Clinics NA*, 10.2 (1977): 217-227.

P. Lachenbruch, "Adolescent Pregnancy: A study of abortes and non-

from a middle class background is disproportionately low, and one can only deduce that middle class teenagers who become pregnant are more likely to be channelled into believing that abortion is the best (only) option. Circumstances and resources are likely to be very different for teenagers who come from a working class background, and there certainly appears to be less pressure to have an abortion. Interestingly, when the Newsons interviewed mothers of non-pregnant sixteen year olds and asked them "What about abortion do you think that is a good way of dealing with unwanted pregnancies?" there was a significant class difference between working and middle class mothers replies. Forty one per cent of middle class mothers and thirty four per cent of working class mothers agreed with abortions. However, when the sixteen year old daughters were asked the same question there were no significant class differences. Thirty per cent of middle class girls and twenty six per cent of working class girls agreed with abortions.<sup>8</sup> This perhaps illuminates the part that parents can potentially play when their daughter's become pregnant

Since 1967 the pattern of legitimate and illegitimate teenage births has altered (see Figure V), but not simply as a result of the Abortion Act. Notably the number of teenage mothers having legitimate children has dramatically decreased while the number of illegitimate children has increased during this period, but not at an inversely proportional rate. The decrease of teenage marriages entered into as a result of the mother becoming pregnant suggests

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aborted," *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, 43 (1973): 796-803.

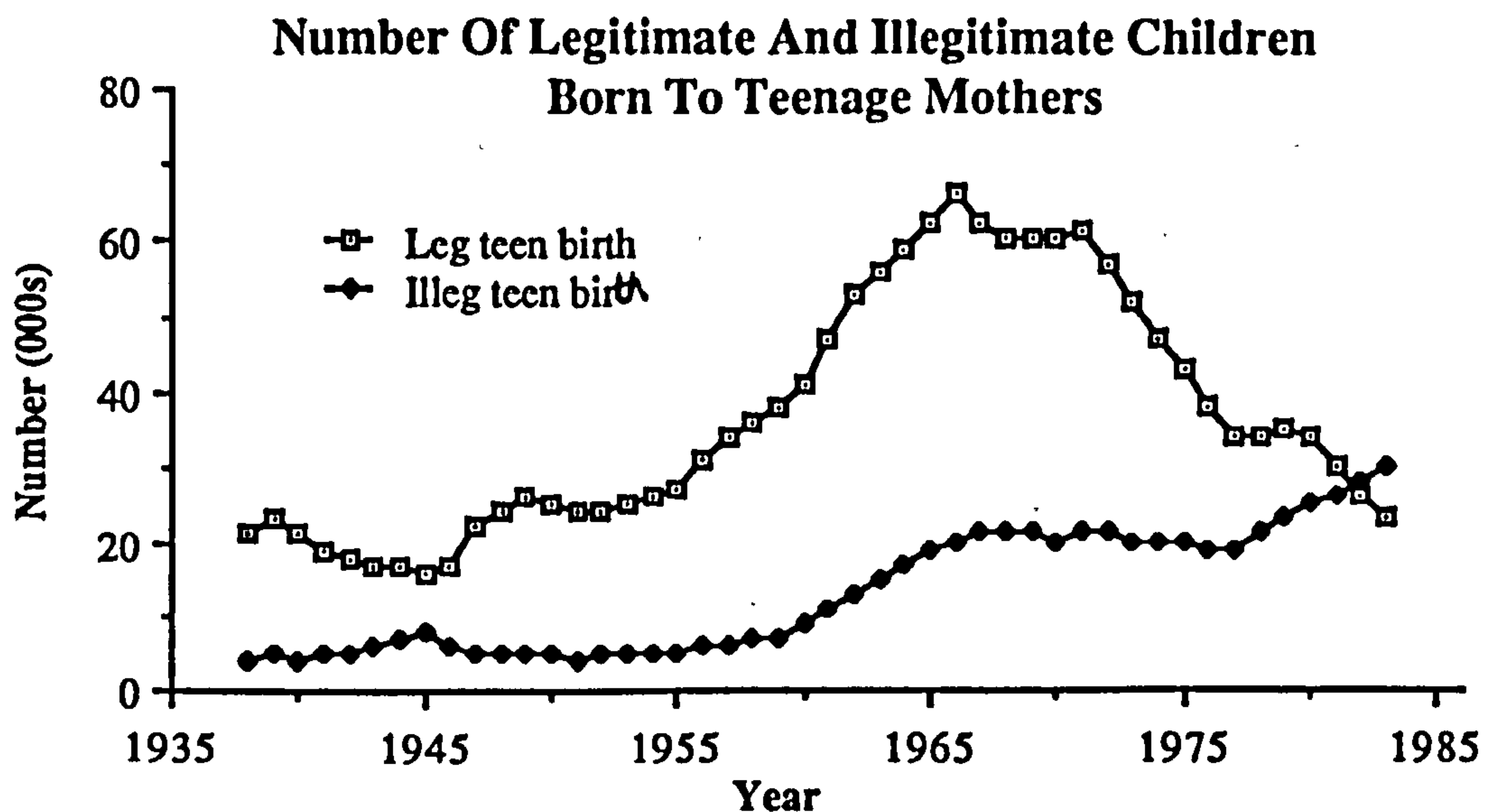
<sup>8</sup>John and Elizabeth Newson, unpublished data.



## Introduction - Teenage Birth Statistics

that there has been a relaxing of attitudes towards marriage and legitimising the child.

Figure V



However a key issue which needs to be raised is whether the young teenager and her partner perceive themselves as having a choice in deciding the outcome of the pregnancy. It is my contention that there appear to be many more options to those who are not directly involved. However, the reality is that reactions to such a situation are governed by circumstances and factors which are seen to be beyond the control of the young person, and hence the outcome of many teenage pregnancies are pre-determined. In an effort to test this hypothesis it is possible to examine how research has focused on the "cause" of teenage parenthood and place that research into a theoretical framework.

## "Aetiology" Of Teenage Pregnancy

### Personality Characteristics

Many authors have attempted to identify characteristics in young teenagers which predispose them to becoming pregnant. Personality factors, as measured by psychometric instruments, have been an obvious target for evaluation. The search for such traits reflects a period when total responsibility for pregnancy was placed on the mother, and so there was a quest to discover specific personality characteristics typical of young mothers. Eysenck<sup>9</sup> studied a group of 100 married and unmarried women, who were having their first baby. Using a series of self assessment questionnaires (Maudsley Personality Inventory, Mill Hill Vocabulary etc.) she was able to determine that there was no difference between unmarried and married in terms of intelligence but the unmarried mothers seemed to be more extrovert and more neurotic than the general population, and were far younger than the married mothers (although her sample was not specifically selected by age). Eysenck notes how difficult it is to generalize about these figures as all the young unmarried mothers were living in mother and baby homes and may have been a very different population from other young unmarried

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<sup>9</sup>S.B.G. Eysenck, "Personality, and Pain Assessment in Chilbirth of Married and Unmarried Mothers," *Journal of Mental Science*, May 1961: 417-431..

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mothers living at home. However she goes on to explain how high neurotic and high extrovert scores are likely to lead to illegitimate pregnancy.

"Girls who are sociable and mix easily and readily with people are more likely to meet boys and go to parties, where opportunities for intimacies could present themselves. Moreover, unstable girls might tend to look for security through a boy friend, and be very amenable to persuasion through their fear of losing him. Doubtless when the two factors are fused, the likelihood of an early pregnancy is increased."<sup>10</sup>

Evidence of such psychopathology on various scales of psychometric measurement has also been found by other researchers.<sup>11</sup>

However two criticisms can be levelled at the psychometric research and the conclusions which have been drawn from its results. Firstly, the samples of young unmarried mothers who have been "tested" are by no means random; often samples were derived from a clinical population. Secondly all the samples were tested after the child had been conceived and levels of neuroticism and extroversion were viewed as evidence of permanent predispositions which were evident before the

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<sup>10</sup>Ibid. p425-426

<sup>11</sup>I.W. Gabrielson, L. Klerman, J.Cutrie, N. Tyler and J. Jekel, "Suicide attempts in a population pregnant as teenagers," *American Journal of Public Health*, 60 (1970): 2289-2301.

R. Giel and C. Kidd, "Some psychiatric observations on pregnancy in unmarried students," *British Journal of Psychiatry*, 111 (1965): 591-594.



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conception. However researchers have often failed to control for stress factors which may have intervened between the time of conception and the time of testing.

More recently Sarah Landy<sup>12</sup> administered a battery of psychometric tests (Pitts Depression Inventory, Rotter Sentence Completion, Rorschach etc) on a number of adolescent and older populations (pregnant and non-pregnant). She noted "there appears to be a trend for the non-pregnant adolescent girls to be slightly more 'emotionally stable and mature' and to be more 'relaxed, tranquil and composed.'"<sup>13</sup> Sarah Landy goes on to say "Our findings give no support to those theories which have claimed that there are specific personality characteristics typical of young pregnant girls ....."<sup>14</sup> This study found no greater sign of pathology in teenage pregnant girls than in the non-pregnant girls.

### Psychoanalytic Theories

The psychoanalytic approach has focused on the conflicts within the pregnant adolescent and between her and close relatives or peer groups. Sugar<sup>15</sup> believes there are a number of

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<sup>12</sup>Sarah Landy, Josef Schubert, John F. Cleland, Camilla Clark, and Jacquelin S. Montgomery. "Teenage Pregnancy: Family Syndrome?" *Adolescence* 18.71 (1983): 679-694.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid. p.686.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid. p.687

<sup>15</sup>M. Sugar, "Developmental Issues in Adolescent Motherhood," *Female Adolescent Development*. Ed. M. Sugar (New York: Brunner Mazel,

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dynamic factors which are particularly prominent within the adolescent mother. From clinical interviews he perceived: (a) a regular theme of conflict about mothering and being mothered, (b) gross denial and disbelief when first learning of the pregnancy, (c) regular fantasies by the pregnant teenager about being a better mother to the baby than her own mother had been to her, along with marked feelings of disappointment and anger towards her own mother. Sugar interprets the feelings of the adolescent mothers as indicating "an unconscious ambivalent gift to the maternal grandmother in the form of the infant for maternal grandmother to mother. This also served perhaps as a ransom for these mothers who were attempting to separate from their mothers."<sup>16</sup>

Blos<sup>17</sup> has further commented that girls are more likely to want to re-experience their early mother and child relationships and, as a means of denying their desire for a nurturing mother, act them out in a "pseudo-heterosexual" manner. Blos believes the object of adolescent heterosexual contact is not to experience mature genital satisfaction but rather to experience a synthetic substitute for love.

Babikian and Goldman<sup>18</sup> in a series of group discussions with

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1979) 330 -343.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid. pp338-339.

<sup>17</sup>P. Blos, *The Young Adolescent. Clinical Studies*, (London: Collier MacMillan, 1970).

<sup>18</sup>Hrair M. Babikian and Adila Goldman."A Study in Teenage Pregnancy," *American Journal of Psychiatry*, 128.6 (1971): 755-760.

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a sample of 15 pregnant teenage girls identified three predominant psychodynamic patterns that are pertinent to adolescent mothers:

(1) Dynamics of the relationship to their mother - conflict between their dependency and their desire for separation; as seen by teenage mothers' identification with their own mother and conversely the number of violent arguments concerning independence.

(2) Dynamics of the Relationship to the putative father - whereby they are unprepared and unable to withstand the onslaught of their sexual desires, giving evidence of their oedipal (sic) conflict and their competitive feelings towards their mother.

(3) Dynamics of the social and peer relationships, where adolescent mothers identified with other teenagers, cousins or friends who were pregnant or had a baby, thus displaying their desire to prove themselves as an undamaged woman.

The superego has been viewed as responsible for keeping in check reactivated sexual desires from early childhood,<sup>19</sup> channelling them into socially acceptable drives and then developing the adolescent into a mature, independent individual. Not surprisingly, psychoanalytic authors who have emphasized the importance of the pregnant adolescent's immature and irrepressible sex drive, have also viewed the unwed mother as exhibiting a marked deficiency in their superego and conscience (as exhibited by their minimal feelings of guilt or shame concerning the pregnancy).<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>19</sup>Sugar., *op. cit.*, 1979.

Blos., *op. cit.*, 1970.

Babikian et al., *op. cit.*, 1971.

<sup>20</sup>*Ibid.*



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However studies with a psychodynamic orientation have a number of methodological flaws. Research findings which have been reported by psychodynamic authors (Sugar, Blos, Babikian, Schaffer and Pine)<sup>21</sup> have been based on clinical populations, thus making them an odd and non-random sample. Also the reported number of subjects is very small, usually under twenty. It is difficult to evaluate how representative such feelings are in the general population as no control groups have been used and many of the "findings" have been based on the researchers' interpretations of other peoples' actions and attitudes. However, the importance of this work lies in the foundation it laid and the further investigations it instigated.

### Changes In The Nature Of Society

Psychodynamic and personality approaches have concentrated their investigation on underlying personality traits and inter-relationship conflicts. However, Furstenberg, when addressing issues of unwed motherhood (not specifically teenage motherhood, although the main bulk of his research was on a teenage sample), takes a practical viewpoint, and criticises theories which do not take into consideration the fact that an illegitimate birth cannot occur unless 1) a single woman has sexual relations, 2) she conceives, 3) she brings the baby to term, and 4) she remains

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<sup>21</sup>M. Sugar, P. Blos, H. Babikian, R. Schafer and F. Pine, "Pregnancy, abortion and developmental tasks of adolescence," *Journal of American Academic Child Psychiatry*, 11 (1972): 511-536.

unmarried until delivery.<sup>22</sup> He goes on to state:

"By focusing exclusively on the final stage of unwed motherhood and disregarding the intermediate steps in the process, many theorists have embraced a purely mechanical viewpoint which holds that women who become unwed mothers necessarily possess an advanced commitment to the status; that is, they are predisposed, for either psychological or cultural reasons to want to have a child out of wedlock. Ignoring the close calls, these researchers magnify the differences between the population of women who become unwed mothers and their peers who for one reason or another manage to drop out of the process."<sup>23</sup>

Therefore, it is more important to identify whether adolescents who become pregnant have a special commitment to becoming pregnant, or whether their peers have a special commitment not to become pregnant, even though both groups may have active sexual patterns.

There is evidence in both the United States and Britain that men and women start their sexual careers at a comparatively early age,<sup>24</sup> and that the age at which people have started sexual

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<sup>22</sup>Frank F. Furstenberg, *Unplanned Parenthood: The Social Consequences of Teenage Childbearing*, (New York: The Free Press, 1976).38.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid., pp. 38-39.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid.

Melvin Zelnik and John F. Kantner, "Sexual and Contraceptive Experience of Young Unmarried Women in the United States, 1976 and 1971, *Family Planning Perspectives* 9.2 (1977): 55-71.

Michael Schofield, *The Sexual Behaviour of Young Adults*, (London: Allen Lane, 1973).

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relations has become earlier and earlier over the last two decades;<sup>25</sup> although there has been some doubt whether actual sexual behaviour has changed, and whether the differences reported were due to adolescents being more open and frank about their sexual activities. However the trend for both males and females to report earlier and earlier "first sexual contact" has continued.

There are considerable cultural, sex and class differences concerning when young adolescents start having sexual relations. In the United States, Zelnik and Kantner<sup>26</sup> record 18% of unmarried women as sexually experienced by the age of 15 and 55% at 19 (see Figure VI).

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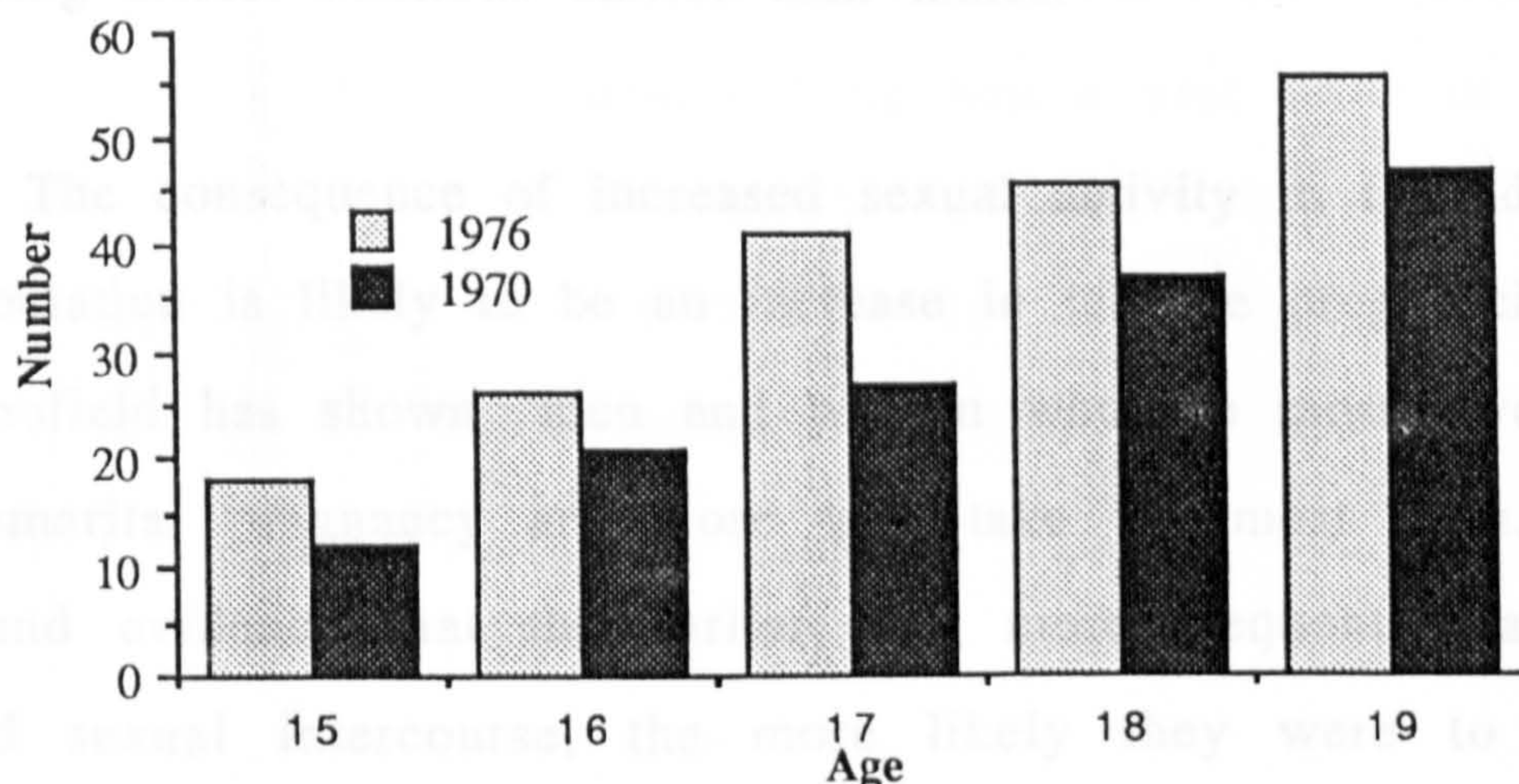
<sup>25</sup>Melvin Zelnik and John F. Kantner, "Probability of Premarital Intercourse," *Social Science Research*, 1 (1972): 335

<sup>26</sup>Zelnik et al., *op. cit.*, 1977.



Figure VI

Percent Of Never-Married Women Aged 15-19 Who Had Ever Had Intercourse, By Age, 1976 And 1971



(from Zelnik and Kantner)<sup>27</sup>

They also recorded that black teenagers were more likely to report being younger at the time of first sexual intercourse compared to white teenagers of the same sex; although, during the period from 1971 to 1976, the white adolescent population who had intercourse at an early age appeared to be increasing at a faster rate than the black adolescent population.<sup>28</sup> The more recent studies have stressed that the prevalence of sexual activity remains considerably higher among the black population, especially at the very early ages.<sup>29</sup> Similar results (although not as widely reported) have been recorded in Britain,<sup>30</sup> although the

<sup>27</sup>Ibid.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid.

<sup>29</sup>Frank F. Furstenberg, S. Philip Morgan, Kristin Moore and James L. Peterson, "Race Differences in the Timing of Adolescent Intercourse," *American Sociological Review* 52 (1987): 511-518.

<sup>30</sup>Schofield., *op. cit.*, 1973.



ages at which adolescents appear to start having sexual relations is older than in the United States and, in general, females report having sexual relations earlier than males.

The consequence of increased sexual activity in the adolescent population is likely to be an increase in teenage pregnancies. As Schofield has shown "men and women who are most involved in premarital pregnancy are those who take the most risks."<sup>31</sup> He found evidence that the earlier, and more frequently, a person had sexual intercourse, the more likely they were to have a premarital pregnancy. However, although it is relatively easy to record the age at which people start to have sexual relations, it is far more difficult to evaluate why certain women become sexually active at an early age whilst others defer relations until late adolescence; as Furstenberg points out "this selective process is a complex one, depending on such factors as dating opportunities, social control, social expectations, personal inclinations and physiological development."<sup>32</sup>

### Environmental Factors

As researchers became more involved in collecting data on sexual behaviour across the whole adolescent population, and not restricting themselves to small specific samples, so they turned away from looking at specific personality characteristics. This led

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<sup>31</sup>Ibid., p. 137.

<sup>32</sup>Furstenburg., *op. cit.*, 1976, p. 40.

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to a great concentration on social and environmental factors which might have direct or indirect influence firstly on onset, and secondly on outcome of sexual behaviour via various psychological mechanisms. Not surprisingly there was a vast array of complex social, psychological and biological variables which were identified as being related to early sexual intercourse. Displayed in Table I is a summary of these results, as reported by Chilman.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>33</sup>Catherine.S. Chilman, *Adolescent Sexuality in a Changing American Society Social and Psychological Perspectives*, United States Government Printing Office,DHEW Publication NIH Publication 79-1426 (Washington: GPO,1979)



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Table I

Summary Of Major Factors Apparently Associated With Early Nonmarital Intercourse Among Adolescents		
Factors	Males	Females
Social Situation		
Poverty and racism	Yes	Yes
Peer group pressure	Yes	Not clear
Lower social class	Yes (probably)	Yes (probably)
Sexually permissive friends	Unknown	Unknown
Single parent (probably low income) family	Unknown	Yes
Psychological		
Use of drugs and alcohol	Yes	No
Low self-esteem/passivity and dependence	No*	Yes*
Desire for affection	No*	Yes*
Low educational goals and poor educational achievement	Yes	Yes
Alienation	No*	Yes*
Deviant attitudes	Yes	Yes
Permissive attitudes of parents	Yes*	Yes*
Strained parent-child relationships and little parent-child communication	Yes	Yes
Going steady; being in love	Yes*	Yes*
Aggression; high levels of activity	Yes	No*
Biological		
Older than 16	Yes	Yes
Early puberty	Yes	Yes (probably for blacks)

\* Variables supported by only one or two small studies. Other variables are supported by a number of investigations. The major studies on which this table is based are: Furstenberg (1976); Jessor and Jessor (1975); Sorenson (1973); Kantner and Zelnik (1972); Udry et al (1975); Simon et al (1972); Zelnik and Kantner (1977); Fox (1980); Cvetkovich and Grote (1975); Presser (1978).

Kantner and Zelnick<sup>34</sup> interviewed 3,132 white and 1,479

<sup>34</sup>John F. Kantner and Melvin Zelnik, "Sexual Experience of Young Unmarried Women in the United States," *Family Planning Perspectives*, 4.4 (1972): 9-19.

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black females aged 15 and 19 years and Furstenberg et al<sup>35</sup> interviewed 468 15 and 16 year olds. Both studies have documented racial differences in the timing and prevalence of sexual behaviour among female teenagers. They have consistently reported that the proportion of sexually active blacks among the youngest teens was nearly three or four times as high as for whites. Furstenberg has argued that reported differences may not represent cultural differences, and could be due to unmeasured or poorly measured economic or social variables. However, Zelnick and Kantner believe socioeconomic measures such as poverty, status, education of parent or guardian, or family income do not diminish the proportions of blacks and whites with sexual experience.

Thus in the United States social class has been shown to be a powerful determinant of female teenagers' sexual behaviour. However it appears to be more difficult to evaluate and more contentious to describe early sexual behaviour as having other culturally determined influences.

Jessor and Jessor<sup>36</sup> adopted a more socio-psychological approach when assessing (via numerous psychometric tests) 1,126 male and female school and college students in a four year longitudinal study of virgins and non-virgins; the study included school students from the 10th, 11th and 12th grades as well as

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<sup>35</sup>Furstenberg et al., *op. cit.*, 1987.

<sup>36</sup>Shirley L. Jessor and Richard Jessor, "Transition from Virginity to Nonvirginity Among Youth: A Social-Psychological Study over Time," *Developmental Psychology*, 11.4 (1975): 473-484.



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freshman college students. Specific data concerning students age's is not specified in their results. When considering the whole sample across all ages they identified a greater deviance in non-virgins (as measured by greater expressed rebelliousness, lower religiosity, less parent-friends compatability etc.) They found a pattern of attributes - personality, social and behavioural - which appeared to be associated with virgin and non-virgin status. They believed non-virgins displayed a less conventional outlook, in a peer environment which provided support and opportunity for transition (from virgin to non-virgin) behaviour. They were also more likely to use marijuana and alcohol. Jessor and Jessor feel their results highlight a class of behaviours which are linked together in the "sociobehavioural ecology of youth" so that their onset is often concurrent.

Simon et al<sup>37</sup> studied a group of college graduates aged between 14 and 18, reported the importance of the social milieu and found sexual behaviour to be strongly linked to "traditional factors" such as relationships with parents and religious attendance. It was found that the higher the measure of intimacy with parents (intimacy was measured by responses to questions such as: does your mother/father understand you as you really are?) and the more regularly a young person attended religious gatherings, the later they were likely to experience sexual intercourse. Robbins et al<sup>38</sup> derived a model for predicting

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<sup>37</sup>William Simon, Alan S. Berger and John H. Gagnon, "Beyond Anxiety and Fantasy: The Coital Experiences of College Youth," *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 1.3 (1972): 203-221.

<sup>38</sup>Cynthia Robbins, Howard B. Kaplan and Steven S. Martin, "Antecedents of Pregnancy Among Unmarried Adolescents," *Journal of*



pregnancy among unmarried adolescents using multivariate analysis on a sample of 2,158 adults who had been first surveyed when students. They believed a number of factors were important. These included:

- 1) Early Adolescent Social Class,
- 2) Family Structure,
- 3) Self Attitudes, and
- 4) Role Stress.

Studies reporting social and personal factors correlated with teenage pregnancy are numerous but the significance of the factors is unclear due to the methodical limitations of the research. Studies have tended to concentrate on black, low socio-economic or clinical populations and have tended to concentrate on the female rather than the male partner. They have also used cross-sectional and retrospective analyses rather than prospective analyses and have concentrated on finding a single, all determining, factor rather than looking at confounding or interacting variables.

### Timing Of Life Events

Most of the research on teenage pregnancy has centered on the adolescents who become pregnant and not on those who, for whatever reasons, avoid becoming pregnant. However, whether adolescents rely on good fortune or take preventative action to

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*Marriage and the Family*, Aug. 1985: 567-583.

avoid pregnancy, it is likely that the latter is a more an effective means to staving off any unplanned pregnancy. There has been considerable research (especially in the United States) on use of contraceptives by adolescents. When Zelnik and Kantner repeated their 1971<sup>39</sup> study of young women between the ages of 15 and 19 they found that contraceptive use at first intercourse was about 50%. This frequency was a slight improvement from 1971. Although there was an increase in the number of women who now regularly used contraception there was also a decrease in use in the very young teenager group. The major difference between the two studies was in the change in type of contraceptive used; from 1971 to 1976 there was a marked decline in the use of the condom and withdrawal, and an increase in the use of the Pill. However, as Schofield states in his English study "Sexual Behaviour of Young Adults," birth control has only a small influence on the overall picture.

"This is because the number of people who are using effective contraceptive techniques during their premarital sexual adventures is too small to make a significant impact on the simple mathematical relationships between the extent of sexual intercourse and the chances of premarital pregnancy"<sup>40</sup>(My emphasis).

Although lack of education has been cited both in the U.S. and

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<sup>39</sup>Zelnik et al., *op. cit.*, 1977.

<sup>40</sup>Schofield., *op. cit.*, 1973, p. 138.



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in the U.K. as a major reason for non-use of contraceptives, the reality is that most men and women have at least received contraceptive education from someone. Ann Phoenix<sup>41</sup> reports 88% of her teenage mother sample as having had such a discussion. Although most of these discussions were at school and were retrospectively viewed as not useful, due to the embarrassment of talking about sexual issues in front of their own peer group, it was not the case that the teenage women who became pregnant "were ignorant of contraceptive methods and needed better contraceptive education "<sup>42</sup>

Drawing together issues of social class, personality factors, stresses etc. it is possible to attempt to put together a framework for the "aetiology" of teenage pregnancy based on the mothers' (and fathers') perspective. As a basis of that framework it is necessary to see pregnancy as only one part of the life course. It is not necessarily a crisis (although certain adolescents, families and friends would certainly perceive it as being one). How the pregnancy is viewed will depend upon how the adolescent perceives her past, her future and the circumstances surrounding her present situation (i.e. schooling, relationship with partner, parental values etc). In terms of her sexual activity, although she may not be consciously thinking of her place on the life course, her present and future behaviour will be determined by the parts of her life path she is prepared to enter. With the advent of contraceptives and abortion a young adolescent is more able to

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<sup>41</sup>Ann Phoenix *The Process of Becoming a Mother*, unpublished manuscript 1987.

<sup>42</sup>Ibid. p.61.



determine and control her progression along the life path. Therefore it is perhaps not surprising to find that many young mothers have a poor educational attainment history; those women who see themselves as having embarked on a long educational career, in this context, would perhaps be unwilling to start a new part of the life cycle without having successfully completed their present sub-cycle and so would delay entering motherhood.

### Young Fathers In Perspective

Until now the majority of this text has concentrated on motherhood, although there has been certain reference to fathers. In this section there is a brief look at references to teenage fathers in historical literature and a closer examination of why fathers are important in the context of the child's development, both directly through their interactions with the child and indirectly via their relationship with the mother. I then go on to discuss research which has collected information concerning adolescent mother-father relationships at the time of conception.

From the early Christian period there has been reference to the nature of child-father relationship:

"Wives, be subject to your husbands, as to the Lord.  
For the husband is the head of the wife ....Children,

obey your parents in the Lord for this is right.  
'Honour your father and mother' (this is the first commandment with a promise) 'that it may be well with you and that you may live long on earth.'"43

St. Paul advises wives, children and servants to obey the master of the house (the father) in the same way that Christians obey God. The picture of the father as master, disciplinarian and divine leader is obviously misleading in terms of actual fathering. There are a considerable number of authors<sup>44</sup> who gave learned opinions on the way parents ought to behave with their children, and vice versa, and their main emphasis was to encourage parents (and especially fathers) to provide an atmosphere of authority. Mr Fairchild, presented as the model father, addresses his young son: "I stand in the place of God to you, whilst you are a child."<sup>45</sup> However the reality of such relationships was likely to be very different, especially amongst poorer families where survival, and not discipline, was the key issue of parenting.

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<sup>43</sup>St. Paul's Letter to the Ephesians, the Revised Version of the Bible, 5:22-6:9.

<sup>44</sup>John Donne, "Sermon on Genesis 1:26" *Sermons of John Donne*. Eds. Evelyn M. Simson and George R. Potter, 10 vols (Berkeley, 1953-1962), 9:68-91.

Thomas Cobbett, "A Fruitful and Useful Discourse touching the Honour Due from Children to Parents and the Duty of Parents to their Children, (1656)" as quoted in Pinchbeck and Hewitt *Children in English Society*, 2 vols.(London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1973) 1:19-20.

<sup>45</sup>Mrs Sherwood, 1818 as quoted in John and Elizabeth Newson, "Cultural Aspects of Childrearing" *The Integration of a Child into a Social World*. Ed. Martin P.M. Richards (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1974.).58.



## Introduction - Young Fathers In Perspective

adolescents (and prepubescents) marrying at an early age, but in general the nature of these relationships is very different from present day teenage marriages. It was the case that many of the aristocracy entered their children into contracts of marriage from an early age; some children in the sixteenth century went through the ceremony of marriage as early as four years old although it is difficult to establish whether the children were married as some had difficulty in repeating the vows.<sup>46</sup> Marriages entered into at an early stage of development could entail a childlike reaction to the events of the wedding ceremony.

"Occasionally, the children reacted strongly against parental pressures, like little John Bridge who 'would eat no meate at supper' after his wedding and 'did weep to go home with his father'. When put to bed with his child bride, John 'lay with his back to her all night.'<sup>47</sup>

References to the teenage father, in contrast to the teenage husband are very rare, and one can only presume that the status of the teenage father is reflected by the situation of the teenage mother. In this way teenage fathers were probably forced to abandon the young mother in order to avoid the consequences of being involved with an illegitimate child, as reported by Pinchbeck and Hewitt.

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<sup>46</sup>Frederick J. Furnivall, ed. *Child -Marriages, Divorces , and Ratifications etc. in the Diocese of Chester , 1561-6*, (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner for the E.E.T.S., 1897): 39.

<sup>47</sup>Ibid., pp. 45-46.



".... punish those whose behaviour offended puritan notions of sexual morality. To achieve this end, physical punishment and public disgrace were added to the economic penalties of the maintenance orders and committals to the Houses of Correction.

Hence an order made by the Lancashire Quarter Sessions in 1601 by which both the parents of an illegitimate child were to be publicly whipped and sat in the stocks during market time, naked from the middle up, with papers on their heads saying: 'These persons are punished for fornication.'<sup>48</sup>

If the young couple however decided to avoid the ignominy of having an illegitimate child by getting married before the baby was born, then there was the likelihood that they would suffer severe economic hardship. The picture was, of course, different if the young father was an aristocrat; it seems to have been taken for granted that the upper classes were entitled to indulge themselves sexually with attractive female adolescents without contemplating, or facing up to, the consequences of their actions.

The "softening" of many attitudes in relation to marriage, sexual behaviour, illegitimacy etc., during the last forty years has had many consequences in terms of people's behaviour. One of the major changes which has occurred recently in descriptions of teenage pregnancy and parenthood is the recognition that the young father is important in other ways than his role of legitimizing the baby. In fact, this function would appear to be

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<sup>48</sup>*Lancashire Quarter Sessions Records*, (1590-1606):74 as quoted in Pinchbeck and Hewitt *Children in English Society*, 2 vols (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1973): 1.213-14.

the most trivial and superficial role that a young father could fill; even though in respect to research and society it is often seen as a crucial commitment to fatherhood. However, to view a young father's role in terms of a commitment to a marriage vow is perhaps, in the long term, insignificant, except within a legal framework where, unless the putative father is legally married to the mother, he has no rights to access or custody. Increasingly researchers have become interested in the involvement of the male partner<sup>49</sup> and the part that he plays in the pregnancy and the life of the mother. Phoenix<sup>50</sup> reported that most of the males in her study of adolescent mothers in London took up a role which was very much in the background. However, studies in the United States have stressed that by perceiving the male as a background figure, the emotional needs of the young father are not recognised and a potentially useful support system is undermined.<sup>51</sup> As one of the important factors in successfully adjusting to adolescent parenthood has been found to be the presence of an adequate and effective social support mechanism (i.e. people to help with child rearing, and to provide emotional, psychological and financial assistance), it is also likely that children themselves need fathers, directly or indirectly.

Lewis et al point out that "until recently it was relatively

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<sup>49</sup>Rosalind Vaz, Paul Smolen and Charlene Millar, "Adolescent Pregnancy: Involvement of the Male Partner," *Journal of Adolescent Health Care* 4 4(1983): 246-250.

Paula Allen-Meares, "Adolescent Pregnancy and Parenting: The Forgotten Adolescent Father and his Parents," *Journal of Social Work and Human Sexuality*, 3.1 (1984): 27-39.

<sup>50</sup>Ann Phoenix: personal communication.

<sup>51</sup>Allen-Meares., *op. cit.*, 1984.



acceptable to say that as far as most psychologists were concerned, the only important social object in the infant's life was the mother."<sup>52</sup> Much of the recent mother biased research can be attributed to John Bowlby and his theory of attachment<sup>53</sup> whereby he asserts that there is a unique biological bond between mother and infant. It is a primary and distinct relationship and is derived from biological and evolutionary necessities. Lewis and Rosenbaum<sup>54</sup> have proposed an alternative model, which views social development within a broader context than just the mother/infant relationship. They suggest that social relationships develop in parallel and are not totally dependent on establishing a relationship with the mother first. Lamb<sup>55</sup> has demonstrated that infants form attachments to both mother and father from the middle of the first year, even though the father spends relatively little time with the child. Main and Weston<sup>56</sup> have since shown that the most sociable infants were those who were securely attached to both mother and the father rather than to only the mother or father. The relationship of father-child has also been

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<sup>52</sup>Michael Lewis, Candice Feiring and Marsha Weinraub, "The Father as a Member of the Child's Social Network," *The Role of the Father in Child Development*, 2nd ed. Ed. Michael Lamb (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1981).259.

<sup>53</sup>John Bowlby, *Attachment and Loss, Vol 1, Attachment* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1969).

<sup>54</sup>M. Lewis and L. Rosenbaum, *The Child and its Family*, (New York: Plenum, 1979).

<sup>55</sup>Michael Lamb, "Interaction between eight -month- old children and their Fathers and Mothers," *The Role of the Father in Child Development*. Ed. M.E.Lamb, (New York: Wiley, 1976)

<sup>56</sup>Mary Main and Marion Weston, "The independence of infant-mother and infant-father attachment relationships: Security of attachment characterizes relationships, not infants," *Child Development*, (1981): 52.



seen to affect cognitive development and sex-role differentiation<sup>57</sup> as well as its quality being a predictor for or against delinquency in boys.<sup>58</sup> However, in addition to the direct effects, fathers also have significant indirect effects on the child's development.<sup>59</sup> Lewis et al<sup>60</sup> have described two general forms of indirect effect. Firstly fathers are able to affect their child via influence on their partner, and secondly when they interact with other people in front of the child. In these ways fathers' psychological and physical support has been shown to have multiple effects on the child. Furthermore, Shereshefsky et al<sup>61</sup> in a study of sixty young middle class families noted that where the husband was responsive to the baby and the mother and was helpfully involved in household tasks, the level of mother-infant interaction was good. If the relationship between the adolescent mother and father is of prime importance for the development of the child, it would be appropriate to consider data that has been collected on this issue.

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<sup>57</sup>H.B. Biller, "Father Absence, divorce and personality development," *The Role of the Father in Child Development* 2nd. ed. Ed. M.E.Lamb (New York: Wiley, 1981).

<sup>58</sup>John and Elizabeth Newson, "Parental Punishment Strategies with Eleven-Year-Old Children," *Psychological Approaches to Child Abuse*. Ed Neil Frude, (London: Batsford Academic And Education Ltd, 1980)

<sup>59</sup>Jay Belsky, "Early Human Experience: A family perspective," *Developmental Psychology* 17 (1981): 1-23.

M. Lewis, C Feiring and M. Weinraub "The Father as a Member of the Child's Social Network", *The Role of the Father in Child Development* 2nd. ed. Ed. M.E. Lamb, (New York: Wiley, 1981).

<sup>60</sup>Ibid.

<sup>61</sup>Pauline M. Shereshefsky, Beatrix Liebenberg and Robert Lockman, "Maternal Adaptations," *Psychological Aspects of a First Pregnancy and Early Postnatal Adaptation*. Ed. Pauline M. Shereshefsky and Leon S. Yarrow, (New York: Raven Press, 1973).

## Nature Of Relationship Between The Young Mother And Father

There appears to be a popular image of young adolescents who become pregnant being the victims of the aftermath of the permissive revolution, which promoted the idea that casual sexual intercourse was the norm. The female teenager who became pregnant was thus seen as guilty of "sleeping around" as evidenced by the fact that she was bearing a child. However, the issue of "what is the relationship between the adolescent mother and father?" is not totally clear. There appears to be evidence from both the United States<sup>62</sup> and England<sup>63</sup> that the majority of adolescent pregnancies do not originate from "one night stands."

At conception, only 3% (2 in number) of the Phoenix sample had not been in an established relationship with the child's father at the time they conceived. Later in the pregnancy, a further 19% (15) mothers lost contact with the father. Although most of Phoenix's parents had established some sort of relationship before conception these were not necessarily based on the idea of permanency and the future. Research in the United States has also established that the majority of fathers are well known to the mother; often they live close to each other or have gone to the same school.<sup>64</sup> A consequence of being familiar, if not intimate, on a long term basis is that the male is more likely at least to stay

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<sup>62</sup> Vaz et al., *op. cit.*, 1983.

M. Elisabeth Lorenzi, Lorraine V. Klerman and James F. Jekel. "School-Age Parents: How Permanent a Relationship?" *Adolescence*, Vol XII. 45 (1977): 15-22.

<sup>63</sup> Phoenix., *op. cit.*, 1987.

<sup>64</sup> Vaz et al., *op. cit.*, 1983.



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in the picture. If he remains emotionally involved with the mother there is a need for the two of them to attempt to negotiate their future together or apart. With changing attitudes to marriage and illegitimacy there is perhaps less social pressure to marry in order to legitimise the baby, as is evidenced by the increasing number of young mothers who give birth to illegitimate children. It seems that the norm, at least for the first child, is to co-habit. As Furstenberg points out "early wedlock is at best a mixed blessing, resolving certain problems that develop as a result of pregnancy but at the same time generating new ones."<sup>65</sup> The pregnancy period is potentially a very unsettling, difficult time for the young father because many of the decisions he has to make regarding what he does are based on a relationship which is temporarily secure, but in the long term has an unknown quality.

### **Impact Of Having Children When A Teenager**

A popular "parenting" research area has focused on the changes experienced by parents when having their first child. This section describes the major orientations and findings, relating to the transition to parenthood, which researchers have described. It then explores how these findings might relate to the younger parent. Van Genep as early as 1906 envisaged pregnancy and then childbirth as a time of transition.

"The ceremonies of pregnancy and childbirth

<sup>65</sup>Furstenberg., *op. cit.*, 1976, p. 62.



constitute a whole. Often the first rites performed separate the pregnant woman from society, from her family group, and sometimes even from her sex. They are followed by rites pertaining to pregnancy itself, which is a *transitional* period.

Finally come the rites of childbirth intended to reintegrate the woman into the groups she previously belonged, or to establish her new position in society as a mother ....<sup>66</sup>

LeMasters in 1957<sup>67</sup> hypothesized that the transition to parenthood would constitute a "crisis event." He based his notion of crisis on the work of Reuben Hill<sup>68</sup> who had previously described viewing families in a three dimensional (or systems) sense, and in particular when adjusting to crises. He believed families went through a series of stages following crisis: Crisis - disorganisation - recovery - reorganisation. Crisis research had primarily concentrated on the effects of loss, but LeMasters stated that the introduction of a new member to a system (the family) would force reorganisation of the system as drastic as removal of a member. He interviewed forty five couples concerning their retrospective view of the "crisis" of parenthood and found the majority had successfully adjusted to parenthood following a "rough period" when the baby had first arrived. There followed a large number of studies which examined the potential changes in the family system associated with the addition of the first child.<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>66</sup>Van Genep, *Rites of Passage*, Translated by M.B. Vizedom and G.L. Caffee (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1977): 41.

<sup>67</sup>LeMasters, "Parenthood as a Crisis," *Marriage and Family Living*, 19 (1957): 352-353.

<sup>68</sup>Reuben Hill, *Families Under Stress*, (New York: Harper, 1949).

<sup>69</sup>D.F. Hobbs, "Parenthood as Crisis: A Third Study," *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 27 (1965): 367-72.

D.F. Hobbs and S.P. Cole, "Transition to Parenthood: A Decade

Hobbs in 1965<sup>70</sup>, and subsequently replicated ten years later<sup>71</sup> found the majority of couples (86.8%) classified the transition period as being a "slight" crisis as determined by data gathered using a questionnaire, whereas Dyer, in his study of 32 couples reported that 53% found the transition a "severe" crisis.

Researchers then began to question whether it was suitable to describe the arrival of the first child as a "crisis"<sup>72</sup> as it took a negative view of the effects of parenthood. The Rapoport<sup>73</sup> moved away from the notion of the transition being a crisis period to one of "normal development and a normal and expectable part of the life cycle."<sup>74</sup> They acknowledged that transition points in the life cycle of the family had elements attached to them which were different for the individuals experiencing them, and those critical points often provoked a feeling of imbalance within a family system. Much of this work was profoundly influenced by Erikson's definition of "crisis" which he used as a highly positive concept: "a necessary turning point when development must move one way or another, marshalling the resources of growth,

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Replication," *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 38 (1976): 723-31.

E.D. Dyer, "Parenthood as Crisis: A re-study," *Marriage and Family Living*, 25 (1963): 196-201.

J.H Meyerowitz and H. Feldman, "Transition to parenthood" *Psychiatric Research Report*, 20 (1966): 78-84.

<sup>70</sup>Hobbs., *op. cit.*, 1965.

<sup>71</sup>Hobbs et al., *op. cit.*, 1976.

<sup>72</sup>Alice Rossi, "Transition to Parenthood", *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 32 (1968): 20-28.

<sup>73</sup>Rhona Rapoport. "Normal Crises, family structure, and mental health," *Family Process* 2 (1963): 68-80.

Rhona and Robert Rapoport "Family Transitions in Contemporary Society, *Journal of Psychosomatic Research*, 12 (1964): 29-39.

<sup>74</sup>Rapoport., *op. cit.*, 1963, p.69.



recovery and further differentiation."<sup>75</sup> More recently researchers<sup>76</sup> have concentrated on the positive as well as the negative aspects of the transition to parenthood. Russell administered a series of "gratification" and "crisis" checklists which were designed to give a more balanced view of the transition to parenthood, to 511 couples. She found respondents checked a far higher proportion of "gratification" items than "crisis" items. This study however illustrates some of the major problems which have been associated with this area. Because most of the transition research has been derived from work on crisis, it has tended to adopt techniques which "measure" characteristics of the population.<sup>77</sup> Psychometric tests, questionnaires and checklists have been the predominant method of investigation. The very nature of these tools has meant that "results" have been found; however the use of such tests does not necessarily lead one to believe that parents' in-depth feelings, emotions and perceptions are being identified - only their superficial, even momentary views are registered.

Studies have also tended to focus on how the quality of

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<sup>75</sup>E.H. Erikson, "Identity and the Life Cycle: Selected Papers", *Psychological Issues*, 1 (1959), 1-171.

<sup>76</sup>Candyce Smith Russell, "Transition to Parenthood: Problems and Gratifications," *Journal of Marriage and the Family* May 1974.

<sup>77</sup>Doris R. Entwisle and Susan G. Doering, *The First Birth: A Family Turning Point* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1981).

Candyce Smith Russell, "Unscheduled Parenthood: Transition to Parent for the Teenager," *Journal of Social Issues*, 36, (1980): 45-63.

Russell., *op. cit.*, 1974.

Hobbs., *op. cit.*, 1965.

Hobbs et al., *op. cit.*, 1976.

Rossi., *op. cit.*, 1968.



personal and marital life changes after the birth of a child. Sollic and Miller<sup>78</sup> when reviewing the literature on transition to parenthood have described four groups of "problems."

1. Role Strain - a new parent experiences new physical demands associated with caring for a child and also experiences stress caused by loss of sleep and constant fatigue.
2. Relationship Strain - new parents experience a reduction of time spent together and changes in sexual relationships.
3. Psychological Stresses - a new parent experiences emotional strain because of the responsibility of total care for someone else. Doubts about competence are also a source of emotional worry.
4. Financial Costs and Other Restrictions - new parents experience negative feelings because of the financial adjustment they have to make in order to accommodate the new child. Also limits are placed upon their freedom and social lives.

It must be noted that many of the "negative" changes which are reported above have been countered by other studies<sup>79</sup> which have reported substantially less "crisis".

Lewis<sup>80</sup> has levelled a further criticism at the "transition to parenthood" research. He points out that the main focus of

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<sup>78</sup>B.C. Miller and D. Sollic, "Normal Stresses during the transition to parenthood, *Family Relations*, 29 (1980): 459-465.

<sup>79</sup>Hobbs., *op. cit.*, 1965.

Hobbs et al., *op. cit.*, 1976.

<sup>80</sup>Charlie Lewis, *Becoming a Father*, (Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1986).

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research has been on women and not men. Thus researchers have often assumed (either implicitly or explicitly) that both women and men experience the transition in the same way. Research which has concentrated on men during the pregnancy and post-partum period has described men in two different ways. Liebenberg<sup>81</sup> has described men from a study of 60 middle class couples in the United States as being predominantly envious of the mother. Because the men were unable to take part in many of the mother's experiences they were seen as developing deviant (unsupporting) coping strategies in order to manage the alterations in their life. For instance Liebenberg describes how some men fervently deny that the mother is pregnant and "intentionally" arrange long motor trips etc. as a way of insisting she leads a normal life. Other researchers have seen the male as a far more peripheral figure who, unaffected by the changes, can only offer himself as support to the mother.<sup>82</sup> Entwistle and Doering failed to concentrate on the unique elements of father's role in their study of sixty couples and only asked the father whether he was interested in the pregnancy and what problems the mother had experienced. The emphasis of the role of the mother is not perhaps surprising as, from a practical view, it is the female who has to assume the major responsibilities for the safe arrival and care of the baby; she also experiences a more profound and dramatic change to her life than her male partner.<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>81</sup>Beatrice Liebenberg, "Expectant Fathers," *Psychological Aspects of a First Pregnancy and Early Postnatal Adaptation*. Eds. P. Shereshefsky and L. Yarrow (New York: Raven Press, 1973).

<sup>82</sup>F.K. Grossman, L.S. Eicher and S.A. Winickoff, *Pregnancy, Birth and Parenthood*, (San Francisco: Jossey & Bass, 1980).



The issue of whether the "transition to parenthood" is a time of psychological change is difficult to resolve. However, in behavioural terms there are many aspects of both mothers' and fathers' lives which alter firstly during the pregnancy and secondly after the birth. How the consequences of such changes are interpreted depend entirely on the orientation and method of study. There is little doubt that these behavioural changes have a psychological impact which is not best described in terms of the positive and negative consequences, but in terms of the way people attempt to orientate and structure their lives.

### Consequences Of Having Children When Young

One of the fundamental concepts to evolve out of the 'transition to parenthood' studies is that, although it can be viewed as a "crisis" period, it is also a normal and natural aspect of the life cycle or life path. This is not perhaps a surprising fact, but much of the early research<sup>84</sup> concentrated on the deviant and psychological aspects of becoming a parent. When considering adolescent fatherhood, the crucial difference between an adolescent and an older man is that the adolescent may not have

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<sup>83</sup>Ibid.

Miller et al., *op. cit.*, 1980.

<sup>84</sup>Ibid.

H. Osofsky, "Expectant and new fatherhood as a developmental crisis, " *Bulletin of the Menninger Clinic*, 46 (1982): 209-230.

W.H. Trethowan, and M.F. Conlon, "The couvade syndrome," *British Journal of Psychiatry*, III (1965): 57-66.



had the variety of life experiences, or be as fully physically developed as an older man. As Belsky and Miller speculate:

"The social context of fatherhood and fathering for adolescent males differs importantly from the normative fatherhood experience. The most obvious departure from the normative situation is the time of adolescent fatherhood. Parenthood in adolescence is off schedule, too soon, earlier in the life course than expected."<sup>85</sup>

Elder and Rockwell<sup>86</sup> when talking of change in general, point out that the impact of an event on an individual's life course varies according to its synchronization with other life events and career lines. Candyce Russell also states:

"The amount of stress experienced varies with the importance of the roles involved and the extent to which the timing is out of phase. Because parenting is a role fundamental to society it is probable that early parenthood is even more stressful to those who mistime the beginning of this period."<sup>87</sup>

It is possible to examine the effects of age on an adolescent's

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<sup>85</sup>Jay Belsky and Brent C. Miller, "Adolescent Fatherhood in the Context of the Transition to Parenthood," *Adolescent Fatherhood*. Ed. Michael E. Lamb (Hillsdale N.J: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1986) 111.

<sup>86</sup>G.H. Elder and R. Rockwell, "Marital timing in women's life patterns," *Journal of Family History*, 1.1 (1976): 34-53.

<sup>87</sup>Russell., *op. cit.*, 1980, p. 51

Introduction - Impact Of Having Children When A Teenager transition to parenthood by comparing the work previously done by Miller and Sollie<sup>88</sup> on a more normative age range sample.

As has been described there are a number of behavioural and psychological changes recorded:

### 1. Role Strain

The advent of a totally dependent infant is likely to have considerable impact on the father, but there is little to indicate that older fathers (although they have had more time) are any better prepared than younger fathers to take on the physical demands of waking up in the middle of the night. Studies in the United States have attempted to measure parents' state of preparation and knowledge of parenting by examining parents' understanding of child development. DeLissovoy,<sup>89</sup> in a study of 48 married adolescent couples, describes how young parents consistently overestimated the rate of child development. However he, like Epstein,<sup>90</sup> failed to use control groups in order to make valid statements regarding the comparative knowledge of adolescents. More recently, Parks et al<sup>91</sup> have found there was no difference between a group of 45 black adolescent mothers compared with a group of adult primiparous mothers from a

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<sup>88</sup>Miller et al., *op. cit.*, 1980.

<sup>89</sup>V. DeLissovoy, "Child care by adolescent parents," *Children Today*, 2 (1973): 23-25.

<sup>90</sup>A.S. Epstein, *Assessing the child development information needed by adolescent parents with very young children*, United States, Dept. Health, Education and Welfare Final Report (Washington: GPO, 1980).

<sup>91</sup>P.L. Parks and V.L. Smeriglio, "Parenting Knowledge among adolescent mothers," *Journal of Adolescent Health Care* 4 (1983): 163-167.



similar socio-economic background.

However knowledge of child development is no real indicator of how prepared a young parent is for the physical burdens of child care. Belsky and Miller<sup>92</sup> describe the importance of context in attempting to evaluate changes in role for the adolescent father. The role strain experienced by uncommitted males is seen as being different from that of those who are highly participant; he surmises that it is difficult to separate the role of mate from father role, and he implies that it is impossible to determine role strain without encompassing factors relevant to the mother-father relationship.

## 2. Relationship Strain

One of the variables which has been associated with ease of transition appears to be state of marriage (marital adjustment or satisfaction). As has been reported earlier, the relationship between adolescent male and female is varied and often extremely complex. Evidence suggests that relationships which are formalised by marriage at an early age are, in the long term, less stable. Glick and Norton<sup>93</sup> who used survey data from 28,000 households in the United States reported that men who marry in their teens have a high probability of divorce, and men

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<sup>92</sup>Belsky et al., *op. cit.*, 1986.

<sup>93</sup>Paul Glick and Arthur Norton, "Frequency, Duration, and Probability of Marriage and Divorce," *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, May 1971: 307-17.



who marry in their late twenties have a low probability of divorce. The younger married men are also more likely to divorce at a relatively earlier time in the marriage. However this data gives no explanation for the higher marital break ups in young couples. Therefore it is not clear whether married couples divorce because they have to cope with additional stresses associated with being young or whether it is in fact the youthful relationship in itself which cannot cope with the normal strains of life.

For the adolescent couple there are likely to be changes both in the nature of their sexual relations and in aspects of their normal daily living. The majority of adolescent couples, at the time of conception, have not been living together and are perhaps unused to frequent uninterrupted sexual relations; therefore the advent of the new baby is unlikely to disturb existing sexual patterns as in the case of older cohabiting parents. Ann Phoenix<sup>94</sup> in her longitudinal study of 79 mothers aged between 16 and 19 when they had their first child found 64% of her sample were living apart from the putative father at the time of conception (75% of fathers in the present study sample were living away from the mother). Similarly, if the couple have been living apart, and decide to live together because of the pregnancy, it becomes necessary for them to negotiate, for the first time, many of the normal day to day routines that older parents have established already. The stresses for older parents, who are having to renegotiate their routines because of the arrival of the

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<sup>94</sup>Phoenix., *op. cit.*, 1987.

Introduction - Impact Of Having Children When A Teenager baby, are likely to be very different from those of younger parents who are newly negotiating and establishing household and baby care routines.

### 3. Psychological Stress

Potentially a major psychological burden at all times is the feeling of responsibility for the care and future of someone else. It has been hypothesized by Elster and Hendricks<sup>95</sup> that "premature role transition causes stress because adolescents have to take on adult responsibilities before they are psychologically prepared." They go on to state:

"Young fathers may still need to experiment with their lives as other adolescents do. The social and physical obligations of parenthood, however, may conflict with their desire for expansive social interactions. These teens often feel tied down, especially if married, and after the initial excitement of parenthood has been replaced by the realities of parental obligations."<sup>96</sup>

Elster and Panzarine<sup>97</sup> interviewed a "convenience" (non-random) group of twenty first time fathers eighteen years or less

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<sup>95</sup>Arthur Elster and Leo Hendricks, "Stresses and Coping Strategies of Adolescent Fathers," *Adolescent Fatherhood*. Ed. Michael Lamb (Hillsdale N.J: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1986): 57.

<sup>96</sup>Ibid. p.57

<sup>97</sup>Arthur Elster and Susan Panzarine, "Teenage Fathers: Stresses during gestation and Early Parenthood," *Clinical Pediatrics*, 22.10 (1983): 700-703.



from three high-risk prenatal clinics, before and after delivery, From these interviews they isolated four groups of stresses reported by teenage fathers. These were:

- 1) worries regarding how they were to support the family,.
- 2) concern for the health of mother and child,
- 3) concern for performance as parent, and
- 4) concern about problems of relationship specifically with partners, friends and parents.

The authors then contend "while many of the concerns reported by teenage fathers are probably similar to those experienced by older men who are experiencing their first fatherhood, the premature role transition results in youth experiencing additional stresses."<sup>98</sup> However, they fail to report any statistical basis for this assumption and have relied totally on clinical samples in order to reach their conclusions, believing their clinical impression of stresses to be a sound and consistent finding.

#### 4. Financial and other Restrictions

One of the major concerns in the United States and, to a certain extent, in the United Kingdom has been the impact of childbearing on education. Data from the United States has consistently shown that adolescents who bear children do not complete as many years of education as those who do not. Card and Wise<sup>99</sup> in a

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<sup>98</sup>Ibid. p.702.

<sup>99</sup>Josefina J. Card and L.Wise,"Teenage Mothers and Teenage Fathers: The impact of Early Childbearing on the Parents' Personal and Professional

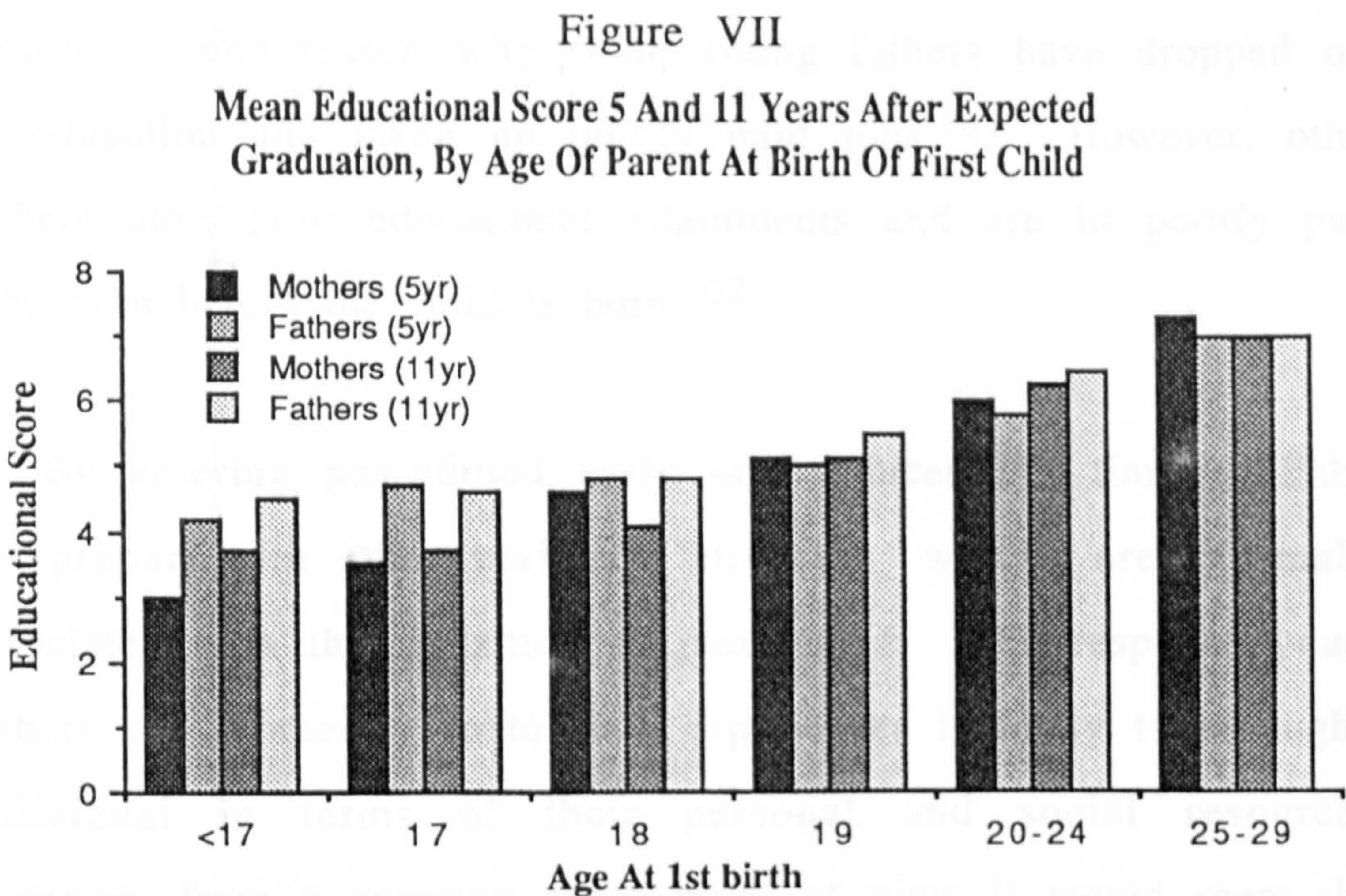


longitudinal study of 375,000 adolescents in the United States, found that young people who became parents whilst in their teens were more likely than their classmates, who postponed childbearing, to have their education shortened. The direct relationship between parental age at first birth and amount of education when measured five and eleven years after expected high school graduation is shown in Figure VII. Education was measured by assigning points to qualifications and completing certain high school grades e.g. score of 12 indicates a doctoral degree, 8 is a college graduate, 7 some college education, 6 post high school but non college training, 5 high school graduate and so on down to nought.

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Lives," *Family Planning Perspectives*, 10.4 (1978): 199-205.  
Furstenberg et al., *op. cit.*, 1987.





(from J.J. Card and L. Wise)

Phoenix, in her study of teenage mothers in London, reports her sample as having few educational achievements, 47% having no educational achievements and therefore not being well placed to obtain jobs with career prospects.

The majority of United States studies<sup>100</sup> which have investigated the stresses associated with adolescent fatherhood have all identified money as being a considerable worry for many fathers, both before and after the birth.

<sup>100</sup>Arthur Elster, Susan Panzarine and Leo Hendricks, "Unwed adolescent fathers: problems they face and their source of social support," *Adolescence* 60 (1980): 861-9.  
Lamb., *op. cit.*, 1986.



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The need for money to support mother and child has been viewed as one reason why some young fathers have dropped out of education and taken up poorly paid jobs.<sup>101</sup> However, other fathers have poor educational attainments and are in poorly paid jobs even before the child is born.<sup>102</sup>

By entering parenthood early one reduces the time available to prepare for the various "stresses" which are normally associated with the transition to parenthood. The response young fathers and mothers give to such experiences is likely to be highly individual in terms of their personal and social resources. However, from a common sense point of view it would seem that young parents suffer a considerable disadvantage; and from an objective standpoint they appear to be very much further behind other parents in terms of experience, knowledge, wealth prospects, preparation, social and personal relations. Despite this, pregnancy and parenthood are very personal experiences and it is sometimes difficult to represent how adolescent parents feel when we, as researchers, have very little personal experience of what they are going through. To a certain extent, viewing them as an adolescent, and therefore deviant population, (as much of the research in the United States has done, for example Elster<sup>103</sup>), has meant that investigations have concentrated on the negative aspects and problems which they are likely to experience. This is similar to the orientation of much of the earlier research into the transition to parenthood and, as a consequence, can be criticised

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<sup>101</sup>Card et al., *op. cit.*, 1978.

<sup>102</sup>Furstenberg et al., *op. cit.*, 1987.

<sup>103</sup>Elster et al., *op. cit.*, 1980.



for a narrow and limited approach. In this study I have tried to give young fathers the opportunity to express the positives - as well as the normalities of their self image.

## Young Fathers When The Child Is One Year Old

Much of the research on fathers has concentrated upon their role within in the family and their physical participation in child care tasks. This section examines some of the available literature concerning theories of father's role in samples of a more normative age range. It continues by reporting available data on young fathers and also reflecting on the influences of variables such as unemployment. Finally it addresses the issue of paternal sensitivity in young fathers.

Before discussing the role of the young father, it is worth glancing at the research which has focused on the father's function within the family. As has already been noted from a historical perspective, there is very little data available on the role and participation of fathers. From the outset, research on the family has emphasised and investigated the relationship between mother and child; although, as Lewis<sup>104</sup> notes, there is ample evidence from the 1940's and 1950's to show that the field was of interest, although not "active". Lewis cites studies on pregnancy,<sup>105</sup> women

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<sup>104</sup>Charlie Lewis, "Fathering in Contemporary Society," diss. U of Nottingham 1983.

<sup>105</sup>J. Landis, "Effects of First Pregnancy upon the Sexual Adjustment of

and work,<sup>106</sup> the family<sup>107</sup> and child rearing,<sup>108</sup> all of which consider the father. However, it was not until the 1970's that the father was primarily seen as being of research interest in his own right. Much of this original research grew out of the work which had involved investigation of the mother. Thus, a fundamental concern has been "how the father compares with the mother" and "how able or willing is the father to take on a function similar to that of the mother." Within the framework of this interest has been the discussion concerning the "Fathers' changing role in the family and society." It has been contended that fathering has been altering from a traditional position to one which is more nurturant (more feminine or mother-like).<sup>109</sup> The traditional father was seen by researchers as a peripheral figure in terms of child care and played a limited role in the family. The father's function or job was to provide a solid economic base and assist the children, especially sons, in the acquisition of appropriate sex-typed behaviour to perform as breadwinners and authority figures. The traditional father viewpoint stems from the belief that mothers and fathers model female and male behaviour and thus provide the first and most powerful sex role influences. There is also the belief that sex and, more specifically, sex role behaviour (which includes mothering and fathering) are

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212 couples," *American Sociological Review*, 15 (1950): 769-798.

<sup>106</sup>M. Komarovsky, *Women in the Modern World: Their Education and their Dilemmas*, (Boston: Little Brown, 1953).

<sup>107</sup>E. Bott, *Family and Social Network*, (London: Tavistock, 1957/71).

<sup>108</sup>John and Elizabeth Newson *Infant Care in an Urban Community*, (London: Allen Unwin 1963).

<sup>109</sup>R.A. Fein, "Considerations of Men's Experiences and the Birth of a First Child," *The First Child and Family Formation*. Eds. W. Miller and L. Newman (Chapel Hill: Carolina Population Centre, 1978a).327.



dichotomous groups. However, during the early 1970's Sandra Bem and others<sup>110</sup> postulated that sex role behaviours could be placed on a continuum, with femininity and masculinity as extremes. Bem<sup>111</sup> then modified her theory and took a more cognitive viewpoint and described a "gender schema" where an individual has an innate orientation toward masculinity and femininity and, in particular instances, may adopt behaviours generally associated with the opposite sex.

Although much of the "nurturant" father research did not stem from Bem's work, the notion of sex role behaviours being on a continuum, rather than two mutually exclusive groups, was the fundamental basis of research on fathers in the late 1970's. Fein commented:

"We find ourselves in the late 1970's , in the midst of a series of reconsiderations. Previously accepted models of womanhood, work, family life, the relationship between work and family life are being scrutinised, examined, remade. Many women, assigned in the past to roles of caring for children, keeping the home, supporting their menfolk, are exploring the world of paid employment, taking on and sharing the breadwinning responsibilities previously held mainly by men. Many men, feeling burdened by too-restrictive definitions of masculinity and manliness, are seeking to blend work life and family life, making efforts to become

<sup>110</sup>Sandra Bem, "The measurement of psychological androgyny," *Journal of Consulting & Clinical Psychology*, 42 (1974): 155-62.

Sandra Bem and E. Lenney, "Sex typing and the avoidance of cross sex behaviour," *Journal of Personality & Social Psychology*, 33 (1976): 48-54.

<sup>111</sup>Sandra Bem, "Gender schema theory: A cognitive account of sex typing," *Psychological Bulletin*, 88 (1981): 354-64.



and stay involved in the daily responsibilities of child care, learning more about the frustrations and the joys of deep and regular participation in the lives of their children."<sup>112</sup>

It became popular, and still is, to view the father as emerging from his traditional role and taking up a more nurturant role. It is Lewis' contention, although difficult to evaluate, that the view of fathers on the verge of becoming more androgynous is a longstanding and prominent feature of the patriarchy we live in.<sup>113</sup> He has put forward the premise that while increases in levels of father participation have taken place over the last twenty years, these changes have been relatively small. Using data collected by the Newsons in 1960 (published in 1963), when interviewing mothers from all social class backgrounds, along with data collected via fathers' reports in 1980 (both studies shared the same location, methodology and sampling techniques) he showed few differences in favour of fathers' participation in his comparisons.<sup>114</sup> To return to the adolescent father, it has been highlighted by some authors<sup>115</sup> that within fatherhood research

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<sup>112</sup>Robert Fein, "Research on Fathering: Social Policy and an Emergent Perspective," *Journal of Social Issues* 34.1 (1978b): 122-135.

<sup>113</sup>Lewis., *op. cit.*, 1983.

<sup>114</sup>Lewis., *op. cit.*, 1986.

<sup>115</sup>Felton Earls and B. Siegel, "Precocious Fathers," *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, 50.3 (1980): 469-80.

Douglas Sawin and R.D. Park, "Adolescent Fathers: Some implications from Recent Research on Paternal Roles," *Educational Horizons*, 53 (1976): 38-43.

Catherine Chilman, "Social and Psychological Research Concerning Adolescent Childbearing: 1970-1980," *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, Nov.1980: 793-805

Robert C. Barrett and Bryan E. Robinson, "Teenage fathers: neglected too long," *Social Work*, 27 (1982): 484-488.

there has been a failure to deal in a systematic way with the special issues of adolescent fathers. Researchers have continued to select clinical or non-random samples,<sup>116</sup> they have emphasised cultural and low-socioeconomic groups,<sup>117</sup> have focused their attention on the mother rather than the father,<sup>118</sup> have used superficial psychometric tools, checklists and self report assessments.<sup>119</sup> Adolescent mothers have been a topic of great research interest; and the young fathers, whether because they are difficult to contact or appear to be unwilling to be interviewed, are somewhat overlooked.

A methodological problem in trying to evaluate the adolescent father's role in the family comes from the social and cultural circumstances in which many young adolescent fathers find themselves. For example, there appears to be little point in examining whether adolescent fathers take up a more "traditional"

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Edward Melhuish and Ann Phoenix, "Motherhood under twenty: Prevailing Ideologies and Research," *Children and Society*, 4 (1987).

<sup>116</sup>Earls et al., *op. cit.*, 1980.

Leo Hendricks and Teresa Montgomery, "A limited population of unmarried adolescent fathers: a preliminary report of their views on fatherhood and the relationship with the mothers of their children," *Adolescence*, 18.69 (1983): 201-210.

Leo Hendricks, "Unwed adolescent fathers: Problems they face and their sources of social support," *Adolescence* 15.60 (1980): 861-869.

<sup>117</sup>*Ibid.*

Hendricks et al., *op. cit.*, 1983.

Furstenberg et al., *op. cit.*, 1987.

Furstenberg., *op. cit.*, 1976.

<sup>118</sup>Furstenberg et al., *op. cit.*, 1987.

Furstenberg. *op. cit.*, 1976.

Zelnik et al., *op. cit.*, 1977.

R. Sorenson, *Adolescent Sexuality in Contemporary America*. (New York: World Publishing Company, 1973).

Phoenix., *op. cit.*, 1987.

<sup>119</sup>Russell., *op. cit.*, 1980.

Eysenck., *op. cit.*, 1961.



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or "nurturant" role (as compared with older fathers) without at least considering a number of factors.

### 1) Frequency of contact with mother and child

Frequency of contact with mother or child is likely to have a crucial bearing on the role that a father plays. If the couple are living apart (for whatever reasons) the father is less available to nurture or take part in child care activities. In this situation age does have an important influence on father role, but frequency of contact is more likely to govern fathering. In short, younger people are not perhaps any less nurturant or more traditional, but may be forced into certain positions because of their social circumstances.

### 2) Unemployment

Fathers who are unemployed are (although not always) likely to have more time to be involved in caring for their child. However, unemployment in the context of the traditional role places fathers in a very stressful situation. They can no longer be categorised as the financial provider and potentially this undermines other roles associated with the traditional father (disciplinarian and sex role).<sup>120</sup> In such a context does the father

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<sup>120</sup>M. Williams, *Human Aspects of Unemployment and Relief with Special reference to Depression on the Children* (Chapel Hill: U of N.



find a new role - one closer to the mother - or one which is independent and unique from her?

Unemployment has also been shown to have physical as well as psychological ramifications.<sup>121</sup> Although less severe in our contemporary society, there are still the debilitating consequences of having little or no financial independence or affluence. Unemployment remains for the majority of people a situation where the main consideration is "getting by" or surviving.

There are also psychological consequences of unemployment, and these are best summed up as follows:

"For a minority, unemployment probably precipitates severe anxiety, depression or self-harm. For another minority, unemployment probably results in an overall improvement in quality of life, allowing relief from stressful, tedious or dangerous employment or allowing the flowering of personal agency. For the majority, however, the literature strongly suggests that the assault on personal agency by the restrictive and threatening psycho-social environment of unemployment, and the exhaustion and discouragement of trying to cope with it, are psychologically debilitating, producing a sense of being uprooted from familiar surroundings, cut off from the vital current of social, community and political life and profound uncertainty about the future."<sup>122</sup>

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Carolina Press, 1933).

G.H.Elder, *Children of the Great Depression*, (Chicago: U of Chicago Press, 1974).

<sup>121</sup>M. Jahoda, P.Lazarfeld and H. Zeisel, *Marienthal: The Sociography of an Unemployed Community*, (1933; Chicago: Aldine-Atherton, 1971).

<sup>122</sup>As quoted by Ramsay Liem in "The Psychological Costs of

The lack of a job has a profound effect on self concept. Eisenberg and Lazarsfeld<sup>123</sup> studied unemployment in 1938 and found that men in our society are often perceived as "breadwinners" and they find it difficult to cope with the psychological impact of unemployment. Thus the way in which an unemployed father adjusts to his employment situation is important in relation to his partner,<sup>124</sup> and is also likely to have bearing on his role. A study in Tyneside by Marsden and Duff<sup>125</sup> found nearly forty years after that unemployed men were very bitter when faced with the realisation they had lost, or failed to achieve, the traditional role of breadwinner. This loss of status, combined with the added change in the amount of time with other family members, often put strain on relationships. Many men reported having more frequent violent fights with their partners.

Unemployment appears to affect fathers in different ways depending on their social and interpersonal relations. The main implication of the research is that the stress of unemployment accentuates the nature of the relationships or bonds which the

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Unemployment: 54 2 (1987): 321-322, original quotation by David Fryer and Roy Payne, "Being Unemployed: A Review of the Literature on the Psychological Experience of Unemployment," *International Review of Industrial and Organisational Psychology*. Eds. C.L. Cooper and I. Robertson (New York: John Wiley, 1986) 271.

<sup>123</sup>P. Eisenberg and P. Lazarsfeld, "The Psychological effects of Unemployment," *Psychological Bulletin*, 1938.

<sup>124</sup>G.L. Staines, "Spillover versus compensation: a review of the Literature on the relationship between work and nonwork", *Human Relations*, 33: 111-29.

<sup>125</sup>D. Marsden and E. Duff, *Workless*, (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1975).



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father has already forged. Therefore, if the father has a warm and loving relationship with the mother the effect of unemployment is likely to be that they will continue to have a warm and loving relationship.<sup>126</sup>

### The Adolescent As A Nurturing Father

One aspect of the "emerging nurturant" father which is taken for granted is that he is as capable of caring for the young child as the mother. During the post-Bowlby<sup>127</sup> era there was much emphasis placed on the unique mother-infant bond. Since that period, attachment has been shown to be more complicated than a biologically determined bond. It is now more widely recognised that fathers are able to look after children in their own right.

Within the context of adolescent parenting much attention has been paid to the young person's ability (especially the mother's) to look after a young baby. Statutory authorities and writers frequently refer to adolescent parents as a population being "at risk" of possibly physically abusing their children.<sup>128</sup> Statistics appear to indicate that mothers who were below twenty years old when they had their first child are over represented in NSPCC

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<sup>126</sup>Jahoda et al., *op. cit.*, 1933.

Marsden et al., *op. cit.*, 1975.

<sup>127</sup>John Bowlby, *Child Care and the Growth of love*, (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1954).

<sup>128</sup>R. Hanson, W. McCulloch, and S. Hartley, "Key Characteristics of Child Abuse," *Child Abuse*. Ed. A. White Franklin, (Edinburgh: Churchill Livingstone, 1978) 39-53

M.A. Lynch and J. Roberts, "Early alerting signs," *Child Abuse* Ed. A. White Franklin, (Edinburgh: Churchill Livingstone, 1978) 28-38



child abuse statistics.<sup>129</sup> However, these statistics are not fully comprehensive and it may be that adolescent parents are less able to keep physical abuse secret, or perhaps more openly admit the physical nature of the relationship between them and their child. Lilley<sup>130</sup> in her study of adolescent mothers in Nottingham found that younger mothers more frequently reported using corporal punishment when the child was one year old. As a consequence they are under close scrutiny of official organisations (Health Services, Social Services, NSPCC) or unofficial networks (neighbours and family). A number of authors<sup>131</sup> (whose research findings have been mainly based on adolescent mothers) have postulated that adolescent fathers are also "A Group Potentially at Risk for Parenting Failure" both directly and indirectly (i.e. via their relationship with the mother). In 1975 the NSPCC published statistics of non-accidental injury to children, which was based on data collected at their Special Unit registers in Manchester, Leeds, Newcastle, Northampton and Coventry during the period 1st January 1975 to 31st December 1975. In their discussion on the parents of children who had been physically abused they noted how the age of both mother and father appeared to be skewed so that younger parents were over-represented. They also found the median ages of the female and male caretakers of "seriously" injured children were 22 years 7 months and 25 years, whereas

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<sup>129</sup>Susan J. Creighton, "An Epidemiological Study of Abused Children and Their Families in the United Kingdom Between 1977 and 1982," *Child Abuse and Neglect*, 9: 441-448.

<sup>130</sup>Jeanette Lilley, diss. U of Nottingham, 1987.

<sup>131</sup>Arthur Elster and Michael Lamb, "Adolescent Fathers: A Group Potentially at Risk for Parenting Failure," *Infant Mental Health Journal*, 3.3 (1982): 148-65.

the median ages of the caretakers of "moderately" injured children were 24 years 6 months and 27 years 8 months respectively.

This trend has continued to be reported by the NSPCC. In 46.4% of cases it was suspected that the mother was the perpetrator and in 44.2% of cases it was thought that the perpetrator was the father. These original NSPCC statistics should not be seen as representing the whole abusing population, and they only indicate that within the abusing population that the NSPCC came into contact with in the 1970's, a high proportion were "younger" parents. Similar results were reported in England by Hanson et al<sup>132</sup> and Lynch and Roberts<sup>133</sup> and in the United States by Bolton et al<sup>134</sup> and Kinard and Klerman.<sup>135</sup> However the American studies tended to be tentative about judging the effect of parental age as Kinard and Klerman comment

"This finding suggests that the hypothesized link between teenage parenting and child abuse may be confounded by the relationship of each variable to other preceding and possibly more significant factors. For example, many studies suggest that both births to adolescents and reported cases of child abuse are more common among lower socioeconomic status families."<sup>136</sup>

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<sup>132</sup>Hanson et al., *op. cit.*, 1977.

<sup>133</sup>Lynch et al., *op. cit.*, 1977.

<sup>134</sup>Frank G. Bolton, Roy Laner and Sandra P. Kane, "Child Maltreatment Risk among Adolescent Mothers: A Study of Reported Cases" *American Journal Orthopsychiat.* 50.3 (1980): 489-504.

<sup>135</sup>E. Milling Kinard and Lorraine V. Klerman, "Teenage Parenting and Child Abuse: Are they related?" *American Journal Orthopsychiatry.* 50.3 (1980): 481-488.

<sup>136</sup>*Ibid.* p.487.



Bolton et al indicated "To a degree at least, the data must be seen as no more than suggestive of causality...."<sup>137</sup> Parental age however is still viewed as an indicator for potential abusing parents. Although the NSPCC describe the fathers as being the suspected perpetrators in 44.2% of the families placed on their Register in 1975, little research has been focused on young fathers. Studies have tended to concentrate on fathers' background (education, job status and childhood experiences) and not on his relationship with the infant.

Recently Bolton and Belsky,<sup>138</sup> when reviewing their own research and that of others, have more openly questioned the aetiological model of child abuse which has viewed maternal or paternal age as a causal factor. In particular they cite Shelby Miller<sup>139</sup> who found that teenage mothers were only slightly over-represented in populations of abusing parents, when compared with the general population, following secondary analysis of data collected from 1977 to 1980. As a consequence Bolton and Belsky, when discussing the United States, say:

"The level of maltreatment anticipated within the population of adolescent parents has not materialised. Despite the presence of multiple factors that predict risk in adult parents, far fewer

<sup>137</sup>Bolton et al., *op. cit.*, 1980, p. 501.

<sup>138</sup>Frank Bolton and Jay Belsky, "The Adolescent Father and Child Maltreatment," *Adolescent Fatherhood*. Ed. M. Lamb (Hillsdale N.J: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1986).

<sup>139</sup>Shelby Miller "The Relationship Between Adolescent Childbearing and Child Maltreatment," *Child Welfare*, LXIII.6 (1984): 553-557.



adolescent parents are found within officially reported samples of maltreating parents than would otherwise be predicted."<sup>140</sup>

Lamb and Elster discuss the amount of stress and the ability of the adolescent to cope with stress as having a direct effect on parental behaviour. However, Lamb focuses on the emotional and economic support (the traditional father role) and not on the adolescent father's sensitivity and participation.

The abilities to identify and to provide appropriate responses to a child's needs are widely recognised as the components of a parent's ability to be sensitive.<sup>141</sup> Much of the research on adolescent mothers in the United States has purported to show that in many key areas of child care the adolescent mother is not as responsive as the older mother.<sup>142</sup> Jones et al in a study of forty primiparous mothers found that mothers under nineteen demonstrated less responsiveness when feeding their newly born infant and did not hold their infant as closely against their body when under observation in hospital. This was seen as a clear indication of young mothers not fulfilling maturational goals of

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<sup>140</sup>Bolton et al., *op. cit.*, 1986, p. 124.

<sup>141</sup>M.D.S. Ainsworth, M. Blekar, E. Waters and S. Wall, *Patterns of Attachment*, (Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1978).

M. Lamb and A. Easterbrooks, "Individual differences in parental sensitivity: Origins components and consequences," *Infant Social Cognition: Empirical and Theoretical considerations*. Ed. M.E. Lamb and L.R. Sherrod, (Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1981).

<sup>142</sup>F.A. Jones, V. Green and D.R. Kraus, "Maternal responsiveness of primiparous mothers during the postpartum period: Age differences" *Pediatrics*, 65 (1980): 57984.

motherhood. However no attempt was made to assess the long term implications of such findings, and no account was taken of the stress factor of being in an institutional setting whilst under observation. In another study of 60 adolescent mothers in an interdisciplinary programme for low income mothers Osofsky and Osofsky<sup>143</sup> reported strengths and weaknesses in the adolescent mother/infant relationship. Mothers were shown to rate highly on scales of warmth and physical interaction but scored low on measures of verbal interactions. However other evidence of differences between adult and adolescent populations appears to be less substantial. Epstein<sup>144</sup> concluded from his work on assessing adolescent mothers with very young children, that they had a lack of knowledge of child development (based on their underestimates of the rate of cognitive development). In addition Levine<sup>145</sup> observed that a clinical population of 15 mothers, in a teaching setting, showed less verbal interaction with their infants.

Because of their methodology these studies have failed to show comprehensively what effect being young has on parental interactions. Any analysis is made more complicated because of social and economic conditions which occlude the "true" effects of age.

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<sup>143</sup>H.J. Osofsky and J.D. Osofsky, "Adolescents as Mothers: Results of a program for low income pregnant teenagers with some emphasis upon mother's development," *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, 40 (1970): 825-34.

<sup>144</sup>Epstein., *op. cit.*, 1980.

<sup>145</sup>L. Levine, C.T. Garcia Coll and W. Oh, Determinants of mother-infant interaction in adolescent mothers, *Pediatrics*, 75 (1985): 23-29.



Most of the research on adolescent fathers has concentrated on the stresses they experience as they enter parenthood, and the financial and emotional consequences of taking on the responsibilities of caring for other people. As has been noted, little data exists on actual parenting skills. Similarly there is very little data on how young adolescents perceive their role and how they believe they cope with the stresses.

### This Study

During the late 1970's and early 1980's a frequent, if not repetitive method of introducing research on fathers was to illustrate to the reader that fathers, their experiences, their roles etc. had been an under-researched and under-reported area of investigation<sup>146</sup> and authors would go on to report how this was changing:

"From the mid sixties through to the early eighties, the fact of family research has witnessed a gentle revolution. Fatherhood has become a distinctive and prestigious substantive issue, and "mother focussed" research programmes have become increasingly outmoded and criticized."<sup>147</sup>

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<sup>146</sup>Nigel Beail and Jacqueline McGuire, *Fathers: Psychological Perspectives*, (London: Junction Books, 1982).

Lorna McKee and Margaret O'Brien, *The Father Figure* (London: Tavistock Publications, 1982).

<sup>147</sup>*Ibid.*, p.3.



## Introduction - Young Fathers When The Child Is One Year Old

This study started at a time when many of the first contributors to Fatherhood Research had finished their initial work in this area. As a consequence much of their initial interest had disappeared. The quest for the lost father was over and they moved into more profitable areas. However, this research project grew as a result of the work that Charlie Lewis had done at the Child Development Research Unit at Nottingham University and from the enthusiasm he had for this research area.

Lewis had originally interviewed a sample of one hundred fathers from a normative age range, in the Nottingham area. During these interviews he became aware that when talking to very young fathers they had a different "feel" to them from that of older more mature fathers. This is a very subjective evaluation; however, there were other motivations behind the idea of investigating, in much the same way as Lewis, a very young father sample.

A fundamental reason was that we have very little information on young fathers. Sims and Smith<sup>148</sup> had interviewed 369 fathers when studying their sample of 623 births to women aged under twenty. However the main emphasis of the study had been the young mothers, and much potential qualitative material was missing because the study had a medical orientation. When talking to psychologists, sociologists and clinicians, it was apparent to me that many had very strong opinions about young

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<sup>148</sup>Madeleine Simms and Christopher Smith, "Young fathers: Attitudes to marriage and family life," *The Father Figure*. Eds. L. McKee and L. O'Brien (London: Tavistock Publications, 1982).

father involvement, status, role etc. This study did not set out to prove or disprove such assertions, but was based on meeting a small specific group of young fathers individually, and set out to explore, in much the same way as Lewis, the nature of the experience of young adolescents as fathers.

Because the study grew out of the work done by Charlie Lewis, many of his orientations are inherent in the design:

"Firstly, it unashamedly attempts to take a father-centred view of the development of early family relationships.....The second goal of this study is to discover something about the 'social institution' of fatherhood.....As a result, this study sets out to examine in a developmental context the 'ways in which men come to adopt the roles they do.'<sup>149</sup>

Also the present study lays more emphasis on the life cycle since it is characteristic of the young father that he has embarked on parenthood at a time when he has not yet completed certain areas of personal, social, financial and psychological development: many will still be seeking independence from their parents both financially and in respect to housing. They are likely to be personally involved with peer groups who have a young or immature approach to parenthood and in addition they themselves are unlikely to be physically or psychologically prepared for involvement in childcare tasks and family life.

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<sup>149</sup>Lewis., *op. cit.*, 1983, pp.37-38.

## **Plan Of The Forthcoming Chapters**

The forthcoming chapters have been divided into four areas.

The first section considers the methodology. Chapter 2 is primarily concerned with how the sample was collected, what methods of investigation were used in order to elicit data, and how data was then used to construct meaningful results. Chapter 3 goes on to describe certain basic features concerning the sample collected, in terms of age, education and job status.

The second section focuses on the time before and during the birth. Chapter 4 retrospectively explores the young father's perception of his relationship, and attempts to establish the status of the relationship the young couple had at the time of conception, and also what future plans (if any) they had made. Chapter 5 discusses some of the financial and social difficulties young parents experience when trying to prepare physically for a young infant, and it goes on to look at the psychological preparations young fathers make for the birth. Chapter 6 examines the attitudes and reactions which young fathers have towards the birth and also describes the fathers' feelings during the first moments when the child is born and their reactions to holding the baby for the first time.



## **Introduction - Young Fathers When The Child Is One Year Old**

The third section is concerned with the young father's life when the baby is one year old. Chapter 7 looks at the relationship between father participation in childcare and work and examines the context within which fatherhood takes place. It particularly examines those childcare responsibilities which the young fathers are prepared to assume. Chapter 8 begins by looking at young fathers' social life and leisure time, and goes on to consider how young parents organise their own time in order to discuss the children.

In the fourth section chapter 9 addresses childcare and is concerned with father discipline and attitudes towards punishment and physical communication. It also attempts to investigate young father sensitivity in relation to the young child. Finally Chapter 10 explores the adolescent fathers' attitudes towards the role of the father, and whether this has been affected by his age. It also examines how he feels he has coped with the stresses and responsibilities which are attached to being a father and which, we might conjecture, are exaggerated by being young.

## **Chapter Two**

### **Methodology And Analysis**

#### **Introduction**

As has been previously described, this study developed out of work previously conducted by Charlie Lewis at the Child Development Research Unit, at Nottingham University. He had interviewed one hundred first and second time fathers, from a normative age range, using a stratified random sampling technique. We wished to make direct comparisons between an adolescent father population and the Lewis sample of a more normative age range. This had various advantages as well as disadvantages. The most obvious benefit was that the basic structure of methodology and interview was laid down. However, this was also the major disadvantage in that we were then constrained to keep to his methodology in order to be able to make direct comparisons.

## Obtaining A Sample

Lewis, in his original study, noted that "Fathers are a notoriously difficult group to study."<sup>1</sup> He suggested that a reason for such difficulty lay in the fact that fathers normally went to work during the day, and so were unable to be interviewed until the evening or the weekend. As a consequence these hours are often seen as unsocial or inconvenient by researchers who also prefer to work during the day. This difficulty, was, ironically, partly removed for the study of adolescent fathers who are much less likely to be in employment as we shall see. However, adolescent fathers were also found to be a particularly difficult group to research. Initially obtaining access to information concerning all the births in Nottinghamshire was a difficult process, and once we had acquired access there was no information concerning the fathers. All data revolved around the mother; there was no record of father presence or his age.

After a long process of negotiation we managed to obtain a list of all the live births in the Nottinghamshire area in the period between May 1985 and June 1986. We also had access to information concerning the mothers' age, her address when the baby was born, and the legitimacy of the baby. With that information we had to attempt to contact the adolescent fathers.

The number of babies born to mothers in Nottinghamshire

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<sup>1</sup>Charlie Lewis, "Fathering in Contemporary Society," diss., U of Nottingham, 1983.



during this period was just over 13,000: 6,500 inside the Nottingham City boundaries and 6,500 outside the City boundaries. We believed it was impossible to try and cover the whole population in our efforts to "track down" young fathers.

We therefore decided that the most promising method would be to concentrate on the young adolescent mothers. Although we could not be certain, we felt it was likely that the young adolescent mothers might have partners of a similar age. We recognised that it was possible for a young man to be involved with a woman considerably older than himself, but social conventions normally dictated that men had relationships with women of roughly the same age or younger and this would especially be so where children were involved.

In conjunction with Jeanette Lilley (see below) we contacted all the mothers aged under twenty years at the time of the baby's birth. Initially I contacted all those women who were married and living in the Nottingham City area, whilst Jeanette contacted all the women who were unmarried.

Jeanette Lilley's work was part of the second generation stage of the longitudinal study of child-rearing values and attitudes which was originally begun in 1958/9 by John and Elizabeth Newson and had comprised a representative sample of all the mothers of one year olds living in Nottingham. However, at that first stage in order to obtain a core sample, it had been necessary deliberately to exclude "illegitimate children," "recent immigrant

children" and "severely handicapped children." Many of these 709 mothers were subsequently interviewed when the children were four, seven, eleven, sixteen and twenty one years of age. For a general overview of the longitudinal and contemporary samples which have investigated parental attitudes to care giving see Figure 1.<sup>2</sup>

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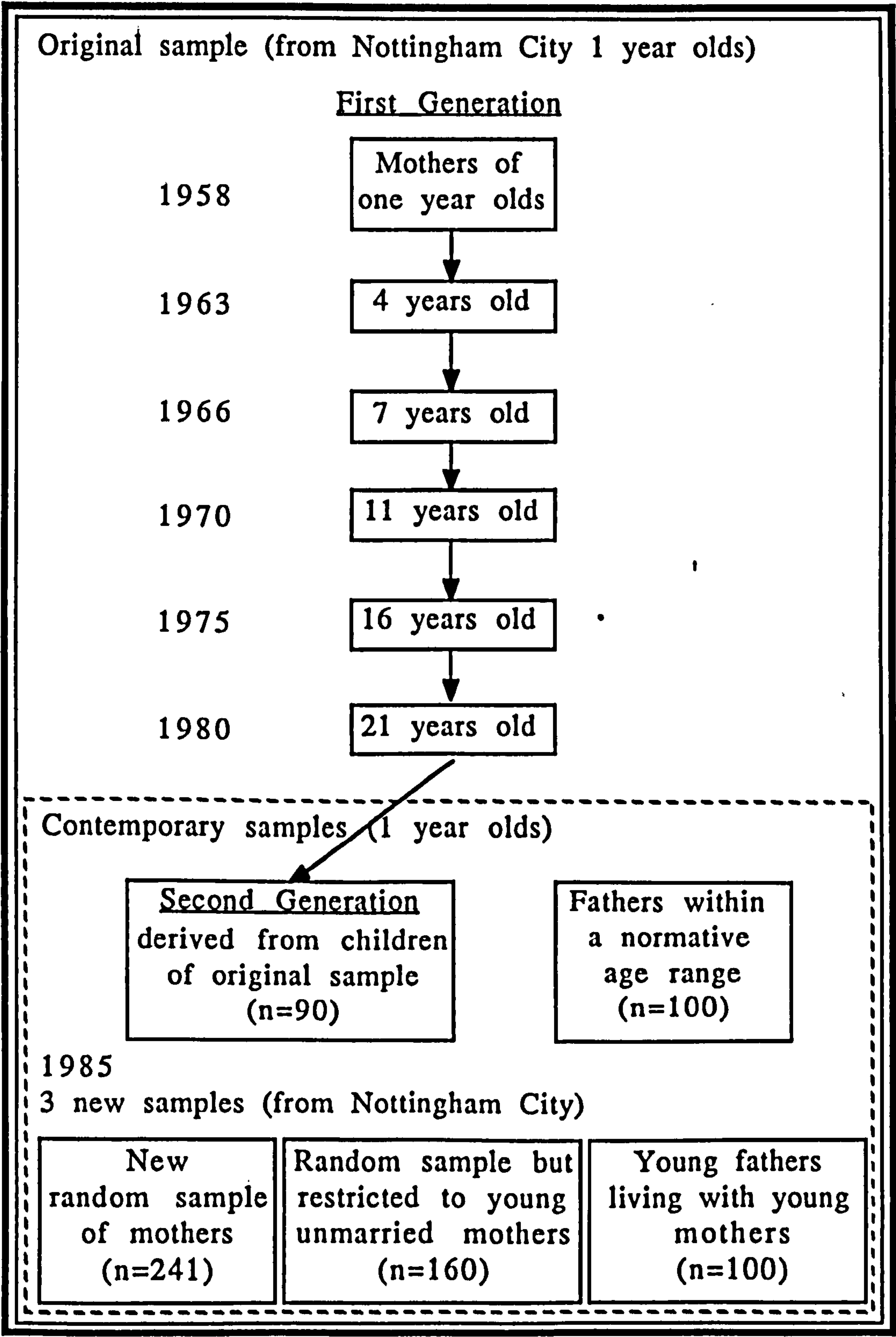
<sup>2</sup>John Newson and Elizabeth Newson, *Infant Care in an Urban Community* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1963).

*Seven Years Old in the Home Environment* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1976).

*Four Years Old in an Urban Community* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1968).

etc.

Figure I  
Overview Of Research Completed At Child Development  
Research Unit





Attitudes towards marriage and illegitimacy have considerably changed since that time and, when replication of the original study was discussed, it was apparent that single mothers could no longer be excluded if the core sample was to be acceptably representative.

This study was in fact very similar in methodology to that employed by the Newsons<sup>3</sup> and Charlie Lewis.<sup>4</sup> Lewis, when researching fathers of a normative age range, used a stratified random sampling technique in order to collect interviewees. Being aware of the Newsons'<sup>5</sup> original work, which had discovered that social class was a matter of "over-riding importance in determining patterns of infant care,"<sup>6</sup> Lewis decided not to select subjects randomly in terms of social class. The main reason for so doing was that with a sample of only 100 men he thought it appropriate to balance class composition in order to make valid statistical comparisons at a later date.

In other respects the Lewis sample was not random. He only selected fathers if the the child was a first or second birth ("first and second timers"), as he wished to compare the accounts of "first time" and more "experienced" men. He only selected fathers where the child was legitimate, as he did not wish to "confuse" his

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<sup>3</sup>Newson et al., *op cit.*, 1963.

<sup>4</sup>Charlie Lewis, *Becoming a Father* (Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1986).

<sup>5</sup>Newson et al., *op cit.*, 1963.

<sup>6</sup>John Newson and Jeanette Lilley, "Child Rearing Attitudes of Young Unmarried Mothers," Unpublished paper presented to the Cambridge Seminar Group, 1988, p.2.

sample with men who might not have had an "established" relationship with the child. In the current study considering the young father, however, we decided that we would make the fathers' age the determining factor in deciding whether to interview. We believed, perhaps naively, that most of the mothers having children when aged under twenty years would be having their first child.

In this study we attempted to interview the young parents as near as we could to their child's first birthday. Since we were unsure of the class composition of the young mother sample, we decided not to select according to class. We did exclude, similarly to the original sample, those families with an immigrant background. This was not intended as an act of racism but was based on evidence<sup>7</sup> that West Indian fathers and Asian men (at this time the major immigrant groups) adopt very different cultural values in the context of fathering, which again might have confused the issue, especially in a relatively small sample.

The rationale for interviewing at one year old does not just lie in the fact that this was the methodology which the Newsons used, and which in turn was employed by Lewis. It was, as Lewis noted, a convenient stage for fathers to take a step back to assess and discuss their feelings and emotions. At other times, especially

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<sup>7</sup>A.M. Grace, "Jamaican Immigrant Child rearing Practices," diss., U of Nottingham, 1983.

J S. Dosanjh, "A Comparative Study of Punjabi and English Child Rearing Practices with special references to Lower Juniors (7-9)," diss.U of Nottingham, 1976.



those closer to the birth, they may be hampered by the powerful emotion of anxiety, which they are then only able to discuss after that anxiety has faded. For the younger father the year after the birth gives him and his partner time to sort things out and settle into their unfamiliar and new lifestyle. To interview during an unsettled period might not truly represent the state of their relationships.

### Approaching And Interviewing Fathers

Fathers were contacted in the following way: during a particular month we collected all the names of mothers who had had babies a year ago that month and who were also aged under twenty at that time. The names of the mothers were divided into two groups depending on whether they were married or not. I initially took all the names of the young mothers who delivered legitimate children. In any one week I wrote to between ten and fifteen of the husbands of the young mothers (See Appendix I for letter). It was assumed that the husband was most likely to be the father of the one year old, but in any case we were interested in the fathering role rather than the biological relationship. In the letter the fathers were asked if they would be willing to be involved in a research project which was looking at the part young fathers played in the day to day care of their one year old child.

The letter then informed them that I would be calling to see them on the next Monday evening so as to arrange a suitable time and



date for an interview.

I would then visit the fathers on that Monday evening and arrange an appointment to interview them. This particular procedure was used so that I would be able to come into contact with a large number of fathers in a relatively short period of time. Until I met the father I had no indication of his age and therefore, during that preliminary meeting I needed to discover the age of the father; only if he was twenty two years or younger would I interview him on a subsequent day.

It was decided that twenty two years or younger was "appropriately" young because it meant that at the time of conception most of the fathers would have been twenty years or younger. Twenty years is by no means a magic threshold age, but in the eyes of "us" researchers it seemed a young age to be starting a family in this society.

The above procedure was the way we hoped to contact fathers; in reality it was far more complicated. There were a number of inherent problems with this format. Firstly, the data on mothers' addresses was collected when the baby was born and since that time many of the mothers had moved to new accommodation.

We had no record of any of these moves. We therefore had to rely on the new inhabitants having some knowledge of the whereabouts of the young couple. If this system failed we were able to contact the Housing Department who sometimes were able to give us the forwarding address. However, a considerable

number of the original names were "uncontactable" because they had moved to accommodation we were unable to trace.

Two hundred and ninety names of young married couples were collected, and of that number seventy three were interviewed. Eighty families were lost because they had changed address and were "uncontactable." Ninety nine fathers were over twenty-two years of age and therefore too old. Seven fathers were of West Indian or Asian origin. In three cases the baby had died during the year and in three cases the records were inaccurate and the mother was not married and there was no father present. Twelve fathers were separated from their children; nine as a consequence of the relationship with the mother breaking up, two because they were in prison and one other because the child had been taken into care. Seven fathers reported that they did not want to take part.

It is difficult to evaluate how effective this method of sampling was. Compared with other studies, the number of young fathers who refused to participate is very satisfactory. However, the number who were "uncontactable" reflects many of the problems which the young couples face during the first year. In this study most of the young parents who were contacted did not have their own accommodation when they first discovered the mother was pregnant. As a consequence three quarters (78%) of this sample moved at least once during the first twenty months (ten per cent moved three or more times during this period). Presumably those

## Methodology And Analysis

fathers I was unable to contact were even more mobile during this period (and hence they became untraceable).

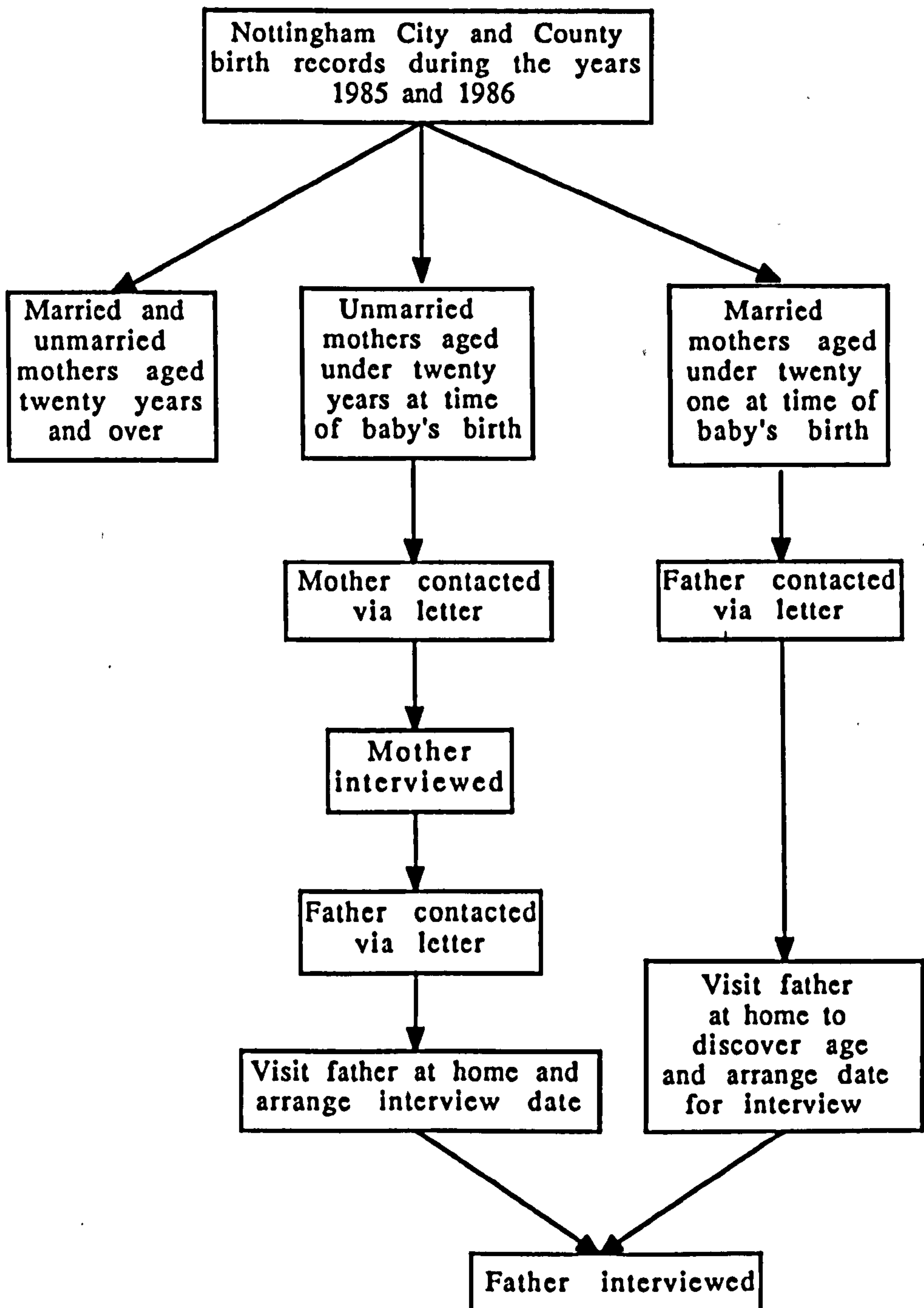
The other twenty seven young fathers were obtained via Jeanette Lilley, who had been interviewing the young mothers.

When in a household where the mother was living with, or had regular daily contact with, a putative father aged twenty two or less, Jeanette would ask the mother if it was possible for me to visit at some later date. If the mother said "yes", I would then send out a letter and visit the father the following Monday etc. One father was included who was admitted not to be the genetic father of the child. He was interviewed because he was living with the mother and acting as father figure to the child. The whole process of contacting fathers can be represented visually as shown in Figure II.



Figure II

Methodology For Contacting Adolescent Fathers



A second major methodological problem was that, although

arrangements were made for me to call to interview the father, it was quite common for him to forget or be out of the house when I called. In such circumstances I was forced to return many times in order to see and talk to the father. During the year I made some six hundred and ninety- six organised visits (this includes preliminary visits on a Monday evening) in order to get my sample of one hundred. Numerous unofficial visits were made on the off chance of catching someone in. A total of over 5,000 miles were covered (an average of 50 miles per interview) in an effort to track down all the families who potentially could be involved.

Although I have perhaps given the impression that I "hunted" down adolescent fathers in Nottingham, I was both surprised and warmed by their attitude towards me and my objectives in coming to see them. The Newsons had also experienced this with working-class mothers, and found that, although the interviewer might feel embarrassed when she finally "caught" the mother at home, the mother herself seldom evidenced embarrassment and the interview did not seem to suffer from the history of broken appointment(s).

### The Schedule

The father's interview schedule (reproduced in Appendix II) was based upon the schedule that Charlie Lewis had used. He based his schedule on a much modified version of the John and

Elizabeth Newson original schedule. As Lewis<sup>8</sup> points out, the Newsons had "tried and tested" many of the features of the questionnaire, with particular attention to the use and style of wording. The object of the schedule was to get a clear and accurate picture of everyday life in the family, without leading or expecting the father to answer in a particular way. In addition to the questions which Lewis asked, a large number of other questions were interspersed: these were questions which were felt to be pertinent to the younger father and were designed to elicit information about feelings and times with which the young person had particular difficulty. I originally hoped to run a pilot study, on a representative sample, in order to "test out" the new questions and to familiarise myself with the questionnaire. In reality this was not possible, the difficulties I experienced when trying to acquire a sample necessitated that I had to start the study interviews immediately. However, during the initial period I decided to interview all the fathers with whom I came into contact, regardless of age, so that I would have some indication as to whether or not some questions might need alteration or modification. In total another twenty older fathers were interviewed before I started interviewing the younger sample.

In many respects the process of meeting the young father had much the same "feel" as Lewis described in his normative range study, "I got the impression that my critical letter did not have much of an impact. Many need to be reminded that they had

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<sup>8</sup>Lewis., *op cit.*,1983.



received it. Others were out when I called and many of these stated later that they had forgotten my letter, even though it had arrived a day or two before."<sup>9</sup> It was therefore usually necessary to explain the reason for my visit and the purpose of the research.

The object of the interview schedule, as in the Lewis study and all the parent studies, was to maintain a structure of uniformity in the questions and the way in which they were asked. Much of the style of the schedule and the interview itself was based towards a Newson approach

"Our main concern is to facilitate the frank response, and the core schedule of questions is worded with great care for precisely this reason, on the assumption that the best (i.e. most facilitating) wording usually takes a degree of time and thought which may not be effectively available in the interview situation itself. Nevertheless, the fact that the written schedule is only the core, and that probe questions have to be extemporised by the interviewer to suit circumstance, offers dangerous opportunities for loading. Here the interviewer herself has to be sensitised to possible snares so that if an error is made once it will not be made again. In a "conversational" interview, where occasional idiosyncratic "bridging" remarks are to be encouraged between questions for the sake of the natural feel they impart, everyone has to be alert for subtle implications of wording."<sup>10</sup>

Only one father refused to answer a question - this was at the

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<sup>9</sup>Ibid. pp57-58.

<sup>10</sup>John and Elizabeth Newson, "Parental Roles and Social Context," *Researchers Look Back*. Ed. M Shipman (Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1974) 38.

start of the interview. Later he openly discussed the topic about which he had initially been unwilling to talk.

### The Interview Procedure

Lewis had originally hoped to exclude mothers from the interview, so as to be able to talk to the father alone and in an attempt to keep the context uniform. However, he was only able to achieve this in just over half (56%) the interviews. In contrast to Lewis, but similarly to the Newsons I decided that I would not attempt to try and separate mother and father as I believed this was intrusive and somewhat contrived since the interview was being carried out on their territory. However, this decision led to problems as mothers found it difficult not to become involved and in some cases were overpowering.

As a consequence, I tried to ensure that I addressed each question to the father first, rather than to the mother; even so the impact of the mother's presence was great and it was clear that many fathers biased some of their answers to conform to the mother's opinions.

Sometimes there were other people present, depending on the home circumstances, and occasionally it was difficult to prevent them from becoming involved. There was also one other common feature throughout all the interviews - no matter what day of the week or time of day, the television was always on when I arrived.



In order to avoid distraction I always asked if it could be turned off. Some parents found it incredibly difficult to switch the television off completely; some would turn the volume down or turn the screen around, and in those situations I would always insist that the noise was turned down to an inaudible level using the excuse of the need to tape record; in many cases the "ever active screen" remained a distraction. However, in the main the young fathers enjoyed taking part and sometimes made encouraging statements such as "this was better than watching television."

As Lewis also notes, even though all the interviews have a certain structural uniformity, each of the interviews was individual, depending on the social environment and the general interaction between interviewer and interviewee. Generally, the length of interview ranged from one and half hours to five hours, with most averaging around two and a half hours duration. All the fathers were assured that the interview was confidential and were asked if they objected to the interview being recorded on tape. The use of the tape recorder was invaluable as it ensured that the content of the interview was accurately recorded, but it did have the disadvantage of picking up background noises. In some instances I felt that it infringed on the confidentiality of the interview and there were a number of occasions when parents commented on its presence, thereby recognising its existence and its impact on their conversation. But in other ways it acted as a "facilitator"<sup>11</sup> as the Newsons point out when discussing the



advantages and disadvantages "it allows the interviewer to give all her mind to the relationship and probing flexibly and effectively, and as a result the interview is in fact demonstrably longer and more informative when the recorder is used than when it is not."<sup>12</sup>

### Coding And Analysis

The structure for handling the data collected during the interviews was very much decided for me. This also had negative and positive attributes. Lewis had "devised an analytical system which was flexible enough to incorporate a variety of types (both factual and impressionistic) of response. A coding system was drawn up ..... In addition, I included a means by which a typical parental account could be recorded. Such answers were coded separately and written out in full on the coding schedule."<sup>13</sup> The schedule consisted of open and closed questions. The closed questions were much easier to code into "yes" or "no" categories, but were of limited value because of their superficiality. The open-ended questions were more difficult to code because of the greater variety and complexity of responses. Many of the open-ended questions needed a considerable number of prompts in order to get a clear and precise picture of events and the young person's feelings. It was of great benefit to use a system which

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<sup>11</sup>Ibid. p33.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid. pp33-34.

<sup>13</sup>Lewis., *op cit.*,1983, p.67.

had previously been devised, worked upon and been shown to be effective. However, the Lewis coding system had been devised for the normative age range sample so that to have used the same codings for questions would have led to inaccurate and unhelpful data being recorded. It was therefore necessary to change much of the coding within Lewis' framework in order to represent the young sample. In the situations where the coding was changed I tried to ensure that it was possible to recode the data via the computer so as to be able to make comparative analysis with the Lewis data at a later date.

The coding of responses was carried out with the help of the tape recordings. Some 347 items were coded, thus giving me a large database from which to work. Transcripts were made of responses to particular questions from the tape recordings. I picked out certain quotations if I felt they illustrated an attitude or point of view in a particularly descriptive way, if they were representative of the sample, or informative about certain situations.

Once all the data had been coded, I set about the analysis in five different stages. Firstly I looked at the general picture by taking the frequency distributions for each question. Secondly I broke down the data further according to father's age, employment, education, first child-second child, status of relationship etc. The third stage involved doing more specific analysis, where certain variables were compared with others. The



fourth stage was to group together different but related questions such as scale of father involvement in household tasks in order to create a scale or index of measurement. This was achieved by assigning scores to responses and a father's total score was a summation of a number of different responses to particular questions. Similarly to the Newsons<sup>14</sup> I attempted to group together questions which "on the grounds of face validity" had some bearing on a more general underlying attitude or characteristics style of behaviour." When assigning scores to responses I again attempted to use face validity as the criteria by which responses were rated, but I also kept in mind the general frequencies of responses in order to create statistically meaningful indices. Finally, I compared the data collected for the normative age range sample against the young father sample.

We had originally hoped that Charlie Lewis would be able to interview some of the young fathers, as we were particularly aware of differences in style of interview and the bias this could produce. However, due to time constraints this proved impossible, and I was thus resigned to ignore this possible bias in order to make relevant comparisons. Given that Lewis and I were both in the age range (25-30) with similar University training and background, and similar personal style. There did not seem to be any reason for being over anxious about this problem.

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<sup>14</sup>John and Elizabeth Newson, "A Longitudinal Study of Child Rearing Practises: Index Data for the Seven-year Stage," Unpublished Document, 2



## Chapter Three

### Basic Nature Of The Sample

#### Introduction

In 1985 the number of live births in England and Wales totalled 656,400. In Nottinghamshire the number totalled 12,975 (of which approximately half were born to parents living in the Nottingham City area, the other half being outside in the county),<sup>1</sup>. In general terms this means roughly 2% of the population in England and Wales were born in the Nottinghamshire area.

If we look specifically at teenage births it is useful to see how the picture has changed during the last forty years. In 1946 a total of 25,159 women had babies when aged nineteen or under; five years later that number had risen to 29,447, an increase of seventeen percent. Over the next ten years the number continued to increase and by 1956 had risen by fifty two percent to 38,493 (5.5% of the annual birth rate). Five years later the number of

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<sup>1</sup>Office of Population Censuses and Surveys, *Birth Statistics*, (London: HMSO, 1985).

## Nature Of The Sample

births to women nineteen years or younger had risen markedly to 60,465 (7.4% of the annual birth rate) and by 1966 it had risen to 87,416 (10.2% of the annual birth rate); in the twenty years after the war the number of babies born to women nineteen years or younger had increased in numerical terms by more than three times from 25,159 to 87,416. This was a period when the population was expanding anyway but even so the proportion of teenage mothers in the population of mothers doubled in that time.

In 1967 the Abortion Act was passed and this dramatically changed the potential outcome of teenage pregnancies. In fact 1966 had the highest number of teenage births ever recorded in England and Wales. Five years later the number had dropped to 83,278 although it had increased slightly when viewed as a percentage of the population of women having children to 10.6%. What is very interesting is the dramatic increase in the number of abortions that were known to have occurred during the period 1967-86 (up until this time the number of abortions in England and Wales was unknown as they were illegal and so not recorded). From 1966, when there were no legal abortions in the U.K, the number rose to a figure of 20,472 in 1971. The implication of this is that the number of teenagers who were becoming pregnant was not actually declining even though the number of births to teenage mothers was lower than the previous high of 1966. The situation had now changed because of the availability of free and legal abortions. In 1980 the number of live births to mothers

## Nature Of The Sample

nineteen years or younger had fallen to 62,006, a drop of thirty percent from 1966 (nine and a half percent of the whole childbearing population). Abortions, on the other hand, were still on the increase and during 1980 there were 35,528 terminations to women nineteen years or younger. The fertility rate (rate of all conceptions) to women aged between sixteen and nineteen was at its lowest level since 1955.<sup>2</sup>

In summary, the general trend since the war has been for there to be an increase in the number of children born to teenage mothers until the introduction of the Abortion Act in 1967. Subsequently, the number of children actually born to young mothers has slowly declined whilst the number of children conceived during this period has at least remained the same if not increased. This increase of children being conceived is not reflected in birth statistics because of the number which are aborted (in 1980 a third of all the children conceived to women nineteen years or younger were terminated),<sup>3</sup>. If we look at the births and abortions in 1980 in more detail we can see many interesting patterns.

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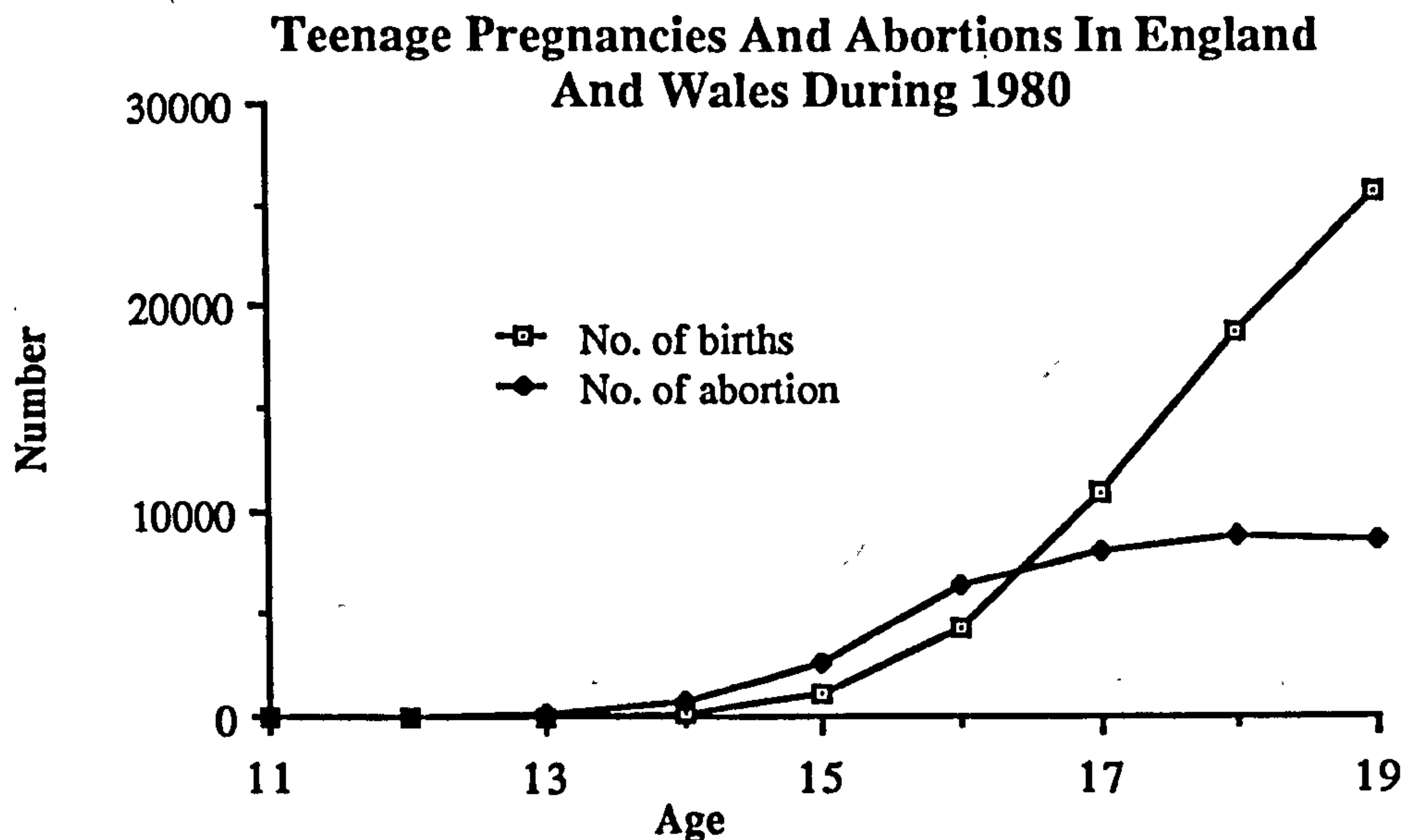
<sup>2</sup>Madeleine Simms and Christopher Smith, "Young fathers: Attitudes to marriage and family life," *The Father Figure*. Eds. L. McKee and M. O'Brien (London: Tavistock Publications, 1982).

<sup>3</sup>Alison Macfarlane and Miranda Mugford, *Birth Counts: statistics of pregnancy and childbirth*, (London: HMSO, 1984).



## Nature Of The Sample

Figure I



What is most apparent when looking at the birth statistics against age is that the number of births increases steeply as the teenage mother gets older, whereas the number of abortions increases until the mother is seventeen and then plateaus.

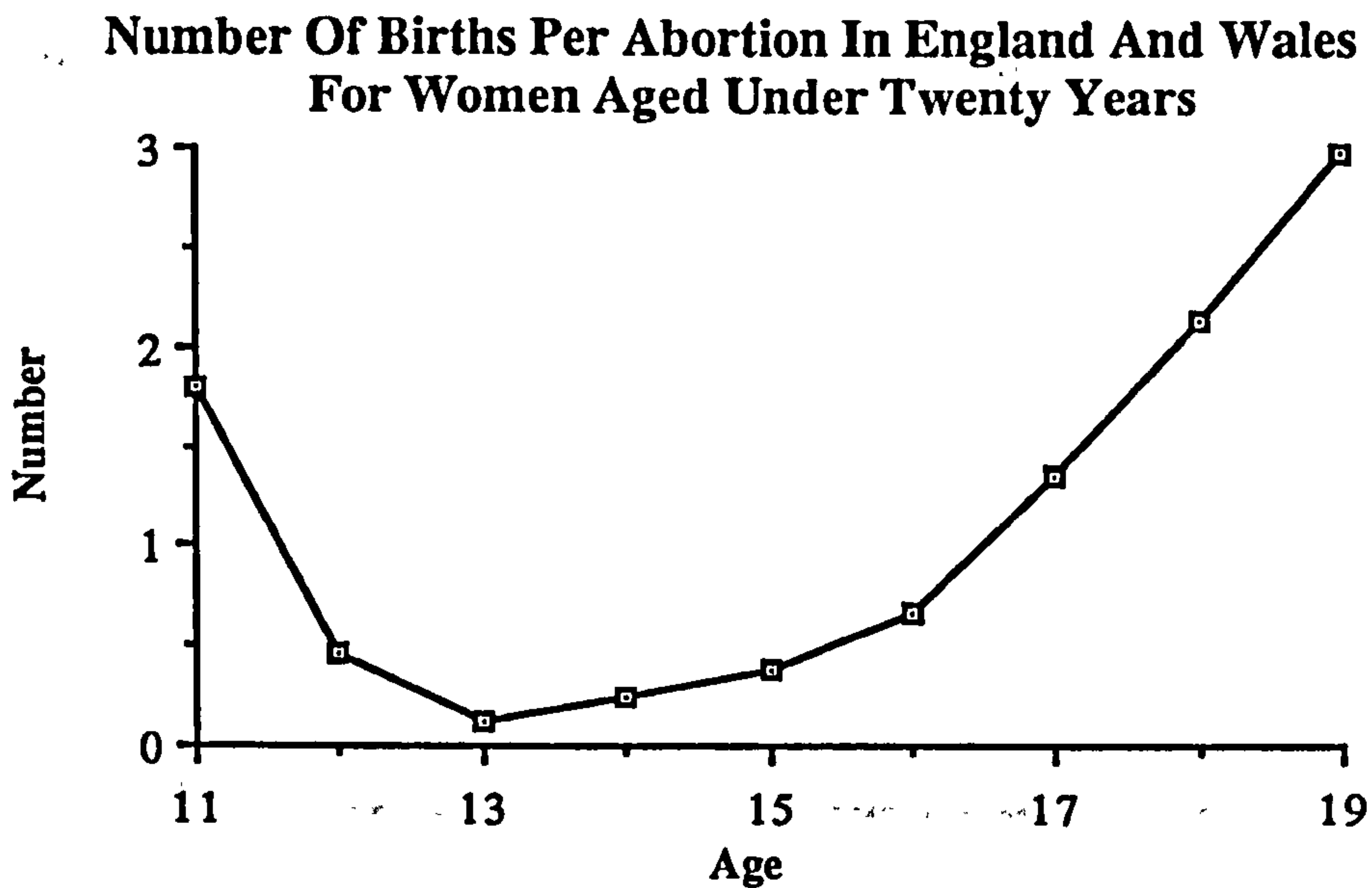
This can be displayed in another way if we look at the number of births per abortion at each age.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup>Office of Population Censuses and Surveys, *Birth and Abortion Statistics*, (London: HMSO, 1980).

## Nature Of The Sample

Figure II



We can see that the number of births per abortion gradually increases with mother's age. The turning point when the number of births is larger than the number of abortions appears to be around sixteen, the age when many young people leave school. It would appear that mothers and the people who surround them are more likely to come to the decision to keep the babies when they have left school or are on the verge of doing so. A teenager's presence at school seems to signify that she is too young to become a mother and have children.

Unfortunately local figures are not available from the OPCS concerning abortions and teenage pregnancies in quite so much detail but what information there is appears to be similar to the national statistics.

## Nature Of The Sample

### Mother's Age At The Time Of The Birth

If we look at the mothers' ages in my sample up to 19 years it is noticeable how similar they are to the statistics nationally (see Table I).

Table I

Age of Mother	
	<u>No.</u>
Fifteen	1
Sixteen	7
Seventeen	11
Eighteen	27
Nineteen	33
Twenty	21

As one would expect there are fewer very young mothers e.g. fifteen, sixteen year olds than nineteen and twenty year olds. Girls of fourteen and fifteen are less likely to experience sexual relationships on a regular basis than older teenagers who have more freedom and accessibility. They are also perhaps less likely to use contraceptives, but are then more likely to have an abortion if they become pregnant. The reason there are fewer twenty year old mothers is explained by my selection procedure: the criteria for selection to the sample were fathers' age and presence; I only



## Nature Of The Sample

interviewed fathers who were twenty one years of age or younger at the time of the birth. A mother of twenty one years of age was most unlikely to be married to a father who was either the same age or younger; the fathers tended to be at least one year older than the mothers. Therefore, the twenty year old mothers were under represented. In terms of demographic characteristics it is likely that the young mother data was biased by the methodology of my selection procedure.

### Siblings

When interviewing I found an outstanding feature was the number of couples who already had children. I had originally thought that by picking only mothers who were under twenty the sample would be made up of couples who were having their first child. However this was not the case (see Table II)

Table II

Ordinal Position Of Sample Child	
	<u>No.</u>
First but with younger sib	2
First, only child	77
Second child	20
Third child	2

## Nature Of The Sample

We can see that twenty five percent of the young fathers had other children with the same mother, indicating that for a quarter of the sample they were even younger when they had their first child. It would also seem that many young couples followed having their first child by having another one virtually straight away. At least eleven mothers were pregnant again at the time of the interview; unfortunately fathers were not directly asked if the mother was pregnant again, and eleven was the number who spontaneously reported another pregnancy. Thus at least fourteen percent of the sample were either in the process of having another child or had had another child since the one year old was born.

This compares with national statistics where we see that for three quarters of the mothers who had children in 1985, and were aged under twenty, that child was their first born. For just under a fifth it was their second child, and for a small percentage (approximately 2%) it was their third, fourth or even fifth child. By looking at the age of the first child (Table III) we can roughly estimate how old the mother was when she had her first born child (Table IV).

## Nature Of The Sample

Table III

Age Of Mother At The Time Of Birth Against Age Of Older Child			
<u>Age</u>	<u>None</u>	<u>Two years</u>	<u>Three-four years</u>
15	1	-	-
16	7	-	-
17	11	-	-
18	23	3	1
19	24	7	2
20	13	5	3
Total	<u>79</u>	<u>15</u>	<u>6</u>

It is possible to extrapolate from the information in the above table in order to give the approximate age of the mother when she had her first child (Table IV).

Table IV

Age Of Mother When She Had Her First Child	
	<u>No.</u>
Fifteen	4
Sixteen	13
Seventeen	18
Eighteen	28
Nineteen	24
Twenty	13



## Nature Of The Sample

Seventeen percent of this sample were of school age or under when they had their first child. Although physical and biological functioning is mature enough to handle sexual intercourse, sixteen years or under is often seen as not old enough emotionally, by family friends and health services, to withstand the stresses and responsibilities of young motherhood.

### Fathers' Age At The Time Of Birth

There is far less information concerning age of father when a child is born; however from the OPCS Birth Statistics<sup>5</sup> we are able to gather the age and number of men who fathered children (see Figure III).

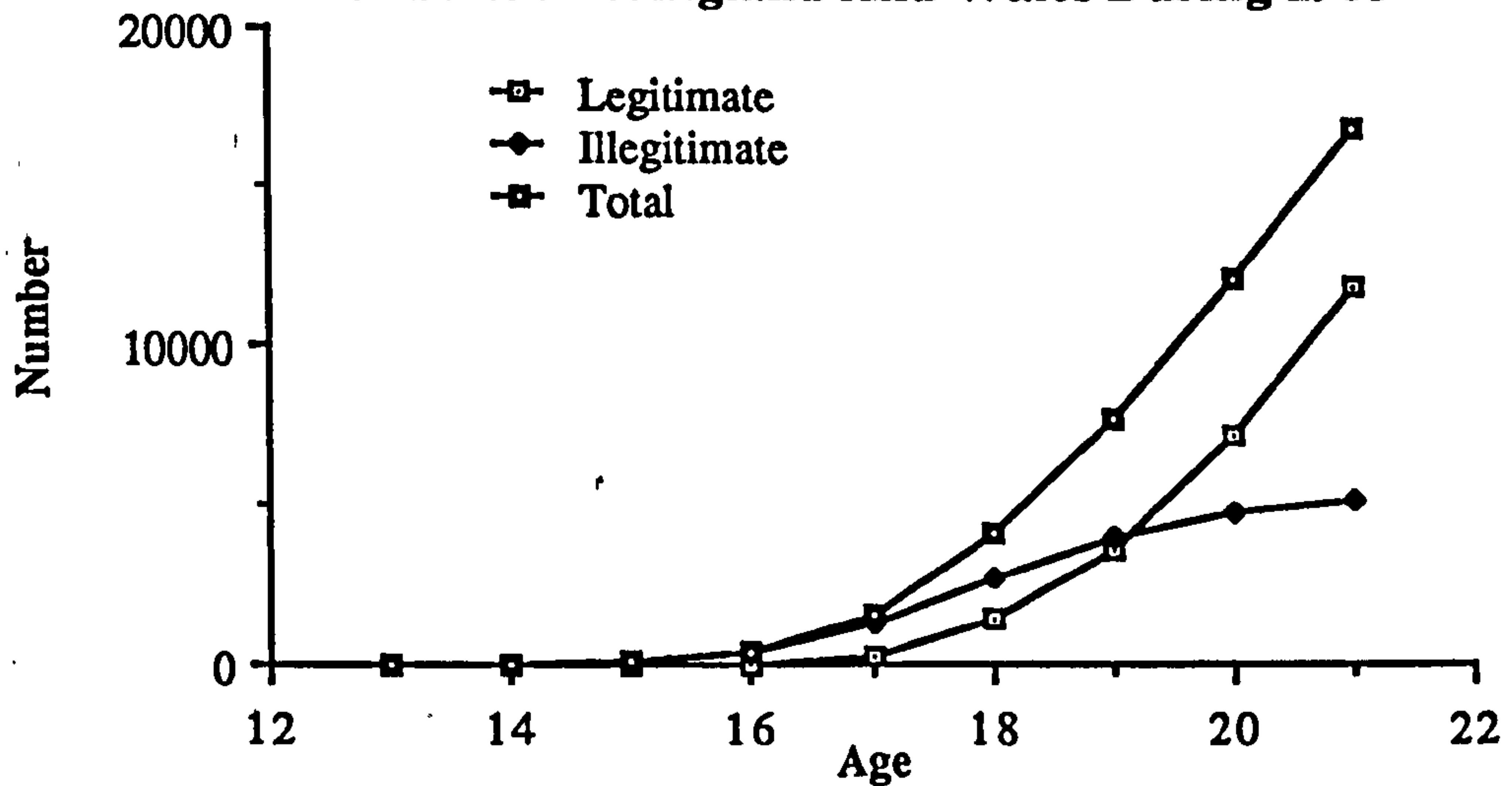
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<sup>5</sup>Office of Population Censuses and Surveys, *Birth Statistics* (London: HMSO, 1985).

## Nature Of The Sample

Figure III

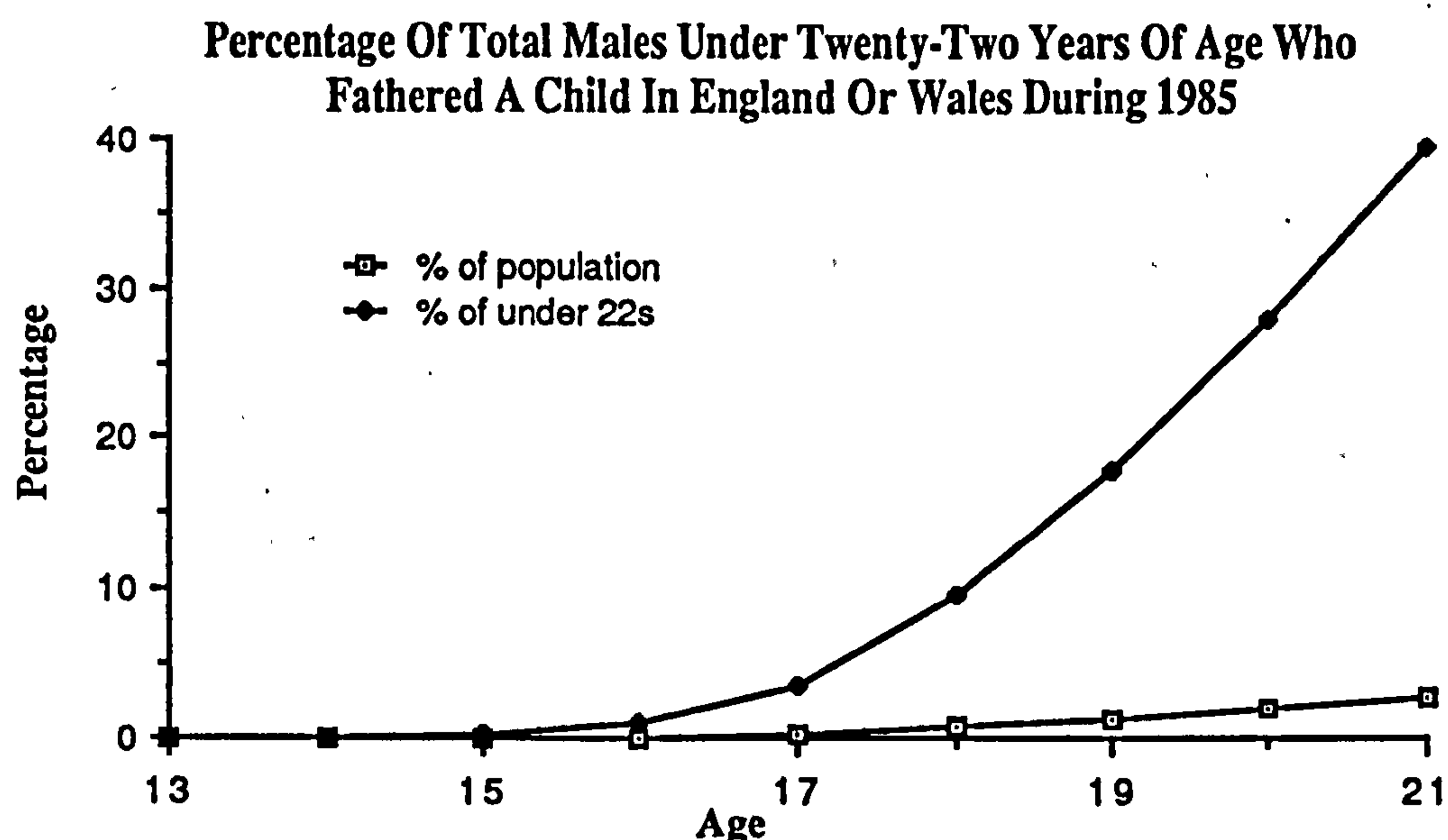
**Number And Age Of Fathers Broken Down By Child's  
Birth Status In England And Wales During 1985**



This information can also be usefully represented in percentages. Figure IV depicts the percentage of men aged under twenty two as a total of the whole population who fathered a child. Secondly it displays for each age the percentage it represents of the fathering population under twenty two.

## Nature Of The Sample

Figure IV



This information unfortunately fails to tell us how many of the fathers represented in the table are living or involved with the child at the time of the birth. This is perhaps not surprising as this sort of data can change very quickly. But we are able to see that some 7.17% of the babies who are born have a father who is twenty years or younger. Figure III displays that older fathers are more likely to be married to the mother, and as a consequence perhaps more likely to be involved. Very young men are likely to father children who are illegitimate.

It also displays that men tend to be slightly older when they have children. For instance, the number of women aged nineteen years or younger who had children during 1980 was nine and a half percent of the whole childbearing population; on the other



## Nature Of The Sample

hand the percentage of men who fathered children in 1980 and were aged nineteen years or younger was only 2.3% of the whole population of fathers who had children in that year. This is only the percentage of fathers who had children, it does not indicate how many of this number actually stayed with the mother.

When we look at my sample of a hundred fathers it roughly mirrors the pattern that occurs nationally (Table V).

Table V

Age of Father	
	<u>No.</u>
Sixteen	1
Seventeen	6
Eighteen	9
Nineteen	15
Twenty	39
Twenty one	30

Again one can see that there are fewer fathers who are aged sixteen, seventeen or eighteen at the time of birth than those who are aged twenty or twenty one. There appears to be a large number of twenty year olds who become fathers.

## Nature Of The Sample

### Age Of Father Compared With Age Of Mother

Seventy five percent of the fathers were married to, or living with, mothers who were younger than themselves. Ninety five percent were living with, or were married to, women who were the same age or younger. This meant that only a very small percent (5%) of women were older than their partners. This was perhaps not surprising as it reflected a general trend in the population; it perhaps became more exaggerated at this stage because the couples were so young.

### Education

When looking at both young mothers' and young fathers' education the striking feature was how few formal qualifications either had been able to attain (Table VI).

Table VI

Teenage Mother's Education	
	<u>No.</u>
Left school at 15/16 - no qualifications	50
Less than four CSEs	14
More than four CSEs	21
O levels	15

As displayed above, half of the mothers had no qualifications

## Nature Of The Sample

at all when leaving school. The other half only had qualifications that were attained when they were sixteen - none of the mothers had any aspirations to continue their education at school or enter another further education establishment after the sixteen year leaving age.

We can compare these educational attainments with those of the general population.

Table VII

School Leavers During The Academic Year 1984-5 CSE And GCE Achievements	
<u>Qualifications</u>	<u>Percentages</u>
A levels	17.08
5 or more CSEs	11.04
1-4 CSEs	26.81
CSEs or O levels - low grade	35.64
No qualifications	9.43

(From Statistics of Education School Leavers CSE and GCE 1985).

We see that young mothers left school with much poorer qualifications than the majority of the general population; they were in fact five times more likely to leave school with no qualifications. Since many became pregnant at a time when they potentially could have been trained or retrained it made the likelihood of subsequent well paid employment unlikely. This was



## Nature Of The Sample

often very restrictive as it meant that in order to justify working on economic grounds the mother would have to work anti social and long hours. Therefore many young mothers did not contemplate work as the time and effort needed to earn even a small amount of money was seen to be too much. This pattern of low educational achievement for teenage mothers has been well documented by other researchers, especially those in the United States.<sup>6</sup> In Britain, teenage mothers interviewed in the London area<sup>7</sup> were also shown to lack qualifications, although they were not as poorly qualified as the sample described here. However, educational achievement within the total mothering population, as described by Newson and Lilley, in Nottingham, appears to be much lower than national statistics.<sup>8</sup> In their contemporary mother sample, older mothers were less likely to have qualifications than teenage mothers. This was a stratified sample and so included mothers from social classes I and II.

## Mothers' Employment

Adolescent mothers' previous job employment is shown below (Table VIII).

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<sup>6</sup>Josefina J. Card and L. Wise, "Teenage Mothers and Teenage Fathers: The Impact of Early Childbearing on the Parent's Personal and Professional Lives" *Family Planning Perspectives*, 10.4 (1978): 199-205.

<sup>7</sup>Ann Phoenix. *The Process of Becoming A Mother* unpublished manuscript 1987.

<sup>8</sup>John Newson and Jeanette Lilley, "Child Rearing Attitudes of Young Unmarried Mothers," Unpublished Paper Presented to the Cambridge Seminar Group 1988.

## Nature Of The Sample

Table VIII

Mother's Previous Employment	
	No.
Unemployed	15
III White collar	19
III Manual	8
IV	42
V	1
Education, not interrupted	6
Education, interrupted	9

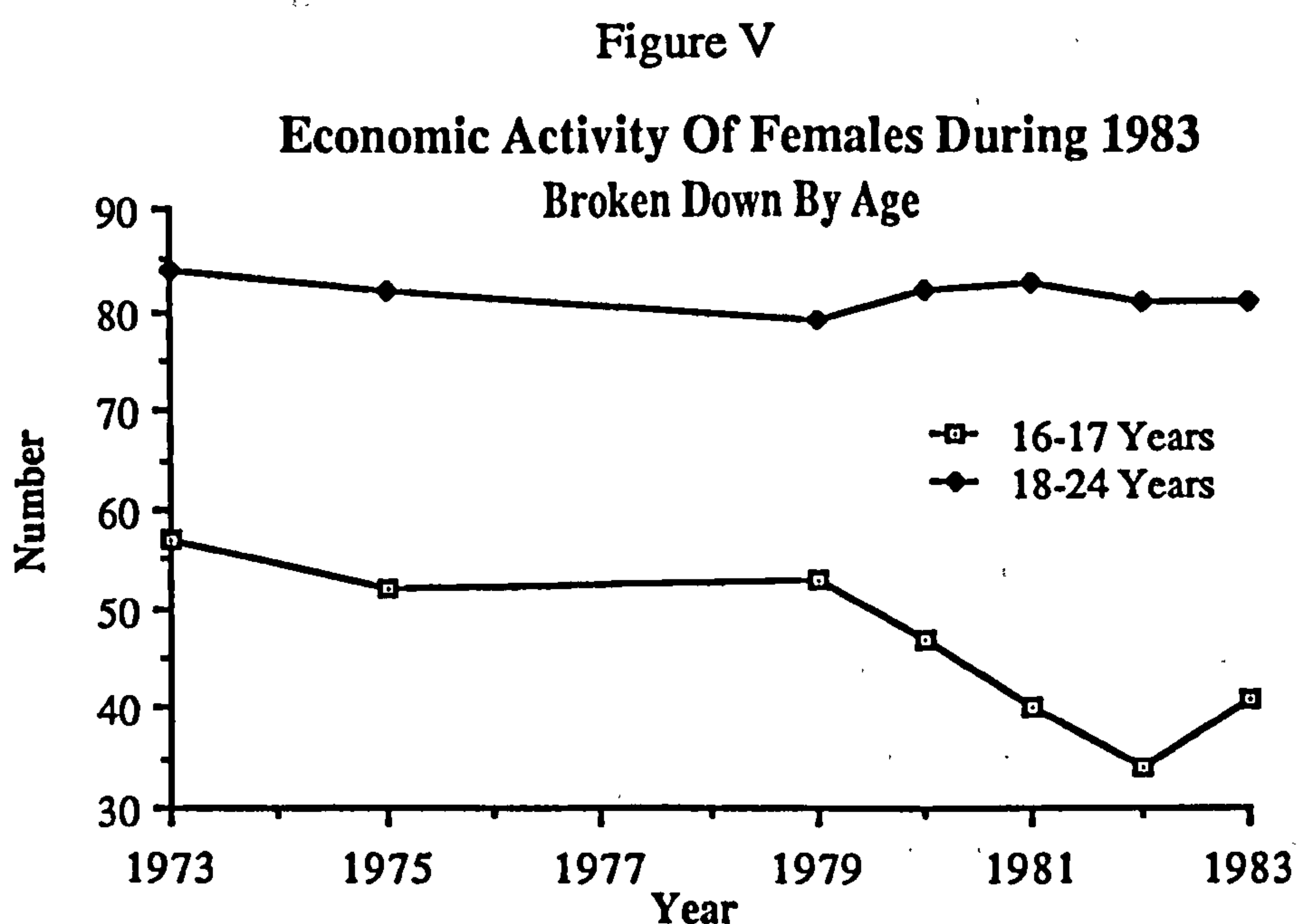
The majority of mothers (42%) were working in jobs that were semi-skilled. This normally meant work in the various factories in or around Nottingham, packing items such as pet food, sweets, shirts, pork pies etc, or working on assembly lines producing typewriters, filters etc. Another major job occupation was working as a machinist in one of the many clothing factories that are located in the East Midlands.

Nineteen percent were working in white collar jobs, normally as cashiers or shop assistants. A further fifteen percent had been unemployed. The female rate of unemployment at a local level was approximately nine percent which at the time was below the national average; however, this figure must be viewed with a certain amount of scepticism as some married women are not able to claim unemployment benefit, thus lowering the actual figure of females out of work who may want to work. On the whole, the

## Nature Of The Sample

rate of unemployment of mothers before they became pregnant was within the extremes of unemployment that were described in the Employment Bulletin printed by Nottinghamshire County Council. These extremes were dependent on the wards that were studied; the highest rate of unemployment was in Lenton at 25% and the lowest was Mapperley, 2.6%.<sup>9</sup> The high level of unemployment in my sample reflected the sort of areas where the majority were living - inner city areas with high unemployment and few opportunities.

The economic activity of non-married females from 1973 to 1983 was reported in the General Household Survey 1983, Office of Population Censuses and Surveys (Figure V).



\*Students who were at college or at university were not categorised as economically active.

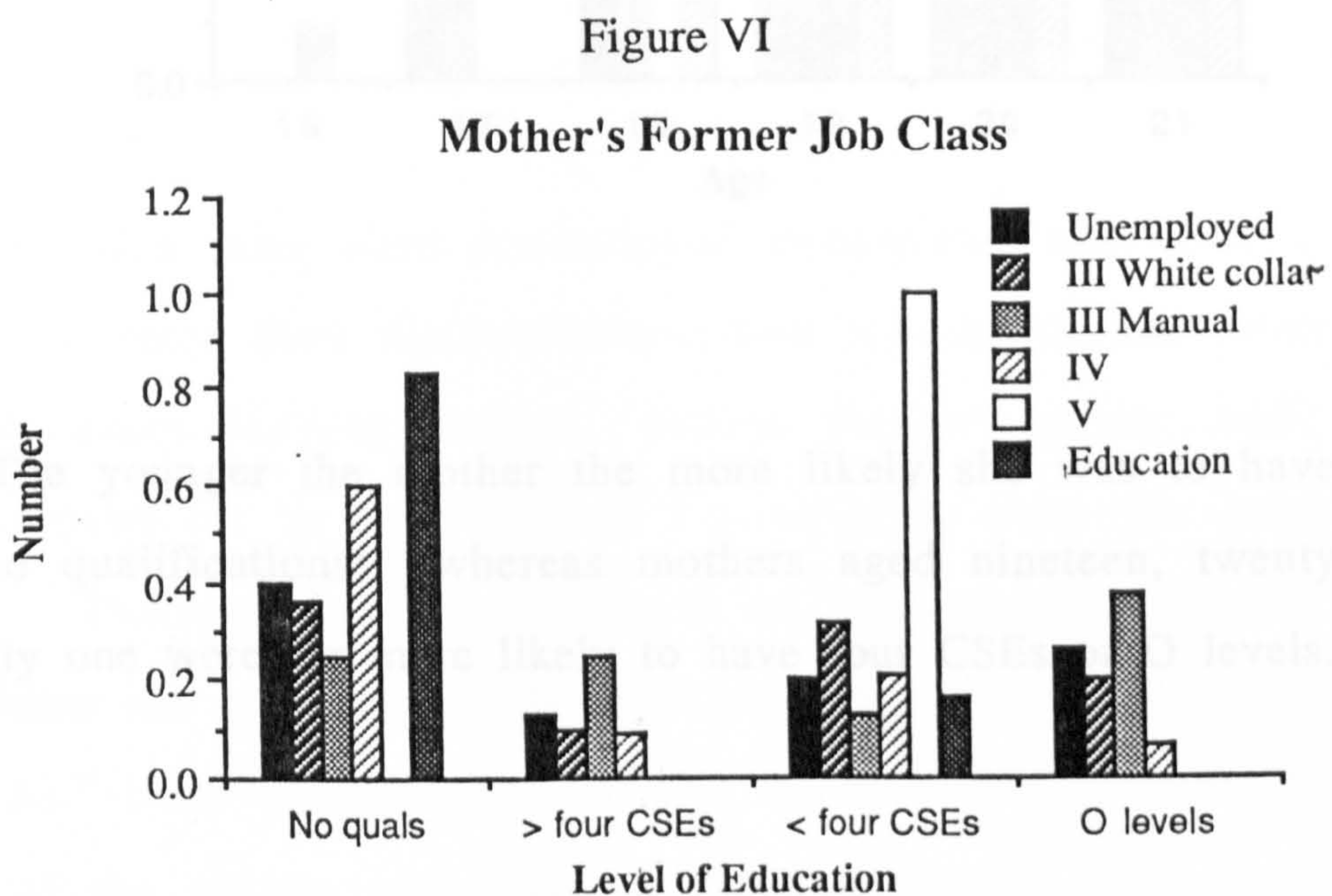
<sup>9</sup>Employment Bulletin, *Nottinghamshire County Council, Planning and Transportation* December 1985.



## Nature Of The Sample

### Education And Jobs

Figure VI displays the young mothers' former job class broken down in terms of education.

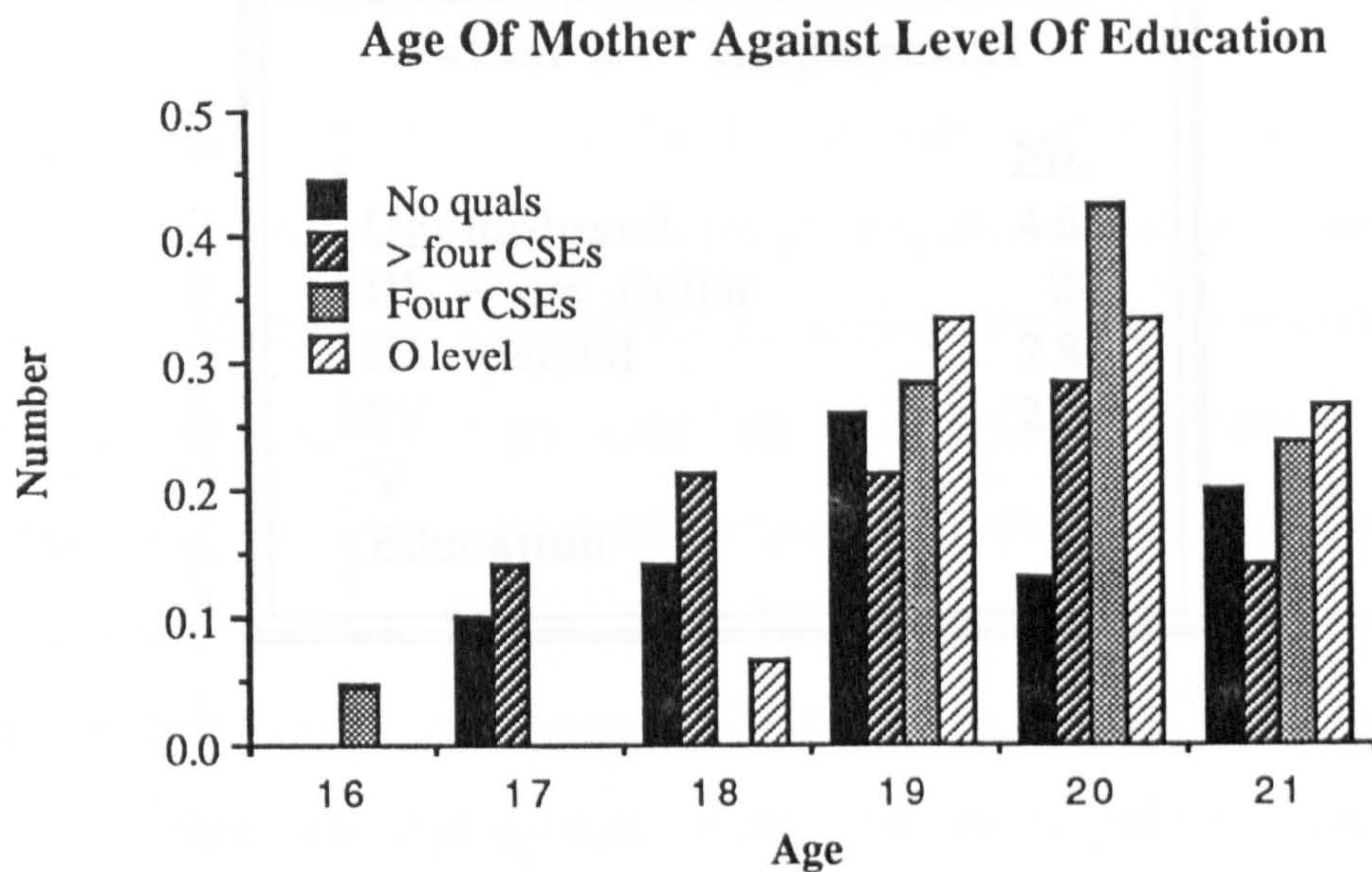


It is interesting to note that mothers with no formal qualifications were most likely to be employed in semi skilled labour, or to be unemployed. Even so most of the mothers were employed in a very unskilled capacity. Figure VII cross-tabulates age of mother against education.



## Nature Of The Sample

Figure VII



The younger the mother the more likely she was to have few or no qualifications; whereas mothers aged nineteen, twenty and twenty one were far more likely to have four CSEs or O levels.

### Fathers' Employment

Adolescent father employment is shown below (Table IX).

As is displayed above the majority of fathers worked in partly skilled labour such as packers, machine tool operators, labourers etc. or in skilled manual jobs such as fork lift driver, plasterer, painter/decorator etc. Only one father was in full time education (studying for O levels).

## Nature Of The Sample

Table IX

Father's Employment	
	<u>No.</u>
Unemployed	46
III White Collar	2
III Manual	28
IV	22
V	1
Education	1

Of those who were unemployed twenty-one had been out of work for more than the last twenty-four months or had never had a job since leaving school, and a further twenty had been unemployed for at least a year i.e. at least since the baby was born. Therefore the vast majority of unemployed fathers (80%) had been out of work for the total duration of the child's life. The rest had been unemployed for less than twelve months. Of the part of the sample who were working, a further ten percent had been out of work for more than two months in the baby's first year of life. Some thirty nine percent had had regular employment since they left school.

As is displayed above the majority of fathers worked in partly skilled labour such as packers, machine tool operators, labourers etc. or in skilled manual jobs such as fork lift driver, plasterer, painter/decorator etc. Only one father was in full time education (studying for O levels).



## Nature Of The Sample

A frequency of 46% unemployed is relatively high when compared against national or local statistics. It was believed that some sixteen percent of the national population were unemployed in 1985<sup>10</sup>. Locally unemployment ranged from the highest 55.3% to the lowest 4.1% depending on the area that was selected, although, on average, the male unemployment rate was equal to the national rate. In general, high unemployment was more likely to be in the inner city areas and these inner city areas or areas that had high unemployment were the most likely places that young parents would be living.<sup>11</sup> It would appear that young fathers being out of work reflected many of the issues of living in inner cities where unemployment was a major problem. We see young fathers working in jobs which are, on the whole, poorly paid and with limited prospects. It also appeared that the younger the father, the more likely he was to be unemployed, although this was not significant.<sup>12</sup>

"Umm ..... not much ummm ..... see nobody's .... I look for jobs but ..... married and with one kid ... you've got to have a helluva lot of money coming in otherwise you're going to work for nothing ... but I'm not the sort of person .. mean few years ago used bone idleness but now think it's completely changed, now .... I mean people like me, somebody

<sup>10</sup>Ibid.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Chi-squared = 2.2, df = 1, Significance level = 0.13. The statistic was achieved by dividing the sample into two groups, those slightly younger aged twenty or under and those slightly older aged twenty one or twenty two. See Appendix III, Table 3.I.

## Nature Of The Sample

married with a kid or a couple of kids I mean the only reason they don't look for jobs is because there's no job with enough money to meet their needs..... I mean, if I get a job on 'so much' wages a week I'll be going out to work for nothing, I mean why should I do that when I've got a chance of within a couple of months of being made redundant..... I'd get a job on the money I'm getting now if I knew it was regular and if I knew I could stick it but no ..... it's terrible hard finding a job these days ..... plus a job that you like, that's why there's a lot of people unemployed .... half of them don't like the job they've got, half of them offered a job and it's not enough money.....just working for nothing." (Unemployed, 22 years old)

## Father's Age And Unemployment

Figure VIII plots father age against employment and unemployment, the trend for the older fathers to be employed can be shown.



## Nature Of The Sample

Figure VIII

### Age Of Father Against Unemployment



In the General Household Survey 1983 it is noted "The economic activity rates of young men aged 16 - 17 fell from 47% in 1982 to 40% in 1983. Although this decrease is not in itself statistically significant, it represents a continuation of the downward trend in activity rates for this age group since 1979."<sup>13</sup> The report went on to describe how unemployment rose more sharply between 1980 and 1981 than in previous years. For men aged between 18 and 24 the increase had continued steadily through to 1983.

The younger father in my sample was likely to have left school and to have found it more difficult to find a job than if he had been a year older and left the year before. So the general trend

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<sup>13</sup> Office of Population Censuses and Surveys, *Birth Statistics*, (London: HMSO, 1983) 4.



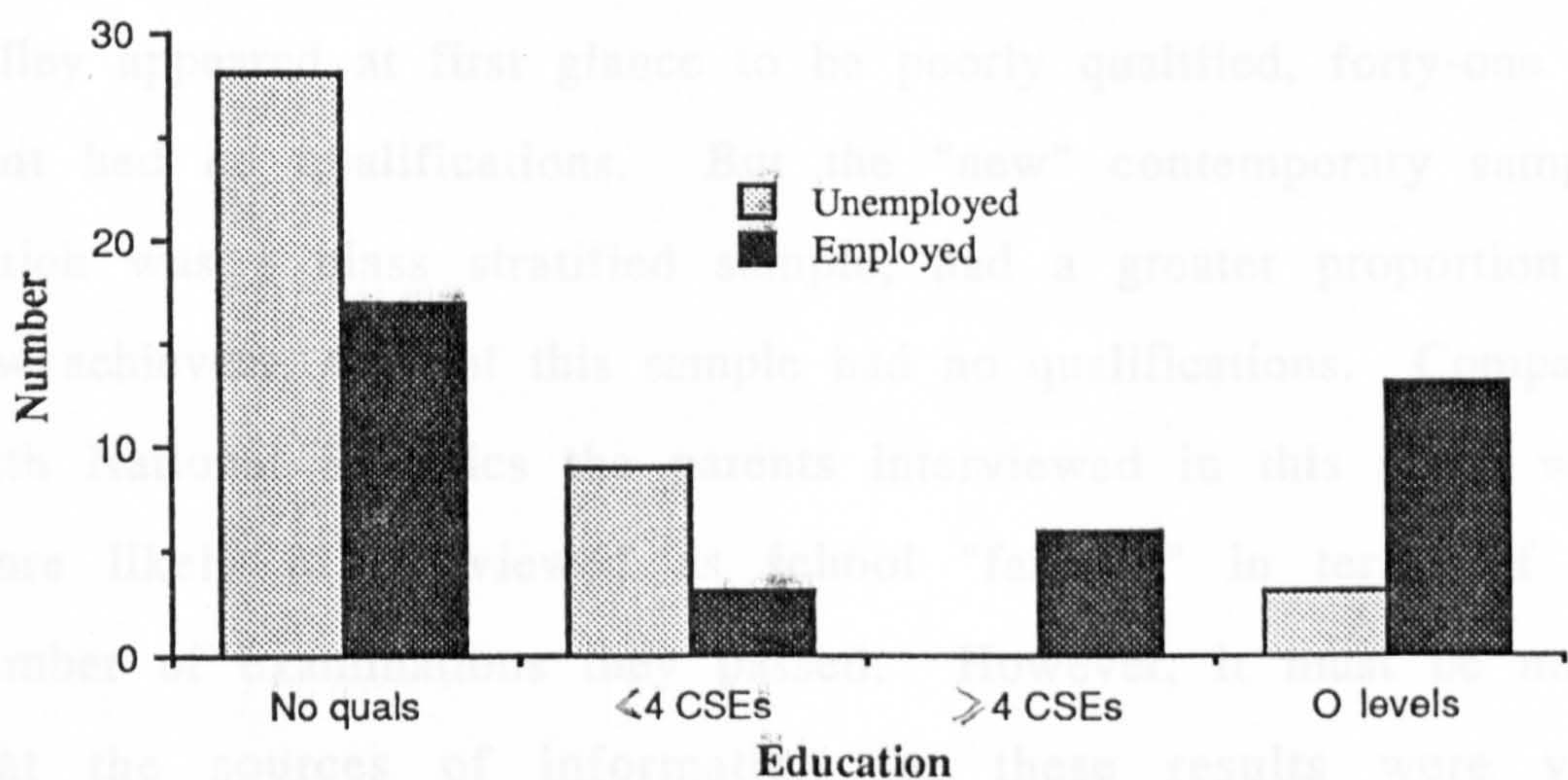
## Nature Of The Sample

that older fathers were more likely to be employed reflected the national trend of young people finding it increasingly difficult to find a job.

The young father was particularly vulnerable to unemployment as he often left school with no, or very few, formal qualifications. His chances of getting any job were therefore slim. As a consequence young unqualified fathers were only likely to be offered unskilled jobs with no future, poor wages and little fulfillment. This perhaps explained why the level of unemployment was so high for my sample, for if indeed they were only eligible for these jobs it made little or no sense taking a job that only paid money that was equal to unemployment benefit.

Figure IX

### Father's Employment Status Against Education





## Nature Of The Sample

As one would expect the more qualified the father was when he left school the more likely he is to be employed (Figure IX). Unfortunately many young fathers had to carry the legacy of failing to do well at school. Those who had managed to get more than three CSEs were six times more likely to have a job by the time the baby was one year old. The picture of poor educational achievement is similar to that reported in the United States<sup>14</sup>. However in Lewis' sample of fathers from a normative age range, he too reported a high proportion of poor academic achievers. Even within his class stratified sample some forty four per cent left school at fifteen or sixteen with no formal qualifications. When young employed fathers and fathers from a more normative age range who were working in similar jobs (i.e. III manual, IV and V) were compared, it was found that there were forty-five (90%) in the older sample who were without qualifications as compared with seventeen (32%) in the younger sample! Similarly the younger mothers interviewed by Jeanette Lilley appeared at first glance to be poorly qualified, forty-one per cent had no qualifications. But the "new" contemporary sample, which was a class stratified sample, had a greater proportion of low achievers, 49% of this sample had no qualifications. Compared with National Statistics the parents interviewed in this study were more likely to be viewed as school "failures" in terms of the number of examinations they passed. However, it must be noted that the sources of information for these results were very different. National Statistics are compiled by the Education

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<sup>14</sup>Card et al., *op. cit.*, 1978.

## Nature Of The Sample

Department and therefore can be seen as an accurate representation of the number of people who are awarded passes in examinations. Fathers descriptions of their examination qualifications were likely to be affected by their own view of schooling. In fact a number of fathers did report that they had taken examinations but they had not bothered to collect their results (these fathers were still coded as having "no qualifications" as this was how they described themselves, even though they might have passed one or more national examinations). Thus younger fathers (and perhaps older fathers) may have under reported their own examination achievements. Anyway it is hard to resist the conclusion that Nottingham young people (or at least Nottingham parents) are educationally deprived compared with the National population.

The statistics concerning young fathers and employment were also in marked contrast with that of the general population of fathers who had dependent children. In 1973, 94% of all fathers were employed compared with 84% in 1983, so during the last ten years unemployment has risen in the population of fathers with dependent children; but it has not reached anything near the levels of unemployment in the young fathers in this sample.

## Summary

In conclusion, although the picture of low educational achievement is not totally clear, when compared with the general



## Nature Of The Sample

population and other fathering samples, there is clear evidence that young fathers are extremely susceptible to unemployment and one explanation for this susceptibility maybe their lack of qualifications and experience. This is not a sufficient explanation, however, in view of Lewis's figures, where it seems that increased age impels fathers to find jobs despite poor qualifications. One must of course allow for the fact that unemployment figures increased in the few years that separated the two studies.

## **Chapter Four**

### **Young Parents Relationship At Conception**

#### **Introduction**

The relationship a young mother and father have before the time of conception is likely to have short and long term effects on the development of the relationship between the young father and unborn child. The parents' relationship is not only likely to determine how they react to knowledge of the conception; but also the way they then behave towards each other and subsequently to the child. One would hypothesise that those fathers who hardly knew the mother would be the most likely to abandon her and so relinquish any responsibility for rearing the child. Unfortunately young parents find they are in the predicament of having little or no time to formulate their feelings towards their potential partner.

There is evidence in the United States and in England that the relationship between adolescent couples who conceive children are generally not of a casual nature. Rosalind Vaz,<sup>1</sup> in her study

## Young Parents Relationship At Conception

of Black American fathers, reports "most teenage relationships that result in pregnancy are not fleeting affairs."<sup>2</sup> Ann Phoenix, as has already been reported in the Introduction, also found the majority of the young mothers in her sample had been in long standing relationships and had known their partner for over one year at the time of conception.

## Young Father And Mother Relationship Before Conception

In this study of young fathers there were a number of problems in trying to determine the type of relationship the young couple were experiencing at the time of conception. The main problem was the retrospective nature of this investigation; in a study where the fathers were interviewed when the child was one year old any answers concerning the young father's feelings and attitudes towards the mother are likely to be swayed by thoughts and actions which have taken place since the time of conception. An indication of the young couple's relationship can, however, be gathered from looking at the data concerning how long they had known each other (Table I). This is not likely to be unambiguously indicative of how they feel towards one another but it does represent the start of their relationship and therefore begins to place how they view each other into some context.

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<sup>1</sup>Rosalind Vaz, Paul Smolen and Charlene Miller, "Adolescent Pregnancy: Involvement of the Male Partner," *Journal of Adolescent Health Care*, 4.4 (1983).

<sup>2</sup>Ibid. p249.



## Young Parents Relationship At Conception

Table I

Length Of Time Father Had Known Mother At Time Of First Conception		No.
Less than 4 months		4
5 - 17 months		14
18 - 29 months		34
30 - 41 months		23
42 - 53 months		12
54 - 65 months		6
66 - 77 months		3
78 months or more		4

Of the fathers I interviewed only a small number, four, had known or been acquainted with their partner at the time of conception for less than three months. Of the group who had only known each other for a very short period there appeared to be no age bias: those who were very young were not the most likely to have had little or no contact with the mother up until the child was conceived.

Fourteen percent had known the mother for a relatively short period of between four and seventeen months. The rest of the sample (81%) had known each other for at least two years. We have to remember that the sample was partly defined by the fact that the young mothers and fathers were still living together

## Young Parents Relationship At Conception

when the baby reached twelve months, and probably those who survive as couples for this long are also more likely to be those who have been at least fairly familiar to each other, for a period which can be seen in terms of years rather than months; however, we have no data on the length of friendship period prior to conception in those whose partners did not survive until the baby's first birthday. Some of the "survivors" had indeed been friendly or living near to each other for a very long time before the baby's conception.

(mother) ".....I was about eight when we met (laughs). One group always living in the same estate .... so you know how you knew all the kids in the same estate ....so we knew each other since being little ... but he was going out with my older sister at the time (laughs) ....Karen .... when he was fourteen went out with her for three years and then (laughs) I went with him....." (Wife of painter and decorator, 21 years old)

Although in this sample, young fathers were likely to have had a long term friendship with the mother, sexual relations and intimacy may not have been a feature for all that period. When talking retrospectively about the time of conception all the young fathers expressed some responsibility and affection for their relationship with the mother. Very few fathers alluded to the possibility that one might only stay with the mother because of a sense of responsibility and obligations to the unborn baby. Data concerning how long the couple had known each other does not

## Young Parents Relationship At Conception

shed any light on the subjective feelings the young father was experiencing. Table II displays the number of couples who were already committed to each other in terms of whether they were living together or not when the first child was conceived.

Table II

Length Of Time Mother And Father Had Been Living Together At Time Of Conception	
	<u>No.</u>
Not living together	73
Less than 12 months	25
12 -23 months	1
24 - 36 months	1

At the time the first child was conceived just over a quarter of the fathers were living with their partners; these were normally the slightly older ones who were aged twenty or twenty-one at the time. Only two of the younger group, who were then aged between sixteen and eighteen, reported that they were living with the mother. It might be anticipated that the younger the father the less likely he would be to be living with the mother. But in purely logistic terms younger fathers would have major problems just trying to acquire accommodation; those under eighteen would not be eligible for council housing, and most rented accommodation would either be too expensive or too inaccessible



## Young Parents Relationship At Conception

to be acceptable. Also one would anticipate that older fathers would have had more time to leave their own family home and more time to carry out decisions.

However when assimilating this data it was extremely difficult to get a clear and precise picture of what exactly had happened since the father had left home. Many of the situations the fathers described appeared to change rapidly and frequently. The relationship between the mother and father sometimes fluctuated, so to view the couple as "living together" would be simplifying much of what might be a complicated and difficult situation. When fathers talked about the past the exact order and timing was difficult to evaluate.

(prompt: "How long have you been here?") (mother: "Since February.")(prompt: "How long were you staying at Deborah's sister's for?") "We stayed at your house {talking to Deborah's sister} was it, cos we lived at your Mum's." (Deborah's sister: "What about you being at my house for the past year? She was still at school when I had Joe. A total of three year.") "A good three year." (prompt: "And was that the two of you together?") (mother: "I had been living there about, three year, and he's been living there about two.") (prompt: "So where were you living before Deborah's sister's?") "Her other sister's. I lived at me mum's as well." (prompt: "How long were you at your other sister's?") "Five week wasn't it. They told me to get out." (Unemployed, 18 years old)

(prompt: "Were you living together at that time?") "No. On and off. Six months off then, then six months again." (prompt: "Why was that?") "We used to have fights, arguments and that. Basically we weren't really getting on - then we split up - just virtually

## Young Parents Relationship At Conception

arguments, that's all." (Unemployed, 21 years old)

### Young Couple's Pregnancy-Orientation

One can attempt to guess how pregnancy-orientated the relationship was by seeing how many of the sample were married; although marriage is by no means the ultimate indicator of how pregnancy-orientated a couple are, it does at least give a minimum number of parents who at the time of conception were definitely thinking of settling down together and perhaps having children.

Table III

Number Of Young Parents Married When First Child Conceived	
	<u>No.</u>
Married	15
Not Married	85

Fifteen of the sample were married and living together at the time of conception as can be seen in Table III. This left some twelve people who were living together but were not married. From an objective point of view, then, twenty seven of the couples had made a definite (or symbolic) gesture that they had more

## Young Parents Relationship At Conception

than a casual relationship; of them fifteen had made the more symbolic gesture which indicated a desire to be seen as partners in a more permanent way. However this does not give any indication as to how the young fathers and mothers felt the relationship was developing at that time, especially those who were not living together or married. Fathers who were unmarried at the time of conception were asked if they had been thinking of getting married before the baby was conceived and there were a considerable range of responses which fell broadly speaking into four types. Just over a fifth of the whole sample said they had never discussed living with each other.

"No .... well, when I first met her like, and I started sleeping around, and I left, um, a couple of weeks after, weren't it? And I started staying at her mum's .... and that was it. It never crossed my mind about living together .... just got in that situation that I did." (Unemployed, 20 years old)

"No, no.... we just .... all together .... when she was pregnant .... in a room .... in favour of not having it and in favour of having it ..... we decided to have it (laughs) then get married .... as well." (Double glazing manufacturer, 22 years old)

"No not before she became pregnant I was, I was, she was living in Stapleford and I lived in Wiloughby, but when I moved back to Ryelands, to go back to me Dad's she came down a few times but we lost contact and then when I heard she was pregnant I started going back to see her. But we never thought about living together before she became pregnant." (Part-time stock assistant, 18 years old)



## Young Parents Relationship At Conception

For these couples no thought had been given to settling down or forming a long term relationship. The younger fathers, aged between seventeen and twenty, were significantly more likely<sup>3</sup> not to have had discussions about marriage or living together when compared with the twenty one and twenty-two year olds. There was only one father (quoted above) who was not seeing the mother on a regular basis, in his case the unborn baby was a catalyst for the two of them getting together. There was a small group of fathers (8) who had talked, albeit fleetingly, about a more serious relationship and a more serious involvement but who felt it had never been a real conclusion for them.

(prompt: "Were you thinking of living together before Jodie?") "Yeah, yeah, just before I think like, we was talking about it, you know how you do when you're young and that, but we didn't seriously think about it. You know." (Unemployed, 18 years old)

"Er - no, not at the time. Yes, we did, we were talking about it. If I can remember right we was talking about sort of thing, but none of us knew how it was going to turn out. Em - obviously, I mean, at thirteen and fourteen it's no good looking into the future is it?" (Unemployed, 20 years old. First child conceived when father was fifteen)

A third of the sample described themselves as having talked seriously about moving in together but had not actually managed

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<sup>3</sup>Chi-squared = 7.2, df = 1, Significance level = 0.002. Fathers who were already living with the mother were removed from the sample for the purposes of this analysis. See Appendix III, Table 4.I.

## Young Parents Relationship At Conception

to put any of their plans for the future into action.

"Oh yeah, yeah. I proposed to her, well, she proposed to me as well, on February the twenty eighth, Valentines Day, about a year before kids were even mentioned really. But before we was even married, before the first kiddy came along, we was talking about how many kids we were having, things like that. It was a shot-gun wedding, but we talked about it all first. And that's a good thing about Sally, we do talk about things, instead of shouting and bawling at each other. We sit down and get our heads together." (Unemployed, 21 years old)

"Yes ..... we was engaged before Gail got pregnant ... erm ... I think we was engaged for about a year before she got pregnant ....." (prompt: "So had you set a date at that time.") "Erm well we was engaged and we was thinking of getting married a year after we got engaged but we hadn't got a specific date. ....Er .... we wanted to get married later the year ... but er .... obviously things changed ... erm .... circumstances changed .... so we didn't want to get married after he was born we wanted to get married before he was born." (Storeman, 22 years old)

"Er yeah ... it had crossed our minds ....." (prompt: "Had you made any plans at all?") "No specific plans ... it all happened a bit quick." (Checker/loader, 21 years old)

In this way, the mother becoming pregnant forced the couple to make arrangements they had previously put off, either because they felt they were not ready or because the plans were set sometime in the future. Finally eleven parents were not living together or married but at the time of conception had already made firm plans to change their position.



## Young Parents Relationship At Conception

"Er ... yes ... we got everything planned the year before, it was all sorted out - everywhere was all booked up." (Hand sprayer, 21 years old)

"Yes , we postponed it about three or four times - sometime I was at work and then - I was going to get married - and then I - unemployed - unemployed we cancelled it then, then we fell out with each other and we cancelled it then, then we got back, started again - probably about three or four times we cancelled it - then we said "yeah" and it just happened quickly - we just got married - it wasn't for the reason she were pregnant because I don't believe in it - I don't believe in just because you get a girl pregnant you have to marry her - I don't believe in that." (Steeple jack, 21 years old)

From these subjective accounts we can see that fifty of the young fathers had at least considered living with the young mother before the conception; the likelihood that all of them would have done so even if the baby had not been conceived is difficult to determine. Many were not at the stage when they were seriously contemplating it as they were only discussing it in a light-hearted way. Therefore the vast majority of young fathers do not conform to the "ideal" where couples firstly get married before having sexual intercourse, living together or conceiving children. However, in our contemporary society far fewer couples now conform to such ideals. It would seem likely that those who do choose to enter marriage first, then live together, have sexual intercourse and produce children are in a minority. Birth



## Young Parents Relationship At Conception

statistics<sup>4</sup> reveal 19.5% of all legitimate births were conceived premaritally in 1985 and this would be much higher for first births. For mothers aged under 20 years 55% were conceived out of wedlock. Thus it is not unusual in the "normal" population for mothers and fathers to start parenthood in a way which breaks ideal norms.

### Discussions About Having Children

We are able to look at how pregnancy-orientated the couples' relationships were in a more direct way by asking the fathers whether they had many discussions about children and the number they wanted to have (Table IV).

Table IV

Parents Discussions About Children Before First Pregnancy	
	<u>No.</u>
Never discussed children	31
Rarely discussed children	30
Often discussed children	38

Some thirty one parents had never discussed the possibility of having children and a further thirty had only discussed it briefly

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<sup>4</sup>Office of Population Censuses and Surveys *BirthStatistics*, (London: HMSO, 1985).

## Young Parents Relationship At Conception

or on one or two occasions.

"The odd time. We just said one day we might end up having a kid. Then quite a while after she says she was pregnant and that was it." (Unemployed, 20 years old)

"Well, we never really discussed it, we didn't say like we wanted a baby, say this like early, like the baby, it was like what you might call, you know, a mistake, we didn't plan for it." (Unemployed, 21 years old)

(prompt: "Was it the sort of subject you never discussed?") "No there was a time when we was having sex, I want you to know that she weren't on the pill, and , stupid this is, she didn't get pregnant for four months. So we thought, there must be something wrong with us. And then she ended up being pregnant. So really....." (mother: "It were our own faults really, weren't it in a way.") "We must have wanted it in a way. None of us did owt about it. But we never actually discussed, if she did get pregnant or if we would marry or owt like that." (Pie packer, 20 years old)

"Yes, Maria wanted one, that's why, that's why I think she never took any precautions at all. I don't know whether she wanted it to pull us together for good or whether ... you know ... or whether she just wanted one because she wanted to be a mother." (prompt: "Who brought it up?") "I don't know it was just one of those things, "What if you ever get pregnant" you know, sort of "Oh I'm not bothered". It was just one of them things which come up now and again. It didn't crop up very often." (Process operator, 22 years old)

Thirty eight parents reported they had regularly discussed having children and the number of children they wanted.

## Young Parents Relationship At Conception

Admittedly just under half had not agreed on the number they would like in the future but for them it had obviously been a popular subject when the two were together.

"Err, I don't know, it just come up. As I say, we do talk, it's all we ever do is talk a lot about these things. We like talking about our kids we really do. We're really proud of them. That's all one ever seems to do is talk about our kids all the time, and that's all we ever used to do before. I was brought up with all sisters younger than me, so I was bringing them up all the time, so it was just kids on my mind all the time." (Unemployed, 21 years old)

"Every time we went to bed really (laughs). I think it was her mum ..... she was going to bed and that ... and she says to Amanda, "Don't you think you ought to go on the pill" .....but we decided to have kids so....." (Sack cutter. 19 years old)

Sixty one percent of the young couples had not fully discussed firstly the possibility of having children, secondly whether they wanted children and finally the consequences of having children. There appeared to be no difference between couples' ages and the amount they reported having discussed children before the conception: older parents were just as likely not to have talked about the possibility of the mother becoming pregnant as the younger ones. This is surprising as older couples were more likely to be living with each other or to be thinking seriously of moving in together. Indeed, those couples who were living together, or thinking seriously of it, were more likely to discuss the prospect of



## Young Parents Relationship At Conception

having children. But within this sample actually being older did not mean the father was more likely to have had conversations about children. The most important factor for determining these discussions appeared to be the meaning the relationship held for the mother and father, as measured by whether the couple had made a physical or symbolic commitment to one another such as looking for, or finding, somewhere for them both to live. Thus young adolescents were more likely to start having discussions about the consequences of sexual intercourse if they were having a regular sexual relationship and if the sexual intercourse was generally known about (although not necessarily openly discussed in the family forum).

When comparing the young fathers with the Lewis sample of fathers from a more normative age range, a significantly larger number of the younger fathers had never discussed having children; even though sexual intercourse was already an integral part of their relationship. For these young parents the fact that some are older than others did not correlate with any increase of responsibility concerning the consequences of sexual intercourse. Among the general population, surveys<sup>5</sup> have suggested that over half of all pregnancies are unintended. Although the context of many of these "unintended" pregnancies is likely to be very different from the adolescents' situation, it is interesting to note that, even in our society where there is a greater acceptance of contraceptives, many parents still accidentally have children. In

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<sup>4</sup>A. Cartwright, *How Many Children?* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1976).

## Young Parents Relationship At Conception

the United States, for example, Entwistle and Doering<sup>6</sup> reported that 38% of pregnancies a sample of parents having their first child had either been "sort of planned" or "completely unplanned."

### Decisions Following Conception

Many of the young fathers described how, as a direct consequence of the knowledge of conception the start of the pregnancy had speeded up the decisions and processes concerning marriage, living together and settling down. The fathers were faced with decisions such as whether they wanted to get married and for what reason or purpose. They also had to tackle reactions from parents, other family and friends, and they had to look at the responsibilities and demands they were taking on. The overwhelming problem at that point appeared to be finding somewhere to live. The majority of young mothers and fathers were living with their parents or other relatives; trying to sort out somewhere to live was often difficult, time consuming and tiring. Sixty four of the fathers reported that no-one had influenced them at that time as to what they should be doing. Those who felt that others had tried to influence them had vivid recollections concerning those early days.

"Well one person tried to put us off, my parents.  
They thought it were too soon, so they tried to get me

<sup>6</sup>Doris Entwistle and Susan Doering, *The First Birth: A Family Turning Point*, (Baltimore: John Hopkins, 1981).



## Young Parents Relationship At Conception

to get her to get rid of it. Which I weren't having. Sort me own life out, have to lead me own life so I wouldn't have it. They said I were too young and me dad tried to teach me about contraceptives which I already knew about. But they got used to the idea when she were getting bigger." (prompt: "How did their advice affect you?") "I didn't like it. We had a big bust up about it. I left home and didn't speak to them for months on end. Then we got back together again and they were all for it." (Animal by-products, 21 years old)

"Yeah cos there was a couple at the time that we was going out with that was a bit older than us and I think they got married a couple of months before us and it was just seeing the amount of joy they had and I thought well .... why be left out." (Rolls Royce metal polisher, 21 years old)

For most of the parents it seemed that a lot of advice had been offered or given but, when asked directly, parents only tended to remember what it was if it had been outstanding in terms of relevance. On the whole advice was seen in a negative way by the young parents, and only four felt that it had been useful and beneficial. Advice was normally in terms of what the young parents should do concerning marriage; the older generation were seen as believing that to be married was the most socially acceptable thing to do. The young parents usually had clear ideas about what they wanted to do and, although they had to listen to their elders' advice, they did not feel compelled to follow what was being advocated. In many cases the views of the parents were very similar to those of the young mother and father and in these circumstances the maternal or paternal parents acted as



## Young Parents Relationship At Conception

catalysts who speeded up and aided the many decisions that were to be made.

"Er .... not really I think it was more of a sit down and discuss what was going off ... cos her parents came round .....At that time we hadn't thought of gerrin' married, it was that sort of ....'cos we went for the test in mornin' an' it sort of came upon us and we din't have a lot of time to think..... then her dad says, "Well, are you gerrin' married?" and I said, "Yes" cos ... but we hadn't thought about it .... um but we knew we had to find somewhere to live ... so it wasn't forced on us really." (prompt: "You felt you were making the decision yourself?") "Oh aye yeah."  
(Unemployed, 21 years old)

## Young Parents Reactions To The Pregnancy

Furstenberg,<sup>7</sup> when he interviewed adolescent mothers on learning they were pregnant, reported that many were surprised or shocked. He found that only a fifth had felt happy when initially discovering their condition. Rosalind Vaz's study, also in the United States, with a sample of mainly black teenage fathers, found that 49% reported feeling happy/proud, 34% were "mad"/scared and 17% had mixed emotions whereas in a study in the United Kingdom Sims and Smith<sup>8</sup> reported that 75 per cent of the men who were the partners of young mothers were happy,

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<sup>7</sup>Frank Furstenberg, *Unplanned Parenthood: The Social Consequences of Teenage Childrearing*, (New York: The Free Press, 1976).

<sup>8</sup>Madeline Sims and Christopher Smith, "Young Fathers: Attitudes to Marriage and Family Life," *The Father Figure*. Eds. Lorna McKee and Margaret O'Brien (London: Tavistock Publications, 1982).

## Young Parents Relationship At Conception

20% had mixed feelings and only 5% felt upset. However, in the Sims and Smith sample it must be noted that only a fifth of the men were teenagers themselves and therefore the statistics do not necessarily give a true picture of adolescent fathers' reactions to pregnancy.

The young fathers in this sample reported a wide range of emotions when discussing both their reactions and those of the mother to the conception of this child (Table V).

Table V

Father's Reactions To This Pregnancy	
	<u>No.</u>
Negative feelings (upset/ashamed/unhappy)	8
Shock/surprise/scared	12
Neutral (not bothered)	5
Mixed (happy and scared)	17
Positive feelings (happy)	57

The majority of fathers said they felt happy or "over the moon" when they found out. However, since all of the fathers were asked retrospectively about their feelings, their reports were likely to be influenced by the passage of time and their continued presence and participation in the family.

"I was quite pleased, I was ..... I didn't want her to

## Young Parents Relationship At Conception

get pregnant or I wasn't hoping she would .... but when she told me, you know I thought ... I was quite pleased ..... even at the first moment, I think I knew what she was going to tell me before she said it .... I was in a way quite hoping it was .... really I was ..... I think I always wanted children when I was young." (Unemployed, 22 years old)

"Yeah.... I was chuffed both times ....it was a bit of a surprise ..... but I weren't bothered ..... I thought well I'm all there anyway (laughs), there's nothing wrong with me." (Painter and decorator, 22 years old)

It must also be remembered that this sample contains twenty three parents who had already had at least one other older child, and their feelings concerning a second or a third child are likely to be very different from those when they discover they are expecting their first. In fact of the twenty three fathers who had had children before, nineteen reported feeling happy when hearing about the conception of the next child. Even when omitting the 23 fathers who had already had children the majority of the rest (76%) said they felt happy when they found out. A further seventeen reported they felt happy about the mother being pregnant but were scared because they would have to tell their parents and were worried about how their parents would react. Fifty four of the first time parents reported some feelings of happiness, mixed or otherwise, concerning the conception of the child. For those who reported other emotions such as surprise and worry, most of them commonly expressed the anxiety about telling parents; some mentioned concern over the lack of housing and preparation for the child; but none of the "mixed feelings"



## Young Parents Relationship At Conception

group said anything that indicated that they had any anxiety with regards to whether they wanted to be involved or not. Presumably fathers who have such anxiety act upon it, and therefore would not appear in this sample.

"Er - we was both very pleased about it, we was excited about it, but it's the way to tell the folks about it, it put the dampers on it a bit (laughs). It was indifferent really - if it had been after we was married, y'know, it would have been a totally different story. But nobody was tricky about it or anything." (Hand sprayer, 21 years old)

"Oh, I loved it at first, I was happy that she was having the baby but what I was worried about was how we were going to get a place sorted out. I was a bit worried at first you know what we were going to do. I mean she was at her mum's and I was at my dad's we had to get our own place really with the council." (Unemployed, 21 years old)

So at the time the baby was one year old many young parents described their feelings of the discovery of conception in a positive way. It may be the case that young fathers looking back over the past year and beyond took a slightly rose tinted view of what had happened. Even when taking that into consideration it appears that, for the majority of young fathers, happiness was one of the predominant emotions they felt on having discovered they were going to become a father. Of the first timers only eleven talked about their feelings concerning the discovery of pregnancy entirely in terms of shock, surprise and worry.

## Young Parents Relationship At Conception

"Um a bit surprised - er ... I just wondered what we were gonna do, that's all ..... there was a few problems that needed to be sorted out: especially tellin' her parents." (Unemployed, 19 years old)

"I was scared at first, I thought her dad would ban me, but he didn't - he said it wouldn't be the last time it had happened." (Unemployed, 22 years old)

These young fathers were overwhelmed by thoughts of how they were going to tell their parents and then how those parents would react to the news. As a consequence, their minds were focused away from thoughts of the child and concentrated on what they were going to say to each of the parents! Eight fathers described in a comparatively more negative way their feelings when they first heard about the pregnancy; a few fathers said they contemplated a termination but in general they referred to their own disappointment.

"It was like I said, resentment at first my first reaction. Get rid of it, you don't want it. Even though I've always wanted kids. I couldn't believe it myself at the time, I thought - God it's really real. I'm like dead against these abortions and all that. But when I was saying that to myself, I really thought about it." (Unemployed, 21 years old)

"I felt ashamed of myself .... because you know it was .... I felt ashamed that I'd let her down, I'd let her family down, my family down and also myself really. ....it was something that we wanted to happen ... inside .... after we was married you know, we wanted

## Young Parents Relationship At Conception

it to happen in the future really." (Storeman, 22 years old)

"Not too good. We weren't too pleased about it at all. But, you know after a couple of days it, sunk in, then you know we just, started to looking forward to it." (Labourer, 20 years old)

A small number of fathers (5%) said they had not really felt any emotions when they discovered about the pregnancy.

"Well dunno .... like ..... not bothered .....like I say I just take things as they come, you know what I mean." (Unemployed, 17 years old)

Fathers were also asked how the mother reacted when she discovered that she was pregnant; their coded answers are shown in Table VI.

Table VI

Mother's Reaction To This Pregnancy	
	<u>No.</u>
Negative feelings (upset)	13
Shocked/surprised	15
Neutral	1
Mixed (happy and scared)	12
Positive feelings	56



## Young Parents Relationship At Conception

If we compare young fathers' reports of how they felt with their descriptions of young mothers' feelings on discovering about the pregnancy we find there is a very high correlation between their feelings: Fathers who described their wives as being happy about the pregnancy also described themselves as being happy. They appeared to mirror each others feelings. In the same way, those who described their wives as being shocked talk about their feelings as being similar. To a certain extent this mirror effect can be explained because we only talked to the father, and he was more likely to see his partner's feelings in the same light as his own. However another factor will be the nature of the relationship they had with each other up until the time of conception. It would be expected that those parents who were pregnancy orientated, and spent time talking and thinking over the prospect of children would be more likely to greet the knowledge of a pregnancy in a positive way. On the other hand those parents who had not had a pregnancy orientated relationship would be more likely to be upset, shocked or surprised. In my sample parents' previous discussions about children were highly correlated<sup>91</sup> with positive feelings concerning the pregnancy.

Other aspects of the couples' relationship were not good predictors in themselves of whether a couple were going to be pleased or unhappy when the mother became pregnant. For

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<sup>91</sup> $r = 0.29$ , correlation = 0.002.

## Young Parents Relationship At Conception

instance, by defining the status of the relationship in temporal terms we found that couples who were living together before the conception were not significantly more likely to report being happy than couples who were living apart. In the same way parents who were thinking about and definitely planning to live together were no more likely to be pleased about the baby than those couples who had made no plans at all.

Surprisingly, then, it appears that not all practical aspects of a young couple's relationship had a bearing on the way in which the couple would initially react to the news of the pregnancy. Even if they had made arrangements to get married or live together and form a more intimate relationship this was no indicator of whether they wanted to have children. It is not until the couple start talking on a regular basis with each other about what they want that one can predict the nature of their emotions when the mother becomes pregnant.

### Summary

Contrary to popular belief, many of the adolescents who had sexual relations which led to the mother becoming pregnant were not involved in casual relationships. However, although participating in a relatively stable relationship the majority of these young parents had not started preparing emotionally or physically for the young baby. Thus many had not discussed

## Young Parents Relationship At Conception

having children or the consequences of having sexual intercourse without contraceptives. Once the pregnancy was known about, the majority of parents reported feeling positive about the baby's arrival.



## Chapter Five

### The Pregnancy Period

#### Introduction

The most basic physical problem that couples had to deal with was housing. On the whole young mothers and fathers were either living apart or living together in accommodation that was unsuitable for bringing up children. As a consequence a major concern for fathers and their partners was where they were going to live; in both the short and long term. Like many other couples or individuals in British society the setting up of a new home away from parents was seen as a highly desirable practice. Couples had a small number of options when considering where they were going to live. Ineichen,<sup>1</sup> in his 1981 study of newly-married couples, reported that 34% of his sample were sharing with relatives, usually with the wife's parents. Twenty five per cent started their married life as home owners. One couple were living in council accommodation when they married. These percentages changed with time as couples moved away from their parents' home, taking up council accommodation or buying their

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<sup>1</sup>Bernard Ineichen, "The Housing Decisions of Young People," *British Journal of Sociology*, 32 2 (1981).

own home. When considering council tenants, Ineichen also reports

"Only one young couple started their married life as council tenants, but altogether twenty seven (15.1 per cent) achieved a council tenancy during the course of the study. A further thirteen anticipated achieving a council tenancy in the near future. These forty couples (22.3% of the sample) are typified by extreme youth, low occupational class, low earnings and rapid fertility. Most of the wives were pregnant at marriage; by the end of the study, 87.5 per cent had had a child, and only a minority were working.

Within eighteen months of marriage, therefore, two distinct housing groups had appeared, with marked differences of age, class and income, although substantial areas of overlap remain. The differences are also particularly notable when fertility is considered: by the end of the study two in ten of the owning couples had a child against nearly nine in ten of the council renting group."<sup>2</sup>

### Housing And Financial Problems

For the young fathers in the present sample who were having a child for the first time, only nine couples had already moved away from home and were living together in a flat or house at the time of conception. The majority of the first timers had to decide how they were going to approach the problem of having nowhere to live. This decision was more or less made for them as they

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<sup>2</sup>Ibid. p254.

## Pregnancy - The Search For Home

usually opted to find accommodation via the local housing department. The reasons young couples did not contemplate buying a private house was, as Ineichen pointed out, primarily a lack of money. Being unemployed virtually excluded all from buying any sort of dwelling, even in the low-cost area which Nottingham represents. For those who were working their wages were small, and adding to the financial burden of supporting a young child by taking on a mortgage was often thought of as too much. Secondly the council system was the method that most of the young parents were familiar with and the private sector was very much an unknown quantity.

Once the couple were aware of the pregnancy one of the first moves was to go to the City of Nottingham Housing Department and have themselves placed on the waiting list. Even though the young couples expecting a baby were placed on a high priority list they would not be housed immediately. During that time young fathers had to find accommodation for themselves. Just over two thirds of the first timer fathers spent some period of the pregnancy with their own mother and father; of them eleven also had the young expectant mother come and stay. A third at some time went to stay with the mother at the maternal grand parents. Only nine first timers (out of 74) did not live with either parents during the pregnancy. By staying with the grand parents young parents continued to receive help and support in terms of housing, finances and conveniences. This help was very much needed as the young couple had little time and space in order to prepare for



the new baby and the new home. As a consequence many young parents used their parents as a means of slowing down some of the problems which are brought about by an unprepared pregnancy. However, this remained a potentially turbulent time, and some young fathers felt uncomfortable during the initial period when they had to rely on other people. When discussing the pregnancy period one young father explained

"Er .... well .... I you know .... wanted a house. we wanted our own place .... the family were good I mean .... the fact that our relatives, our family were good, they were very good .... very helpful but I .... I .... we didn't feel .... we did feel close together but you know .... we wanted our own place where we could do our own thing we .... didn't feel free though they made us very welcome we didn't feel free within ourselves to do what we wanted to do and er .... yeah .... but I .... I was just glad .... I ....I .... I .... was looking forward to replacement ... I was glad when this house came up." (Storeman, 22 years old)

Most young couples decided to live in council accommodation and, because the length of the pregnancy limited the amount of time they had in which to find accommodation, they were forced into taking whatever the housing department decided to offer them. The housing department, with its limited resources, could normally only offer flats or maisonettes which were in poor condition and on the roughest, most unpopular estates. These estates were usually many miles from the fathers' family and friends. The parents were made to feel more isolated as they had no means of seeing their own family except via public transport.

## Pregnancy - The Search For Home

This meant long bus trips which were not only time consuming but costly.

"A bit worrying really because I lost contact with me Dad and I lost contact with me Mam ..... 'cause I was right up here - I was mostly going to me Dad's, to Marie's mum's, back to me Dad's then I got back to her Mum's then I came up here, so I was flitting all over the place .... I didn't know where I was going or coming .... a bit bad." (Unemployed, 21 years old)

In moving away the young father had to adjust to the new life away from home. For some this move was welcomed as they were looking forward to living on their own, and thereby have more independence. Sixty per cent of the sample talked of having problems when they moved away. The most common difficulty was money. Not only did most couples have very little, but also they were totally unused to the responsibilities of using money in a constructive way.

"It was a bit of an uplift ...at the time er .... financially ....basically I didn't know what I was doing ... you still went around spending your money and then you realised you didn't have enough to pay the rent at the end of the week ... and then you'd go on for a month, and then the electric bill would come, an electric bill! I'd never seen one of these before! .... Then the gas .... they just hit you as if .... you've been living in dream world ...it's very strange that." (Warehouse manager, 22 years old)

(prompt: "And did you have any problems when you first moved in?") "At first I think I didn't want to move in because there was a bit of responsibility. I



## Pregnancy - The Search For Home

had my mother and my father to fall back on before and I didn't have to worry about bills and things, and eventually it sort of worked itself out and I got used to the idea." (British Rail trackman, 19 years old)

Financial difficulties were further exaggerated because parents had to buy furniture for the new flat or house and clothes for the mother and baby. Frequently parents had to rely on the DHSS (Department of Health and Social Security) to fund these acquisitions. In such a situation parents normally had to buy goods at the very cheapest end of the price range (or second hand) in order to be able to afford them.

Some fathers mentioned other aspects of moving away from home which they found difficult. They discovered that after eighteen years of one particular routine it was disconcerting to move into a lifestyle that was very different. They now found that jobs around the house, which they had previously been able to ignore, had to be done.

"Strange at first, I mean, you had to do everything yourself .... normally you've got everybody running about after you doing you teas, doing your dinners doing your own washing .... realising how hard it is to run a home .... when you're on your own." (Steeple jack, 21 years old).

The young couple had to cope with being emotionally and



physically distanced from the life they had previously known. They also had to overcome the problems of financial hardship and the impending arrival of the baby without the usual access to the structure of the family support system.

"Well I was quite pleased at first but when you get used to it and you're away from your family, I've not been one for visiting but ... you know ... you move away from your family and that, and you don't see much of them and it changes your life for you, quite a bit really, I mean, cos you've been living with your mother for so long, you're not glad to get away but you're trying to make it on your own, sort of ...like ... but other than that its been alright... Quite happy now, settled down and everything." (Unemployed, 22 years old)

Being young and having to rely on parents for help and support caused problems in itself. Where housing was shared maternal and paternal grand parents were caught in the difficult position of firstly still acting as a parent/disciplinarian and secondly as someone trying to facilitate the young parents through the difficult pregnancy period. The advice that grand parents gave could often be useful but on some issues just created conflict.

"Well, when we were living at me parents' house I had to do what me dad said all the time couldn't do what I wanted to do and I didn't like it. You know like had to be in bed for a certain time, "Don't be up too late", "If you stop up you've got to put money in the tele", things like that. To pay for the electric -

## **Pregnancy - Father Involvement In Preparations**

which she didn't like for a start. .... But that was just as bad, it was just as bad, it weren't the same as having your own place. If anybody wants to get married I think they ought to get their own place before they do." (Animal by-products, 21 years old)

"Yeah, I think there was Elaine's mum ..... it just seemed like she was telling us everything what we should do and what we shouldn't do instead of just letting us find out on us own as our family as ourselves. She had a lot to say didn't she? Made us niggle at each other cos we knew we had to stop there so we couldn't say too much to her. I think if we look back at what we've done now we'd like to have moved here first wouldn't we?" (Rolls Royce metal polisher, 21 years old)

Grand parents still found it difficult to come to terms with the fact that their children could no longer be termed adolescents, indeed they had jumped out of adolescence when they became parents. However, grand parents provided a vital structure for most young parents during the pregnancy even if at times it caused tension and arguments.

### **Fathers' Preparations During Pregnancy**

Once the pregnancy was known about the couples were likely to take part in a number of "ritualistic" activities to help prepare themselves psychologically and also physically for the arrival of the child. The parents themselves were also likely to change as a direct result of accepting the responsibilities of having children. Whether the couple had somewhere to live or not, they both still



had to make preparations for the birth and the subsequent arrival of the baby.

### Material Preparations

One of the public rituals during pregnancy is buying materials that will be needed later. Clothes, cots and prams were perhaps the easiest, and the most obvious, items which needed to be acquired for when the baby came home. Although fathers have not always been directly involved in this public event, increasingly it is expected that there are joint decisions in going to buy, or look for, such items. It was perhaps the young father's first opportunity to become actively involved with his child. Up until this point most of his concerns for the future were orientated around other problems; such as informing parents of the pregnancy and finding somewhere to live. Even though it was moderately easy to be involved with buying clothes etc. there was still a large number of fathers (17%) who reported that they had done virtually nothing in preparing clothes, prams, bottles, blankets or decorating bedrooms for when the baby came home. The situations these fathers found themselves in were very different; for some, anything to do with the baby was perceived as the mother's role and therefore it was up to her to go out and choose the necessary items; others reported they had not become involved because they were not living with the mother at the time; and finally, some fathers said that they would have liked to have been involved in the preparation but had felt "ignored" by



## Pregnancy - Father Involvement In Preparations

the members of the maternal family who were doing most of the organising.

"Er ..... I don't know, I don't .... at the time I couldn't really see that there was a lot I could do ... I think I must confess that most of the things that were done were mostly done by our family .... by her sisters and her mother and that ..... there wasn't .... I was quite kind of er ... left out in that sense." (prompt: "And do you think you would have like to have been involved any more?") "Yeah, you know, I felt .....I did feel that I could have been involved a bit more with various things." (Storeman, 22 years old)

In fact 41% of the fathers who were not involved said that they would like to play a larger part when the next baby arrived.

(prompt: "Would you have liked to have done more?") "Now I would, yeah - I think the next one .... when the next one come along. I will do a lot more - cos I know what to do then." (prompt: "So what would you like to do this time?") "What I'd like to do now before the birth I'd like to go out shopping - get the bottles sterilisers, the wife's clothes - things like that, you know going out and help the wife - instead of sending the wife out on her own you know I'd like to be able to do it myself." (Steeple jack, 21 years old)

Fifty five per cent of the fathers went with the young mother to buy clothes, prams and cots. When looking back many

## Pregnancy - Father Involvement In Preparations

commented how restricted they felt at the time because of their limited financial resources. This meant that they were unable to buy all the commodities they wanted and, in addition, they felt they had to buy products of an inferior quality.

Unemployed fathers were reliant on social security for extra money. A recurring regret was their inability to buy new products from brand shops and so had to rely on second hand goods. In total twenty per cent of young fathers reported they would have liked to have done more but were restricted because they did not have the means.

"I'd like to have bought her a new crib to start with, which we had to have a second hand one with it being the first." (Animal by-products, 21 years old)

Twenty seven per cent of fathers in addition to shopping for "baby clothes" also decorated the baby's bedroom.

### Ante-Natal Clinics

In the Nottingham area, as is consistent with most cities around England, the hospitals organise antenatal clinics and antenatal classes. The clinics are designed to monitor both the mothers' and babies' progress. The classes are a means of "educating" the mother, with a primary focus on the time

immediately before and after the birth.

Primarily both the hospital-based activities are organised for the mothers, although more recently there has been emphasis on the fathers' role and increased participation.<sup>3</sup>

Antenatal clinics are not mandatory for women, however, the vast majority of expectant mothers attend. Even to this day there is a view that the father serves no function at the antenatal clinic. In Lewis' study of the fathers from a normative age range he found that only one father had managed to get beyond the waiting room at an antenatal clinic, and in most other cases the father's presence was only needed in order to drive the mother to and from the hospital. The actual role the father did serve depended on many factors: 1) The relationship between the young parents. 2) Time young father had available. 3) Each parents' perception of their role. 4) Independent factors e.g. hospital's perceived reaction to fathers being present and mothers' or fathers' feeling towards hospitals.

A quarter of my young fathers reported they had not attended any antenatal clinics and had no desire to do so. Of this group there was a small number who appeared to be indifferent to the check-ups. However, even within this small "uninterested" group there was a certain level of concern although it did not appear to be externalised to any visible display of participation.

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<sup>3</sup>R A Fein, "Men's Entrance to Parenthood," *Family Co ordinator*, 25 (1976): 341-348.



## Pregnancy - Father Involvement In Preparations

The majority of fathers who did not want to go to the clinic said they "couldn't be bothered". They believed there was no point attending clinics where they were not actively involved.

(prompt: "Did you attend any antenatal clinics?") "Er no, I was at work you know" (prompt: "Were you encouraged to go then?") "Er, no not really, no." (prompt: "Would you have liked to gone to them?") "Er - I suppose er I could have made the effort to go to one or two I suppose, I wasn't particularly bothered, you know." (Hand sprayer, 21 years old)

As one father expressed, it was not he who was having the baby, it was the mother so it was her responsibility to go to the check-ups. For the young mother her own family often acted as support, further making the father's role at the hospital uncertain. Both parents being young makes it understandable that the young father does not have any particular views concerning institutions such as antenatal clinics. Not only is he likely to be very unfamiliar with their function, but he also is unlikely to have had many discussions with other fathers concerning the benefits of attending. There was a tendency for him to take an almost selfish stance of not supporting the mother because it was not he who was carrying the child. This may be a reflection of the father's age; although in many respects the father was an adult, in others he was still an adolescent. If that was the case, he may have had difficulty putting himself in someone else's position and so failed

to sympathise with the mother, who was likely to want support. The mother may also have felt she was under the protective mechanism of her own family and so did not need to encourage the father to be present. Dislike of hospitals was another reason young fathers did not go to the clinics.

Some fourteen per cent of young fathers did not attend but mentioned that looking back on it they would have liked to have gone. These fathers normally cited work as the reason they had been unable to participate. Interestingly enough, there was no difference between the attendance levels of fathers who were working and those who were unemployed.<sup>4</sup> Even when fathers had time available it did not appear to be the case that they were any more likely to support the mother when she went to hospital. The only thing it did change was the reasons the father gave for non-attendance.

Just under fifty percent of the fathers went to one or more of the clinics. In fact the majority only went to one clinic. When compared with Charlie Lewis' sample of normal aged fathers, younger fathers were significantly more likely to attend one or more clinics.<sup>5</sup> This is surprising considering both young and old samples have roughly the same statistics for non-attendance. The difference between the two samples was that the normal aged sample were more likely to attend one of the parent evenings and

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<sup>4</sup>Chi squared value = 2.26, df = 1, significance level = 0.13. See Appendix III, Table 5.I.

<sup>5</sup>Chi-squared = 5.32, df = 1, Significance level = 0.02. See Appendix III, Table 5.II.

the younger fathers were more likely to go to one of the clinics.

Table I

Father's Attendance At Antenatal Clinic		
	Young Fathers	Normative Age Range Fathers
Father did not attend	44	49
Fathers nights only	6	17
Clinic	49	33
Total	<u>99</u>	<u>99</u>

This difference is not explained by differences in age, class or even unemployment but in fact by the variable "time." Young fathers are now more likely to attend clinics because the procedure for antenatal care in Nottingham has changed since Charlie Lewis first did his interviewing . The ultrasonic scan has been introduced. The psychological effects of ultrasound scanning on pregnant women have been reported.<sup>6</sup> In general, scans appear to give the mother a more positive attitude towards the pregnancy. The effects on the father were not discussed in these studies. However, many of the young fathers reported going to

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<sup>6</sup>S. Campbell, A.E. Reading, D.N. Cox, C.H. Sledmore, R. Mooney, P. Chudleigh, J. Beedle, and H. Ruddick, "Ultrasound Scanning on Pregnancy: the short-term and Psychological effects of early real-time scans," *Journal of Psychosomatic Obstetrics and Gynaecology*, 1 (1982): 57-61.

Mona Tsoi and Myra Hunter, "Ultrasound scanning in Pregnancy: Consumer Reactions," *Journal of Reproductive and Infant Psychology*, 5 (1987): 43-48.



## Pregnancy - Father Involvement In Preparations

the clinics in order to see the scan, and described how enjoyable and worthwhile they found the first view of the child. This visual representation of the baby was an enormous incentive for the father to be present.

Other than the time when the mother attended antenatal clinic for the scan, the father's role at the hospital was unclear. Men often objected to being barred from examination rooms as they were unable to see the mother being examined. This brought forward strong feelings of anger as the father wanted to know exactly what the doctor was doing to the mother, indignation because he did not feel that the mother's body was something that needed to be kept a secret from him and lastly resentment because he was unable to hear the discussions between the mother and doctor.

(prompt: "Did you go to any of the check-ups?") "Yes."  
(prompt: "What did you do at them?") "Well, I went in once - I go in the ones at the doctor's but couldn't get in the ones at the hospital - I used to go with her to the doctor's and the hospital hoping I'd see the scan - couldn't get in, but when her mother used to go, she used to get in - I'm more to her .... I'm her husband so that was stupid really." (prompt: "And they wouldn't let you in?") "No, they kept pushing me away." (prompt: "So what did you do?") "Sat there reading the paper." (prompt: "Were you made welcome by the staff?") "Not at the hospital." (prompt: "Didn't they?") "When I wanted to go and see the scan, wouldn't let me go in would they?" (mother: "No") "And yet they let your mam." (prompt: "And did there seem to be any reason for that?") "Don't know really. I just followed her when she left -

## Pregnancy - Father Involvement In Preparations

they said "Not you, go and sit down" - when I saw her coming out I thought she was going to show me something - about time - but she came out and nothing." (Unemployed, 21 years old)

To a certain extent omitting the father from the examination room fostered unnecessary suspicions and created feelings of uselessness. Fathers commented they only went once because they had had nothing to do and felt, not in the way, but redundant. They also missed out on the opportunity to ask the doctor questions themselves. Procedures varied depending on where the mother was being seen but on the whole General Practice check-ups appeared to be more client-centred than those services offered by the hospital. As a consequence fathers normally reported feeling ambivalent towards the hospital routines.

"I wanted to see that .... er ... what's it called (prompt: "...scan....") "But I didn't see it cos she wouldn't do it (laughs)I wanted to see the scan and erm, ... it was interesting really won't it? .. I mean I like ... I mean ... I was .... it might be a bit like a farm ... a cattlemarket ... mm herdin' 'em in one end and out the other but, er, but er, I like going it was interesting but like I say it was a bit in one room and out the other all the time won't it? - and waitin' 'ere and waitin' there which is obvious ... it put me off a bit." (Fork lift driver, 21 years old)

A small number who regularly attended commented on how



much they enjoyed it and the satisfaction they received from being with the mother and supporting her.

"Yes I was nervous at first of the hospital, the first time you know you see all these pregnant women and no blokes you know I reckon everyone should go really to make their wife more comfortable you see felt out of place with one or two blokes and about forty girls I was a bit out of place at first but I thought it's my kid and well you know I wanted the baby that's it." (Unemployed, 21 years old)

### Ante-Natal Classes

Within our society there has been an increase in the number of classes which address the the problems of childbirth and the subsequent arrival of the child. These classes have attempted to educate mothers and, to a certain extent, fathers about the difficulties and enjoyments of having children. Studies which have examined antenatal classes have shown that they are more likely to be attended by "older, richer and more educated women who come from the dominant ethnic group and who are having their first child."<sup>7</sup> Lewis also noted that attendance was related to social class membership and that "working class men were far more likely to express animosity towards hospitals, professionals and the contemporary belief that parents need to be educated in

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<sup>7</sup>David Jones and Christopher Dougherty, "Attendance at Antenatal Classes and Clinics, Medical Intervention during birth and Implications for Natural Childbirth," *Journal of Reproductive and Infant Psychology*, 2 (1984): pp 49-50.



their role."<sup>8</sup> When considering the social class make up of my sample it is perhaps not surprising that many of the mothers and fathers reported no interest in relaxation classes and exercises. Over half the sample did not attend any relaxation classes. This is a significantly larger percentage of mothers who were absent from relaxation classes when compared with Charlie Lewis' sample, when second children were considered.<sup>9</sup>

Young fathers reported that classes were of little value as childbirth was an experience for which you could not prepare. It was something that had to be dealt with at the time and reactions to it were natural. It has been hypothesized that fathers who become involved in classes are already more "committed" to fatherhood and are likely to be more participant.<sup>10</sup> But this view fails to understand that fathers' attitudes to antenatal classes are more likely to be governed by their view of the institution (hospital) in which the classes take place, and the role that institution is seen as playing.

Of the remaining forty nine mothers who did attend relaxation classes, most of the fathers had no wish to take part. Some felt relaxation sessions were for women and by attending they would only embarrass themselves; others would not have minded taking

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<sup>8</sup>Charlie Lewis, *Becoming A Father* (Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1986) 39.

<sup>9</sup>Chi-squared = 4.7, df = 1, Significance level = 0.02. Those parents who had an older child than the one year old were excluded from the analysis. See Appendix III, Table 5.III

<sup>10</sup>Nigel Beail, "The Role of the Father in Childbirth," *Fathers: Psychological Perspectives*. Eds. Nigel Beail and Jacqueline McGuire, (London: Junction Books, 1982).

## Pregnancy - Father Involvement In Preparations

part but did not because they thought they would be the only male present.

(prompt: "What put you off?") "Erm .... I think it's because nobody else went, none of the other husbands went so I didn't think I'd go, you know I was either at work or it was like me "No I don't feel like going to that sort of thing", sort of helped her at home, sort of thing and that, but .... it's not so much you'd feel embarrassed doing anything like that, it's just that you're the only one see, if there was a few others I would have gone. I mean it wouldn't have bothered me, but just being the only one there I don't think I'd have liked it." (Unemployed, 22 years old)

Fifteen fathers attended the relaxation sessions with the mother. Having made the effort to attend, young fathers still found it difficult to take part and often sat on the periphery watching what the mothers were doing rather than becoming actively involved.

### Reading Material

Young fathers were also asked whether they had prepared for the child by reading any of the literature on childcare or childbirth. Lewis had commented on his sample of fathers from a normative age range "Even the least imposing or threatening of the sources of official 'knowledge' and involvement .... seemed not

to take up the interest or involvement of men."<sup>11</sup>

Entwhistle and Doering found that compared to the mothers in their sample there were comparatively few fathers who obtained child birth information from magazines and pamphlets. Thirty four per cent of my young father sample had read nothing before the birth, which is a considerably greater number than in the older father sample (this was irrespective of whether the fathers were first timers or not).<sup>12</sup> It was likely that for many young fathers collecting information via books or magazines would be an unsuitable medium especially considering over half of the sample had no formal qualifications. In fact, seven of these fathers reluctantly admitted that they could not read.

Others felt that they could get that sort of information from other sources such as friends or relatives.

"No I didn't read anything just, I just catch it all off me brothers, cos they've all got babies I spent a lot of time with them." (Unemployed, 18 years old)

Finally some fathers did not do any reading because they felt the mother knew enough and so that was sufficient.

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<sup>11</sup>Lewis., *op. cit.*, 1986, 41.

<sup>12</sup> Chi-squared = 7.8, df = 1, Significance level = 0.005. See Appendix III, Table 5.IV.



## Pregnancy - Father Involvement In Preparations

"No I didn't. She already knew about, having babies and that cos, she used to look after her sister's a lot, that's how she knew, knew how to do Shane because of her sister." (Unemployed, 18 years old)

Twenty one per cent had a quick look at various magazines and books. Browsing through books or magazines was often induced by the mother, who would place such items in front of the father for him to read. In such situations the father would at least make some gesture of reading what was in front of him.

"Claire kept giving me articles in magazines to read but I didn't .... I read the odd article here and there but not as much as she put in front of me ... she was a bit more caught up in it than I was I suppose." (Checker/loader, 21 years old)

"Er, no not really. She used to get the mother and toddler thing - I think it's Mother and Toddler magazine, something like that. Erm - I used to have the occasional look through, but I was never actually looking at it very specifically." (Unemployed, 21 years old)

"Only thing I read, was something on a, father's, what was the book called, it was something about what a father's role was, it was a book about this big, cartoons, and babies to look at and stuff like that. It's quite interesting to read you know, it tells you how your baby's supposed to grow best, and its all through the blokes eyes you know. I only read that cos, Fiona got it from the library, otherwise I wouldn't have bothered with it." (Furniture polisher, 22 years old)

Finally there were forty-three fathers who had read either the

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handouts or books from the library. The most striking feature of young fathers reading was the widespread use of the bounty pack - the free package of brochures given out by the hospital. It was difficult to assess the influence this reading material had, but certainly some parents had strong feelings concerning it.

"Yeah. All the time, always carrying loads of books, loads of free sachets of things. We don't use most of them, cos they're crap. As I say, we used to read the books. But if you look back when you've got kids, the books are stupid they really are. Because it's nothing like that ....." (Unemployed, 21 years old)

"I think there's a box upstairs full of them that we read, er... problem with books is, they can show you diagrams and give you all this advice, and things like that. But until you're actually there, and you see it, and it's been done, it doesn't make any sense ....do you know what I mean....." (Warehouse manager, 21 years old)

"Yes I did, yeah ... it was a book that was given from the hospital ... it was on childbirth and various things you know, to do with the birth of children ... I found it very interesting, you know very helpful." (Storeman, 22 years old)

Only twenty five per cent of my sample read books or magazines other than those given out by the hospital.

When looking at fathers' physical participation in antenatal clinics, antenatal classes, reading and in the buying of clothes, it is clear that there was a considerable number of young fathers who



## **Pregnancy - Psychological Effects Of Pregnancy**

were not involved in activities which would be viewed, in our "caring" society, as being for their own benefit. Young fathers who were involved in an activity such as antenatal classes were significantly more likely to be involved in reading and antenatal clinics. Whether non-participating fathers would benefit from increased involvement is difficult to evaluate, but physical involvement in the ritualised events of pregnancy did not indicate young fathers were not emotionally committed to the mother and baby. For many reasons the pregnancy was an unsettled period and young fathers' role was sometimes made unclear by the presence of other close relatives who "naturally" took some of the responsibilities which could be seen as the paternal role. Financially he was also less able to participate, as he normally had little or no monetary resources. Finally, young fathers' lack of involvement in some institutionalised rituals can be explained by their attitudes towards the institutes where they are supposed to participate and it would seem that a very conscious positive effort to welcome young fathers is needed if they are to feel at home in such places.

### **Psychological Effects Of Pregnancy**

The physical and psychological impacts of pregnancy are most obvious in the mother. With the advent of "father" research there has also been interest in his psychological changes during pregnancy. Psychological changes were of particular interest



## Pregnancy - Psychological Effects Of Pregnancy

when considering the young father because many were having to make potentially stressful adaptations in many aspects of their lives. Some researchers<sup>13</sup> have reported pathological reactions to the pregnancy, described as "Couvade Syndrome", where the father reports symptoms similar to the pregnant mother (backache, sickness, tiredness etc). Explanations for these symptoms have ranged from psychoanalytical ("womb envy"<sup>14</sup>) to even more insubstantial explanations of the father identifying with the foetus and linking with it via acts of "sympathetic magic."<sup>15</sup> However, when young fathers were asked "Do you feel that X's being pregnant had any effect on you as a person?" they tended to reply in one of two quite dichotomous ways. Forty per cent said the pregnancy had had no effect on them at all and forty nine per cent replied that they had altered their outlook on life. The main emphasis of this change was the need to mature; fathers found that they no longer wanted to be irresponsible, they wished to adopt what they saw as the fathering role.

"Well, I suppose it made me think of myself as more adult like, you know. More of the fact that I had to be when she was born." (Part-time mechanic, 20 years old)

"....It changed me. Everybody said it changed me one hundred per cent ... you know. I've come from being

<sup>13</sup>Lewis., *op. cit.* 1986.

J.T. Condon, "Psychological and Physical Symptoms During Pregnancy: A Comparison of Male and Female Expectant Parents," *Journal of Reproductive and Infant Psychology*, 5.4 (1987): 207-219.

W.H. Trethowan and M.F. Conlon, "The Couvade Syndrome," *British Journal of Psychiatry*, III (1965): 57-66.

<sup>14</sup>Bruno Bettelheim, *Symbolic Wounds* (Chicago: Free Press, 1955).

<sup>15</sup>J.G. Frazer, *Totemism and Exogamy*, (London: MacMillan, 1910).

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a school boy - I'd just left school - to being a father, in a matter of seven days, two weeks, you know. It changed me a lot." (Pie packer, 20 years old)

A large group of fathers found themselves having to "grow older" during the pregnancy in order to cope with the responsibilities of having children. Young fathers talked about having to stop many of the activities they were used to: stopping drinking; stop getting into trouble with the police. But the main emphasis of fathers' replies concerned taking control of their own lives and making all the decisions themselves. There was also the the responsibility they felt for the relationship and its future development

"Well it stopped me drinkin' ...I used to go out a lot boozin' and that .... well we 'ad to ..... an I think that we 'ad to come closer and become more of a family ... er ....we 'ad to settle down ... yeah ...I think I just had to settle down really ...erm ... not do all the things I should of done between eighteen an twenty, more or less." (Unemployed, 19 years old)

Fathers, whether they felt it or not, were forced into behaving in a more adult and mature way. When we compare with Charlie Lewis' sample of normal aged fathers, we find that thirty per cent (compared to 49% of young fathers) also described themselves as having to grow up despite starting from a more grown-up baseline. Both young and old fathers report that the pregnancy is



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a time when they have to become accustomed to new responsibilities and restrictions brought about by parenthood; as a consequence many felt that the pregnancy was a time when they had to mature disproportionately quickly.

Eight young fathers reported that the mother being pregnant had a positive effect on them

"Yes, I was, ... thought good inside." (Unemployed, 21 years old)

"I thought I handled it better than I'd of thought I'd done, sort of thing. I thought it changed me in one way sort of thing ....I thought it'd get me more worried than what it did. I thought it'd change me in that sort of way, you know, I thought it'd affect me, cracking up, sort of but not really. I think I was just happy really about the whole thing, cos everything was going alright at the time, nothing was going wrong, things didn't sort of get on top of me." (Unemployed, 22 years old)

Five found that the pregnancy had a negative effect on them but only one described being upset and very worried by the pregnancy.

"Yeah. Because she wouldn't do things as the doctor told her you know, she'd be lifting and stuff like that, it used to get me upset because, if she lost, I used to tell her "if you lose the baby, I'm leaving you" and that was our first. But because we shared the experience you know and, traumatic experience



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really, it sort of bonded us together a bit closer. But it used to make me upset, when she wouldn't do as, I'd say don't do that you've been told not to do that, then she'd go ahead and do it, and that you know, used to really get my back up." (Furniture polisher, 22 years old)

The other four fathers reported negative feelings because the pregnancy had brought restrictions to their lives and the fathers found themselves at home during the evenings when they would have preferred to be out with friends. Another four fathers felt that they had altered but were unable to describe the way in which they had changed. Of the sample there were two fathers who not only reported being psychologically affected by the pregnancy but also reported having physical pains which appeared to be related to the mothers' pregnancy.

"She never went through no sicknesses or anything like that, didn't have the asthma. I did. I went through a lot of pain with all of them. I used to get really bad stomach cramps, headaches, feel sick in the mornings. I couldn't believe it. No one believes you, and when you tell them you do - these phantom pregnancies." (prompt: "So you went through a lot of the pains that you'd expect her to get?") "Yeah, Yeah. As I say, she suffers with her back a lot, after Damian, cos he was so heavy on her pelvis, and when she was carrying the girls I used to get a really bad back down the spine. It's just one of them things. You don't believe it though until it happens. It's really strange. I used to come and say "I feel sick", she says "Look it's me that's pregnant, not you". You think, oh I can't help it I just feel sick. But I was never sick, I just felt sick. My stomach kept churning and I'd get these headaches, I don't suffer from headaches anyway, but during the pregnancies I get them." (Unemployed, 21 years old)

"Well both of us had a good labour because I was carrying Justin as well as Deborah. As soon as Justin was born I felt terrific instead of Deborah and that was it." (prompt: "When did you first get these pains?") "When he first started to move, when he first started to kick." (mother: "Two and a half months.") "Yeah, I think that was it, as soon as from then that I followed it all the way through, and every time she got a contraction I got one as well - so when Justin was born it was a relief off me." (prompt: "So how did you feel about all this?") "Well really I just wondered what was hitting and God knows what else. We went up to the doctor because I thought I had lost some more weight, I was really thin, and she goes "no, if your wife's pregnant, the son or the daughter could follow onto the father" and I thought "oh", because I thought there was something wrong with me, he kicking about that much." (Unemployed, 19 years old)

As Lewis<sup>16</sup> has pointed out, fathers offer realistic explanations as to the reasons why some of them go through extreme psychological/physical reactions when the mother is pregnant. The pains etc are likely to be symptomatic of the relationship between the mother and father. Therefore when the father experiences physical pain it appears almost in sympathy with the mother.

It got on my nerves a bit, but, I think I was worse than what she was, I mean towards her. It might have hurt her her being like she was, it might have

<sup>16</sup>Charlie Lewis, "A Feeling you can't scratch?: The Effect of pregnancy and birth on Married Men" *Fathers: A Psychological Perspective*. Eds. Nigel Beail and Jacqueline McGuire, (London: Junction Books, 1982).



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been my fault you know through me doing all this worrying. I mean I was worrying for twenty four hours solid. It come on when she were about four or five months pregnant, that's when it came on, and I had it every day, never missed a day. It was terrible." (Process operator, 22 years old)

### The Effects Of The Pregnancy On Couple's Relationship

The changes during the pregnancy which occur in individuals were likely to alter the relationship the young couple had with each other. Shereshefsky and Yarrow<sup>17</sup> observed that there was an improvement in relationships during the pregnancy period. However, other researchers have reported a decrease in affection<sup>18</sup> during the pregnancy and a general dissatisfaction with the time spent with the spouse.<sup>19</sup> The picture of the effects of pregnancy is therefore not clear. The context in which the pregnancy is taking place is likely to be a powerful influence on how parents feel. Moss et al<sup>20</sup> state that there were two significant factors that were more likely to lead to marital dissatisfaction: "parental age and length of marriage, with the younger couples and shorter marriages more at risk."<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>17</sup>P.M. Shereshefsky, and L.J. Yarrow, *Psychological Aspects of a First Pregnancy and Early Postnatal Adaptation* (Amsterdam: North Holland Publishing Company, 1973).

<sup>18</sup>Geraldine Scott-Heyes, "Marital Adaptation during the Pregnancy and After Childbirth," *Journal of Reproductive and Infant Psychology* 1.1 (1983): 18-28.

<sup>19</sup>Peter Moss, Gill Bolland, Ruth Foxman, and Charlie Owen, "Marital Relations during the Transition to Parenthood," *Journal of Reproductive and Infant Psychology*, 4 (1986): 57-67.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid. p65.



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Before being asked more directly about their relationship young fathers were asked how they thought the mother had changed during the pregnancy period. The overwhelming majority (73%) replied they had found the mother had become more difficult to live with. The main complaint was that the mother was very moody and unpredictable.

"Yeah. Yes I would say they do change." (prompt: "In what way?") "Short tempered, she had a very short temper. If something didn't suit, or I'd done something she used to get really upset and cranky. She used to get really upset with me, I mean I don't mean shouting, I'd get things thrown at me, you know knives and hammers." (Furniture polisher, 22 years old)

"Yes. They, they change when they're pregnant like, they change with the weather. They can be, happy as anything one minute and they just, they're, you know, be angry or something the next." (Unemployed, 21 years old)

Sixteen fathers said there was no change, and seven fathers reported their partners were more attractive and happier. Young fathers were significantly more likely<sup>22</sup> to report that the mother changed in a negative way than older fathers from a more normative age range.

It may be that young fathers who, as previously described,

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<sup>22</sup>Chi-squared = 13.4 , df = 1 , Significance level = 0.0002. Father's responses were categorised into positive and negative codes; neutral responses where the father did not perceive the mother as having changed were assigned to the negative category. See Appendix III, Table 5.V.

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have not been living with the mother prior to the pregnancy, find living with the mother an altogether different experience. His perception that the mother was more moody and bad tempered may not have been just a reflection of the physical and psychological changes the mother was enduring. He was likely to be coming to terms with co-habiting and with the difficulties of living with someone who was comparatively unfamiliar to him. Thus the young father's perception of the mother's moodiness was likely to be an interaction between 1) The altered physical and psychological state of the mother and 2) The mother and father acclimatising to each others day to day living habits.

In contrast to young fathers reports, the ideal role for fathers during the pregnancy has been viewed as a supportive one where he would thus help the mother through these difficult moods. However, for the younger fathers, who were perhaps not as used to playing a supportive part in any relationship, there seemed to be difficulties in adopting anything but a more aggressive position.

Thirty three of the fathers found themselves reacting against, and almost finding themselves in direct conflict with, the mother, sometimes resulting in incidents which were seen as upsetting for the child.

"It made me feel different - I became very nasty and short tempered because I didn't want that sort of aggravation, we both could have done without it,



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there used to be a time when one of would start something but then nothing would come of it, that was it, but then it "tit for tat" "tit for tat" all the way down the line. Yeah it made me a bad person because I was never like that before, what upset me most was Julia upsetting herself, she could have been upsetting him because there was days when we would both be sulking we had had a fight or something and he wouldn't have kicked or anything for days and we just thought that if we had been shouting at each other or just not being nice and we wouldn't hear from him would we?" (mother: "No") "But if it was nice quiet voices or things like that, he'd let us know that he was alright." (Fork lift driver, 22 years old)

"Yeah it gorrone me nerves. She was always bleatin'! She was always crying for nowt, you know what I mean? That really go me down, that did." (Unemployed, 17 years old)

(prompt: "Do you feel this had an effect on you?") "It did at first but now I've got used to it, you know, I can handle - instead of me getting ratty or anything, I can handle it now." (Acoustic technician/fitter, 22 years old)

Thirty five young fathers reported being unaffected or not bothered by the mother's behaviour.

"They lose their temper quickly." (prompt: "Do you feel that her losing her temper had any effect on you at all?") "No cos I'd choose to leave her..... when she used to get mad and I used to take her to her mum's and sit there and after a bit she'd stop." (Unemployed, 19 years old)

"Nasty some days, then she's alright. Waking you up in the middle of the night: "I want this, I want that" you know. (prompt: "Did it have an effect on you at all?") "No. I just ignored it. Told her sod off and that



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was it." (Unemployed, 21 years old)

In most cases these fathers decided to ignore what was going on but again this appears to be an unsupportive position.

Looking at the pregnancy overall, it is clear that young parents have to struggle through a succession of problems, over some of which they have no control. The data I collected shows that a high percentage of my sample talked about the pregnancy in negative terms. This was because there were housing problems which were difficult to resolve; relationship problems with other relatives concerning how certain situations should be handled; and partnership problems because the couple were 'facing a whole series of new physical and psychological hurdles.

Despite finding some of the changes in the mother difficult to cope with the majority of young fathers (61%), when looking back on the pregnancy, found it was a time when their relationship became closer.

This positive view of the relationship during the pregnancy, appears to contradict much of the research on marital relationships, which has stressed how young couples' interpersonal lives have been adversely affected by pregnancy.<sup>23</sup> One clear difference, however, between this study and other studies,

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<sup>23</sup>R. Chester, *A Survey of Recent UK Literature on Marital Problems*. Mimeographed Report, Home Office Research Unit, 1981.

which have looked in greater detail at marital relationships, is in the methodology for collecting data. As has been noted before, much of the data assimilated in this study was retrospective, whereas the study by Moss, for example was part of a longitudinal study which recorded emotions and attitudes at particular points during the pregnancy and post natal period. The different research methods adopted and the timing of such research (in terms of the parents' own life cycle) are likely to have considerable bearing on parents' reports. The conclusion to be drawn would seem to be that stresses can be seen in a negative way at the time they are happening and yet be perceived later as having exerted a force of cohesion.

Apart from methodological considerations there was another important difference between my sample and the majority of samples who made up the analyses on marital relations. For the most part, research on marital relationships has been based on couples who have established a "stable and settled" relationship; but this was a position which most adolescent couples who entered parenthood had not yet achieved. By the end of the pregnancy they were more likely to be either seriously looking for or living in accommodation together. In this situation many young men may have considered that they had become more closely involved with their partners than they were at a less stable point in their premarital history.

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### Summary

The majority of young men who father a child during their adolescent years are psychologically and materially unprepared for parenthood. A direct consequence of their lack of preparation leads them to have to rely on support and help from relatives. Most young fathers spend some time living with one or both sets of parents and, as a consequence, are helped financially and emotionally during the first turbulent months of pregnancy. However, close involvement of other family members sometimes leads to the young father having an ambiguous role, in relation to the unborn child and the pregnant mother. This role ambiguity can also lead to non participation in hospital based antenatal clinics and antenatal classes - institutionalised events which men from low socio-economic background prefer to avoid anyway.

The majority of fathers reported being happy when they discovered they 'were to be a father; but their inexperience and lack of knowledge concerning the young mother often made it difficult to be supportive. Nonetheless, when looking back on the pregnancy period most fathers felt they became closer to the mother.



## **Chapter Six**

### **The Birth Experience And The Post Natal Period**

#### **Introduction**

During pregnancy a father's opportunity to become involved with his unborn child has mainly been through other people. Most obviously the mother is able to give the father information concerning the baby's movements and also how these movements affect her both physically and emotionally, although later in the pregnancy he will be able to feel the baby kicking for himself. The father can also receive information concerning the baby's welfare and progress from various hospital and medical staff; with them he will often "see" the baby for the first time when the mother has a scan. How involved he does become with listening and actively seeking out this information will depend on his attitude to the pregnancy, his relationship with these various people and the time he has available. For most young parents and especially those having their first child, the pregnancy has been a particularly unsettled time. Often fathers' attentions are focused away from looking forward to the baby and instead have to

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concentrate on dealing' with problems such as housing, unemployment and lack of money.

The birth thus represents a climactic end to many difficult months and is the father's first real opportunity to be physically rather than purely emotionally involved. Over the last twenty years there have been considerable changes in hospital procedures, and of particular interest has been the change of attitude by the hospital based medical profession concerning fathers' presence, so that in the main men are now more likely to attend and witness the whole of the birth than men twenty years ago.

When the Newsons<sup>1</sup> carried out their original research none of the two hundred and eighty hospital births (in three hospitals) was witnessed by a husband, relative or friend. However this did not mean that fathers or other relatives were totally absent from childbirth as sixty per cent of their births did not take place in hospital but at home; procedures for these home births were managed by midwives and general practitioners (RSM) and forty three per cent of all home births had a lay person present. In fact fathers witnessed fifteen per cent of all home births. Twenty years later when Lewis<sup>2</sup> interviewed one hundred Nottingham fathers in a normative age range, he noted how many of the procedures of childbirth had changed. Firstly home births were no

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<sup>1</sup>John and Elizabeth Newson, *Infant Care in an Urban Community*, (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1963).

<sup>2</sup>Charlie Lewis, *Becoming a Father*, (Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1986).

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longer encouraged as they had been previously, and only two per cent of the live births took place at home. Secondly, rather than barring lay people from the birth, hospitals were positively encouraging friends, relatives and especially fathers to attend the birth. Lewis commented when comparing the original Newson sample and his more contemporary sample:

"Although the composition of the two samples of these two studies was slightly different, the contrast between them is sufficiently striking to show that father attendance, like delivery itself, has become institutionalised."<sup>3</sup>

Medical justifications by hospitals for having the father present during the birth have also changed during this period. As the percentage of home births declined (thus imposing on most mothers an unfamiliar environment and, on many, an institutional one) obstetricians such as Burne<sup>4</sup> suggested that fathers were the most suitable people to be present with the mother, in order to comfort and reassure her. Although some obstetricians did not share such enthusiasm<sup>5</sup> changes did occur. Perhaps an important consideration was as births became more hospital-based, and shortages of medical staff became more acute, the need

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<sup>3</sup>Charlie Lewis, "Fathering in a Contemporary Society," diss., U of Nottingham, 1983, 131.

<sup>4</sup>B.H. Burne, letter, *British Medical Journal*, 1 (1961): 594.

<sup>5</sup>J.H. Patterson, "Fathers at Delivery," *British Medical Journal*, 1 (1961): 594.

R.H. Stewart, "Natural Childbirth, Father Participation, Rooming-In- as What-Have-You," *Medical Times*, 91.11 Nov. 1963.



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to have someone to monitor and report the mother's state became a role that fathers could fill. Burne<sup>6</sup> also believed that by having the father witness the birth it would draw the couple closer together. The Newsons had shown that mothers had more positive attitudes when remembering the birth after a year if the father had been present. More recently researchers have stressed the importance of father attendance on father-infant bonding. Greenberg and Morris<sup>7</sup> hypothesized that early contact at birth released an increased interest in the infant, which they termed "engrossment." They noted that fathers who were present at the birth had an increased sense of self esteem and worth within the family; they believed this would lead to an increase in participation later in the child's life. However their data did not support this contention as there were few attitudinal and emotional differences between the attending and non-attending fathers. They still believed there was an unrecorded long-lasting qualitative impact on fathers who witnessed the birth. Klaus and Kurnell<sup>8</sup> also strongly advocated the positive benefits of very early contact to later parent-infant bonding, showing quantitative and qualitative differences in parenting twelve and twenty four months after the birth when comparing attenders with non-attenders. Although other studies have found similar findings<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>6</sup>B.H. Burne., *op. cit.*, 1961.

<sup>7</sup>Martin Greenberg and Norman Morris, "Engrossment: The Newborn's Impact Upon the Father," *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, 44 4 (July 1974): 520-531.

<sup>8</sup>M.H. Klaus and J.H. Kennell, *Maternal Infant Bonding*, (St. Louis: C.V. Mosby, 1976).

<sup>9</sup>R.D. Parke, S.E. O'Leary and S. West, "Mother-father-newborn Interaction: Effects of Maternal Medication, Labour and Sex of Infant," *Proceedings of the American Psychological Association*, 1976: 85-6.

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in general much of the research has not been able to replicate the positive long-lasting effects of witnessing the birth.<sup>10</sup> An important point to consider was noted by Richards.

"The correlation between presence at birth and later participation should not be interpreted as a causal connection. It seems more likely that both are associated with some characteristic attitude towards involvement with the children in the father."<sup>11</sup>

### Father Presence At Birth

From the longitudinal data collected by the Newsons<sup>12</sup> it is possible to compare the impact of witnessing the birth on later father participation. There is no recorded difference between the non-attenders and attenders in father participation as reported by the mother at whatever age one examines this (one, four, seven, eleven and sixteen years). However the birth and the events surrounding it have a considerable impact on the father and it is therefore important to investigate how many of the young fathers attended and why.

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M. P.M Richards, J. F. Dunn and B. Antonis, "Caretaking in the First Year of Life: The Role of Fathers, and Mothers' Social Isolation," *Child: care, health and development* 3 (1977): 23-36.

<sup>10</sup>R.D. Parke, S.E. O'Leary, "Family Interaction in the Newborn Period: Some Findings, Some Observations and Some Unresolved Issues," *The Developing Individual in a Changing World, (Vol 2): Social and Environmental Issues*. Eds. K.F. Riegel and J. Meacham, (The Hague: Mouton, 1976).

Richards et al., *op. cit.*, 1977.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid.p. 34.

<sup>12</sup>Newson., *op. cit.*, 1963.



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When comparing the Lewis sample of fathers in a normative age range and the sample of young fathers there are again differences in father attendance (this is not significant),<sup>13</sup> although the trend is still for fathers to be present (Table I).

Table I

Father's Presence At Birth		
	Young Fathers	Normative Age Range Fathers
Not present	20	15
Early Stages (not delivery)	4	18
Late Stages (including delivery)	2	2
Throughout the birth	74	65
Total	<u>100</u>	<u>100</u>

The major difference in the attendance of young fathers and fathers in the Lewis sample was that the older fathers were more likely to withdraw before the delivery began. Some eighteen per cent of the older fathers were present for the labour and left before delivery yet this was only true in four per cent of the younger fathers. As a consequence, young fathers were significantly more likely to attend the whole birth than the older fathers who had been interviewed in 1979/80. Possible explanations of this disparity include firstly, differences in

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<sup>13</sup>Chi-squared = 1.9, df = 1, Significance level = 0.15.



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hospital procedure that may have occurred in the last six years. Men previously may have been regularly asked if they wished to attend the whole birth or whether they wanted to leave once the delivery began. Secondly, it may highlight attitude differences between the two groups in that young fathers appeared to take a "day to day," "minute by minute" approach to life and therefore once in the delivery room took the whole process of the birth in their stride whereas older men may have been more likely to look ahead and decide to withdraw before they became overwhelmed. Thirdly, it may reflect a continuing change in attitude of individuals and society to fathers being present and participant, leading more fathers to expect to be present all the way through the birth. Fourthly, since older fathers were more likely to be employed, it might be supposed that some would have to leave for work before the delivery was completed.

Of the twenty fathers who were absent, a third reported they would have liked to have attended and were only prevented by physical barriers such as distance, mis-timing or having to look after other children; however it was apparent that some of these fathers had not strived to any great extent to ensure they could be present.

"Yeah, well I was there with me little lad (first child), when he was born. We was separated, split up at the time with Zoe (second child), and I found about two hours after she had her, I was straight up to hospital in car. Then, Bonnie (third child) was born and I

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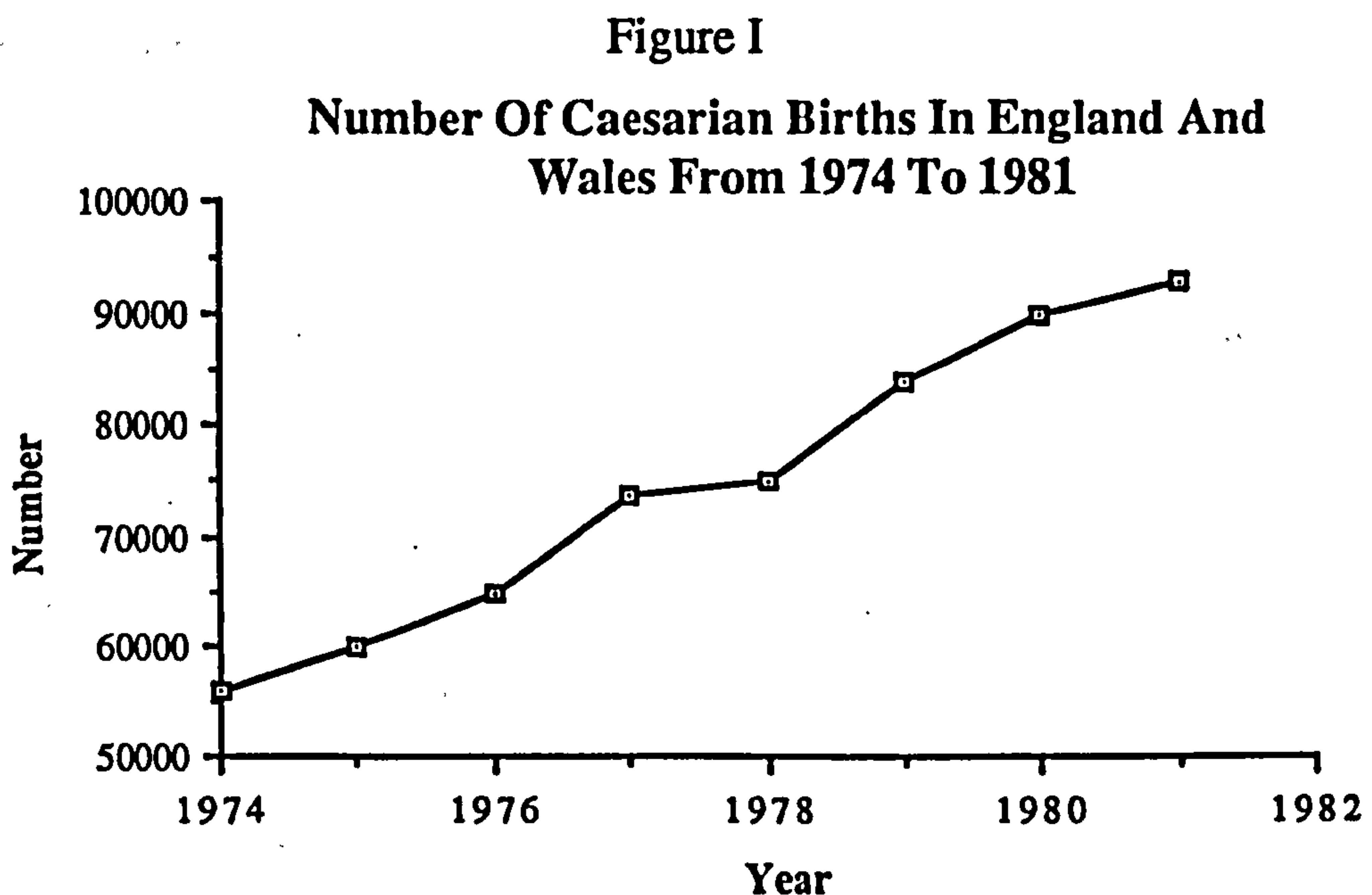
went up they said you'll be alright, you know what I mean, go home for a bit, so I went home and then I went back up and she already had it. Then with Kalee (fourth child), it was three o'clock in morning I come back from a party and she tried to wake me up and I don't like being woke up. And I just thought it was a laugh or a joke she went in the ambulance and I couldn't really go up because the rest of the kids were still in bed, I couldn't really leave them go down and stay for a while and come right back, so I waited till, what was it about, ten o'clock in the morning, phoned one of me mates up he come up in the van, picked the kids up and took 'em down to me Mum's and went straight to hospital." (Unemployed, 21 years old)

The rest of the non-attending fathers who had not wanted to be present (10) believed that the process of the birth was going to be too much for them, and they would not be able to stomach the blood, without feeling too ill or fainting. The nine fathers who did not attend because it was a Caesarian delivery all reported they would have been present if it had been a normal birth. A few of these commented they would have attended the operation but had not fully appreciated that firstly there was an option to be present and secondly they could only be present if the medical staff were informed beforehand. That fathers can now be present during planned Caesarian Sections represents a considerable change of attitude towards the status and worth of the father. In normal deliveries fathers have been encouraged to be involved in a number of the birth procedures, but Caesarian Sections are predominantly medical affairs and father involvement is not a realistic proposition. However in situations where the mother is

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conscious and the father informs medical personnel he wishes to be present it is now possible for him to attend. The notion of the medical profession even entertaining the idea of lay persons being present in an operating room signifies a dramatic alteration in attitude to processes surrounding the birth.

The number of Caesarian deliveries was slightly lower in the Lewis sample. Six per cent of the sample had Caesarian deliveries and although this is in no way a significant increase over time it does reflect a general trend where the percentage of Caesarian births has steadily been increasing nationally over the last ten years (see Figure I).



The increasing use of Caesarian Section, whereby it is almost seen as one of the normal methods of childbirth, has become a



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contentious issue; and one which has been publicly debated (via the Wendy Savage controversy). Although 9 of the younger mothers in my sample compared with 6 in Lewis's had undergone Caesarian Section, it has been reported<sup>14</sup> in a number of other teenage populations a lower prevalence of obstetric problems needing medical interventions such as forceps and Caesarian Section. This presumably, therefore, represents a change based more upon medical personnel's preference or convenience than upon obstetric necessity, and it would be interesting to investigate how far the mother is offered any informed choice in the decision to use surgical intervention.

On the whole if the father did not attend, then the young mother had to go through the birth on her own; only six of the fifteen mothers who did not have the father in attendance had another relative present, this normally being the maternal grandmother. Nowadays, not only are fathers expected to be present but when they are absent their role as supporter is unlikely to be filled by other relatives or friends. The "rightful" person to be present at the birth is seen to be the father and to have other people take up his role is almost unacceptable. This is a considerable change from the Newsons' survey, where among home deliveries - thirteen per cent were attended by the father -

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<sup>14</sup>J.K. Russell, *Early Teenage Pregnancy* (Edinburgh: Churchill Livingstone, 1982).

B.V. Lewis and P.J. Nash, "Pregnancy in Patients under 16 years," *British Medical Journal*, 2 (1967): 733-734.

H.O. Dickens, E.H. Mudd and C.R. Garcia, "100 Pregnant adolescents: Treatment Approaches in a University Hospital," *American Journal of Public Health*, 63 (1973): 794-800.

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ten per cent by the woman's mother - fifteen per cent by her sister or a neighbour. There have been other considerable changes in birth procedure, away from the practicalities of hospital procedures to a more "parent" centered approach. Often at the forefront, as the Newsons noted, were the midwives and during a conference convened by the Royal College of Midwives in 1960 it was asked "are we doing all we can to ensure mothers the supreme pleasure that having a baby can offer her or has something of the pleasure been lost to the mother of today as a result of our clinical approach and our concentration upon her as a patient."<sup>15</sup>

Fathers can be separated into four groups, according to how the decision to attend was made. Fifty seven, of the seventy attenders reported they had decided before the birth they wanted to be present.

"Oh yes, we agreed on that; I wanted to be there anyway. People had tried to put me off but I definitely wanted to be there; I mean. I wouldn't have missed it for the world - it's a great experience ..... I mean .... although it does get you sweating a bit....." (Fork lift driver, 21 years old)

"Well ... erm .... when Melanie went in the nurse says, "Are you the 'usband?" and er .... I says, "Yeah" and she says , "Are you goin' in" I says, "Yeah". I was gunna go in before no-one sort o' said yes or no before. (prompt: "So was that something you'd made your mind up about?") "Oh yeah ..... me mum tried to

<sup>15</sup>Royal College of Midwives Conference on Human Relationships in the Care of Mother and Baby: at Oxford, March 1960. As quoted from John and Elizabeth Newson, *Infant Care in an Urban Community*, (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1963) 38.



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talk me out of it - she said "Ah, you won't like it in there" but - I still went." (Unemployed, 19 years old)

Another eight fathers had originally decided they were not going to attend but had been persuaded, normally by the mother, sometimes by a close male friend, or even by "the magic of the moment" to change their mind.

"It was a bit of both really - at start I said I wasn't going to be there, and when I got there I said I'm not going home now, I might as well stay and see what goes on - just get the experience, see what it was like, alright OK, I was a bit .....plenty of blood in there." (prompt: "Is that the reason why.....?") "It put me off at the start but then I thought I might as well - if I faint, I faint." (Unemployed, 21 years old)

There were two fathers who did not appear to have made any decision concerning whether they wanted to attend or not but had done so when their partners had asked if they were going to be present. Finally there were eight fathers, who had a detached attitude towards the birth and had not discussed, or made a decision about, whether they were going to attend and at the time of the birth "just went"; their presence was almost accidental as they had not made a conscious decision to attend.

The majority of fathers attending the birth, therefore, had made the decision to attend the delivery before the mother had gone to hospital, and only ten per cent of the attending fathers



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described "drifting" into the delivery room without any pre-planning.

Separating men's attitudes towards being present at childbirth from their actual presence; the majority of fathers in my sample wanted to be present, either from the beginning or at some stage. However, it was surprising how many young fathers commented that their attendance was unique among the men they knew. They described a discrepancy between their own attitude to father's attendance at childbirth and how they believed other men viewed, and took part in, such events. These young fathers perceived their attendance at the birth as being an indication of their own manliness, dedication and suitability to be a father. A comparable finding is reported by Weinstein<sup>16</sup> when studying men from the Virgin Islands who, he believed, gain more fulfillment from the role of parent than from that of husband and the child is seen as proof of their virility and manliness.

### Father's Attitude Towards The Birth

Once in the delivery room, no matter what motivated them to attend, fathers feel a multitude of emotions.

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<sup>16</sup>E.A. Weinstein, *Cultural Aspects of Delusion*. (New York: The Free Press of Glencoe, 1962).

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Table II

Father's Attitude When Witnessing The Birth		<u>No.</u>
Negative		4
Worry		6
Neutral		4
Positive but worried		34
All positive		30
Not present		22

The lasting feeling was usually one of happiness, (see Table II) but over half the fathers expressed worries concerning the health of the mother and baby.

"I did feel a bit worried ... for Gail .... you know I wasn't ..... I felt a bit worried for her because he was such a big .... he was a big baby .... he was big for her because she was so small like .... you know all sorts of thoughts went through my mind, you know .... I can't say .... I kind of felt worrying thoughts not morbid you know but I hope she doesn't die like." (Storeman, 22 years old)

The pain which the mother had to endure during the birth often came as a surprise to fathers and, as a consequence, many felt upset and worried by the proceedings. These feelings were sometimes exacerbated when the procedure was perceived to be going wrong. However, for most fathers reflecting back on the

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birth was predominantly a happy experience and the pleasure of seeing their own child being born was perceived as a landmark in their life. The birth, especially when considering father attendance, therefore can be seen as a rite of passage when experienced by a couple together, and their joint experience assures them both an entrance into the adult domain of parenthood. This would appear to be especially important for younger fathers who may have missed out on many of the rituals or ceremonies associated with preparing for fatherhood. Newton<sup>17</sup> comments "Possibly because it is so easy under some conditions for men not to assume nurturing and assisting behaviour towards childbearing women and children, many societies have developed ways of emphasizing the responsibilities of men"<sup>18</sup> and although father attendance at birth has not been explicitly viewed as a means of focusing attention on new responsibilities there was no doubt that young fathers described it as a moment of great significance - "a very grown-up experience" as Prince Charles is reported to have described his witnessing his son's birth. The anxiety and worry was considered worthwhile once the child was born. However about ten per cent of the fathers looked back on the birth with no happiness. Six of them had found it nothing but worrying and four reported not feeling any particular emotions.

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<sup>17</sup>Niles Newton, "Cultural Patterning," *Childbearing its Social and Psychological Consequences*. Eds. Stephen Richardson and Alan Guttmacher (Baltimore: Williams and Wilkins Co, 1967).

<sup>18</sup>Newton., *op. cit.*, 1967. p.189.



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"A bit boring actually. When she decided to come, she come out sort of ever so fast and with the waiting and twiddling my thumbs nothing to do." (prompt: "Was there anything you thought you could do?")  
"Try talk to your wife, who you don't talk to anyway." (Lorry driver, 22 years old)

"I don't know - I din't really feel an awful lot. Um - I don't know, it was nice bein' there 'specially when I found out it was goin' to be born on my birthday an' I wanted a boy an' it was a boy .... I was delighted at that, but 'er ..... other than that I can't remember feelin' owt." (Unemployed, 19 years old)

Interestingly young men's descriptions of the childbirth experience are very similar to those of older men. The pleasures and fears of observing your partner give birth seem to cross all age levels. Lewis also notes "the same themes recur in interviews and perhaps not surprisingly that they do, not only have many of the medical procedures become regular discussion topics in the media and between experienced fathers, they also have become so standardised that events are much the same for most couples."<sup>19</sup> However, procedures may have become more standardised and perhaps more talked about, it is certainly the case that many fathers find the birth nothing like what they had expected; whether they were familiar with hospital procedures appeared to be irrelevant and in any case birth as depicted on television tends to be somewhat cleaned up and sterilised. However, it is difficult to determine whether men tend to describe such significant events in a stereotypical fashion, using anecdotes in order to

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<sup>19</sup>Lewis., *op. cit.*, 1983. p. 135.

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structure their replies, or whether the birth affects all men in a very similar way.

### Father's Function At Birth

Although most men report feeling happy at the birth it is interesting to speculate what their function is within the delivery room. Not only have they been encouraged to be present, they have also been encouraged to become more participant in the actual birth - to be part of the team, rather than only observers. Some studies have identified ways in which fathers have been involved in the delivery rooms as a supportive partner to the mother, both physically and emotionally, helping with the various procedures and encouraging the mother.<sup>20</sup> The importance of father presence has also been noted because of the positive emotional consequences for both partners.<sup>21</sup> However it has not been the case that all fathers in other studies have felt positively about their role at birth<sup>22</sup> and there are intrinsic problems with

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<sup>20</sup>R.A. Fein, "Men's Experience before and After the Birth of a First Child: Dependence, Marital Sharing and Anxiety," diss., U of Harvard, 1974.

Charlie Lewis, "Father impressions of pregnancy and childbirth," paper presented to the BPS London Conference, 19 December 1980.

L. McKee and O'Brien *The Father Figure* (London: Tavistock, 1982).

R.P. Klein, N.F. Gist, J. Nicholson and K. Standley, "A Study of Father and Nurse Support During Labour," *Birth and Family Journal*, 8 (1981): 161-164.

<sup>21</sup>D.R. Entwisle and S.G. Doering, *The First Birth A Family Turning Point*, (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1981).

S. Kitzinger, *The Experience of Childbirth*, 3rd ed., (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1972).

<sup>22</sup>Lorna McKee, "Fathers and Childbirth: "Just Hold My Hand"," *Health Visitor* 53 (1980): 368-372.

J. Richman and W.O. Goldthorp, "Fatherhood: the social construction of pregnancy and birth" *The Place of Birth*. Eds. S. Kitzinger and J. Davis

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attempting to involve fathers in childbirth. Brown<sup>23</sup> gives three reasons why fathers describe themselves as being without a function in child birth.

- 1) helplessness in the face of their wife's experience of labour
- 2) being an encumbrance - a feeling of being in the way.
- 3) length and type of labour - there being a direct correlation between the extent of medication employed and the extent of the father's feelings of redundancy.

Young fathers were asked whether they felt they had a job to do during the birth or whether they felt in the way; their responses are shown in Table III.

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(Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978).

<sup>23</sup>Angela Brown, "Fathers in the labour ward: Medical and lay out accounts" *The Father Figure*. Eds. Lorna McKee and Margaret O'Brien (London: Tavistock Publications, 1982).



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Table III

Did Fathers Feel They Had A Job To Do During The Birth		No.
Fathers who felt in way during birth		
Definitely in the way		17
Felt in the way but had some use		6
Mixed/neutral		14
Fathers who felt they had a job during birth		
Had a job but sometimes felt in the way		2
Definite job		39
Not present		22

Many fathers found their role during the birth was not altogether clear; they were in the difficult position of not knowing what to do because they were not actually having the child. They were therefore not the primary concern for the medical personnel, and they also had little experience of how to respond to the event of childbirth (especially those young fathers who had not attended classes or read any of the available literature).

"I felt a bit in the way for a while you know what I mean, then you know like, as I say, I felt a bit as though I was in the way kind of thing, bit of a nuisance being in and out, moving around and that, probably being in the way. Apart from that it was alright." (prompt: "Did you mind feeling a bit in the way?") "Yeah, you know like, I didn't like being in

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the way you know, because being in the way they can't do their job properly can they really."  
(Unemployed, 22 years old)

Many fathers felt themselves in the dilemma of wanting and expecting to be present at the birth but not actually being positive about what the purpose was once they were there. Table III shows forty one of the fathers believed they definitely had a job to do; the majority of these felt involved either because they were given the responsibility of keeping an eye on the monitors whilst the staff were out of the room or because they were comforting and reassuring the mother during first stage of labour and then encouraging her during the actual birth:

(prompt: "Did you feel you had a job to do during the birth, or did you feel a bit in the way?") "Well, I was - did a - sort of holding on to her ... you know, giving her a bit of confidence, holding her hand - quite involved." (Steeple jack, 21 years old)

(pause) "I egged you on really didn't I. (Wife: "Encouraged me.") "One of the nurses said it might help if you try, you know, telling her to push and everything, so I just joined in." (Pie packer, 20 years old)

Although men did report not feeling participant in childbirth, only a small minority of them believed a father's presence in the delivery room was a bad idea and so not to be encouraged. The

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rest felt a father being present was definitely beneficial as it helped:-

- 1) To form an instant bond between father and child.
- 2) The father to understand the pain the mother had to endure.
- 3) Bring the couple closer together.
- 4) The mother to be comforted by someone she knew and "loved".

### **Fathers' Reports Of First Holding The Baby**

If seeing the baby being born is an important aspect of father-infant bonding, fathers seem equally affected by the experience of holding the baby at such an emotionally charged time. As has become general procedure the majority of fathers held the baby almost immediately after the birth (Table IV).

**Table IV**

<b>Length Of Time Before Father Held The Baby</b>		<b><u>No.</u></b>
Within 10 minutes		64
10 to 60 minutes		20
Same day		5
Next day		7
Later		3



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Only a small number either resisted holding the baby or were unable to because they were physically too far away. Even though most held their baby straight away, many were filled with a whole mixture of emotions ranging from extreme happiness to extreme anxiety (Table V).

Table V

Predominant Feelings Of Father When Holding The Baby For The First Time	
	No.
Unhappiness	1
Worry	27
Neutral/nothing	6
Happiness/pleasure	59
Do not know	6

Anxiety was normally expressed because fathers were either scared of dropping or squeezing the child. For many fathers this was because they felt awkward about holding such a small baby, usually because they had had no experience of picking up and holding young children.

"Frightened at first 'cause I'd never held a baby before she were born - and I thought to myself, how do I hold her, what do I do - I mean, as soon as I got her in me arms it just come natural - I think it does - I think it does for everybody, my opinion." (Steeple

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jack, 21 years old)

"It was nervy at first because I thought he looked so delicate wrapped up and I didn't know if I was holding him properly at first I didn't know exactly how to hold him properly but it was alright."  
(Unemployed, 21 years old)

Other fathers were worried because the baby looked unwell. One father whose child was born with a physical abnormality sums up the tremendous swings in emotion which were apparent at the birth of his child.

"Well I was happy, sort of excitement it was in a way, that was all over and done with. And also I was a bit upset with her arm it was, I can't really explain the feeling. Yeah I didn't know whether to laugh or cry. You know what I mean, it was a funny feeling. Many people have asked me that but I still can't answer the question. As I say I enjoyed it because she was there but, I still can't really answer it because when they were checking her over I thought there was more wrong you see, with her throat I thought, it could be worse, but apparently it wasn't that bad.  
(Unemployed, 18 years old)"

Only one father expressed unhappiness when holding the baby for the first time and this was not because he was upset to hold the baby but because he had been unable to attend the birth (something he had been looking forward to).

Just under sixty per cent described holding in positive terms,

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normally recalling how happy or pleased they felt. Some fathers felt more than just pleasure and described not only feeling satisfaction at having created something but also pride because it symbolised the beginning of their manhood.

The way in which the father feels about holding the child is likely to be affected by many factors other than those immediately relevant. Hubert<sup>24</sup> discusses social and psychological issues which are likely to affect the feelings of mothers when first holding their child.

"The process of socialisation (of children) is said to begin in some aspects at the birth of an infant. If this is so then the attitudes, expectations and behaviour patterns will not only depend on a whole range of social and psychological factors but also on the series of events that led up to the the birth and their effect on the mother including the expectations of childbirth, pregnancy and nature of original conception."<sup>25</sup>

As one might perhaps expect, a father's experience of young children was likely to affect the way he felt when holding his own baby for the first time. A father who had little or no experience of young children was significantly<sup>26</sup> more likely to feel scared or

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<sup>24</sup>Jane Hubert, "Belief and Reality: Social Factors in Pregnancy and Childbirth," *The Integration of a Child Into a Social World*. Ed Martin Richards, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1974).

<sup>25</sup>Ibid. p. 39.

<sup>26</sup>Chi-squared = 4.0, df = 1, Significance level = 0.04. See Appendix III, Table 6.I.



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worried when holding the baby. More interestingly, fathers who were shocked or surprised when they first heard the mother was pregnant were significantly<sup>27</sup> more likely to feel scared when holding the baby.

Men's descriptions of the process of birth and especially of their feelings during and afterwards, were often very stilted and ambivalent, and it was difficult to pinpoint how they actually felt during the birth. The researcher's confusion was very much the reflection of men's own comments on those moments.

"Odd? er I don't know .... I felt emotional suppose that's all I can really remember feeling er I think I was too shocked .... looking at it er .... to think about it you know ..... just an emotional experience.  
(Unemployed, 22 years old)

"I cried .... brought a lump to my throat .... unbelievable at first, when you first got 'em in your arms, don't believe it's there .... and it's ... you know, you come out of hospital and that .... just not realising you know, you're going round sort of thing."  
(Unemployed, 21 years old)

There were other difficult moments for fathers during the birth. One father was very upset because he was not allowed to hold the premature baby when he had wanted and expected to; this not only soured his relationship with the staff but also with his wife (who had been allowed to hold the baby).

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<sup>27</sup>Chi-squared = 6.24, df = 1, Significance level = 0.01. See Appendix III, Table 6.II.

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"Well, on both times, well when Michael was born I didn't get a chance to hold him at all. I was very disappointed then because Michael they put him straight into a thing and cleaned him, well they wouldn't let me near him. She kept holding me and then when he was cleaned up and she were cleaned up they passed him to her, they never offered me and then when they got out in the corridor they asked me if I wanted to hold him when they was on the way up to the ward. It was too late then. And Tanya was the same, as soon as she was born, to see her straight away but they didn't bother about me they didn't ask me if I wanted to hold her or anything. It was until about half an hour after she'd been born I just picked her up." (prompt: "The child hadn't been offered to you by that stage, it was something you had to do yourself?") "Yeah, I just had to pick her up. And then they didn't like it coz I picked her up. They told me to put' her back .... which I didn't think was right - if the mother could hold her straight away, why couldn't the father? .... but I would have liked to have held her straight away." (Animal by-products, 21 years old)

Two fathers found with all the attention being on the mother that they were ignored and were isolated from the "main event"

"I felt apart from it I just sat back and let them carry on, you know." (Unemployed, 21 years old)

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### **After The Birth And Preparations For Coming Home**

Once the baby had been born, and the mother was settled into the maternity ward fathers then set about telling the interested relatives what had been happening, normally visiting or phoning grand parents and various aunties and uncles. Talking about the birth and the new baby was obviously an enjoyable experience for some fathers, and not only helped them to adjust to the reality of the baby's arrival but helped to fill in the time between the visiting hours at the hospital. Twenty of the fathers went home and used the time to prepare for the baby's homecoming, finishing off the jobs they needed or had promised to complete before the baby came home; usually this was decorating or getting the final items for the baby's room. About a third of the fathers (29%) found they did very little between the visiting, often spending their spare time getting to and from the hospital.

"The day she was born I left Maria at half past nine and went out and got drunk, on me own like, coz I know a lot of the landlords round town, all buying me ale then I'd go and go to bed, get up, go to and buy her something and then catch a bus to the hospital or go straight to the hospital, come home, have summat to eat, watch telly then go straight up to the hospital again. Well, I'd have stayed there all day if they'd have let me. Well, she weren't in all that long, she was in a couple of days that was all really." (Process operator, 22 years old)

This period when the father was separated from the mother



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and baby was often a lonely experience for fathers especially at night times after television closed down.

"Well I were at work most of the time - I was fed up and miserable I should think." (prompt: "Why was that?") "Well, just - on me own." (prompt: "And that's something you didn't like?") "No, no I missed them - I wished I could've stopped and all." (Farm tractor driver, 21 years old)

".....Sulked. Yeah, well I wanted her to be home, and I wanted the girls to be home. The first time, I stayed at her mother's with Damian. But this time I wanted her to come home, get settled in. It was just loneliness really, I just missed her being around the house." (Unemployed, 21 years old)

"When she were born I left the hospital about quarter to nine and - straight into the pub - following day I was in the pub in the afternoon - you know when I'd finished visiting Heidi -no, before, straight into the pub - that night I was straight into the pub - never had anything for about forty eight hours - I couldn't eat at all - I was at my mother's a lot, at my neighbour's a lot - I couldn't stop in my house, on me own - took the dog to bed with me - it were horrible - I think the worst part about it were being on your own for that five days." (Steeple jack, 21 years old)

Seventeen fathers continued to work during this period either because they couldn't afford to stop or because they saw no real advantage in not working when the mother was still in hospital. In contrast to the Lewis sample, young fathers do not describe this time as being particularly hectic, although admittedly some fathers did report rushing from one job to another, trying to finish

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things before the mother came home.

"Firstly I went to sleep .... I was tired er .... I think I was just making things ready for when she came home, cos I promised to do this, and I promised to do that .... I just couldn't find the time, I had to rush it into a week." (prompt: "So what sorts of things would that be?") "Er .... well I promised to wash all the clothes and things, and get those ready and there was things that still needed doing in the nursery, like .... we had to move the cot from where it was in storage round at my Mum's, and ..... I think the pram was still being delivered, so we had to collect that, all sorts of little things." (Warehouse manager, 22 years old)

However, for many of the fathers there was no opportunity to become involved in any of the traditional nest making activities. For instance those who were living with either maternal or paternal grand parents did not become involved in decorating or even clearing up, simply because the house was not their own and because they were unlikely to remain there long term. Those who were unemployed were additionally restricted, as the cost of travelling to and from the hospital was financially exhausting and so they were unlikely to become involved in anything which entailed additional expenditure. Finally, there was little or no time as young mothers were not normally in hospital for longer than forty eight hours.

In accordance with present day hospital procedures most of the mothers spent a relatively short period of time in the hospital

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(see Table VI).

Table VI

Length Of Time Mother Stayed In Hospital		No.
Less than 3 days		35
3 to 7 days		41
8 to 14 days		21
15 days or more		2

Mothers who were seriously ill stayed longer than fourteen days. On the whole, mothers were in hospital for between one and three days unless they had a Caesarian Section. Mothers who were having their first child were generally kept at the hospital for forty-eight hours, whereas those who were having their second or third only stayed at hospital for the birth and were discharged within eight hours. During this time most of the fathers (71%) were able to visit twice a day. The visiting times were not only a time for the father to visit the mother and child to check on their well-being but also an opportunity for the father to get used to the various physical demands a child makes without having to become directly involved with the baby's routine.

It was also a special time for other people; most obviously maternal and paternal grandparents wished to see and hold the



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new baby; and visiting hours therefore were normally very crowded. The majority of fathers were happy with these arrangements; however, some decided to take action to ensure they had the time they wanted with the mother and child. For some this meant getting to the hospital early, before visiting hours officially began, or staying on afterwards. Others made it clear it was acceptable for family to visit during one of the visiting sessions, but not the other. Eleven of the fathers were bothered about the number of visitors present and, as a consequence, the lack of time they had with the mother.

"I felt left out. Probably a bit selfish but I did feel left out."

(prompt: "What, and there were always quite a lot of visitors were there?") "Oh yes. There was my family, her family ..... chaotic really. You're only allowed three round the bed and we had about ten." (prompt: "And would you have liked time to yourselves?") "At least ten or fifteen minutes. Really say she was in hospital two days I didn't really see her for, what, ten to fifteen minutes at the most each time. Well, I saw her but I didn't have a chance to talk with her." (Unemployed, 21 years old)

As has been discussed above, the birth would appear to be a time which marks the mother's entrance into adulthood. With the adolescent father ritually being present he too marks his transition from boy to man to father. The period of time directly after the birth represents a transitional moment when fathers are able to get used to their new role. Entwistle and Doering<sup>28</sup>

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believe men take up such a role gradually after the birth, and that it is not necessarily assumed as a direct consequence of being present at the delivery. They postulate that fatherhood requires interaction with the baby after he or she has been born. This would appear to be similar for young fathers also but in addition the time spent away from the mother in hospital also serves an important function in terms of their need to discuss the joint experience in order to internalise and digest what has happened. For instance, 14 fathers visited their maternal or paternal grandparents to discuss the events surrounding the birth and a further seventeen per cent visited friends and other relatives.

### Mother And Baby Coming Home

The bringing home of the baby has, like many other events surrounding the birth, great significance for both father and mother and marks the time when both parents start the negotiations concerning parenthood rather than looking forward to or dreaming about their behaviour as parents.

However unlike many older parents a considerable number (42) of the young couples were not living on their own but were staying with friends or relatives, usually the maternal grandmother. Those who did stay with relatives were all having their first child; parents who had older children returned to their

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<sup>28</sup>D.R. Entwisle and S.G.Doering, *The First Birth A Family Turning Point*, (Baltimore and London, The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1981).

## The Birth Experience And Post-Natal Period

own home. There were only two fathers who were not living in the same house as the mother. A consequence of living with relatives was that these younger couples were significantly more likely to have help with the young baby<sup>29</sup> during the early days than those who had already set up their own home and were living independently. As a group these young parents were significantly<sup>30</sup> more likely to have help when compared against the older Lewis sample. However this difference does not appear to be a function of age, but more a reflection of young parents' domestic circumstances. Admittedly younger parents were more likely to be living with relatives, because they had not had the time to prepare or find somewhere for themselves to live but age itself did not determine whether the young family was more likely to have extra help after the birth.

Consistent with data concerning older fathers most of the fathers took some time off work after the birth. A considerable number (39) were unemployed at the time and had no problems being at home all day (Table VII)

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<sup>29</sup>Chi-squared=10.7, df=1, Significance level = 0.001. See Appendix III, Table 6.III.

<sup>30</sup>Chi-squared =6.2, df=1, Significance level = 0.01. See Appendix III, Table 6.IV.



# The Birth Experience And Post-Natal Period

Table VII

Fathers Time Off Work After Birth	No.
None	13
1 to 3 days	9
4 to 7 days	28
8 days or more	10
Unemployed	39

Nonetheless thirteen of the working population (21%) were unable to or did not take time off work following the birth, and in general younger fathers were likely to take less time off from work than the older father sample.<sup>31</sup> The younger fathers who remained at work felt their presence at home during the day was not necessarily important. It must be remembered that younger parents were firstly more likely to have help from relatives and friends, and secondly more likely to be living with one or other set of parents. This is illustrated when looking at how some young fathers describe their participation during the early days.

"Well, we were living at her mother's I didn't do too much you know, just getting clothes, things like that and change the baby now and then." (Unemployed, 21 years old)

"Well actually I didn't really, I didn't really do a lot. I

<sup>31</sup>Chi-squared = 6.9, df = 1, Significance level = 0.01, Older fathers were more likely to take a week or more off, whereas employed men in the younger father sample tended to take one or two days off, See Appendix III, Table 6.V.

## The Birth Experience And Post-Natal Period

couple of times changed the baby, you know, changed his nappies there wasn't really a lot I could do at first because ..... because my wife was breast feeding him so ....." (prompt: "So what about around the house, was there much you did there?") "No ....no it wasn't our huse, we were living with relatives so....." (Storeman, 22 Years old)

Fathers living with relatives often felt constrained by the social circumstances of being with other people and as consequence found it difficult to become involved in childcare tasks where they were obviously novices compared with the other members of the household. The consequence of having family help, however, is that the parents' early and perhaps amateurish attempts at baby care is done under observation which may increase the pressure and undermine their personal worth.

However in general the majority of fathers took some part in child care tasks (Table VIII).

# The Birth Experience And Post-Natal Period

Table VIII

Father's Role In The Early Days	
	No.
None	7
Helper	
in home only	9
with baby	23
in home and with baby	42
Major responsibility (i.e. more than mother)	
housework	6
housework and some caretaking	12
all housework and all caretaking	1

These younger fathers were more likely<sup>32</sup> to report they had been involved with child care tasks than the older population who were more likely to have done housework. This is again probably a reflection of the number of younger parents who were living in someone else's home - thus it often seemed inappropriate to be participant in household tasks, especially if at the time the father was not living with the mother. When the Newsons did their original research they found that after confinement working class mothers often paid for or received help from neighbours (the Newsons were uncertain how often young couples paid for such assistance as they initially did not directly ask for this information). However, in this sample there was no reported

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<sup>32</sup>Chi-squared = 7.3, df = 1, Significance level = 0.007. See Appendix III, Table 6.VI.



## The Birth Experience And Post-Natal Period

involvement of either paid or unpaid help from neighbours. One might conclude that this represents a degeneration of community spirit but realistically it is more likely to represent the young persons social isolation in the new environment away from home and also their lack of financial resources in order to pay for this help.

### Summary

Birth is obviously a highly emotive subject for both parents and professionals and within our society arguments have raged as to the method by which mothers should give birth and the procedures that ought to be adopted by the various medical institutions. Within these arguments childbirth has continued to go on; sometimes individual mothers and fathers have been greatly affected by these discussions but generally parents have been very accepting of whatever procedures are organised for them. The young parents I interviewed were very similar to the general population in that they found it easy to adapt to the present day institutionalised nature of childbirth. However most of the fathers who attended the birth were deeply affected by what they experienced, and they were often surprised by the variety of emotions they felt both for the mother and the baby. Although this is a fairly common phenomenon in fathers who attend childbirth, I believe it has heightened significance when considering these young fathers who have not been through a

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"natural" pregnancy; they have been unable to prepare themselves both emotionally and physically for the young baby.

Their lack of readiness extended into the delivery room where many fathers found they did not know what to do or how best to help during the birth. Admittedly this helplessness may have stemmed from the procedural and technical nature of childbirth, but other factors such as lack of attendance at childcare classes and time to develop a strong and comforting relationship with the mother were bound to have an impact on the father's role in the delivery room. His lack of experience of young children makes holding the baby for the time a worrying, but enjoyable experience. Although many young fathers felt awkwardness when in the delivery room, their presence helped to boost their own perception of their worth in terms of being a father and a man.

Lack of time and money to prepare for the young child forced many young couples to live with other relatives, until they had had time to arrange for their own permanent accommodation. Not only did this give them room both spatially and temporally but also it was of considerable benefit when the young baby came home, as relatives (usually the maternal grand mother) were able to offer help and advice to the inexperienced couple. It also gave the father more time to be with his child rather than doing the housework which traditionally the father has done when the baby has first come home.

## Chapter Seven

### Participation: The Young Father's Dilemma

#### Introduction

Within our society paid employment has always been a integral part of men's lives. However with the dramatic increase of unemployment a considerable number of men are having to cope without the financial and emotional support of work. At the most basic level, employment gives men and women the means to provide for themselves and their dependents. However it serves other functions which were first highlighted by Jahoda and her co-workers when they investigated an Austrian community, where most of the men had been made redundant following the closure of the local factory. They describe how work provides the person with a structure for his daily life; it makes him a member of a group, and gives him a place in society.<sup>1</sup>

Most of the psychological literature concerning unemployment

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<sup>1</sup> M. Jahoda, P. Lazarsfeld and H. Zeisel *Marienthal: The Sociography of an Unemployed Community*. (1933; London: Tavistock Publications, 1972).



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makes some attempt to describe the changes of feeling and attitude that people tend to experience when they become and then continue to be unemployed. As in much of the current developmental research, reactions to unemployment have been described in terms of a stage theory, where it is seen that people (and more particularly men) go through a series of coping strategies to deal with unemployment. The number of stages has varied from author to author<sup>2</sup> but perhaps the simplest description comes from Jahoda et al's original research:

"We have distinguished four basic attitudes: the predominant one is 'resignation'; a more active one we named 'unbroken'; and two deteriorated forms we called 'in despair' and 'apathetic'. As we look back on these two forms, it now appears that they are probably but two different stages of a process of psychological deterioration that runs parallel to the narrowing of economic resources and the wear and tear on personal belongings."<sup>3</sup>

At the time of interview forty seven per cent were unemployed; this was relatively high when compared against national or local statistics. It was believed in 1985/86 that some sixteen per cent of the national population were unemployed. Locally unemployment ranged from fifty five per cent to four per cent depending on what area of Nottinghamshire was referred to. In general high unemployment was more likely to be found in the

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<sup>2</sup>P. Kelvin and J. Jarrett, *Unemployment: Its social psychological effects*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985).

<sup>3</sup>Jahoda., *op. cit.*, 1933/1972. p. 87

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inner city areas. At the time of interviewing, unemployment was rising and the people who were most severely affected were those who had just recently left school. The General Household Survey (1983) had previously noted:

"The economic activity rates of young men aged 16 - 17 fell from 47% in 1982 to 40% in 1983. Although this decrease is not in itself statistically significant, it represents a continuation of the downward trend in activity rates for this age group since 1979."<sup>4</sup>

The young father in general is vulnerable to unemployment as he leaves school often with few or no formal qualifications and tries to enter a work environment where a higher degree of knowledge concerning technical skills is now expected than at any time in the past.

Not only is unemployment high but increasingly we are seeing that employment is unstable and there are for many people constant changes of work position. The sample of young fathers was made up of three distinct groups; firstly those fathers who had been in more or less constant employment since leaving school; secondly those fathers who had never had a job or who had not been employed for at least two years; thirdly the fathers who were constantly in and out of employment, their status at the

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<sup>4</sup>Office of Population *General Household Survey* (London: HMSO, 1983): 4.

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time depending on when they were interviewed.

Table I

Young Father's Employment Since Leaving School		No.
Employed		
Constant employment since school		43
Unsettled		
Working now but been unemployed in last year		10
Unemployed now but worked during last year		11
Unemployed		
Unemployed for between one and two years		15
Unemployed for over two years		21

Of the one hundred fathers in my sample forty three had been employed since they had left school. Ten were working now but had been unemployed during the past year. Another eleven were unemployed but had worked at some time during the last twelve months. So approximately twenty per cent of my sample had had an unsettled period of employment over the last year. Of the remainder twenty one had been unemployed for over two years. The rest, fifteen, had been out of work for between one and two years.

Being officially unemployed did not necessarily indicate that a father was not working, in fact nine of the unemployed men



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mentioned that they had taken jobs without informing the Department of Health and Social Security. This work was normally casual labouring or painting and decorating. The jobs of these nine varied in their regularity and duration: one man who was a door to door salesman worked every day of the week from seven in the morning to nine at night. Another was regularly working away for two nights a week on jobs, but didn't indicate the nature of his work. For other fathers the work was normally sporadic and unpredictable, and they had to rely on friends or relatives to look out for work where they might be taken on.

A comparison of unemployed and employed fathers in my sample presents us with an opportunity to examine some of the topical issues concerning a father's availability to take part in child care activities and his actual participation. For the purpose of analysis here I have categorised those fathers who collected unemployment benefit as being unemployed even though sometimes they were working every day. This is because the work was not usually constant or long term and because the fathers described themselves as being unemployed. It must be noted that when attempting to evaluate some men's status of employment it is very difficult to determine whether they are truly unemployed; as a consequence different researchers might use different criteria with equal validity.

There may have been other unemployed men in the sample who were working but who did not mention their opportunity to

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earn extra money because they feared I might have an official responsibility to inform the authorities. Therefore we can say at least twenty per cent of the young fathers registered as unemployed did some sort of paid work outside of the home.

When considering how unemployment affects fatherhood I believe the key questions that need to be asked are.

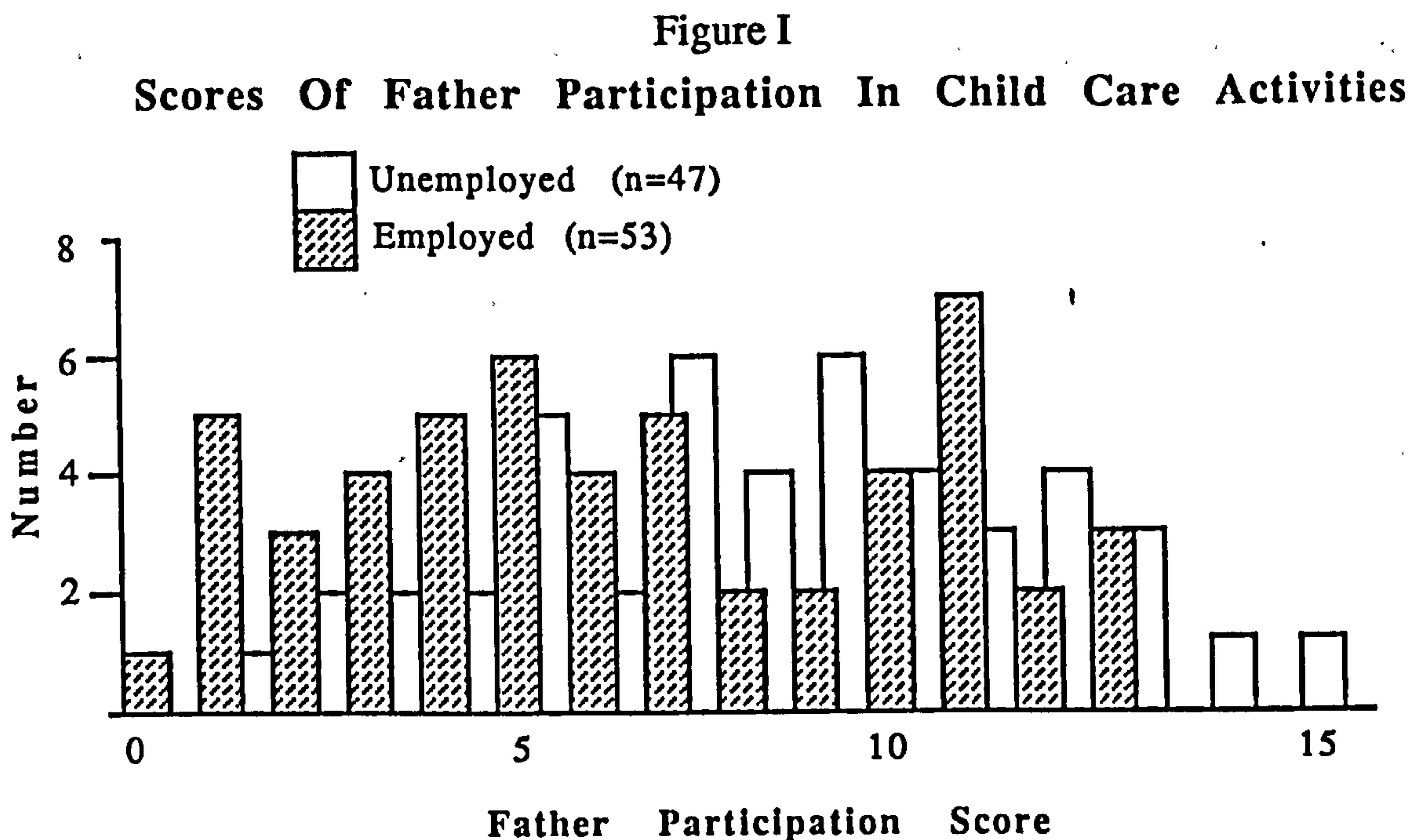
- 1) Do unemployed fathers become more involved in child care than fathers who go out to work?
- 2) If he is doing more for the child, is he in fact taking on the same responsibilities as the mother?
- 3) Has being at home all day and looking after the children affected the way he views himself as a father?

## Young Fathers Involvement In Child Care Tasks

In an attempt to get an overall picture of father participation I created an index made up of measures of his participation in nappy changing, bathing, looking after the baby without the mother, feeding and putting to bed. From his description of the involvement with each activity the father was given a score which ranged from nought to three, nought indicating a low level of participation and three a high level. The scores from each activity were then summated and the index created. This index is similar

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to one previously created by Lewis<sup>5</sup> and total scores ranged from nought to fifteen. If the unemployed and employed group are compared (see Figure I) unemployed fathers are significantly<sup>6</sup> more likely to report a higher involvement in child care activities than employed fathers. The mean for the unemployed group was 8.21 (standard deviation=3.48) and 6.52 (standard deviation=3.7) for the employed group.



Taking data from the population of fathers interviewed by Charlie Lewis it is possible to create the same index for fathers in a more normative age range. Father participation is commonly

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<sup>5</sup>Charlie Lewis, *Becoming a Father*. (Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1986).

<sup>6</sup>F score = 5.3, Significance level = 0.02.



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found to be associated with social class; if all the white collar and professional workers are then removed from the Lewis sample (these workers were not represented in the young father sample) it is possible to compare the two groups of working fathers in order to investigate any age differences. However there is no significant difference between the two groups, the mean level of participation (6.77) in the Lewis sample of older men working in III manual, IV and V jobs is comparable with the younger sample working in similar jobs. This would appear to indicate that the significant difference in the level of participation between young unemployed and employed fathers is a function of employment rather than youth.

In an attempt to get a clearer picture of young mens' participation it is necessary to look at individual child care tasks. Take for instance father participation in nappy changing (Table II).

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Table II

Young Father Participation In Nappy Changing		
	Employed	Unemployed
Never/rare	20	7
1-4 times per month	3	6
2-6 times per week	9	7
1 time a day usually	5	4
<1 a day/less than mother	15	8
As much as mother	0	15
Total	<u>52</u>	<u>47</u>

We find that young unemployed fathers are significantly<sup>7</sup> more likely to report that they change at least one nappy every day when compared with the employed fathers. It is very noticeable that unemployed fathers are much more likely to report that they change the nappies as often as the mothers do, although this result is not altogether surprising since they have far more opportunity to share such an activity than men who work.

"I do that quite regularly, Jodie's nappies." (prompt: "How many times?") "Say about four times a day. I do it nearly all the times." (Unemployed, 19 years old)

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<sup>7</sup>Chi-squared = 4.5, df = 1, Significance level = 0.04. See Appendix III, Table 7.I.

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However, the effect of unemployment is not total. There is considerable variance in the level of participation. As can be seen from the table there are fathers who are at home all day and still rarely change a nappy.

"Very rarely .... it's only when I have to ..... if she's in she does it ... or one of the neighbours in the street .... I'll call them in for a cup of tea and let them do it ..... I'll go all the way to the end of the road knocking on doors before I do it ...."  
(Unemployed, 21 years old)

Unemployed fathers are significantly<sup>8</sup> more likely to report that they are as skilled at nappy changing as the mother. Although more fathers appear to be involved on a daily basis it is interesting to note how some of them describe this involvement:

"I do it every day yeah but it's not on a regular basis, such as a woman has to do it every time."  
(prompt: "So is it very much when you feel like it?")  
"Yeah (laughs). Or sometimes she'll say to me "Do me a favour", and I'll say "What?" - "Change his bum"."  
(Unemployed, 20 years old)

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<sup>8</sup>Chi-squared = 9.9, df = 1, Significance level = 0.02. See Appendix III, Table 7.II.



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### Young Fathers Responsibilities

The fathers who are at home just as much as the mothers appear at first glance to take a more active role. However this is not to say that they perform roles equivalent to the mothers; many are still describing their part in child care as if they are only an extra pair of hands, helping out when they want or when asked rather than taking the initiative or the direct responsibility for jobs that have to be done. On the whole this does mean they are more participant but many are managing to organise their lives and those of the mothers to avoid doing activities that they find unpleasant.

"Yeah I've changed 'im. I've changed 'im from 'is dirty one, it don't bother me." (prompt: "So how often in all would you say you've changed him?") "I can't say, er, only about a few times like y'know. I've changed 'im when Tracey's gone out. I've looked after 'im and 'e's pooed 'is nappy. I always make sure Tracey don't go out until 'e poos 'is nappy." (Quality control inspector, 21 years old)

It is necessary to look at other individual tasks in order to get a clearer picture of whether unemployment affects men's views concerning their responsibilities and involvement in child care activities. If we look at an activity such as feeding (Table III) we can see that this reflects many aspects of their overall involvement.

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Table III

Father's Participation In Feeding During Week And At Weekend				
	Employed		Unemployed	
	week	weekend	week	weekend
Rare <once a month	12	11	8	11
1-3 times a month	11	8	7	7
Once a week/end	9	13	4	4
Two to three a week/end	11	13	8	10
Shared with wife	10	9	20	15
Total	<u>53</u>	<u>54</u>	<u>47</u>	<u>47</u>

When looking at fathers who can be categorised as highly involved (that is they feed the baby nearly every day and at least once every two days) we see that the unemployed are significantly<sup>9</sup> more likely to be highly involved during the week when compared with employed fathers. However at the weekend when the working father is likely to be at home in the day as much as the unemployed father we find there is no significant difference between the numbers of "highly involved" fathers in these two groups.<sup>10</sup> This would seem to indicate that unemployed fathers' increased participation in activities such as feeding is more a reflection of the amount of time that they have

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<sup>9</sup>Chi-squared = 3.9, df = 1, Significance level = 0.046. See Appendix III, Table 7.III.

<sup>10</sup>Chi-squared = 1.3, df = 1, Significance level = 0.224. See Appendix III, Table 7.IV.

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available than a significant change in present-day fathering attitudes.

This same pattern can be seen in fathers' participation in attending to the child in the middle of the night. Night-time is another time when unemployed and employed are likely to be at home as much as each other.

Table IV

Who Goes To Baby If Wakes In Night		
	Employed	Unemployed
Always Mother	9	5
Usually Mother	21	16
Shared	10	16
Mainly Father	4	1
Always Father	8	5
Other	1	4
Total	<u>53</u>	<u>47</u>

From Table IV it can be seen that there are few differences between the two groups in terms of getting out of bed if the child cries during the night. The table also illustrates how the burden for such activity rests mainly with mother, and often the only difference between the employed and unemployed is in the type of excuse that was used in order to get out of helping!



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(prompt: "Would you ever go to him yourself?") "If I woke up yeah, I'm a very heavy sleeper .... plus I suppose working at night you know getting home maybe twelve or later I'm very tired .... not having any rest period for sleep ..... I was a little bit different when I was working during the day because I'd be home and relaxed a bit more before going to bed so ..... I ... before, I flaked out when I got back." (Checker/coder , 21 years old)

"Caron does, mostly, you know." (prompt: "Why is that?") "Well, she knows a lot more and that. And I'm not settled into it." (Unemployed, 21 years old)

Men who were employed were more likely to say that they were too tired, and as a consequence either did not hear the child or needed their sleep in order to work effectively<sup>11</sup> during the next day. The unemployed fathers were more likely to report that the mother was more competent or skilled at getting the child settled down, and that they only upset the baby when they went.

As I have previously described, there was a group of fathers in my sample who were constantly in and out of work. It has become customary to refer to this group who move on and off the register over a period of time as being in "flow."<sup>11</sup> It is interesting therefore to look at their involvement in the family as they are in the unique position of being neither truly employed nor unemployed. Their levels of participation will also help to point us to whether the increase in father participation in

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<sup>11</sup>W.W. Daniel and E.Stilgoe, "Where Are They Now? A Follow-up Study of the Unemployed," *P.E.P.Broadsheet*, 43.572, Oct. 1977.

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unemployed men is only related to the time they have at home or whether unemployed fathers adopt a different role. Since unemployment does alter fathers' participation then we might expect men who are in "flow" to be similar to the working population in terms of their participation regardless of whether they were unemployed or employed at the time of interview because their view of themselves was more likely to be that of a provider/worker. However the best indicator of level of participation of the 'flow' group as of the rest, was how much time they were at home now, not how long they had been unemployed.

### The Role Of Unemployed Fathers

It has been well documented that many working fathers feel a conflict between the demands on their time at work and their desire to spend more time at home with the children.<sup>12</sup> It has also been noted that this conflict is more likely to be described by professional men. O'Brien reports:

"Another reason for working-class fathers' low reportage of family-work conflicts may be the underlying belief that they were making a positive and valued contribution to the family through their work. It seemed that for many working-class men work meant breadwinning, and successful

<sup>12</sup>M. O'Brien, "The Working Father," *Fathers: Psychological Perspectives*. Eds. Nigel Beail and Jacqueline McGuire (London: Junction Books, 1982).

Michael Young and Peter Willmott, *The Symmetrical Family* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1973).



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breadwinning fulfilled most of the requirements associated with being a 'good family man'.<sup>13</sup>

It is thought professional men go out primarily for themselves and secondly for the family, whereas working class men see their employment as an important function of their family life and less important in terms of their own personal fulfillment. This leaves unemployed working class fathers in a difficult position as they are no longer making the contribution which previously would have made them a valuable member of their family. There can be little or no conflict for the unemployed father concerning the time he has to spend away at work and the time he has available to be at home; he may feel considerable conflict however between his model of fatherhood and his perception of his own fathering role. Many unemployed men are therefore in a vacuum, where they are financially failing to provide for the family and failing to take responsibility for the care of the children. Unemployed fathers who do not take a highly participant role with their children do not fulfill either of the classic roles of mother or father, and this leaves them as a vulnerable, almost unnecessary, member of the family. Their only function is then to help support the mother physically and emotionally and also to produce more children. It is interesting to see how these fathers view their own future in terms of their place in the work culture and also within the family.

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<sup>13</sup>O'Brien., *op. cit.*, 1982. p. 226.



## Employment Or Participation?

Thirty of the unemployed fathers (68%) viewed their chances of finding future permanent employment as slim. Fathers felt that they were unlikely to find work because there was such a shortage of jobs for people in their position - i.e. young men with few qualifications or skills. Even if there were jobs that were suitable for their qualifications they were normally jobs that were aimed at school leavers who could afford to take on jobs paying a lower wage. Thus there was little or no incentive to take on jobs which would leave them no better off.

"Erm .... not much erm .... see nobody's .... I look for jobs but .... married and with one kid ..... you've got to have a helluva lot of money coming in .... otherwise you're going to work for nothing .... but I'm not the sort of person .... I mean a few years ago it used to be bone idleness but now I think it's completely changed, now .... I mean .... people like me, somebody married with a kid or a couple of kids I mean the only reason they don't look for jobs is because there's no job with enough money to meet their needs....." (Unemployed, 22 years old)

This lack of incentive quite often had a devastating effect on fathers and there were a number (although not specifically recorded), only just in their twenties, who talked about life having passed them by; because they believed jobs now required a high level of technological skill which they had not acquired. These fathers were often concentrating their future happiness on their children, building their hopes on the development of their child.

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"Yeah, I mean I could have been killed meself, but I wasn't bothered it was just him. I mean I've had my life but he doesn't even know what's going off at the moment." (Reported by a father following a near accident when shopping that morning. (Unemployed, 20 years old)

Moreover the longer they remained out of work the more difficult they were going to find future employment. This was not only because they were getting older but because they were slowly being removed from the working culture.

"Oh ... the ... not very bright ... just 'ave to keep 'opin' really, but.... just keep tryin' ..... er ... it's it's er ....sometimes .... like we gerrup in a mornin' an' you go out there .... really give it a go .... come 'ome, fed up an'.... you just 'ave to keep tryin'. Sometimes I feel like givin' up but .... you 'ave to ...just for sake o' yer kids, 'cos .... I mean, we survive ... unemployed y' know .... 'am not sayin' we don't get enough money or nowt .... we do survive .... but ... I'd sooner work for livin', y'know. I don't like signin' on at all ... sort o' feel guilty every time I sign on, I prefer to work ... but it ... it 'ad one good point anyway .. an' that's 'ave been able to see me kids grow up ... that's about the only good thing can be said for it, tho' ..... but I .... see ..... the longer I'm unemployed, the'arder it's gunna be for me to get a job anyway ... which ... I know that .... that's one of them things ... just keep tryin'...." (Unemployed, 22 years old)

This unemployed group of fathers is in many ways very

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similar to the major part of the unemployed group studied by Jahoda.

"The most common basic attitude in Marienthal, the one most visible at first glance, is an attitude of drifting along, indifferently and without expectations, accepting a situation that cannot be changed. With it goes a relatively calm general mood, and even sporadically recurring moments of serenity and joy. But the future, even in the shape of plans, has no longer any place in the thought or even dreams of these families."<sup>14</sup>

One might expect, fathers who had only just become unemployed or who worked casually, to have a much more resilient attitude to work. However there appeared to be no significant difference between men who had become unemployed during the last year and men who had been unemployed for a longer period (over one year), when asked "What do you think your job prospects are?".<sup>15</sup> There were a small number (3) of unemployed who viewed their work prospects in a very positive light.

"Well, I can do virtually anything like, you know, bricklaying, I do a bit of welding, a bit of

<sup>14</sup>Jahoda., *op. cit.*, pp. 52-53.

<sup>15</sup>Chi-squared = 0.13, df = 1, Significance level = 0.7. Employed men were removed from the sample and father's responses were grouped into two categories; those who saw their prospects as being poor or bad and those who thought they were good or uncertain. See Appendix III, Table 7.V.



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mechanicing, that kind of thing, so I do virtually anything." (prompt: "And what sort of opportunities do you think you will have in the future?") "Well, like I say I'm sort of working at this place at the moment and they're a growing company, they've got a couple of solid contracts with various places and with the fact that they've got recovery vehicles as well there's a lot of prospects there and I should say within the next year or two I should have a proper job." (Unemployed, 20 years old)

A small group of the unemployed fathers, normally those who had left school, had a child straight away and never had a job, were making no attempt to find work. This attitude towards employment marks a tremendous turn around from at least twenty five years ago when the Newsons first started their research and more recently when Lewis did his. It was then the norm for men to redouble their attempts to search out employment when they became fathers, and for those who were employed to ensure that they remained working. However in 1986 some young fathers although concerned about being unemployed were not bothering to try and find employment apparently because of the responsibilities or interests of fatherhood and being at home.

"None at the moment, cos I'm not going to bother getting a job until .... we're sorted out, what with kids and stuff decorating .... cos once, once I start getting a job, I've got to pay for my rent. And it's going to be a lot more than what it is, than what it was over there .... if I can get a job on the side, then I'll get a job on the side but .... that's about all, cos

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otherwise I wouldn't be able to afford to keep ....  
afford to do anything." (Unemployed, 21 years old)

Other factors may have influenced a father's decision not to look for employment. A sizeable proportion (12%) had never had a job in their life - and this left them in the difficult position of not knowing where they stood in society, having no real idea where they would be best employed or where to find employment. Their track record not only led them to have little hope of finding a job but it also led employers to believe them unsuitable. Secondly, with the economic position having so drastically changed from ten to fifteen years ago, not only has unemployment become less of a social stigma but it has become a reality for many families. Most of the young unemployed fathers had friends or relatives who were in a position similar to their own, so at least they did not feel isolated within their social group for being young and out of work.

These fathers can only be seen as permanently unemployed - as they are unlikely to look for, let alone "capture" a job, unless there is a considerable change in the economic structure of this country. How do they view their position in the family? Perhaps one indication is how willing the father is to "allow" the mother to go out to work. This has enormous significance in Nottingham where the availability for employment is traditionally greater for women due to the large number of lace and other textile factories. Only eleven of the one hundred mothers in my sample were



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employed, seven part time and four full time. Surprisingly all the mothers who were working had partners who were also working. This would seem to imply that the fathers' presence at home gave no encouragement or no opportunity for the mothers to go out to work. That is not to say that all these fathers were actively preventing the mother from working, although that certainly was the case with some. There were economic considerations, for women as well as men, which might have prevented the mother from taking or looking for work: the jobs for which they were eligible would not bring in the same amount of money that social security automatically paid. Contradictory to what was actually happening, when asked how they would feel about the mother going out to work, unemployed fathers were significantly more likely<sup>16</sup> than employed fathers to say they thought that it was a good idea.

"She says it's our baby so we should both take the responsibility and that she'll get to see both of us for about the same time.... so that she don't take to one more than the other." (prompt: "How would you feel about staying at home?") "I'd be happy to do it ..... if it come down to that then I'd be happy, yeah." (Unemployed, 22 years old)

Unemployed fathers were less likely to admit feeling that their

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<sup>16</sup>Chi-squared = 14.7, df = 1, Significance level = 0.0002. Father's responses were grouped into two categories; those who had no reported reservations about the mother working instead of the father, and those who had reservations or thought it was a bad idea. See Appendix III, Table 7.VI.



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role as provider was threatened by the mother going out to work, although there was a small number (2, and 5 of the employed men) of unemployed men who did express unhappiness at the prospect of the mother working instead of them.

"I've suggested that. I wouldn't mind doing that but I'd sort of, .....this way I've been brought up, the man goes out. It's not I don't agree with it, y'know what I mean. I think 'yeah, why not?' but I feel a bit of a nancy staying in all day and that. I don't think I could 'andle it on my own to be honest anyway. I'd rather be honest with 'er than 'ave a try and muck it all up." (Unemployed, 21 years old)

The young unemployed father is more likely, to describe how he is willing and able to take on the mother's responsibilities at home. However the fact remains that the unemployed father, although often highly involved, is not the parent who ultimately has to change the nappies, feed the baby or get up in the night. He often takes part in these activities but he still has a degree of choice about how often and when he does become involved.

## Summary

The title for this chapter is "The Young Fathers' Dilemma" and it may seem to imply that young fathers have a degree of choice over whether they work or spend time at home. The unemployment literature often describes as normal a "volatile"

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period after leaving school when it is acceptable for young people to chop and change employment without much concern for the consequences of their actions. This has often been viewed as a 'settling-down' period both in relation to the work place and in terms of their role in society. However the introduction of a child into a young man's life means he has to forgo this period. Entering fatherhood so early is one factor that impels many men into premature and permanent unemployment. A by-product of this unemployment is that young fathers are more participatory in both child care and household tasks. Without the structure of work, the child provides an alternative routine which gives unemployed fathers something to do and to a certain extent some kind of future, albeit not their own, to look forward to. Even though fatherhood in the short term has beneficial effects it does however restrict the possibility of future employment for both mother and father and also undermines the father's position and function within the family.

## Chapter Eight

### Fathers' Social Life And Leisure Time

#### Introduction

In our society leisure is youth-orientated. Most television advertisements, newspaper articles and brochures concerning leisure are directed or focused at and on the young person. The popular image of a happy, relaxed, carefree adolescent is sometimes overpowering. However in reality many young persons are not leisure-orientated in the manner depicted in the media. Leisure as a concept is difficult to describe and its role within society is not clearly defined but there is agreement that any definition must incorporate at least three dimensions: 1) that leisure is a type of free time, 2) that leisure is a type of recreational activity, and 3) that leisure is an experience which contains its own rewards.<sup>1</sup> According to Parker:

"Leisure is time free from work and other obligations and it also encompasses activities which

<sup>1</sup>Kenneth Roberts, *Youth and Leisure*, (London: Longman, 1986).



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are characterised by a feeling of (comparative) freedom."<sup>2</sup>

There are considerable restrictions on young persons' leisure activities which make it almost impossible for an individual to break away from financial, social class and sex boundaries. One of the most powerful determinants of leisure activity is gender. In general boys not only behave very differently from girls but each sex is expected by society and by parents to use their leisure time in different ways. For boys, staying at home is viewed as dull and boring, whereas girls are expected to be involved in more home orientated activities. From a comparatively early age girls are encouraged to stay at home, and by so doing prepare themselves for some of the responsibilities of later life, especially those of parenthood. Anxieties of parents regarding the safety of their adolescent children when out are particularly focused on girls; for some boys parents may worry about delinquency or fighting but for all girls parents suffer anxieties about sexual activity or exploitation.<sup>3</sup> When girls do go out it is often to dances or discos etc, where the main object of the evening is to find a partner of the opposite sex and there is an explicit or implicit understanding among girls that this meeting might be permanent, whereas boys find it acceptable to adopt a short term predatory intention. In general, then, whether inside or outside the home, girls appear to

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<sup>2</sup>S.R. Parker, *Leisure and Work* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1983): p.6.

<sup>3</sup>John and Elizabeth Newson, *Childhood into Adolescence*, (in press).

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be preparing for courtship and marriage whereas boys' leisure behaviour is more multi-dimensional.

Although money plays a crucial role in determining what activities a young person is able to take part in, social class is also a major influence on the ways in which the young spend their money and time. For instance middle class boys of sixteen are far more likely to be involved in organised sports events both in and out of school<sup>41</sup> than boys from lower socioeconomic families (23% of middle class boys were reported to be involved in sports clubs as compared with 14% of working class boys). In general boys from working class families are less likely to take part in organised leisure activities of any kind than middle class boys even though they have often have more "free time" (i.e. free from work that extends into their time at home) and also have fewer parental constraints imposed upon them; the time working class boys have is often spent on street corners or at friends' houses.

Within the structure of all the social classes there are several stages of social development that most young adolescents go through. Dunphy<sup>52</sup> describes an abstract ideal typical outline of this development (see Figure 1) and later research has not grossly disagreed with this description.

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<sup>4</sup>John and Elizabeth Newson, unpublished data.

<sup>5</sup>Dexter Dunphy, "The Social Life Of Urban Adolescent Peer Groups", *Sociometry*, 26, (1963): 230-246

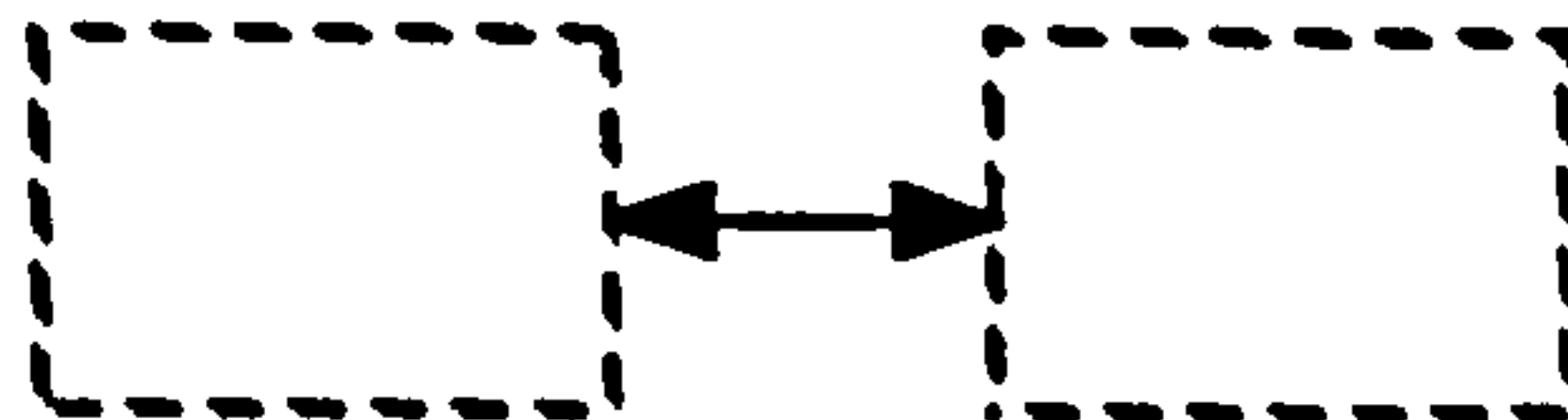
# Social Life And Leisure Time

Figure I  
Social Structure Of Urban Adolescent Peer Groups,  
From Dunphy (1963)

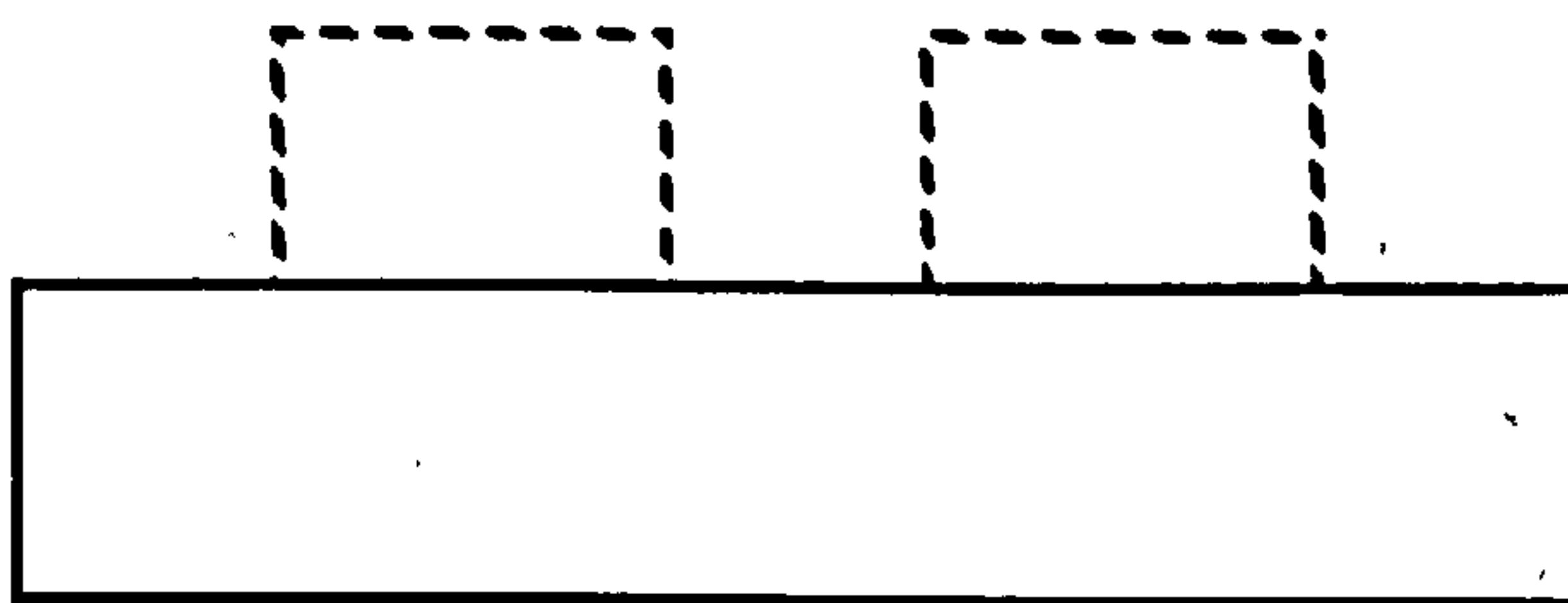
## Early Adolescence



Stage 1:  
Pre-crowd stage.  
Isolated unisexual  
cliques.



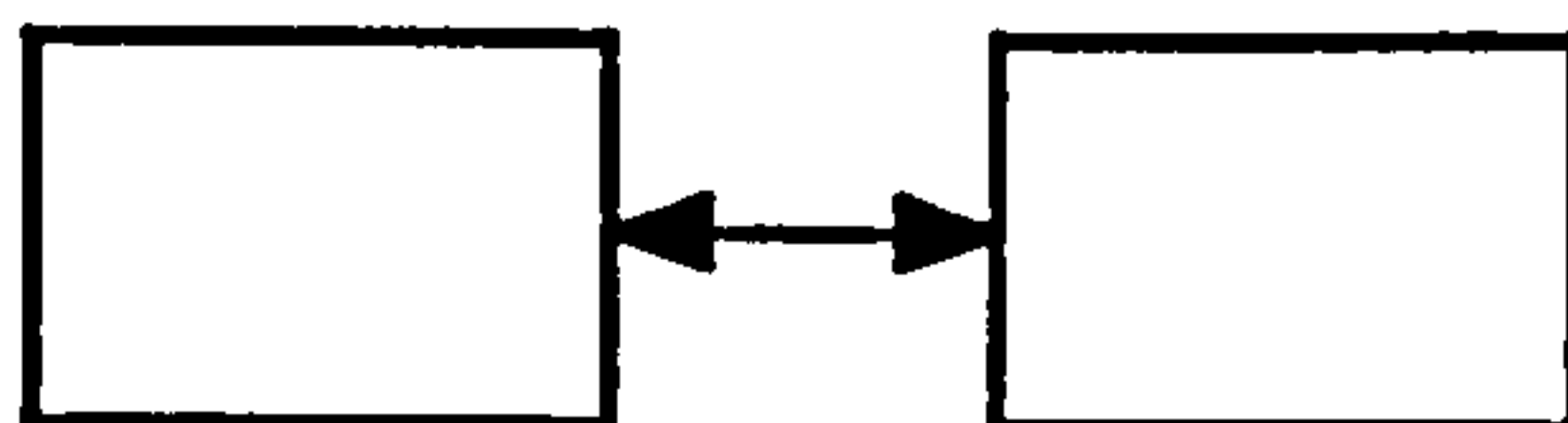
Stage 2:  
Beginning of crowd.  
Unisexual cliques in  
group to group  
interaction.



Stage 3:  
Crowd in transition.  
Unisexual members  
with upper status  
members forming  
heterosexual clique



Stage 4:  
Fully developed crowd.  
Heterosexual clique in  
close association



Stage 5:  
Beginning of crowd  
disintegration. Loosely  
associated groups of  
couples

## Late Adolescence

 = girls or boys       = both sexes

Groups of boys and girls begin at stage 1 as isolated unisexual cliques and gradually begin to interact with each other until finally the groups dissolve at stage 5 with heterosexual partners

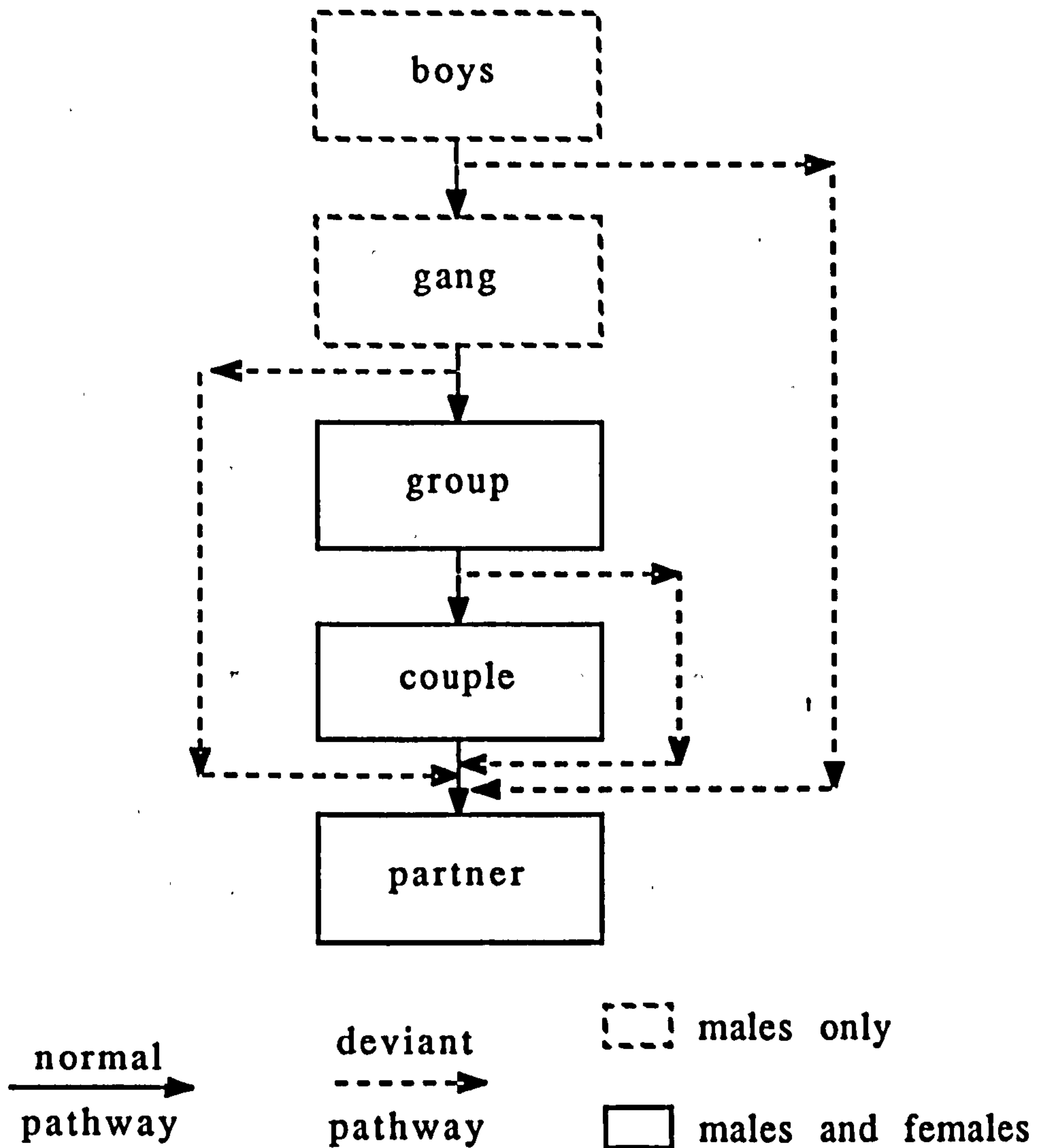


## Social Life And Leisure Time

being the dominant social relationships. Thus for any individual who is a member of a group, his or her behaviour at any one time is likely to be affected by firstly, the stage at which the group is going through and secondly, the role and status that the individual holds within that group. The ages at which young people go through these stages are by no means consistent; however the transition from adolescent to adult, in our society, depends on successfully negotiating the various levels of heterosexual and social development.

When contemplating the position of adolescent fathers one might expect that many had not reached the last stage of social development before their first child was conceived, simply because they were so young; and one might hypothesise that the further away from reaching that final stage, the more difficulty they would have in adjusting to the social confines of fatherhood. This can be conceptualised as shown, see Figure II.

Figure II  
The Effects Of Fatherhood On Social Development



Furthermore it could be hypothesised that the group of men who have not successfully reached the mature stage, where emphasis is on heterosexual partnerships, are likely to find the transition to fatherhood more difficult than young girls who are in the same position, as social life and social development in females

## Social Life And Leisure Time

still tends to be far more dominated by home activities and marriage whereas boys are expected to be taking part in activities that are regarded as masculine (i.e. that boys take part in to virtual exclusion of girls) and that do in fact take place away from the home base. For instance when adolescent fathers were asked about their participation in leisure activities before the pregnancy only twenty eight per cent reported they had no outside interests. Most commonly they were involved in playing or watching sporting events (football, fishing, rugby, ice skating, darts, cricket, weight lifting, base ball and scuba-diving). In contrast, seventy seven per cent of the women were reported as having no sporting or recreational interests before their first pregnancy. A number of mothers were reported to have played badminton but only with the father, others played hockey and went to keep fit. Even allowing for an expected diminution effect where respondents report another person's interests and activities compared with their own, this is a striking difference.

### Changes In Father Social Life

To understand the changes that have occurred to the young father during the preceding eighteen months it is important to establish how he spent his free time before the baby was conceived, with particular reference to whether the girls and boys organised their time in order to be together or apart. In this sample, young men's social life at that stage was likely to be



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highly varied from one individual to another with factors such as age, unemployment, place of residence, relationship with girlfriend and friends affecting the sorts of activities he took part in. It may be interesting therefore to explore how his attitude to socially affiliated behaviour changed, firstly during the pregnancy period through the knowledge that he was fathering a child and secondly after the baby's arrival.

When fathers were asked how often they went out as a couple before the pregnancy, the majority (73%) reported spending at least two evenings a week together, and over thirty nine of them (the modal group) were going out at least four times a week (see Table I).

Table I

How Often Couple Went Out Before The Pregnancy Began		No.
Never/rare		5
Occasionally (1 - 3 times a month)		9
Once a week		13
2 - 3 times a week		34
4 or more times a week		39

For the most part young couples wanted to share their free time together; however, many had to face difficulties common to adolescent relationships. Difficulties tended to be centred on

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having no privacy, a lack of money and society's explicit restrictions on youth. Not surprisingly those young couples who were still living with their own parents found they had little or no time by themselves; as a consequence they often visited friends or relatives or went on walks in order to be away from the watchful eye of their own parents. A lack of money also restricted the variety and frequency of social activities; this was highlighted by the unemployed group who had been less likely to go out than employed couples. Finally the younger men (seventeen, eighteen, nineteen, twenty years) were less likely<sup>6</sup> to go out regularly with their partner (two times a week or more) when compared with the older fathers (twenty one and twenty two). Explanations for this difference could be that many of the evening social events (e.g. pubs) require that people be over eighteen to take part; although some of these younger fathers were of that age, they were on the whole being accompanied by partners who were approximately two years younger. Therefore not only would the couple have difficulty gaining entry but also they would be likely to face severe criticism from parents for breaking the law, and there may have been more parental restrictions imposed on the younger mothers and fathers concerning night-time behaviour. Also these younger couples are more likely to be at an earlier stage on Dunphy's model of social development and hence not at a stage where it is deemed acceptable by the individuals and the group to go out regularly as a couple. In contrast with how frequently the couple went out together, the majority of fathers

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<sup>6</sup>Chi-squared = 5.08, df = 1, Significance level = 0.024. See Appendix III, Table 8.I.

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(53%) reported rarely or never having gone out without their partner.

Table II

How Often Father Went Out Without Partner Before Pregnancy	
	No.
Never/rare	53
1 - 4 times a month	26
2 -3 times a week	13
4 or more times a week	8

Only twenty one per cent frequently went out without their partner, and these were often the highly sociable men who met their friends every day of the week and joined the girl at the weekend - the normal activity for these fathers was drinking in the local pub. However the majority of young men preferred to go out with their partners to going out on their own and although they were likely to see their friends they normally did so as a couple rather than on an individual basis. Therefore even before the conception it can be deduced that many of the young couples tended to socialise in a more "family" orientated manner than that of their contemporaries.

During the pregnancy, patterns of fathers' and mothers' social life altered. In general fathers reported reducing their frequency of going out; however the timing and reasons for cutting down



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varied. Some parents stopped straight away, normally because they wanted to save the money they would have spent on themselves in order to buy baby clothes and other accessories. Others began to cut down the number and length of outings, as the pregnancy developed, believing that it was in the mother's and unborn baby's interests to slow down the pace of life. In general all these couples felt their priorities needed to change, and they now preferred to remain at home rather than stay out late.

"We started stopping in more. We drifted away from our mates more, put it that way, and we stopped in more. We sort of, grown up more, in that nine months, when she knew she were having a baby, it changed a lot but, we stopped going out, stopped playing football, stopped going to discos. It was all sort of a new lifestyle it was. But as I say, for me it was for the better, I enjoyed it really. I don't miss, like to play football, or seeing me mates something like that." (Unemployed, 18 years old)

"We started going out less cos we couldn't afford to go out three nights a week then cos we had things to buy. I had to cut down on me fishing and things like that." (Animal by-products, 21 years old)

Thirty per cent of the fathers reported that nothing changed during the pregnancy. Two of these parents had never gone out before the pregnancy and continued to stay at home when they discovered that the girl was going to have a child. The rest, however regularly went out in much the same way as they had before. A few couples (7) went out more often than before as

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they saw this as the last opportunity before their freedom was very much restricted.

"Erm .... well cos we was both working when we first met .... and I was still working when we first met .... and I was still working when she was first pregnant ... in the daytime it was just concentrating on my work ... but in the evening, you know ... it didn't really change much at all we still went out regular drinking but it changed ... all it did was change the conversation at night everybody was always asking how Deborah was and asking her about the baby so all it did really was change the conversations." (Unemployed, 22 years old)

"Well it never changed actually because, when we moved in we never went out, maybe up to her Mum's and, we've always done that, just carried on the same way. Apart from we tried to get in a bit earlier to bed." (Unemployed, 21 years old)"

Once the baby had arrived, both mothers and fathers dramatically reduced the time they spent outside the home. Sixty eight of the fathers never or very rarely went out during the first six weeks, preferring to stay at home in order to be with the baby and help the mother.

## Table III

How Often Father Went Out During The First Few Weeks After Baby Born	
	No.
Never/rare	68
1 - 3 times a month	8
Once a week	4
2 - 3 times a week	13
4 or more times a week	3
Missing	4

Twenty per cent of the young fathers continued to go out at roughly the same frequency as before the child was born; these fathers were likely to be the ones who had gone out frequently on their own before the pregnancy, gone out frequently during the pregnancy<sup>7</sup> and now after the birth.<sup>8</sup> The new born child appeared to have the least impact on this highly sociable group of fathers. However most fathers wanted to be at home during this period and were very happy to relinquish their social life in order to be involved.

"Well, say the first, two months it did, like you know just two. But we didn't want to go out you know. We were too excited about the baby, like you know but, after the excitement, got a little bit, slack, we you know, said to my sister, would you

<sup>7</sup>Chi-squared = 3.9, df = 1, Significance level = 0.04. See Appendix III, Table 8.II.

<sup>8</sup>Chi-squared = 4.62, df = 1, Significance level = 0.03. See Appendix III, Table 8.III.



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baby sit like, a couple of hours. And that was it.  
While we went out for drink or something."  
(Unemployed, 21 years old)

### Father's Present Day Social Life

By the time the baby was one year old mother, father and child seemed likely to be settled into their own and each other's routines. It is therefore interesting to investigate how the young father has come to organise his "leisure" time both in and outside of the home and whether his priorities and commitments appear to be within the family or with other social groups such as friends.

Table IV

How Often Father Goes Out On His Own	
	<u>No.</u>
Never/rare	55
1 - 3 times a month	8
Once a week	20
2 - 3 times a week	13
4 or more times a week	4

Over half the fathers (55%) reported rarely (less than once per month) or never going out without the mother. Thus a large proportion of fathers were committed to being involved at home

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during the night-time. This of course gives no indication of whether they regretted giving up their previous social life but does reflect a general trend established before conception of preferring to be with the mother whether outside or inside the home. Therefore it was not surprising that many fathers were going out infrequently when the baby was one year old as they had already dissociated themselves from many of the activities of their peer group. Those fathers who only rarely went out on their own were significantly more likely to express happiness concerning the way their life was organised.

"No I don't like going out on me own .... I like to take Sharon with me cos it's a bit of company and then we can go places together .... and then there's no ..... you know, suspicion." (Unemployed, 22 years old)

"If I have to go out, you know, if me mates ask me from work. I used to. I have a couple of times gone out on my own but it's just no fun without Maria or the baby or owt. With me mates, I always used to be hanging out with me mates, like if I do go out seems to be something missing, all the time." (Process operator, 22 years old)

Finances and free time available were likely to affect how often the father was able to go out and indeed unemployed fathers were less likely to go out during the evenings than employed fathers; however the reasons for this may not just be financial since they also had a greater opportunity to socialise or take part in other activities during the day when employed men

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were working. Although work itself involves socialising, younger fathers did not take part in any of the formal social events organised at work. Of the forty five fathers who were going out regularly the majority (20) were meeting friends or playing football once a week. There were only nine fathers who appeared to want to spend more time away from their home than in it.

By the time the baby was one year old couples were normally beginning to establish a regular or semi-regular time for themselves (Table V).

Table V

How Often Couple Go Out Now	
	<u>No.</u>
Never	6
Rare (> 6 times a year)	26
6 - 11 times a year	4
1 - 3 times a month	25
Once a week	32
2 - 3 times a week	4
Total	<u>97</u>

This contrasts quite markedly with the Newson sample twenty years ago where they noted that going out was closely related to social class and that twice as many white collar and professionals went out "sometimes" as did Class V couples. Although the young



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father sample did not include any white collar or professional couples they were significantly<sup>9</sup> more likely to go out regularly (once a week) than the couples twenty years ago. During that period attitudes towards and opportunities to partake in leisure have dramatically changed and thus it is not altogether surprising that couples expect to have time together away from their baby, as middle class couples did then. However many still found leaving the baby with someone else a difficult and often insurmountable barrier.

"I think we did it once. I think it was half an hour before we walked out the door and we was worried about him - it's either I've gone out and Debbie's looked after him or Debbie's gone out and I've looked after him - if he knows one of us has got him he's alright. I won't leave him with Debbie's mum and I won't leave him with my Mum, not because they're funny in that way, but because I feel uncomfortable." (Unemployed, 19 years old)

"We have done once or twice if, me uncle's looked after him. Once or twice. I think it's actually twice we've been out without him, since he's been born, because we don't really like to see people looking after him, because he suffers with asthma. We like to keep an eye on him so we know what's going on." (Animal by-products, 21 years old)

Going out was seen an important time for the couple in order to relax away from the child, in contrast with the fathers who went out on their own who saw this as a time to remain in contact

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<sup>9</sup>Chi-squared = 4.75, df = 1, Significance level = 0.03. See Appendix III, Table 8.IV.

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with their friends.

Over a third of the sample (37%) felt that they had now completely lost contact with their former friends; the only time they did come into contact with each other was when they happened to "bump" into them when shopping in the city centre. There was a distinct dichotomy within the sample concerning frequency of seeing friends; on the whole either fathers regularly met their friends on an organised basis (once a week or more) or they never saw them. Fathers' explanations for never seeing friends fell into two areas. Firstly many of the fathers had had to move away from the area that their friends lived in; it was therefore difficult to remain in contact as most of the young families did not have telephones and also the distance between father and friends was a problem as they usually had to rely on public transport to carry them from one side of the city to the other. Secondly fathers felt distanced psychologically; they believed that their attitude towards many aspects of their lives had changed during the last eighteen months and that they now had very little in common with many of their friends. Those fathers who did not go out regularly were likely to feel isolated further because they believed that their friends did not understand what it meant to have a young child. Whether these feelings of lack of understanding grew out of a genuine lack of empathy or a lack of contact was not totally clear but a large number of fathers commented on the differences between them and their friends.



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"I don't think they do cos they always say to me - come on, come out Friday with me or whatever, I just turn around and say I can't afford it and they say come out and I'll pay for you. Which, you want to and then again you don't. So, I don't think they do understand." (Pie packer, 20 years old)

"Not a lot of the time, no. Umm .... some .... one or two of 'em 'll say ..er. "Oh yeah. Come wi' us" or something like that. But I say, "Nah. I don't want to". But they can't understand that I don't want to do the same as them. But ....erm .... I'll say, "Well, y'know if you've got a kid or something you'll find out whorrit's like yourself later". But they don't seem to understand it .... they seem to think that yer missin' out .... but, y'know at the same time I tend to think that they're missin' out .... 'cos I ... a lot of what they like , I don't like anyway (laughs) so ... um, that side of it doesn't bother me at all .... y'know ... a lot of it anyway is good natured .... they don't mean owt by it .... but even if they did it wouldn't affect me anyway cos I'd just take no notice of 'em." (General warehouseman, 21 years old)

Fathers were more likely to report that their friends<sup>10</sup> understood about young children if they had children themselves, and there appeared to be a shift of emphasis for many fathers from going out with their "male" friends to going out with other fathers. Therefore not only within the home but often outside fathers became more family orientated. Ironically the men who were most likely to report feeling unhappy about their present level of social activity were those fathers who frequently went out

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<sup>10</sup>Chi-squared = 4.2, df = 1, Significance level = 0.03. See Appendix III, Table 8.V.



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during the week with their friends.

"It's hard to say I mean if something crops up, like a mate phones me then I'll go out, but it'll probably only be till nine o'clock and then I'll be back here. If I plan to go out, I probably wouldn't be allowed to." (mother: "You make it sound like prison.") "It bloody is. I don't go out, I don't go out unless somebody phones me up or." (prompt: "So how often would you like to go out?") "I'd like to get out every night. I do just to have a break from, coming home every night, doing the same thing every night, you know watching telly, it get boring, apart from when you've got the money to, go out every night." (prompt: "How many times a week would you say you went out now?") "About two if I'm lucky (laughs)." (Furniture polisher, 22 years old)

The men who continued to go out frequently when the baby was one year old, as noted above, were also likely to be the same fathers who had gone out frequently before the child was conceived. These, therefore, were the men who had not reached the final stage of social adolescent development (according to Dunphy). He would suggest that those who were deeply entrenched in the ideals of their peer group were likely to remain at the same social stage as that of the group until the group itself developed more fully. In terms of my sample, entering parenthood they were likely to remain at the same social stage as evidenced by their continued, but reduced, activity outside the home and their general dissatisfaction with their present social life. Although fatherhood had forced them to alter their way of

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life many found it difficult to give up the values of their peers and so found themselves neither being totally part of "the group" or totally dedicated to "being a father". These difficulties of adjusting to the restrictions of parenthood are therefore not a function of the fathers' age in itself, although they may be age related in our society. They are more a reflection of shared personal development within a particular youth culture.

The majority of fathers (77%) believed that friends had perceived a change in them since they had become a parent. Most frequently fathers saw themselves as having moved away from the group and so grown up and therefore taking a more mature view on life.

"I have really cos, say I was one of them if you know what I mean, we was always together especially at school, gang I used to go round with at school; but now I'm a poofter, now, they call me a big poof and, everything, like I say it don't bother me, it's what I wanted. I'm happy as I am."  
(Unemployed, 18 years old)

"They think I'm more of a pratt. Because I don't go to the pub. They can't see that I'm not particularly doing what my wife tells me to do." (prompt: "That it's something you want to do yourself?") "It's for the baby's sake more than anything. OK my wife will tell me like, but if I didn't want to do it I wouldn't do it. I'm a big lad and she can't force me to do anything, and she knows that. I do it more for the baby's sake, for my wife's sake as well, but more because of the baby." (Lorry driver, 22 years old)



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However some felt that their friends now saw them in a more positive light as a consequence of their fatherhood, that they now respected a father's responsible attitude rather than viewing it as a move that threatened and questioned their lifestyle.

"Er ... I saw them as very higher up than I was .... I sort of looked up to them ..... but now (laughs) I see them below me ... now I'm married and got kids ... or as an equal I mean they seem to take me ... whereas they used to look down on me now they see me as an equal .... they ask me for advice (laughs) it's really changed round." (Unemployed, 21 years old)

"I've changed? ... erm .... I think I'm more sort of, I'm a helluva lot more independent now than what I used to be, I mean I used to be hopeless .... if I go out now, I'm more .... I can associate with people better, I'm more sort of respected ... I mean I used to go out and I used to hang around with a load of mates and you'd go in a pub and you'd think "Oh 'ere they are look" you know ... now I can go into a pub and the landlord'll say sort of, "Eh up, how you going on?, Alright?" you know, "How's your missus?" and all that lot, sort of respected more ..... changed quite a bit, in other people's eyes." (Unemployed, 22 years old)

### Father's Conversations At Work

When outside the home a large number of the fathers (68%) frequently discussed their child or children with other people. Conversations were normally dominated by how the baby was



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developing and what she had just achieved. A lot of these fathers felt considerable pride when recalling special moments to friends or workmates.

"I'm always telling people at work .... a lot of me mates at work have been round and seen her and that .... I've told them at work "Do you want to see my daughter, she's gorgeous" and all this lot and they've come round dinner time or something .... I'm always bragging about her ... I always have done, I only wanted a little girl .... spoilt her more than I did him ..... " (Builder, 21 years old)

"Oh just one of my work mates, who I work with - tell him what he's been doing... what a good looking bugger he is and all (laugh) I'm a big-head, aren't I?" (mother: "Well some people ask you about him though don't they?") "Yeah, some do yeah .... it cheers me up you know, when I'm at work, I think of the things he's done - I feel better for the day ... oh, I don't know I feel good." (Panel operator, 22 years old)

Among the men who talked frequently to other people there appeared to be no bias between talking to men or women. However among the men who talked less regularly there were a number who noted that having conversation about children was a female activity and one rarely started by men. In fact most of the men felt happy talking about their children but those who did not have regular conversations did not appear to get the same enjoyment or fulfillment out of discussing their children as many of the fathers who had frequent conversations.

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"What there's me mates 'n all that, people I work with, they 'ave children so I don't really mention it y'know, I try and .... I took photos in like, that were normal, but that were again there'd be conversation about 'im. See I'm there to work and if I was there to talk about children I'd be here all day like this, I wouldn't 'ave to go to work." (Quality control inspector, 21 years old)

When directly asked whether they had conversations about how to bring up young children the majority (55%) of fathers reported that they never had such discussions. Fathers felt strongly that the method by which they cared for their children was up to them, and to have conversations where other people talked about how they dealt with problems was an intrusion.

"No, cos most people of my age that I know socially, they're all single and what have you or married without children, or got no plans, so it never tends to crop up that much." (prompt: "Would you like to talk about it?") "Er - no not really, cos everybody's got their own idea, I mean I've got me own idea now of how I want to bring our Shaun up." (Hand sprayer, 21 years old)

"Not so much bringing up as what they've done - up to date - mainline of conversation." (prompt: "So do you ever talk about how you bring them up?") "No" (prompt: "Why's that?") "Everybody to their own, I think, just bring them up how you like, it could differ from one to the other and they could say "Oh, I don't like this or that" (prompt: "Would you like to talk about it more?") "No, not really. I like keeping meself to meself. I want to bring her up, it's my baby like, I'll do it this way." (Acoustic



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technician/fitter, 22' years' old)

Seventeen per cent had had one or two conversations and these had all been started by friends. Just over a quarter (28%) of the sample reported having child care conversations on a regular basis. For these fathers the conversations had considerable value as it was an opportunity to consolidate their own ideas.

"Yeah I have done, I have had a couple of discussions at work with lads at work .... you know about bringing up children you know.... shared points of view like ... I've said that I feel they should be brought up ... in a disciplined way ... but also that it should be brought up to be taught responsibilities and and also that he should be shown he is loved and accepted .... which I think is the most important thing is the most important thing, that they are brought up in an atmosphere of love." (Storeman, 22 years old)

Fathers did not remember so much listening to other people's opinion but more what they had said to other people. There appeared to be a mis-match between a father's function when he was at home, and how he described his attitudes towards conversations about children outside of the home. Many fathers established that they had strong views concerning child care and child welfare; however these strong views are contrasted by their lack of involvement in discussing the responsibilities of decision making within the family as will be shown in the next section.



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### **Conversations Between Mother And Father**

Once the excitement of the birth and the period subsequent to that had settled down the young mother and father had to set about adjusting their lives in order to accommodate the new arrival. For many fathers certain aspects of their life did not change; those who were working continued to work after the baby was born (there were no fathers in my sample who gave up work to care for the baby - the only fathers who stopped working after the birth were those who were made redundant or sacked). Fathers who continued to work often perceived their employment in a different light but nonetheless had to spend the majority of the day away from the home. They therefore missed the many day to day developments that occurred in the child's life, they were often absent when new feeding, sleeping and other routines were first put into action and established.

In this section I wish to explore the conversations that young fathers become involved in, especially those relating to child care. The time the employed father has at home is not only a time to be with the child but also a time when mother and father can discuss the various events of the day, and plan how they are going to tackle problems and put into action any changes. The regularity and perceived function of these conversations between mothers and fathers can give an indication of the father's daily interest in

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his young child and his role within and outside of the family. More importantly by looking at the areas of child care that fathers do discuss one can attempt to gauge the responsibility they are prepared to shoulder in making decisions concerning firstly the day to day welfare of their child and secondly the child's overall well-being.

Along with discussions about child care there are also likely to be arguments concerning how the child ought to be brought up. Issues such as discipline, sex role behaviour, comforting, feeding etc are likely to bring the mother and father into confrontation. How these differences of opinion are resolved will depend on the strength of feeling concerning these issues; the parents' individual and combined strategies for dealing with problems; the parents' function and power within the relationship, and the feasibility of putting into action the changes that the parent sees as important.

Inside the home fathers, especially those who had been working, liked to catch up on the events that had occurred while they had been away from home. Fifty nine per cent of all the fathers regularly had conversations concerning their child or children most evenings of the week. A father's role in these conversations varied, for the most part he was an active listener who enjoyed hearing of the progress that his child was making and the interesting happenings that had taken place.

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"No I look forward to hearing it cos it's progress that she's making that we talk about ..... I look forward to it cos we like looking back to how she was and then how she is now .... and it's enjoyable."  
(Unemployed, 22 years old)

Often a part of these conversations was devoted to how the child had behaved since the father was last at home; whether the child had been "naughty" often appeared to be irrelevant but it gave the mother an opportunity to vent some of the frustrations of looking after a young child all day. Fathers often found these incidents amusing and were able to defuse some of the daily confrontations by looking back at the more comical aspects of certain situations.

"Yeah ..... oh no, I always like to hear what she's done - if she's been good or ... what she's done that day; even if it's naughty I like to have a laugh about it .... what she's done." (Senior warehouse assistant, 22 years old)

A few fathers saw these conversations as a time only to discuss the child's behaviour, and as a consequence then to impose themselves as disciplinarian; these fathers were normally those who had other older children.

"I always ask when I come home from work, sometimes I don't have to ask, she'll say, "She's



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been a pain today" (laughs)" (prompt: "Do you look forward to these conversations or do they sometimes get a bit boring?") "It don't get boring ..... it just comes natural every time I come home from work .... what they been at all today, or I'll just walk in and she'll say "Just tell him will you, he's been a right pain today (laughs) ...it don't bother me ..... it's my responsibility .... they're my kids." (Builder, 21 years old)

Just over a quarter of the fathers reported they did not regularly talk about their one year old but had conversations when she did something special, for instance when she took her first steps or said her first words. A further fifteen per cent said they rarely or never had such conversations. This is a relatively large proportion of the sample when compared with data collected by Lewis on fathers of a normative age range, in the Lewis sample five per cent never or rarely discussed the child whilst twenty four per cent only had discussions when the child did something special. Younger fathers were significantly<sup>11</sup> less likely to have conversations every day than older fathers. This difference can perhaps be explained by two differences in the samples. Firstly, with just under half the young fathers being unemployed, the need to have an organised conversation each day becomes very much reduced; as the function of such conversations is to inform the father what has been happening whilst he has been away, this function is made redundant when the unemployed father is at home all day. When comparing the employed and unemployed young fathers there was also a significant difference<sup>12</sup> between

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<sup>11</sup>Chi-squared = 3.7, df = 1, Significance level = 0.05. See Appendix III, Table 8.VI.

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the two, with unemployed fathers reporting far fewer conversations than employed fathers.

"Erm ... if 'ee's done somethin' new or special .... if it's somethin' that's made us laugh .... we talk about it. But .... we're both usually there anyway .... which generally .... talk about what 'appened durin' the day." (Unemployed, 19 years old)

Secondly, as Lewis noted in his own sample, there are significant differences between social classes, with fathers from social class I, II and III white collar reporting a higher regularity of conversations than those from social class III manual, IV and V.<sup>13</sup> As has been previously reported all the young fathers in my sample were employed in a semi-skilled or unskilled capacity.

Although most fathers looked forward to these conversations, ten per cent found that they occasionally got bored, normally when discussing the more mundane aspects of daily life. Six per cent only found it interesting when their child had done something special and two fathers never found it interesting.

Fathers were asked more directly whether they and the mother had discussed certain aspects of their child's development, for instance, whether they had been involved with discussions

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<sup>12</sup>Chi-squared= 12.6, df = 1, Significance level = 0.0005. See Appendix III, Table 8.VII.

<sup>13</sup>Chi-squared = 9.72, df = 1, Significance level = 0.002.

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concerning when to start potty training. Over half the fathers (54%) reported they had left that decision to the mother. Normally it was seen as the mother's responsibility to know or find out when routines such as feeding or potty training need to be started. No fathers reported starting the first conversations concerning when to begin potty training. For those fathers who were rarely involved in changing nappies the thought of changing from nappies to the potty was unlikely to cross their mind since it was a routine they were detached from.

"No ..... that's all left up to Angela ....Asha's on a pot already .... when they're not sitting on properly, they're a bit wobbly ....just sit them against the settee with some cushions .... sooner you get them out of nappies the better (laugh) ... lot less washing." (Builder, 21 years old)

Even those fathers who were more participant did not take the initial responsibility for making decisions concerning the baby's routine.

"No, like, she'll turn round to me and say we'll start one on a pot tomorrow or something, and that's it we start one you know, she's old enough to do this now, say fair enough we'll start then." (Unemployed, 21 years old)

"I think that's her, Wendy decides it, cos, you know she's read about it and what have you. I mean it comes into the routine and all that, kind of just take it as it comes." (Labourer, 20 years old)



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In the families where potty training was discussed the mother was the main person behind the motivation to change. The father's role in these discussions was often to act as a vehicle for mothers to announce what they intended to do; mothers were officially asking the fathers rather than telling them that they were going to change the babies' routine. Backett<sup>14</sup> describes parental negotiation of this kind as "a vital means both of coping with uncertainties of their parental situation, and mutually-legitimizing and reinforcing each other's beliefs in the appropriateness of their actions."<sup>15</sup> However many of these fathers realised that they were not significantly involved in the decision making.

"Er ... well yes, she'll say well, she'll ....she'll well she'll not, well ask me she'll say "Oh I'm going to start, see if I can get Mark on a potty this week" like, she'll say. And I'll say "Oh I think, you know, you'll be alright" but she don't like ask me when .... when to, cos I think Janet, she knows best when it is." (Print finisher, 21 years old)

"Mmm, well the vaccinations come regular to every baby ..... so we've had most of those done .... as potty training .... she says something to me about it other week "Shall we try it out" and I says "You can do if you like, yeah" ... we tried it ... I mean ... he'd rather flipping do it in his nappy ... if you sit him on the potty he'll start crawling around ... so we ... we...

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<sup>14</sup>Katherine Backett, *Mothers and Fathers: A Study of the Development of Parental Behaviour*, (London: Macmillan. 1982).

<sup>15</sup>Ibid. p. 45.

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just try things like that, we both find it more of a laugh than anything else ... a bit of fun and if they work we stick to them if they don't then we sort of laugh about it and say, try later .... she suggests most of the things that concerns him, I always mostly go along with them and see what they're like." (Unemployed, 22 years old)

Fathers report more involvement in discussions which directly affect the child's physical well-being. For instance fifty six per cent of the fathers report having conversations about whether the child should have vaccinations, and only twenty seven per cent of the mothers took single responsibility for vaccinations. When considering who would make the decision to call the doctor if the baby was unwell twenty four fathers believed that it would be them that made that decision. A further forty per cent felt it would be a joint decision and thirty one thought it would be the mother.

Table VI

Father's Involvement In Childcare Decisions			
	Potty training	Vaccinations	Calling doctor
Mother only	54	27	31
Both discuss	42	55	45
Father only	2	1	24
Other (e.g. clinic)	2	17	0
Total	100	100	100

Table VI displays father's involvement in discussions concerning child care and in general it shows he is more likely to be involved in major decisions rather than those that affect just the day to day routine of the child. In fact fathers who are at home all day (i.e. unemployed) were more likely to discuss day to day changes in routine, such as nappy changing,<sup>16</sup> than those who were away at work. However the major responsibility for implementing these changes rested with the mother.

### Mother's And Father's Arguments

La Rossa<sup>17</sup> who studied fifteen couples' (using indepth interviews) conceptualised daily life when married as being based on "a system in which confrontation was inevitable and consensus problematic."<sup>18</sup> He reported, when investigating conflict within the power structure of the family, that marital differences were an integral part of family life. The major orientation of this study was not to establish the nature of conflicts between mother and father.

Many of the fathers (40%) reported that they had no arguments or disagreements with the mother concerning how to

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<sup>16</sup>Chi-squared = 7.19, df = 1, Significance level = 0.007. See Appendix III, Table 8.VIII.

<sup>17</sup>Ralph La Rossa, *Conflict and Power in Marriage*, (Sage Library of Social Research, vol 50, 1977).

<sup>18</sup>Ibid. p. 104.



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bring up their child. This is a considerable proportion of the sample when one considers how often arguments form an integral part of our daily life. It perhaps reflects a number of aspects of family life. Firstly couples and especially fathers are often reluctant to admit to having disagreements as this could be interpreted by others as evidence of a failing relationship. The pressure to give the impression of happy family life is considerable, some fathers may have wished to dispel themselves as examples of the folk wisdom which believes there is instability in young marriages, and others may have felt that the interview context in some ways demands parents to put on a "good show". Secondly some fathers may indeed perceive any differences between themselves and the mother concerning child care as small in comparison to other issues, such as money, going out, marital problems. Thirdly some fathers may feel relatively detached and powerless when decisions concerning the child's welfare are made, and consequently not involved in conversations of this nature. Fathers' feelings of powerlessness often stem from not being at home during the day, rendering them incapable of changing the mother's ideas or acting upon ideas that they have themselves.

"Maria decides things like that, you know, cos she's with her all day you see I'm not really, nothing to say if I disagree with her I'll tell her I don't agree with it but if she thinks it's for the best it's for the best." (Furniture polisher, 22 years old)

Table VII

Disagreements Between Mother And Father About Child	
	No.
None	37
Mother protests at father	19
Father protests at mother	6
Disagree - come to agreement	14
Agree to differ	24

Nearly a fifth of the fathers reported that any disagreements were normally based around the way they related to the child. Most commonly fathers believed that mothers were upset by the physical nature of the father-child interactions - throwing in the air, teasing and tormenting was viewed by the mother as over boisterous and smacking as often too hard.

"Oh, when I'm throwing them about, I threw Damian once and hit his head on the ceiling, she didn't like that. She said I shouldn't be throwing them about so much. As I say, all the times I've thrown them about, I've never hurt them. They seem to know ... like Roxanne, she's terrified of being thrown about, but Jade she's into it, and Damian used to be into it but he's going through a different stage now. It's just stages all the time. A lot of the time you do have to beat the life out your kids, but we try not to. We try to keep it with just with normal running." (Unemployed, 21 years old)

(mother: "I don't like him to smack her. I'll smack her but I don't like him to.") (prompt: "Why's

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that?") "She doesn't like me to smack her." (prompt: "Is that because you smack harder?") (mother: "You don't really smack her hard but...") "When I smack her, she she knows then. but when she smacks, she just laughs at her, you see." (Unemployed, 18 years old)

In comparison very few fathers reported (6%) only having arguments over the mother's unacceptable behaviour. These fathers found that the mother was too loving towards the child, and they feared that always comforting the baby when he cried or fell over would lead to indulgence and spoilt behaviour. The majority of fathers reported (38%) that both parents disagreed sometimes about the way in which each handled the baby. These disagreements were normally orientated around 'discipline or the giving of love, as previously described. Others, especially the fathers of boys, had differences of opinion over the style of clothes that were to be worn. In the majority of incidents the differences between the parents remained unresolved.

### Summary

In general all the young men who became fathers went through considerable changes in their social life during the period from conception to when the baby was one year old, these changes normally involved withdrawing from many of the social activities that the young father was accustomed to. However evidence



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suggests that the process of withdrawal may have started before the conception, as indicated by fathers' reluctance to go out without the mother. By the time the baby arrived the majority of fathers were not going out at all. As a consequence many fathers found that they had lost contact with their friends (37%); indeed maintaining contact was seen as difficult because not only were young fathers often many miles away from where their friends lived but also fathers felt that they were now significantly different from their friends because of the extra responsibilities that they now had to shoulder. Not all fathers become physically and psychologically isolated; many fathers (55%) continue to keep up regular contact with their friends. However even these relationships were affected by the young person's fatherhood, and often the young father sought out friends who were also fathers.

Consistent with other studies on fathers,<sup>19</sup> young fathers displayed considerable interest in their young child and much of their free time at home and at work was devoted to listening to or recounting how the child was developing. Although considerably concerned about their children the vast majority of fathers were in no way involved in making decisions concerning the day to day routine of the child; this not only reflected that many were absent during the day but also that such decisions were perceived as the sole responsibility of the mother. Fathers were however more likely to be involved in decisions that were not necessarily more

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<sup>19</sup>Charlie Lewis, *Becoming a Father*, (Milton Keynes: Open University Press. 1986).

Lorna McKee, "Fathers' participation in infant care: A critique" *The Father Figure*. Ed., Lorna McKee and Margaret O'Brien, (London: Tavistock. 1982).

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important but could be categorised as potentially more life threatening. Although often not influential in decisions concerning the daily routine of the child, many of the fathers reported having strong views about the way their child should be brought up.

## Chapter Nine

### Young Father's Sensitivity And Responsiveness

#### Introduction

In this chapter I wish to explore young fathers' reports of their parental methods when handling their one year old child, and also to investigate the predominant attitudes forming the basis of this parenting behaviour. In particular, I want to examine the sensitivity and responsiveness young fathers display when dealing with the everyday problems which arise when a child is unsettled or being difficult.

With the extensive publicity given to the incidence of all forms of child abuse, there has been both a desire and a demand for research to isolate the factors which appear to increase the likelihood of abuse. One of the major characteristics found to be over-represented in abusing parents is youthfulness at the birth of the first child. In a number of studies<sup>1</sup> it has been found

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<sup>1</sup>Ruth Hanson, J.W. McCulloch and Susan A. Hartley, "Key Characteristics in child abuse," *Child Abuse*. Ed. Alfred White Franklin, (Edinburgh: Churchill Livingstone, 1977).

Margaret Lynch and Jacqueline Roberts, "Early alerting signs" *Child*



that there were comparatively more abusing mothers who were aged under twenty years when they had their first child than older mothers. However, most studies of this nature have only examined mothers in the abusing population, and have therefore been unable to comment on how representative these adolescents are of the whole adolescent parent population; therefore it is important to investigate both young mothers' and fathers' approaches to care giving and to place their behaviour within the context of "normal" parenting in our society.

Lamb and Easterbrooks<sup>2</sup> have emphasised the importance of parental sensitivity for child development and in particular the development of social cognition. Interestingly Leventhal investigated two reported risk factors (1) prematurity or low birth weight and (2) young maternal age. He examined a number of studies<sup>3</sup> which reported finding prematurity and young

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*Abuse*. Ed. Alfred White Franklin, (Edinburgh: Churchill Livingstone, 1977).

Margaret Lynch and Jaqueline Roberts, "Predicting child abuse: signs of bonding failure in the maternity hospital," *British Medical Journal* 1 (1977): 624-626.

<sup>2</sup>Michael Lamb, Ann Easterbrooks, "Individual Differences In Parental Sensitivity: Origins, Components, and Consequences," *Infant Social Cognition: Empirical And Theoretical Considerations*. Eds. Michael Lamb and Lorrie Sherrod, (Hillsdale, New Jersey: Lawrence Earlbaum Associates, 1981).

<sup>3</sup>John Leventhal, "Risk Factors for Child Abuse: Methodologic Standards in Case-Control Studies," *Pediatrics* 68.5 (1981): 684-690.

E. Elmer and G.S. Gregg, "Developmental characteristics of abused children," *Pediatrics* 40 (1967): 2783.

A.E. Skinner and R.L. Castle, *78 Battered Children: A Retrospective Study*, (London: NSPCC, 1969).

M. Klein and L. Stern, "Low birth weight and the battered child syndrome," *American Journal of Disabled Children*, 122 (1971): 15.

B. Lauer, E.T. Broeck and M. Grossman, "Battered child syndrom: Review of 130 patients with controls," *Pediatrics*, 54 (1974): 67.

H.P. Martin, P. Beezley and E.F. Conway et al, *Advances in Pediatrics*, 21

maternal age as being high risk factors. He found that the majority of studies could be criticized on a number of methodological criteria which had not been adequately controlled for ([1] use of control groups, [2] selection of sample leading to biases, [3] different definitions of abuse, [4] different definitions of risk factor, [5] biases in detecting certain groups, and [6] demographic differences). Having subjected 22 studies to more rigorous statistical and methodological analysis he concluded:

"This review indicates that the conclusions of certain case-control studies of child abuse may reflect faulty methodology rather than the truth about the hypothesis investigated. Of the seven methodological standards against which the case control groups were compared two (choice of a specific control group and adjustment for differences in the clinical and demographic susceptibility) most often affected the conclusions of the studies."<sup>4</sup>

Lamb has defined sensitivity as being "an adult's tendency to provide contingent, appropriate, and consistent responses to an infant's signals or needs."<sup>5</sup> In such a context Lamb has also

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(1974): 25.

S.M. Smith, R. Hanson, "134 Battered children: A medical and psychological study," *British Medical Journal*, 3 (1974): 666.

S.M. Smith, R. Hanson and S. Noble, "Social aspects of the battered baby syndrome," *British Journal of Psychiatry*, 125 (1974): 568.

etc.

<sup>4</sup>Leventhal., *op. cit.*, 1981: 689.

<sup>5</sup>Michael Lamb and Arthur Elster, "Parental Behaviour of Adolescent Mothers and Fathers" *Adolescent Fatherhood*. Ed. Michael Lamb (Hillsdale. N.J.: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates: 1986): 90.



stated:

"The adult has to perceive the infant's signal or need, interpret it correctly, select an appropriate response from her/his repertoire, and implement it effectively. A deficiency in any of these stages of the reception-response sequence could result in behaviour that would be labelled insensitive."<sup>6</sup>

In a more recent paper Elster and Lamb<sup>7</sup> have contended that adolescent fathers are more likely to exhibit inadequate parental behaviour which has adverse effects on their children's development. However, no evidence is provided concerning paternal behaviour, and a speculative link between economic stresses, low job satisfaction and parental insensitivity is given. Elster et al<sup>8</sup> when reviewing studies concerned with parental behaviour of adolescent mothers note that very few investigators have directly studied behavioural sensitivity of adolescent mothers. They cite a number of studies (9) which have investigated the relationship between youth and maternal sensitivity; although much of the research has severe methodological flaws which undermine their validity. Elster et al still conclude "Taken together, the results of the studies suggest that there may be qualitative differences between the parental

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<sup>6</sup>Lamb et al., *op. cit.*, 1981: 128.

<sup>7</sup>Arthur Elster and Michael Lamb, "Adolescent Fathers: A Group Potentially At Risk For Parenting Failure," *Infant Mental Health Journal*, 3.3 (Fall 1982): 148-155.

<sup>8</sup>Arthur Elster, Elizabeth R McAnarney and Michael Lamb, "Parental Behaviour of Adolescent Mothers," *Pediatrics*, 71. 4 (April 1983): 494-503.



behaviour of adolescent and adult mothers."<sup>9</sup>

One of the major methodological problems in attempting to identify the influence of age on parenting is the large number of other variables which are likely to interact and have bearing on parental behaviour. Many of these variables are age related but nonetheless cannot be viewed as only being associated with young people. For instance youth unemployment at the time of interviewing was at an all time high. In no way could it be said that joblessness was something unique to adolescent fathers, but the effect of unemployment cannot be ignored as, even at the most basic level, it affects the amount of caretaking that a father is likely to be involved in and also the amount of money a family can guarantee they have to spend in a week. Therefore trying to isolate the "true" effect of age on parenting is fraught with methodological and statistical complications. John Leventhal<sup>10</sup> when examining statistics for child abuse illustrated the complexities of attempting to analyse data with demographic differences. His paper concentrated on examining various retrospective studies which had "identified" high risk factors associated with potential victims of abuse. He also emphasised the difficulties of examining populations in which there were differences over a number of influential variables.

Bearing this in mind, it is possible to draw attention to some of the underlying trends seen in the reports of young fathers. It also

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<sup>9</sup>Ibid. p496.

<sup>10</sup>Leventhal., *op. cit.*, 1981.

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must be noted that, although these trends often represent considerable differences between adolescent parents and parents from a more normative age range, they are usually quantitative differences and so do not necessarily denote a "deviance" or "abnormality" which can then be categorised as a qualitative characteristic of adolescent parenthood.

### Father's Response To Unsettled Behaviour

In an attempt to get an indication of adolescent fathers' sensitivity I wish firstly to examine fathers' reported reaction to the child's "unsettled" behaviour. Although these reports are not in themselves objective measures of how fathers behave when their child cries or has a temper tantrum etc, they do at least give a realistic flavour of everyday incidents within the home, and how fathers respond to them.

When asked "Does he ever just seem a bit miserable?" the majority (87%) reported that there were times when the baby could be described in this way. There was no reported difference between the young father sample and the Lewis sample of a more normative age range, in the occurrence of "miserable" behaviour in the child. However, there was a difference in father's perceptions of the reasons for the child's behaviour. The older sample were significantly more likely<sup>11</sup> to believe that the

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<sup>11</sup>Chi-squared = 13.3, df = 1, Significance level = 0.0002, fathers who reported their child never being miserable behaviour were removed from the sample. See Appendix III, Table 9.I.

miserable behaviour was due to the baby being ill or feeling unwell i.e. when teething; whereas the younger fathers were more likely to describe the miserable behaviour as being caused by the child wanting attention or being in a "mood". Adolescent fathers therefore perceived miserable behaviour as more likely to be due to the child's current disposition, i.e. as having a degree of intentionality, than to situational factors that were outside of the infant's control.

The experience of having other, older, children also affected young fathers' view of miserable behaviour, second timers being more likely<sup>12</sup> to give situational and transient explanations for the child feeling miserable. Even though these fathers were perhaps slightly older than those who were having first children, the effect of experiencing parenting in itself seemed to have given them valuable insight into child behaviour.

On examining the ways in which fathers reported dealing with young children when they felt miserable, from their accounts it is possible to categorise their behaviour into two broad areas: sensitive and insensitive.

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<sup>12</sup>Chi-squared= 4.22, df = 1, Significance level = 0.03. Fathers who reported their child never being miserable behaviour were removed from the sample. See Appendix III, Table 9.II.



## Father Sensitivity And Responsiveness

Table I

Father's Reaction To Miserable Behaviour	
	<u>No.</u>
Never miserable	13
Insensitive	
Leave	18
Fetch mother/doctor	8
Sensitive	
Distract	28
Comfort	24
Other response	8
Total	<hr/> 99

In general, I am defining as insensitive those who left the baby to get over his miserableness alone or passed the responsibility over to the mother so that they did not have to deal with it themselves.

"Well you have to - it'll take a bit of force off you then but generally you have to let him get on with it - there's not a lot he'd let you do for him anyway - you have to bear with him - last couple of weeks he's been terrible - shouting and screaming." (Steeple jack, 21 years old)

(prompt: "Do you know what makes her feel like that?") "No, I don't think so. Sometimes, as I say, she gets out of bed or somebody wakes her up she's miserable then. She doesn't like being woke up - you know, she's ever so glad to see somebody if anybody

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comes - she'll fuss them - she likes a kiss off her dad." (prompt: "How do you cope with it when she feels a bit miserable?") "The wife copes with it - I've got a temper - I mean if I get out of bed in the morning - I'm not the best of people in the morning anyway - if she's got a temper then I lose my temper - the wife shouts at me for losing my temper .... so." (mother: "I found out it's just best to leave her.") (Part-time labourer, 21 years old)

Those who were categorised as being more "sensitive" tended to try and comfort the child by giving them a "bit of love" or distract them by offering them toys or other objects.

"Well we just have to try and get along with it. We try to occupy her mind to cheer her up a bit, like you would say a kid of five you have to keep playing with them ... so that's what we do with her ... but mainly she's cheerful more of the time than what she's miserable ... you never get a bad day often .... you'll probably get a couple of hours ... that's all." (Unemployed, 22 years old)

(prompt: "How do you cope with it when she's like that?") "Just play with her for a few minutes and then she seems to cool down, she'll give you like a little smile and then she'll start laughing." (Unemployed, 22 years old)

Their accounts gave only the most general indication of how effective either of these parental methods was at calming the child down. There was also no relationship between fathers' perception of the cause of the miserable behaviour and his reported method

of dealing with it: it was not the case that young fathers who believed the child was miserable only when he/she was ill were more likely to report adopting a sensitive approach than those who saw miserableness as a more internalised disposition. There were no significant differences<sup>13</sup> between the young father sample and the Lewis sample of fathers from a normative age range when comparing how they reported dealing with "miserable" behaviour.

Attitudes towards a child being miserable or crying were likely to be affected by the perceived circumstances or reasons for such behaviour. Since crying is one of the child's main means of communication there are likely to be occasions when a child cries in such a way as to communicate rebellion or defiance. Under these circumstances young and older fathers report different attitudes about the effect of leaving the baby to cry. In the main young fathers were more likely<sup>14</sup> to state that they thought it would not do any harm to leave the baby to cry; however this difference becomes non-significant when social class is controlled for<sup>15</sup> and so it would appear to represent a social class difference rather than an age difference. One thing to bear in mind, as the Newsons discovered in their original study, is that there was a considerable difference between what parents say is

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<sup>13</sup>Chi-squared= 1.07, df = 1, Significance level = 0.30. Fathers who reported their child never being miserable behaviour were removed from the sample See Appendix III, Table 9.III.

<sup>14</sup>Chi-squared = 15.2, df = 1, Significance level = 0.0001. See Appendix III, Table 9.IV.

<sup>15</sup>Chi-squared = 3.0, df = 1, Significance level = 0.08. Fathers who were working in I/II or III white collar jobs were removed, as were unemployed fathers. See Appendix III, Table 9.V.



acceptable in this area and what they actually did. The Newsons felt that many parents were paying a form of lip service to the prevailing medical advice when replying to the question "Do you think it does a child of this age any harm to be left to cry?", and this seemed true of my young fathers.

"Er .... I don't think it does any harm ..... but I, I wouldn't .... we wouldn't leave him a long period of time when I think it would er ... I think it would ... it would scare them and make them uneasy if they was to be left for a period of time to cry." (Storeman, 22 years old)

"I don't think it does a child any harm to let it cry; if I heard her I wouldn't leave her." (mother: "He doesn't like to hear her cry.") "I think she's, upset or, you know I see what's wrong with her." (prompt: "So how long would you leave her if you felt there was nothing wrong with her?") "I wouldn't." (Sales engineer, 20 years old)

"I think it does them some good, but we've never done that with Justin - no I don't like it." (Unemployed, 19 years old)

In order to gain an idea of long they were actually prepared to leave the baby young fathers were asked "How long would you leave him if you thought there was nothing wrong with him?", replies ranged from "I wouldn't" to "all night". In general however the majority (82%) said they would not leave the baby for longer than thirty minutes.

Table II

Length Of Time Father Would Leave One Year Old To Cry		
	Normative age sample	Adolscent sample
Would not leave	9	8
Less than 5 minutes	19	16
5 - 10 minutes	24	29
11 - 20 minutes	23	21
21 - 30 minutes	17	8
30 minutes or more	8	17
Total	<u>100</u>	<u>100</u>

When compared to the Lewis sample the lengths of time that fathers were prepared to leave the child were roughly equivalent, although of those who would leave the child for as much as 20 minutes there was a larger (but not quite significant<sup>16</sup>) group of young fathers who would leave the child for still longer or indefinite periods.

(prompt: "How long would you leave them if you thought there was nothing wrong with them?") "All night. We've found out they go to sleep about a hour and a half later anyway. They get a bit pissed off crying." (Unemployed, 21 years old)

"As long as he were crying really - I mean I'd leave him for about three hours - he'd just cry himself to

<sup>16</sup>Chi-squared = 3.8, df = 1, Significance level= 0.051. See Appendix III, Table 9.VI.

sleep." (Labourer, 21, years old)

(prompt: "Do you think it does any harm to leave her to cry?") "No if they're crying you know they're alive and breathing." (prompt: "How long would you leave her to cry?") (mother: "She's been left a long time hasn't she?") "Yes actually, she used to be awful when she was little .... but we'd just leave her for about three hours at a time. (Sack cutter, 19 years old)

As with many decisions concerning how to best approach child care problems fathers felt themselves caught in the position of doing something unnatural in order to create long term benefit. Thus when they believed the baby was crying for no obvious reason fathers would often leave them for a longer period than they would have liked. The notion that the child would become spoilt in the future, if constantly attended to, had a powerful effect in determining parents' present behaviour. However, fathers often had to pay a penalty for this "long term" approach.

"Erm ..... tend to think that sort of erm - well all things go through your mind, you want to get up, but you don't, sort of thing cos you know, I mean you know in your mind well I know anyway, once you've done it you'll regret it, sort of thing, always ... I mean you hear about it, helluva lot, flipping people beating their kids up on telly .... I mean it really er gets me that does ... there no way I'd do it to him ... no but ... it makes you feel like doing it so you can see why there is some sort of ... you know, people do it but if you've got the ... if it's there you should be able to control it. I mean why should you beat a kid up at that age .... there's no way ... you just have to put up with it, plus you know ... it's



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only for at most an hour .... I mean it's never been more than an hour it might be sometimes later on or it might not, you know always, next day you can wake up in the morning, early hours of the morning and he's crying his eyes out, Deb'll go and see to him and he won't shut up but you're thinking nowt of it, you'll see him and you'll look at him and you'll think "No I could never do it to him" .... It just gets me upset er so as I'd go in and hurt him, it just gets me upset.. I can think well, half an hour later everything will be alright and I'll be back to sleep."  
(Unemployed, 22 years old)

".....It just gets me angry - not that I'd do anything to hurt her or anything - the sound just gets through me I wish she would be quiet but I don't ever scream at her or shake her or anything - I wouldn't do anything like that." (Clerk/computer operator, 20 years old)

"If she's crying for a reason - if she's fallen over or something I feel sorry for her but if she's just crying - I get annoyed .... because I don't like mardy kids. Drives me crackers, that does." (Unemployed, 21 years old)

"Um ... it gets us a bit ratty sometimes ... 'specially if you think it's for nothin' .... I mean if it's for 'is teeth neither of us really mind, do we?" (prompt: "How else does it make you feel?") "Er ... tensed up. Durin' the day it doesn't really matter all that we'll just start playin' with 'im it's at night ... 'e sometimes just starts in the middle of the day. It's mostly 'cos 'e's a little bit tired .... but er.. it does get ya a bit tensed up....."  
(Unemployed, 19 years old)

Fathers who had experience of previous children were more likely to report feeling calm than inexperienced fathers. The majority (62%) of fathers reported feeling uncomfortable when the one year old cried for a prolonged time.

**Table III**

<b>How Father Feels When One Year Old Cries</b>	
	<u>No.</u>
Never upset	39
Feels sorry for him	9
Unsettles/worries him	10
Upsets him	7
Annoys him/gets on nerves	25
Makes him angry	10

### **Father's Reactions To Tantrums**

None of the above data records how effective young fathers were at dealing with a difficult or unsettled child, but perhaps some indication of young fathers' parenting skills can be gained by examining the frequency of the child's temper tantrums. Displays of temper were usually caused by frustration when the child was unable to organise or manipulate their world in the way they wanted. Methods parents have of dealing with temper tantrums are likely to effect their frequency and intensity. As the Newsons describe there are three general alternatives a mother (or father) may employ when dealing with the situations that commonly precede a tantrum.

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"She can give in to the baby's wish (but this may be dangerous or inexpedient); she can insist on her own course of action, possibly giving the child a smack for good measure, and risk a tantrum; or she can, while insisting that the child conforms to her will on the matter at issue, so distract him by special cuddling or drawing his attention to other attractive occupations that his frustration is reduced and a tantrum averted."<sup>17</sup>

The efficacy of each of these methods is not totally clear, but the Newsons believed that completely ad hoc methods, where the mother was inconsistent when dealing with the child (i.e. first smacking and then giving a sweet to get over the slap) were likely to increase the frequency of temper tantrums and this supposition, though it was not the whole story, was supported by class differences showing increased tantrums further down the social class scale. Among the young father sample the most commonly reported way of dealing with a child in a temper was to leave them.

"I mean, OK you let him go so far, and if it carried on for too long, you try and get them out of it but, personally, I think it's best to leave them cos at the age that they are I mean I, you don't know actually you don't want to do this and you don't want to do that, but they can't understand what you're trying to you know, tell him or, whatever. So I think it's best to leave them. When they're older, when they do it yeah, then I think it'd, the parents would step in and smack them or...." (Furniture polisher, 22 years old)

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<sup>17</sup>John and Elizabeth Newson, *Infant Care in an Urban Community*, (George Allen and Unwin: London 1963): 196.



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"I don't actually know, this is the first, and we've yet to learn about that, while we leave him at the moment, and if he comes out of it we may as well leave the next one." (Unemployed, 20 years old)

"No. If she's having a temper, a bad temper, you've just got to sit her in the middle of the room and just leave her - until she gets herself out of it - she'll be the first to move." (Steeple jack, 21 years old)"

Twenty eight of the fathers adopted a more comforting and caring approach, preferring to try and distract or comfort the child out of their temper. Fourteen fathers reported smacking the child when tantrums started.

"Well, not really, but I do, .....because I've got a short temper and I get ratty with the little ones. Er .. she doesn't do it much now, .... say once a week ... at least! But sometimes you don't have to smack her arse and put her to bed, she just packs it up when you tell her off." (Unemployed, 21 years old)

Within the sample there was a relationship between whether father's reported parental methods were coded as sensitive or insensitive<sup>18</sup> and the frequency of temper tantrum. Fathers who tried to distract or comfort the child during a tantrum were likely to report fewer tantrums (less than one a week) than those who

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<sup>18</sup>Chi-squared = 4.5, df = 1, Significance level= 0.03 Parental methods that were coded as being sensitive were, comforting placating or distracting the child. Whereas insensitive approaches were seen as leaving the child, punishing, putting the child to bed, or telling the child off. See Appendix III, Table 9.VII.

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left or smacked the child. Furthermore, although there was no significant difference<sup>19</sup> in this particular style of parenting between the young father sample and the sample from the normative age range, there was a highly significant difference<sup>20</sup> between the two samples when frequency of tantrums were compared, with the one year olds of the younger parents having far more temper tantrums.

Table IV

Frequency Table: Tantrums In One Year Old		
	Normative age sample	Adolescent sample
Never	24	10
Rare	8	5
Less than once a week	15	12
1 - 3 times a week	24	27
Most days	11	9
Daily	18	37
Total	100	100

This difference according to age remained when social class between the two groups was controlled for. The reason for this difference was not totally clear as there were methodological as well as age considerations; for instance there were likely to be

<sup>19</sup>Chi-squared = 0.18, df = 1, Significance level= 0.67. Parental methods were coded as described in footnote 18. See Appendix III, Table 9.VIII.

<sup>20</sup>Chi-squared = 6.16, df = 1, Significance level= 0.013. See Appendix III, Table 9.IX.

differences between all fathers in the way in which they perceived and then responded to questions concerning child care. However, if the difference in frequency of tantrums was seen as being real and taking into consideration that there were no age differences in how different-aged fathers dealt with the tantrums once they had begun, it leads one to believe that the large difference between the two age groups was due to the younger parents being less able to defuse potentially frustrating experiences for the child. The combined figure of forty six per cent for a frequency of most days or more can be seen as an extreme when compared with the Newsons' highest figure of twenty three per cent for "frequent" tantrums (in Class V, compared with 9% in the middle classes). As a further example of this sort of inability, one can refer to the large number of children who were sometimes actively tormented and teased as a form of parental amusement.

"If it was any of our fault like, tormenting, something like that we just you know, laugh at him but, if he does it when we're changing a nappy or something like that, we slap his hand, and just say, stop it, or no." (Unemployed, 21 years old)

(prompt: "What do you do when she is like that?")  
"Best to torment them more." (Labourer, 21 years old)

Although they advocated one method for dealing with tantrums, fathers described using a diverse range of caretaking strategies;



sometimes these strategies were variable and inconsistent.

"Leave him. (pause) Well she ends up loving him."  
(Unemployed, 20 years old)

"Pick her up and tell her to pack it in, an give her toy back and then she's perfect. Then shout at her, smack her bum and tell her to set down."  
(Unemployed, 21)

"Give in to her! (laugh) Ornaments and things like that we don't agree with, so we try and swap it round with a toy or something like that, you know what I mean? .... Sometimes if she does something wrong you just tap her on her hand and she understands and she won't come near it again. Or "Babal"<sup>21</sup> like that. Like I say she's a good baby all round." (Part time warden of an unemployment centre, 21 years old)

"Try and distract her or, give her what she wants, I suppose. But not all the time because that would be spoiling her that way, but we try and get her out of it. Or sometimes I smack her as well, tap her legs or sommat. It's like I say we're expecting to have more kids we can't just pay attention just to her....."  
(Unemployed, 18 years old)

Therefore it may not be the case that younger parents behave differently from older parents when dealing with a tantruming young child. However, evidence suggests that these younger parents are more likely to have children who become frustrated and then tantrum, thus it may be hypothesised that younger fathers either fail to interpret the warning signals of a child

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<sup>21</sup>"Babal" or "It's a babal" is a common Nottingham warning to naughty babies.

becoming frustrated or he recognises these signals but fails to respond in such a way as to calm the situation down.

### Parental Punishment

When young fathers were asked how they punished their one-year-olds when they were naughty, eighty five per cent reported that they used some form of physical punishment. When compared with Charlie Lewis' sample of normal aged fathers, younger fathers were significantly more likely to use physical punishment.<sup>22</sup> Young fathers were also significantly more likely to say that using physical punishment was the only way to get through to the child.<sup>23</sup> The consequences of not smacking were seen as allowing the child to get away with too much and therefore to be indulged. In the long term, not smacking was seen as leading to possible maladjustment and or delinquency. There was no difference between the numbers of unemployed and employed who had started smacking.

There was a great diversity of feelings concerning smacking. Some fathers recognised that they sometimes hit the child harder than they should and this had brought a feeling of regret. Some were unhappy about smacking a child but felt it was the only way to indicate that they had done something wrong.

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<sup>22</sup>Chi-squared = 8.41, df = 1, Significance level= 0.003. See Appendix III, Table 9.X.

<sup>23</sup>Chi-squared = 7.86, df = 1, Significance level= 0.005. See Appendix III, Table 9.XI.

"No .... I think I've done it twice .... once when I was messing about .... I came out .... she just whacked her, didn't we? and I tapped her on the bum and sometimes like a wet towel when it flicks you and I did it funny, didn't I? And was only messing about, I mean kind of .... I didn't mean to do it hard .... I didn't mean to hit her that hard .... that time either .... just get a bit carried away, you know .... just to let them know they can't do it." (Painter and decorator, 21 years old)

"Smacking them when they're being naughty, really naughty, then I think you should. But , if they're just being niggly or, you know, like when she won't go to sleep and you smack them to get them to sleep they'll cry just more often. So, you're just best to leave them alone really, when they're like that. But if they are being really naughty, and definitely doing something that they shouldn't do, then you should smack them." (Pie packer, 20 years old)

"I smack his hand. And just say "No." This is after I've like told him about, 3 times about the same thing, and after the third time then I smack his hand, the third time I smack his hand." (Unemployed, 21 years old)

Many parents made a distinction between levels of physical force, and categorised "tapping" the child as being different from smacking; as one parent explained "There's hitting and there's hitting isn't there?" Nearly all the fathers were caught in the difficult position of needing to make the child aware that he had done something inappropriate. This gesture was normally in the



form of a physical reprimand and fathers reported that these reprimands were getting harder and more physical not just because the child was getting older but also because the child's reaction to soft smacking was often defiance. However they also reported that care should be taken not to "mark" the child in either a physical or emotional way. As a consequence, many fathers talked about smacking the child hard to ensure that (s)he knew he had done something wrong and in the same breath mentioned that they only smacked him on his nappies or his hands so that he was not hurt or bruised.

"Erm .... when you smack a child, they've er got to know why they're being smacked and it's got to .... it's a punishment so it's got to hurt I suppose .... but with a child this age you're very careful not to hurt them I suppose, because they are so .... they're small and delicate. I don't know whether it does hurt her when you smack her or not but er it's associated with her doing something wrong, later on when they're a little bit more robust then ...."  
(Checker/loader, 21 years old)

Of the fifteen non-smacking fathers, some believed that children were too young to be smacked at a year; some that they were too young to understand what was meant by a smack; others didn't believe that anything was achieved by smacking and finally, some refused to smack their children because they had been severely beaten themselves as a child.

We can never be positive that parents do not adjust their replies to conform to their view of good parenting. But when discussing with parents the issue of punishment and especially the use of physical force when punishing, it would seem unlikely that they would over-stress or exaggerate the physical nature of their methods of parental control. If this is the case, the majority of all parents regularly used physical punishment which they saw as an effective means of communication.

Young parents have sometimes been viewed as an "at risk" group for physical punishment. From their accounts it appears that their methods of disciplining are in fact very similar to parents of equivalent social classes and indeed to the whole population. It is true that they are more likely to smack their children than the normal population of parents, but it is inappropriate to label young parent's physical behaviour towards their young child, when he or she is being naughty, as deviant based on this quantitative difference. Primarily because smacking is so prevalent anyway it seems of little benefit to make a distinction between the two groups who predominantly use physical punishment regularly. Also we have no indication as to whether younger parents hit their children in a different way than older parents. Although they do seem to punish for the same reasons as older mothers and fathers. Instead it is important to highlight pressures and stresses that all young parents are subjected to during the child's first year of life over which they have very little control.



### Fathers Approach To Everyday Routines

To gather another viewpoint of young fathers' style of parenting, it is possible to examine the way in which they approached the everyday routines and activities, such as feeding and sleeping which form an integral part of the young child's life.

By the time the baby was one year old feeding routines had been well established and so too had methods for dealing with the child when he refused to eat. In general, like older parents, adolescent fathers (39%) tended to leave the child when he refused to take any more. The rest of the fathers tried to persuade the baby to eat by either offering him food that they knew the child normally liked (12%) and so would be unlikely to refuse unless ill; or by encouraging the child to eat (21%); or encouraging and playing games such as "aeroplanes" (15%). There were only a small number of fathers who reported strategies which were very insensitive or unresponsive to the child's needs: Firstly, those fathers (3) who felt that they had to force the food down the child if he did not eat and secondly those fathers (4) who handed the baby to the mother when any situation of that kind arose. Adolescent fathers in the main report dealing with their one year olds in very much the same way as older more mature fathers. However younger fathers were more likely<sup>24</sup> to

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<sup>24</sup>Chi-squared = 4.47, df = 1, Significance level= 0.034, fathers who reported the child never refusing food were removed from the sample. See Appendix III, Table 9.XII.



report feeling upset or frustrated when the child refused or would not eat.

"(prompt: Do either of you get upset when he doesn't eat or do you both stay calm?)" "No, .... I do, I always sort of ... if he don't eat anything ... sometimes if I say to Debs "Has he ate his breakfast?" and she'll say, "No he hasn't ate it", or "He ate a bit but not all of it" I always say to her "Well don't give him any chocolate in the morning time before his dinner", make sure he eats his dinner, see and usually he will eat his dinner and then she'll give him something after ..... she give him his chocolate often you see .... we don't always give him chocolate but if he don't eat his dinner time he don't get anything you see ... no chocolate or anything cos it tends to spoil their appetite ... same as anybody I suppose but I always seem to get upset more if he don't eat owt..... yeah cos she's the one to .... when I'm out sometimes during the day and she's always giving him something in between and I go in and he hasn't ate any of his tea .... quite upsets you really. Is he eating enough?, you know things like that ... make sure he eats it .... you just get fed up after a bit if he don't want it ... so you make sure he eats his supper so he's alright. Usually he'll eat all his supper so he's alright. It's not as if ... he always get enough to eat but you tend to think cos they don't eat it you know, you think well he's not eating enough."  
(Unemployed, 22 years old)

"Sometimes I mean I lose my temper - if she don't eat it I get narked about it - another time if the wife's had a rough daily routine she'll get narked about it - it's vice versa. I mean we both lose our temper about it." (Steeple jack, 21 years old)

Some younger parents thus found it difficult to be relaxed when the child was not following his or her normal routine. Although

prolonged failure to eat is likely to cause a child considerable harm, the circumstances the young parents described were very much part of "normal" patterns of feeding and non-feeding that most children would be expected to go through; however younger parents reported having more problems controlling their emotions in these situations. This may reflect younger parents' anxieties concerning the physical well-being of their children and also the difficulties they perceive when the baby behaves in a manner which could be viewed as defiant.

### Warmth

In general this chapter has been concerned with the young father's sensitivity to his child's needs, and in order to investigate this in a global manner I have created two indices from their reports: firstly an index of fathers' active responsiveness and in particular sensitivity based on questions from all areas of child care; secondly an index of fathers' reported feelings and attitudes in child care situations. Displayed below are the two sets of questions that make up the scales and their corresponding frequency distributions (Figures I and II).

Questions and codings which made up the "Active Response Scale".

Do you ever sit and chat to N while he's eating?

<i>Never/rare</i>	<i>0</i>
<i>Occasionally/regularly</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>Daily</i>	<i>2</i>

What do you do if you're feeding him something and he won't eat?

<i>Hand over to mother/force</i>	<i>0</i>
<i>Leave/try alternative</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>Encourage or play</i>	<i>2</i>

Do you usually do anything to get him to sleep at bedtime?

<i>Put down and leave</i>	<i>0</i>
<i>Tell story/rock or cuddle</i>	<i>1</i>

What happens if he won't sleep, or cries after he's been left?

<i>Leave</i>	<i>0</i>
<i>Leave then bring down/mother placates</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>Father placates</i>	<i>2</i>

How long would you leave him if you thought there was nothing wrong with him?

<i>Over 20 minutes</i>	<i>0</i>
<i>Between 5 and 20 minutes</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>Less than 5 minutes</i>	<i>2</i>

Can you describe what you do when you play with him now?

<i>Physical play (rough and tumble)</i>	
<i>0</i>	
<i>Social or constructive</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>More than one type of play</i>	<i>2</i>



## Father Sensitivity And Responsiveness

How do you cope with him being miserable?

<i>Leave</i>	<i>0</i>
<i>Fetch mother</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>Comfort/distract</i>	<i>2</i>

Do you try and stop him in any of his habits?

<i>Both stop</i>	<i>0</i>
<i>Mother stops</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>Mother and Father do not stop</i>	<i>2</i>

What do you do when N has a tantrum?

<i>Smacks</i>	<i>0</i>
<i>Leaves/put to bed/tells off</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>Distracts/placates</i>	<i>2</i>

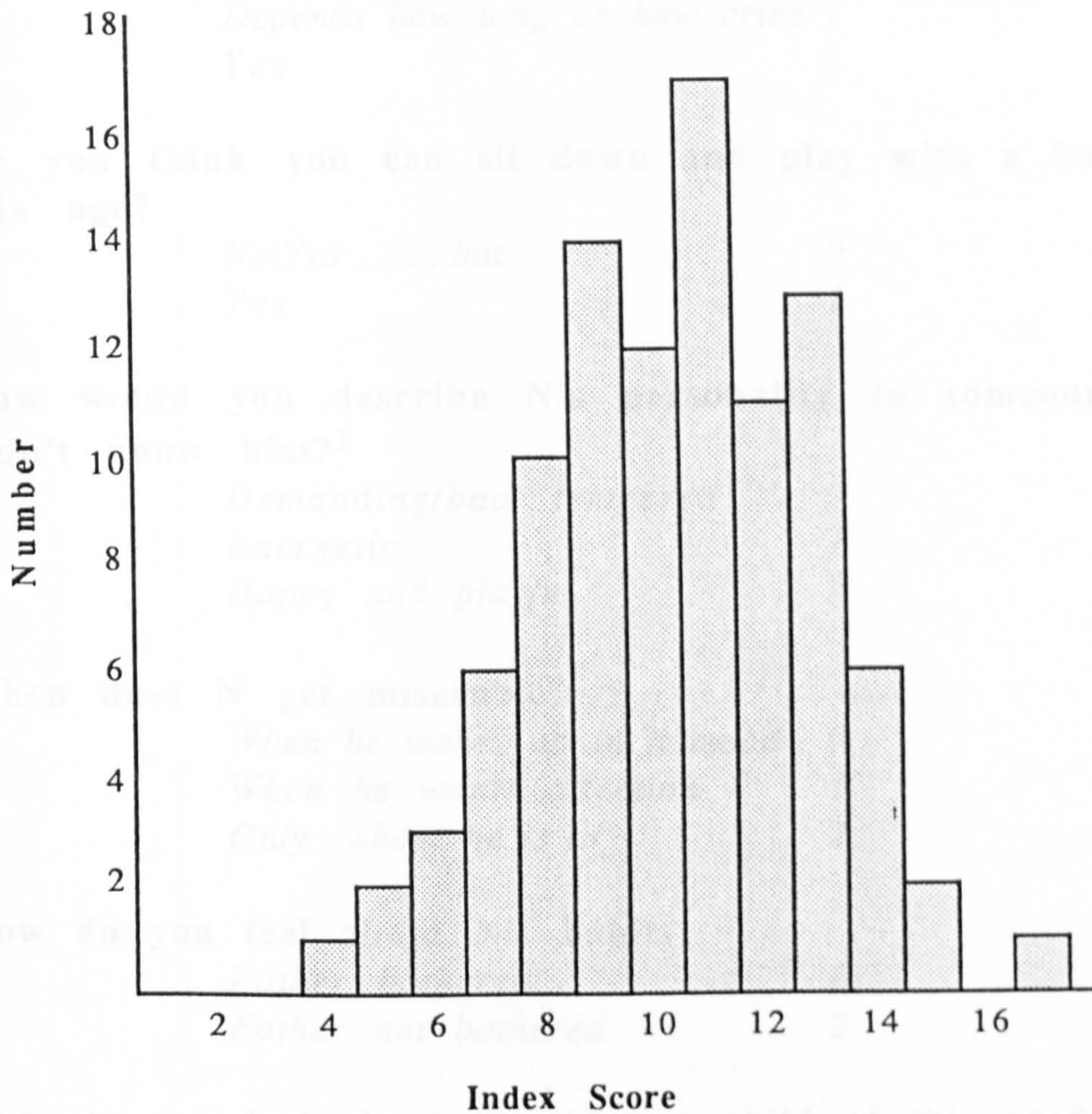
How do you punish him when he's naughty?

<i>Smack</i>	<i>0</i>
<i>Do not smack</i>	<i>2</i>

A frequency distribution of the young father's scores on the "Active Response Scale" is shown in Figure I.

## Father Sensitivity And Responsiveness

Figure I  
Scores On Index Of Father's Active Response



Questions and codings which made up the "Empathic Attitude Scale"

Does one of you tend to get upset about it (when the child doesn't eat) and the other do the calming down or do you both feel the same way about it?

- |                           |   |
|---------------------------|---|
| Both or father gets upset | 0 |
| Mother gets upset         | 1 |
| Both calm                 | 2 |



Do you think it does a baby any harm to be left to cry?

<i>No</i>	<i>0</i>
<i>Depends how long or how cries</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>Yes</i>	<i>2</i>

Do you think you can sit down and play with a baby of this age?

<i>No/Yes .....but</i>	<i>0</i>
<i>Yes</i>	<i>1</i>

How would you describe N's personality to someone who didn't know him?<sup>1</sup>

<i>Demanding/bad tempered</i>	<i>0</i>
<i>Energetic</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>Happy and playful</i>	<i>2</i>

When does N get miserable?<sup>2</sup>

<i>When he wakes up in a mood</i>	<i>0</i>
<i>When he wants attention</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>Only when he is ill</i>	<i>2</i>

How do you feel about N's habits

<i>Father bothered</i>	<i>0</i>
<i>Father not bothered</i>	<i>2</i>

How do you feel about smacking a child of this age?

<i>Hopes not until child is older</i>	<i>0</i>
<i>Don't like tol a tap is alright</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>Acceptance - you have to</i>	<i>2</i>

A frequency distribution of the young father's scores on the "Empathic Attitude Scale" is shown in Figure II.

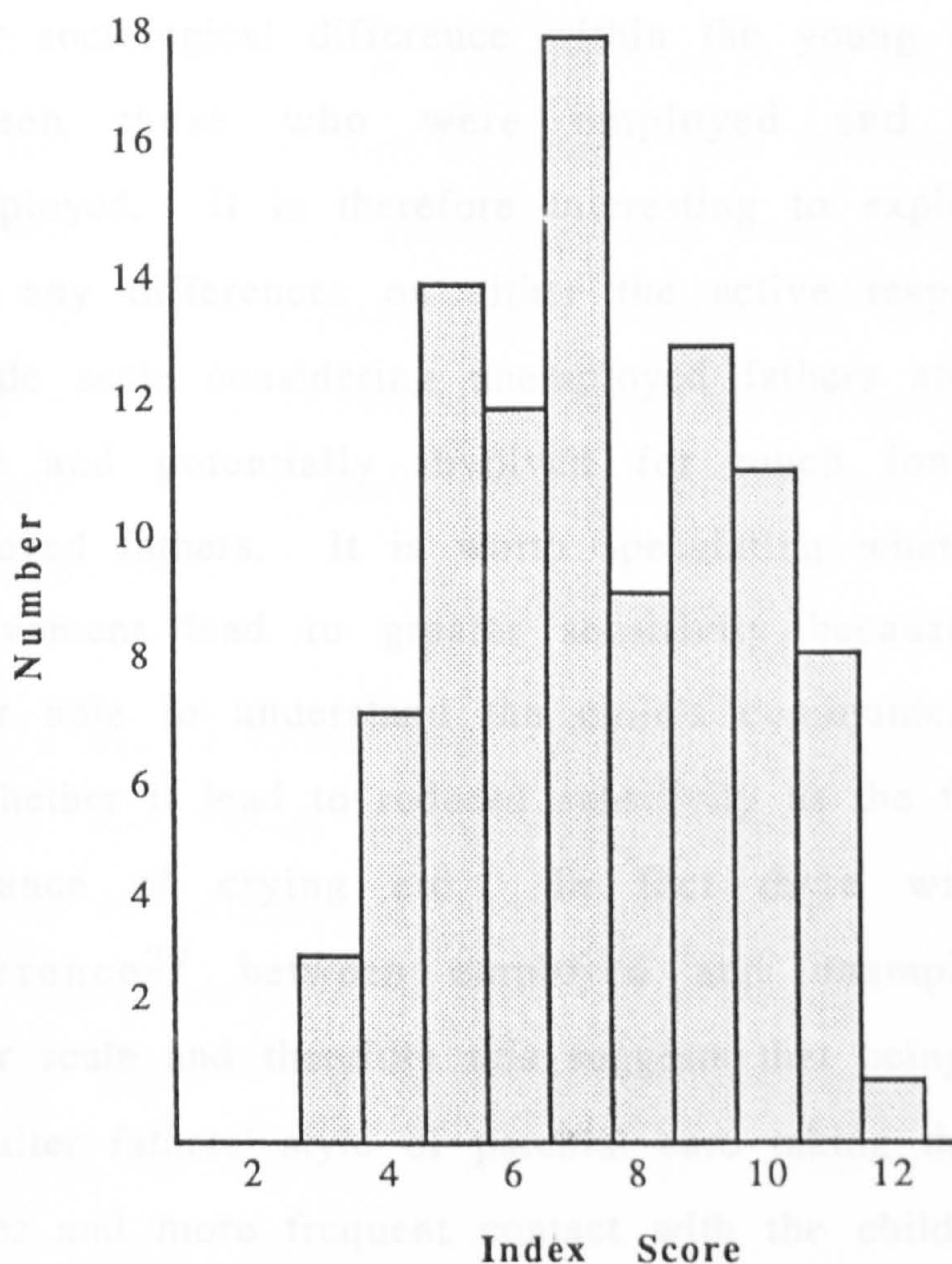
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<sup>25</sup>This question was included and coded in this form because the child abuse literature has shown that abusing populations have particularly negative views of their children personality.

<sup>26</sup>This question was also included because child abuse literature has described abusing mother's as having the belief that much of the child's "difficult" behaviour was due to the child provocatively being defiant.



Figure II  
Scores On An Index Of Father's Empathic  
Attitude



There was a strong relationship between the two scales. Those fathers who, on the whole, scored highly when their behavioural sensitivity was rated also tended to score highly on the empathic attitude scale. This was not altogether surprising as one would expect fathers who express attitudes and feelings which are empathic behave in a sensitive way.



There was a great variation in the scores obtained and one was able to examine whether there are any psychological or sociological factors that may influence a father's sensitivity. The major sociological difference within the young father sample lay between those who were employed and those who are unemployed. It is therefore interesting to explore whether there were any differences on either the active response or empathic attitude scale considering unemployed fathers are likely to be at home and potentially involved for much longer periods than employed fathers. It is worth speculating whether this increased involvement lead to greater sensitivity because the father was better able to understand the child's communications, moods etc or whether it lead to reduced sensitivity as the father had a lower tolerance of crying etc. In fact there was<sup>27</sup> no significant difference between employed and unemployed fathers on either scale and therefore this suggests that being out of work did not alter fathers' style of parental care taking despite their having longer and more frequent contact with the child. Although these scales were not objective measures of parental behaviour they were an indication of how the father perceived himself acting, and the way in which he constructed those actions within his own belief system. Although there were no significant differences between employed and unemployed on both scales it is of great importance that the two groups appeared to have similar attitudes and beliefs considering their whole lives were structured in a different way. It appeared that those young fathers who were

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<sup>27</sup>F = 1.09, Significance level = 0.29, on the active response scale.

F = 1.41, Significance level = 0.23 on the empathic attitude scale.

unemployed continued to adhere to the values of social class III man, IV and V, even though the social context within which they existed was very different from that of employed fathers. In fact, there was a far larger difference on both scales between IIIwc and IIIman in the Lewis sample than between the unemployed and employed. This result in itself was surprising and that job class was more important than employment in determining young father sensitivity (when we combined both samples) indicated the powerful effect of prerequisites of social class, such as childhood and education.

To a certain extent this was borne out when comparing young fathers' educational qualifications against both scales of active response and attitude; as fathers who had at least one CSE or more were significantly more likely to score higher on the empathic attitude index<sup>28</sup> and on the active response index<sup>29</sup> than fathers who had no qualifications. Other experiential factors which related more directly to child care also seemed to affect sensitivity; young fathers who had had a child prior to the sample one year old were more likely<sup>30</sup> to express attitudes and feelings which were more sensitive/indulgent than first time fathers, although there were no differences in their reports of how they dealt with behaviour when calculated on the active response index. Thus with experience young fathers' attitudes and beliefs appeared to become more tolerant and relaxed. The experience

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<sup>28</sup>F = 6.22, Significance level = 0.014.

<sup>29</sup>F = 4.9, Significance level = 0.029.

<sup>30</sup>F = 5.12, Significance level = 0.025.



however needed to be specifically in the form of parenting rather than care giving as there were no differences between the attitudes of fathers who had regularly looked after children before having their own offspring and those who had no experience at all. Thus the actual experience of looking after children did not significantly alter parents' attitudes, it was only after experiencing the responsibilities and emotional extremes of parenting that attitudes appeared to alter.

There were no differences between adolescent fathers of different ages within the sample but there were large differences between the young father sample and the Lewis sample of a more normative age range on both indices. However when social class was controlled for there only existed a difference between the two groups on the index measuring fathers' attitudes to the child when he or she was being difficult.

## Summary

The data collected concerning adolescent fathers' sensitivity is not objectively derived data, and was not verified using observational techniques. However, the accounts given in interviews do throw light on young fathers' attitudes to parenting and also give an indication of how they approach caretaking. It appears that adolescent parents are not qualitatively different from older parents as hypothesised by Elster et al<sup>31</sup> and as more

recent writers have suggested it is important to consider the large number of stresses which may adversely affect paternal sensitivity (for a full summary of child care differences between the normative age range and young fathers see Appendix IV, page 435b). However, it must be noted that although the adolescent father and mother have to cope with relatively more stresses than older parents, those stresses themselves are not good predictors of paternal sensitivity when considering young parents as individuals rather than as a group. The emphasis placed on risk factors in the child abuse literature has highlighted a large number of social and economic "stresses" which are over-represented in abusing populations. However, this orientation fails to explain why the vast number of parents who are subjected to such stresses fail to abuse. In this study, where half the young fathers were unemployed (often perceived as a considerable stressor), there were no differences on measures of sensitivity, perhaps illustrating that although unemployment is often viewed as a negative experience there are positive aspects as well, including more involved parenting. Furthermore father presence at home may be a considerable support for the mother, thus helping her emotionally and physically to look after the young child.

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<sup>31</sup>Elster et al., *op. cit.*, 1983.

## Chapter Ten

### Roles And Responsibilities

#### Introduction

It has been noted by many authors<sup>1</sup> that up until 1976 fathers were comparatively unimportant in family functioning and child rearing, within research and academic circles. As interest gathered concerning men and their function within the family, discussions started about whether fathers' roles within the system were changing.

Some of this discussion has been centered on sex roles and in particular "androgeny." From this perspective, an androgynous individual is someone whose behaviour reflects both stereotypic masculinity and femininity.<sup>2</sup> Bloom-Feschback believes that

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<sup>1</sup>Michael E Lamb, "Fathers: Forgotten contributors in Child Development," *American Sociological Review*, 38 (1973): 99-118.

Nigel Beail, "Role of the Father During Pregnancy and Childbirth" *Fathers Psychological Perspectives*. Eds. Nigel Beail and Jacqueline McGuire (London: Junction Books, 1982).

<sup>2</sup>Jonathan Bloom-Feschback, "Historical Perspectives on the Father's Role" *The Role of the Father in Child Development*. 2nd ed. Ed Michael Lamb. p 103.



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contemporary families have a different orientation than those during the "industrial revolution." The modern family reflects a developmental progression toward an increased degree of integration of function; modern men are more affectively oriented when involved in family relations, formerly the sole province of women. Also, Robert Fein has described three historical conceptualisations of fathering. He describes the traditional perspective where the major image of the father role is one of aloofness and distance. The father in this context cares for his children by going out to work and providing financial support for them. Although interested in his children the father, from the traditional perspective, has relatively little direct involvement with his children.

The modern perspective is where fathers are concerned and involved with child development, most notably 1) achievement of socially appropriate sex-role identity (masculinity and femininity), 2) academic performance, and 3) moral development.

The emergent perspective is one in which men are able to fulfill the "psychological needs" of their children in a similar way to mothers. The children's lives are viewed as being enhanced as a consequence of having a healthy relationship with both parents.

In an attempt to evaluate the father's actual role, researchers have spent considerable energies measuring and assessing father involvement in childcare routines.<sup>3</sup> A popular area of interest

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<sup>3</sup>M.P.M Richards, J.F Dunn and B. Antonis, "Caretaking in the first

## Roles And Responsibilities

has been whether fathers' actual roles have changed during the last forty years. Certainly there has been considerable speculation and conjecture that fathers are moving away from their aloofness to a more supportive position. However, as Lewis has extensively discussed, there is little evidence which has established measurable differences between fathers of different generations. He also points out that it is important to consider fathers' opportunity to be involved, as any differences may be the result of having more time at home because work routines have considerably changed during the last thirty years, rather than a substantial change in attitudes. Chapter seven has already described the young fathers overall participation and the relationship between opportunity and involvement. In this chapter I wish to examine the young father's perception of his role within the family and also to look at the emotional consequences for a young man of taking on such a role.

"Time Budget" studies in the United States<sup>4</sup> have indicated that although fathers are involved in household chores and childcare tasks the mother is likely to do six times as much family work as fathers. Fathers who had partners who were employed performed more family work than fathers with unemployed partners.

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year of life: The role of father's and mother's social isolation," *Child: Care, Health and Development*, 3 (1978): 23-36.

Charlie Lewis, *Becoming a Father* (Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1986).

<sup>4</sup>J. Pleck and L. Lang, *Men's Family Role: its Nature and Consequences*. (Wellesley, Mass: Wellesley College Center for Research on Women, 1978).

**Young Father's Role**

Young fathers were more likely to be highly involved<sup>5</sup> if they were unemployed and therefore had more time to participate in activities at home. But even unemployed fathers failed to take up the major responsibilities of child care; thus they would happily help out on a regular day to day basis but were not usually in the position where they had to look after the child. Nonetheless, when young fathers were asked directly how they believed the young mother viewed their participation, the majority (51%) believed they shared all the responsibilities. (See Table I).

**Table I**

<b>Mother's Perception Of Father's Role In Caretaking As Reported By The Father</b>	
Occasional helper	26
Share some responsibilities	20
Share all responsibilities	51
Uncodable	3

Those who thought their wives perceived them as taking a full share were significantly more likely<sup>6</sup> to be young fathers who

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<sup>5</sup>F score = 5.3, Significance level = 0.02. See Chapter Seven.



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were unemployed. Overall, 'then' those fathers who were at home all day were firstly more likely to report themselves as highly participant and secondly more likely to assume their wives would report the same compared with those who went out to work.

"I don't know. Not really, we share everything, you know feeding, changing." (Wife: "The only time I have more to do with them, is if he's not very well. Then the only person he wants to know is me anyway.") "Yeah it's like with all the kids, if they're bad, they run to their mother, except for Jane, Jane's all on me all the time." (Unemployed, 21 years old)

Twenty fathers recognised they shared many activities, but did not share all the responsibility for looking after the child. This disparity was normally brought to their attention by the mother who would ask for more help or would attempt to cajole the young father into being more involved.

"Well we share doing it but if she wants .... if I'm in here and she's in there with the kids .... doing the pots or just sitting with them and I'm watching the telly .... she wants something doing then she'll shout." (Prompt: "Do you think she expects an equal share?") "I don't know .... she'd like me to do more I know that .... she's always moaning." (Builder, 21 years old)

"I think she wants me to share - well I do share, you know, I will - but even if that extra bit she

<sup>6</sup>Chi squared = 14.9 df = 1, Significance level = 0.0001. See Appendix III, Table 10.I.

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wants I'll be there as well, I don't mind." (Prompt: "Do you think you share everything?") "If it is one way it's slightly towards Wendy's way, she'll do a bit more than I will do." (Acoustic technician/fitter, 22 years old)

There were twenty six fathers who saw themselves as a helper, rather than someone who shared the care taking responsibilities. As mentioned above, these were more likely to be the working men.

"Um .... Melanie usually teks the responsibility of 'im .... an' I usually go an' grab 'im if I want to .... er but if she needs me 'am mostly there for 'er ...." (Unemployed, 19 years old)

"Well she has him most of the time, she feeds him herself and dresses him and changes him but I hink that she'll accept those as her duty to do ....although, I mean I do dress him now and again." (Lorry Driver, 21 years old)

"She likes me to help. She don't force me to help, but she likes me to help." (Painter/Decorator, 22 years old)

For the most part fathers reported how mothers enjoyed their participation in child care activities, although there were a small number (2) who felt they occasionally were a hindrance rather than a help. A common theme being they never completed a job properly, or were too eager to finish it quickly and as a consequence the task had to be repeated by the mother.

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"Erm, she don't mind .... I think I get in the way more than anything when she's dressing .... or something like that .... I mean sometimes I annoy her when she's feeding him or something .... at suppertime you know if I tickle him or something like that .... she turns around and she gets annoyed .... I just leave her to it." (Unemployed, 22 years old)

"I think less in a way because things I do, I do 'em wrong - Sometimes I'll do a bit of hoovering and I get bored with it and leave half of it .... she's got to come back and do it again." (Wife: "He always starts a job and never finishes it - like he'll start the garden and never finish it)" (Steeple jack, 21 years old)

However the general impression was that young fathers' "help" was felt to be appreciated, although many fathers admitted (59%) that their partners wished they would do more. Fathers sometimes found it difficult to be more helpful or involved as they were tired from work and needed some time to relax. In this particular context some men saw their role as father and "breadwinner" as being synonymous and the responsibilities of child care were the mothers'. This could be viewed as a more "traditional" role for fathers and some fathers did mention that their attitudes were perhaps of a less "emergent" nature.

"Sometimes she moans at me. (she laughs). She says I'm not doing enough. I says, "Look", say when I'm tired sometimes or like that y'know." (mother:



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"You don't care if ....") "I'm just old fashioned, no, I'm just old fashioned thinking that, er, while he's home Tracey's gonna look after him more than I should obviously cos I'm earning the bread. A bit male chauvinistic I think I am." (Quality control inspector, 21 years old)

By looking more specifically at the jobs which mothers would like more help with, it becomes clear that young fathers avoided taking part in some tasks not only because they were tired but also because the jobs were unpleasant. Most commonly men avoided nappy changing.

(prompt: "Does Glenys prefer doing the nappy changing?") "No, it's cos I don't want to do it (laughs). I just don't like changing her backside a lot....." (prompt: "Why's that?") "Cos it's a mess." (Unemployed, 20 years old).

"Well feeding and changing his nappies definitely and bathing him, they're her jobs really." (prompt: "Is that because she enjoys them or because she thinks she can do them better?") ".....Erm ..... I feel as though it's because she does them better but I think it's because she knows she's got to do it more than anything." (Car mechanic, 19 years old)

Much of the contemporary literature concerning father's role has emphasised the nature of any functional changes that have occurred in father perception. In contrast adolescent father literature has concentrated on his suitability to be involved, examining his ability to ~~care~~ for the young child. Even Parke et al,

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in an article titled "The Adolescent Father's Impact on the Mother and Child"<sup>7</sup> only briefly considers actual father involvement and in no way considers his function within the family system although they conclude "there is clear evidence that adolescent fathers can play an important role in the cognitive and social development of their infants and children."<sup>8</sup>

Young fathers in this study were asked "In what way do you think you are important to a child of this age?" and also "How do you think things would be different if you weren't around?" in an attempt to get a subjective view of adolescent fathers adolescent father role. In fact a fifth stated they did not feel that they were important to a child of this age; however they usually qualified this statement by pointing out the likelihood of their greater role in the years to come.

(question: "In what way do you think you are important to a child of this age?") "I think he'd be just as well looked after and everything but to be honest at this age I don't think 'e needs me really. It's just later on when they need a Dad.....He needs me in a way ..... like 'elping 'er out with the bills an' doing the house nicely, in way, but yer could stick 'im in a pig house and he'd be happy. I mean he'd roll in it." (Unemployed, 21 years old)

(question: "How do you think things would be different if you weren't around?") "I think nothing would be different really because he wouldn't know

<sup>7</sup>Ross D. Parke Thomas G Bower and Theresa Fisher. "The Adolescent Father's Impact on the Mother and Child," *Journal of Social Issues*, 36 (1980).

<sup>8</sup>Ibid. p103.



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really - would they? - so wouldn't be any different."  
(Labourer, 21 years old)

This is in some ways ironic as research appears to have tended to indicate that fathers become less involved as children grow older. Lewis, Newson and Newson<sup>9</sup> when analysing the longitudinal data collected in Nottingham, using a standardized father participation index scale, found no evidence of an increase in father participation as the child grew older. There were also no age related increases associated with either sex of the child or social class of the parent. However they did note the difficulty in evaluating comparative measures of father participation when the nature of child care changes as the child becomes older. Sims and Smith in their study of 623 young mothers and 369 fathers recorded a few of the young men being indifferent to fatherhood. An indifferent stance was not recorded in this study, however Sims and Smith interviewed a large proportion (50%) of men who were not living with the mother and some of these were beginning to lose contact at the time of interview. Therefore the indifferent attitude may have been voiced by men who were not making a commitment to fatherhood.

Only two fathers saw their role solely in the more traditional perspective of "provider" or "breadwinner." The contrast with the Sims and Smith work where half of the men who had young

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<sup>9</sup>Charlie Lewis, Elizabeth Newson and John Newson, "Father Participation Through Childhood and its Relationship with Career Aspirations and Delinquency," *Fathers: Psychological Perspective*. Eds. Nigel Beail and Jacqueline McGuire (London: Junction Books, 1982).



partners mentioned their role in terms of "breadwinner" this probably represents differing methods of investigation. In this study I adopted a very open approach when questioning fathers about their role, whereas Sims and Smith asked fathers directly if they believed they had a responsibility providing money. Just over a fifth (21%) of the present sample had a "modern" perspective and believed the absence of the father from the family would lead to the child being inappropriately disciplined. The majority of these fathers believed the young mother would not be stern enough with the children, and as a consequence the child would be indulged and so become spoilt.

(prompt: "In what ways do you think a father is important to a child of this age?") "The way they bring them up .... mums seem to be a bit more softer with them than the father would." (prompt: "How do you think things would be different if you weren't around?") "If I weren't around he'd do a lot of what he shouldn't do." (Unemployed, 20 years old)

"I couldn't say cos I wouldn't be there, would I? She'd be at her mam's still I should think. With Maria's mum. I think she'd have a life of leisure, you know, she'd be able to get away with more things than what she can." (Process operator, 22 years old)

The father's perception of his role of disciplinarian in the family contradicts data within this study which indicates that fathers were less likely to smack their children than mothers,

even though smacking was the most frequently reported method for displaying parental control or disciplining a child. This was also found in the Newson's study at later ages: mothers were considerably more likely to smack than fathers at both 4 and 7 years.<sup>10</sup> In fact the Newsons noted at 7 years old "the contemporary father's increased participation in child rearing falls short of the disciplinary role, and this is true through all social classes."<sup>11</sup>

In order to take effective responsibility for discipline the father needs to be the parent who also takes primary responsibility for childcare generally; however as has already been shown the majority of fathers do not take up such responsibility. Therefore for the father to 'see himself as responsible for keeping the child in check is perhaps unrealistic; but this view may also reflect social class values, whereby fathers from low socioeconomic background perceive their role in a more traditional perspective, whereas fathers from a middle class environment are comparatively more comfortable with the liberal media concept of the "new man" and an "emergent" or "mother-like" role. A comparison of young fathers and fathers from Lewis's more normative age range illustrates that middle class fathers were indeed more likely to describe their function in a more emergent and contemporary manner. Interestingly, in

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<sup>10</sup> John and Elizabeth Newson, *Four Years Old in an Urban Community*, (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1968)

John and Elizabeth Newson, *Seven Years Old in the Home Environment*, (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1976)

<sup>11</sup>Newson., *op. cit.*, 1968. p.328.



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response to this question there were no differences in the reports of the young father sample between the working and unemployed subgroups.<sup>12</sup> This would appear to reflect the strength of social class values even in the light of actual participation and observable function. Even so it is surprising how many middle class fathers stated their role as being similar to the mother's compared to fathers from an unemployed background considering their actions were more like those of uninvolved father.

As Lewis<sup>13</sup> notes, men's reports of their roles often reflect a degree of ambiguity and lack of clarity. In general, however, young fathers believed in their own importance as fathers, whether it was directly, by playing with the child, or indirectly by helping the mother to get the housework jobs done. As a consequence a substantial group (27) felt that if they were not present their child would lead a far more restricted life, be unable to go out as frequently and to take part in as many pleasurable activities; in such a situation they believed the mother would be overwhelmed by the extra work and that this in turn would have a detrimental effect on the child.

"Well, you know I think Sue would struggle on a bit more, you know, than she does. Apart from that, he

<sup>12</sup>Chi squared = 1.1 df = 1, Significance level = 0.28. Fathers were coded into traditional/modern perspective (breadwinner/disciplinarian) and a more emergent perspective (role similar to mother). See Appendix III, Table 10.II.

<sup>13</sup>Charlie Lewis, *Becoming a Father* (Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1986).



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probably would as lively like but, it's fun-wise. you can't really have with just one parent all the time you get bored with it." (Railway Engineer, 22 years old)

"They'll not progress as fast if they ain't got a dad there. And I know that's true cos look at Adam, he's two he still craps himself. And, I mean, his dad left when he was four months old, and he's sort of really backward compared to what he should be and I think that if the father's there, he's helping the child progress you know play with him, and he's learning something different more or less every day." (Furniture Polisher, 22 years old)

A small number (4) of fathers expressed a belief that a mother living on her own was "wrong" as it was an unnatural situation. Most were unable to explain further why they viewed fatherless families as being abnormal, but there were some men who commented that the child (especially if it were male) would be likely to lose his gender identity in an environment dominated by one sex.

(prompt: "Why do you think a father is important to a baby of his age?") "To play with them differently. Her mam's soppy, I reckon that makes kids soft - they need to get tough - so they can take it when they fall over - I mean don't scream the house down or get hysterics." (Unemployed, 21 years old).

"The've got to 'ave both really - yo' can't grow up with .... er ... just men or just women 'round 'em; cos Melanie teks care o' the cuddlin' and things like that. Well, 'opefully in a year or so I'll be .... the .... if he ever wants to go out an' play football he's not gunna run an' ask Melanie all the time (laughs)." (Unemployed, 19 years old)

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In summary the young fathers who were interviewed reported a wide range of responses when asked how they perceived their role. Their individual responses could all be placed into one of Fein's three conceptualisations of how fathering has changed historically. However, when considering this in the light of their reported participation and responses to other questions it becomes clear that it is difficult to categorise fathers in this way. The main problem being that men do not behave consistently, probably as a result of not having to take full responsibility. Therefore they can be highly involved in one activity and not in another or on one day but not the next.

### Father's Perception Of The Impact Of Having Children

As many studies have recorded<sup>14</sup> the process of becoming a parent is a period of considerable change. LeMasters<sup>15</sup> has viewed the addition of the first child as being a crisis period, whereas the Rapoport's have stressed the normality of the transition to parenthood. By the time the child is one year old, parents have had some time to adjust to any changes and thus it is

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<sup>14</sup>Ralph La Rossa, *Transition to Parenthood: How Infants Change Families*, (Beverly Hills: Sage, 1977).

E. E. Le Masters, "Parenthood as a Crisis," *Marriage and Family Living* 19 (Nov. 1957): 352-355.

Rhona and Robert Rapoport, "Family Transitions in Contemporary Society," *Journal of Psychosomatic Research* 12 (1971): 29-39.

<sup>15</sup>LeMasters., *op. cit*, 1957

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a suitable juncture to invite them to look back and enable the researcher to evaluate how young parents' personal situations might have altered. Fathers were first asked what difference the one year old child had made to the life of the young mother. Table II displays in a limited way fathers' responses.

Table II

Father's Accounts Of Changes In The Mother's Life Since The Arrival Of The Baby	
Life is more restricted:	
- only restriction mentioned	34
- restricting and yet positive	3
Life has more responsibilities	8
Little or no change:	
- no change	15
- only routine has altered	3
Positive change:	
- more mature	10
- happier/fulfilled	21
Unspecified change	5

A large proportion (37%) of the young fathers mentioned negative aspects, believing the new baby had brought an increase in the number of restrictions the mother experienced. These men acknowledged there were times when a young baby restricted the mobility and freedom a young woman might expect. Mothers were no longer able to pop out to the shops, or go and see friends



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without involving themselves in considerable preparations. Other fathers emphasised different ways in which the loss of contact with friends had followed motherhood.

"Quite a lot. Quite a lot. She's 'ad to give up work obviously. And sometimes she gets a bit .... sometimes she gets very bored .... er .... which I can understand, really. Um .... it's meant quite a lot really cos you've had to give up quite a lot. Yeah .... um .... y'know, er .... work and friends you was involved with at work .... yeah .... we used to 'ave a lot o' people 'round .... yeah .... that's right, just not having people there to talk to .... Nichola can't talk to me!" (General warehouseman, 21 years old)

"Quite a lot. She's got someone else to look after, other than herself. She's busy all the time. She doesn't get much time by herself." (Self employed brick layer, 19 years old)

"Erm .... don't know." (Mother: "We haven't thought about it") "Depresses her a lot, you know, .... think she gets fed up with the house work, and that kind of thing sometimes." (Unemployed, 20 years old)

Three of the fathers who perceived motherhood as being restrictive also perceived the positive aspects as well. When young fathers' reports of the impact of motherhood were compared with those views described by fathers from Lewis's more normative age range, the younger sample were significantly more likely<sup>16</sup> to report that it was a totally restrictive experience.

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<sup>16</sup>Chi squared = 10.02, df = 1, Significance level = 0.0015. See Appendix III, Table 10.III.

This difference could be attributed to differences in peer groups. For instance, the young mother is more likely to have friends who are not actively involved in caring for children and are therefore going out during the evenings in order to enjoy themselves; emphasising to the father the confining nature of motherhood; whereas older fathers, who entered parenthood at a later stage, are more likely to be surrounded by other mothers and fathers of a similar age and, as a consequence, not see parenthood as having constrained the mother.

Over a fifth (21%) emphasised that the child had made the mother happier and more fulfilled.

"I think it's somethin' that Alison looked forward to a lot. She was prepared for it in her mind mentally as well .... it wan't a shock; she was prepared for it. You was .... I mean, everybody says that yer a great mother for yer age - you are, I mean, you seem well prepared for it, you never seem .... yer so calm and .... I don't worry about things, you don't worry about things do you? - except for when she gets a bit of a cold, you start to worry then: you want to call doctors and things .... yeah .... but I'm used to it now .... it's when the first born init, you gorra watch 'em an' things." (Fork lift driver, 21 years old)

"Oh a lot really." (prompt: "In what way?") "She's happier I suppose, I mean if we didn't have him we'd be lost." (Unemployed, 21 years old)

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Other fathers (10) mentioned how the mother had changed in a special way, and was now completely different. Usually they described how the mother had matured to take on many of the responsibilities associated with bringing up children. Fathers who had only seen their partners as young adolescent girls found themselves proud of the adoption of these new roles.

"She's changed ever such a lot, you know, she's done things now that I'd never dream of seeing her doing. She were never any help, she helped out in the house, but not a lot, you know when she were at home but when she had the baby, since she had the baby I've noticed ever such a big change. She does things, she's not sort of, "I can't be bothered with this, I can't be bothered with that" she does everything." (Process operator, 22 years old)

In contrast fifteen per cent felt the mother had not gone through many changes during parenthood, and a further three felt the mother had only changed her day-to-day routine and that there had now been psychological readjustment. Thus a relatively large number (when compared with Lewis's sample) thought the mother had gone through little or no change during the last eighteen months. However a similar number of men (21) reported how little the child had altered their own lives.

(prompt: "And how much difference do you think N has made to your life?") "I'd say about equal really. It doesn't make much of what I do different, cos a lot of things that I do like when I'm hoovering up



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when I'm washing he joins in, so it's more fun, there's more fun in having him, than what there was before." (Unemployed, 20 years old)

"It hasn't made much difference to me, you know what I mean, because I still do nearly everything I've always done. But you know what I mean say, its just, its just made me calmer and quieter than what I used to be, you know what I mean." (Unemployed, 22 years old)

Unemployed fathers were as likely<sup>17</sup> to describe having experienced few changes in their lives when compared with employed fathers. This was perhaps surprising since employed fathers still retained the routines of going to work and so were unlikely to experience as many of the day-to-day changes as the fathers who were still at home. Perhaps this reflects fathers' lack of responsibility for childcare and that when compared with the mother their lives have indeed not altered as much.

More than seventy five per cent of men reported that the child had had a considerable impact on their daily existence (see Table III).

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<sup>17</sup>Chi squared = 0.37, df = ,Significance level = 0.54. See Appendix III, Table 10.IV.

Table III

Father's Accounts Of Changes In His Own Life Since The Arrival Of The Baby	
Life is more restricted:	
- only restriction mentioned	17
- restricting and yet positive	2
Life has more responsibilities	18
Little or no change:	
- no change	20
- only routine has altered	1
Positive change:	
- more mature	16
- happier/fulfilled	22
Unspecified change	3

Fewer fathers<sup>18</sup> were likely to have seen their life as having become restricted when compare with the mother. Lewis reported a similar finding in his study and he suggested that this supported the impression that motherhood was more "restricting" than fatherhood. But there was a strong correlation between those fathers who reported themselves and also the mother as feeling restricted, when the child was one year old.<sup>19</sup>

Over a fifth reported being happier as a consequence of the child, and many reported how they now had a different

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<sup>18</sup>Chi squared = 8.1, df = ,Significance level = 0.003. See Appendix III, Table 10.V.

<sup>19</sup>Chi squared = 5.7, df = 1,Significance level = 0.016. See Appendix III, Table 10.VI.

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perspective on their lives. To a certain extent this view was so disparate from their previous perspectives that it was difficult to evaluate in positive or negative terms. Certainly they were growing used to the responsibilities and many were happy to be taking a mature and adult view of life.

"I feel as though, cos I've, it's different for me than anyone else cos like me mum - I'd a dispute with 'er and she didn't wanna know me or anybody, - I was out of work, I felt as though I didn't serve any purpose, so, y'know how most people that are unemployed feel rejected, they don't serve a purpose, no-one cares whether they're alive or dead. It's nice to know that someone depends on me, are you with me, like 'im, 'n I've got a duty, even though I'm not working or getting paid for it."  
(Unemployed, 21 years old)

This new perspective was often epitomised by fathers' new attitude to their use of their time. Employed fathers saw their time at work as having far more significance and importance than previously. Some reported clock-watching in their eagerness to get home to the baby. In some cases they worked longer hours or tried to ensure that they would not be sacked.

"I think a lot really because I ... before I went to work because it was a job but now I go because I have got to really, I probably don't have to but I think I got to go to work really." (Clerk/computer operator, 20 years old)



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It is difficult to evaluate whether fathers saw parenthood as being a positive or negative experience, as fathers were not asked specifically to evaluate the changes in their lives in this way. But it is worth noting that younger fathers were more likely<sup>20</sup> than Lewis's sample to describe how they were affected by fatherhood themselves only in negative terms. This may reflect the deviant timing of this life event, but is likely also to reflect the considerable social and physical privations brought about by severe economic restrictions. Thus being poor and having children was likely to adversely affect the way fathers viewed their role and the impact the new responsibilities had on their lives. To a certain extent this is borne out by the data showing that unemployed fathers saw motherhood as being 'more restrictive than did employed fathers.'<sup>21</sup>

However a large proportion (38%) described the changes they experienced as being fulfilling or worthwhile, and viewed themselves as having progressed.

"Er, I should think it's sent me from a school child into a man, sort of thing. I've grown up too quick, sort of overnight, sort of thing. Going from going out every night with the lads, to stopping in every night, you know. But it doesn't really bother me."  
(Unemployed, 20 years old)

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<sup>20</sup>Chi squared =9.14, df =1 ,Significance level = 0.002. See Appendix III, Table 10.VII.

<sup>21</sup>Chi squared =6.05 , df =1, Significance level = 0.01. See Appendix III, Table 10.VIII.

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When asked specifically whether they had missed out on anything by having children, a large proportion (66%) believed that there was little or nothing they had missed; considering the age and nature of the population this appears to be a surprisingly large number. One would perhaps have expected with a young sample that they would have felt bitter about having missed out on the supposed "fun-time" of life. However this was certainly not the case for the majority.

"I don't think I've missed out on anything coz I had a crap life anyway really but I think Maria, she was only nineteen and I think Maria's missed out on her freedom. But she don't seem to be bothered and I'm not bothered. See I don't really feel like I've missed out on anything. But I think Maria has. But she don't think she's missed out on anything."  
(Process operator, 22 years old)

"No - not really, 'cos I didn't really have owt to give up anyway (laughs). No ..... it's what I wanted anyway,, so y'know ..... I ain't really 'ad to give up anything." (Unemployed, 22 years old)

Thus the child brought them new happiness and a new purpose.

"Not really, cos I didn't 'ave a lot before I 'ad 'im like. I was stuck in one room and that and the only sort of thing I've given up is a bit of me freedom which I've given up quite willingly and I'm 'appy giving it up cos I know I could 'ave it again if I

wanted it." (Unemployed, 21 years old)

For those who did feel they had had to give up many things, holidays abroad were the most frequently cited activity (10) which fathers regretted that they were unable to afford. Other fathers mentioned a lack of spare time and also freedom to take part in other activities.

### Coping With Parenthood

Authors in the United States<sup>22</sup> have emphasized the considerable number of stressors which impinge on young parents especially during their transition to parenthood. Elster and Hendricks<sup>23</sup> when reviewing stresses experienced by adolescent fathers, report some of the same stresses as those reported by "adult" fathers. Typically fathers are concerned about the lack of money, loss of freedom and social leisure time, and the child's health. However, following interviews with ninety five black adolescent fathers Hendricks et al<sup>24</sup> have isolated a number of

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<sup>22</sup>Michael E. Lamb and Arthur B. Elster, "Parental Behavior of Adolescent Mothers and Fathers," *Adolescent Fatherhood*. Ed. Michael E. Lamb (Hillsdale, N.J.: L. Erlbaum Associates, 1986).

Jay Belsky and Brent C. Miller, "Adolescent Fatherhood in the Context of the Transition to Parenthood," *Adolescent Fatherhood*. Ed. Michael E. Lamb (Hillsdale, N.J.: L. Erlbaum Associates, 1986).

Arthur B. Elster and Leo Hendricks, "Stresses and Coping Strategies of Adolescent Fathers," *Adolescent Fatherhood*. Ed. Michael E. Lamb (Hillsdale, N.J.: L. Erlbaum Associates, 1986).

<sup>23</sup>Arthur Elster and Leo Hendricks, "Stresses and Coping of Adolescent Fathers," *Adolescent Fatherhood*. Ed. Michael Lamb (Hillsdale, N.J.: L. Erlbaum Associates, 1986).



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"special" stresses which they believed were unique to young fathers: 1) interpersonal problems, i.e. difficulties with their own families and the mother's family, 2) external problems e.g. lack of money, employment or the inability to finish school. Over ten per cent of their sample reported they had not faced any problems as a father. Unfortunately Hendricks et al failed to use any control groups and their contention of having identified special stresses appears to be a little weak, especially as many of the stresses young fathers report look suspiciously like those reported by older fathers. Authors have also discussed the importance of support mechanisms when trying to cope with life events that are potentially more stressful because they occur at an earlier time than prepared for. In this section I wish to examine how the young fathers have viewed their last year and the circumstances which they have had most difficulty in dealing with. Fathers were asked "Had there been many bad moments for you this last year?" Many fathers were remarkably forthright about their "bad moments" but a large percentage (45%) said they had had no difficulties during the previous year (see Table IV).

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<sup>24</sup>Leo Hendricks, C.S. Howard and P.P. Caesar, "Black Unwed Adolescent Fathers: a Comparative Study of Their Problems and Help Seeking Behaviour," *Journal of the National Medical Association*, 73 (1981): 863-866.

Table IV

Father's Reported Desperate Moments During The Baby's First Year Of Life	
None	45
When the baby ill	28
Financial problems	11
Fatigue	5
Other	11

A common anxiety which was voiced throughout most of the interviews concerned the baby and illness; in such situations parents not only felt they had lost all control but also were totally "ignorant" of what to do and how to best help.

"Yeah the very first time when she got ill you feel a bit desperate then cos we didn't know why it was ... and the doctor didn't tell us till a week after .... so we was in a panic.... she wasn't feeding all she was doing was sleeping .... she was sleeping 24 hours a day mainly and she wouldn't drink she wouldn't eat so that was a bit worrying". (Unemployed, 22 years old)

"I think, like I say, the worst time was when she was ill for that week or so. Um .... then it really did get us down - y'know we thought "Can't stand much mor o' this" we tended to start arguing and snappin' at one another because you're tired yerself. I mean I 'ad probably been up all night um with Nichola, to get Caroline get some sleep, y'know, cos Caroline 'ave it all day so I'd be goin' to Caroline'd be tired cos she'd had 'er all day an' we'd be snappin' at one another. Oh it was a terrible week." (General warehouseman, 21 years old)

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Just over ten per cent (11) had found that the financial burdens had sometimes been overwhelming, and this had forced them to cut back on their own lives.

"When we ran out money for food, we had a big sideboard, ran out of money, ran out food, so unfortunately I had to sell it, to get food I wasn't bothered about myself, I was worried about her, and this one." (Unemployed, 20 years old)

Some fathers described particular situations or events which they had difficulty coping with.

"I think when we live at your mum's a bit after you came out of hospital - I think I felt a bit left out because Gill was in with mum and dad and Stephen was the only grand child but it sorted out a bit, being there all the time made me feel horrible and I had to go the doctor's about it, but since we have got a house it's been a lot better, I mean, I don't mind her mum and dad coming up but I think it was just being there all the time. I used to think "I don't know why I'm bothering living here"" (Clerk/computer operator, 20 years old)

Others were unable to attribute their desperation to particular events but felt unhappy and entrenched.



"Sometimes I felt really fed up, not wanting to go to work, not for any particular reason I don't think because I .....I don't know really." (prompt: "Not because of Hayley?") "No - just because I think "I've got to do this, I've got to do that" I think it's quite a lot of pressure on both of us because you think you've got to do everything."

Fathers were also more likely to report the mother rather than themselves as having been more visibly emotional and upset by events during the last twelve months.<sup>25</sup>

Table V

Father's Reports Of Whether The Mother Or Father Have Felt Like Crying During First Year		
	<u>Father</u>	<u>Mother</u>
Never cried	55	23
When child ill	20	24
Financial problems	7	6
More than one reason	7	32
Fatigue	2	4
Happy event	7	3
Other	2	8
Total	<u>100</u>	<u>100</u>

<sup>25</sup>Chi squared = 20.1, df = 1 ,Significance level = 0.000. See Appendix III, Table 10.IX.

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This did not indicate fathers' lack of sensitivity, but often fathers saw it as important that they responded in a manner which could be viewed as supportive when the family was under pressure.

(prompt: "And have you ever felt like crying?")  
"When they took bad and they took her into hospital times like that. And when she cries at night time and we know what's wrong with her and we can't do nowt for her. She always breaks down and cries but I feel it but I hold it back." (Animal by-products, 21 years old)

It was clear that there had been many occasions for both parents during the first year which had caused considerable anxiety. However throughout all these difficult moments young fathers appeared to have an overriding concern for the child.

### Age Perspective

Research in the United States and in the United Kingdom has taken for granted that there is an age at which young people are too young to be parents. When originally designing the schedule I believed it was important to attain the parents' own view of their age and as a consequence fathers were asked "A lot of people must have said to you that you are very young to be a father - do you feel very young in the sense of being unprepared?" This was

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an attempt to capture how adolescent fathers had found age had affected their parenthood. Perhaps surprisingly, the vast majority of fathers did not perceive themselves as being too young to be a parent (see Table VI).

Table VI

Does Father Feel Young In The Sense Of Being Unprepared		<u>No.</u>
No (better to be young)		81
Yes, but not to do with childcare		5
Yes, dealing with the child		9
Yes, everything		5

Often recognising they were comparatively young, fathers gave evidence of other young friends who were also mothers or fathers, and in many circumstances fathers knew of other people who were younger than themselves.

"Well, I don't know, I'm young, like I say, I'm one of the oldest out of all my friends so like I say they're young I'd say they're too young. Like I say I wasn't too bad cos I was 19 going on 20. I think I was right, just right, the right age." (Unemployed, 21 years old)



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Young fathers perhaps also felt older because the mother was younger than themselves, and as a consequence was even less "prepared" or ready. In some ways this was borne out by those fathers who believed that they had "done everything" and so were ready to go on to the next stage of adulthood.

"I don't know I don't think I was too young because I mean, I was 21, like, and ur, I don't know, I don't think I was too young. A few people have said it you know "You're silly you're too young you should have waited a few years". I mean me grandmother said it she said "I was 28 before you know, I even got married and I was about 29 before I had me first child." You know what I mean, a bit silly. But I mean, to me, it seemed I done virtually everything I wanted to do so I mean, I weren't too young. And I don't know, they keep saying to Angela "Oh you was too young you know what I mean being only 18. Otherwise, I don't think I was too young. I mean people asked me, you said to me "Oh you're too young and that", but otherwise, I'd never said I was too young." (Unemployed, 22 years old)

For these men the acceptable age for entering parenthood had been governed by the social context in which they lived and for the majority, although it was perhaps a little early in the eyes of some people (i.e. researchers and people from a more middle-class background), they felt they had started parenthood within the normal age confines.

Some fathers (10) felt that there were positive benefits in

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being younger because as the children grew older they would have time to take up activities or interests they had previously neglected, and still be relatively young themselves. Many fathers who had boys noted that when their son was eighteen they would only be in their late thirties and it would be possible for the two of them to enjoy a social life together.

"No .... I've always said I want .... if I want a family I want it young, cos then when, I only want a couple of kids and when they're gone then I can have my life then like, you know what I mean. When he's, when he's left home I want to, then I want to find my work." (Unemployed, 20 years old)

"No. One thing that I look at it like, like I said earlier, when I'm 40 Aaron 'll be cracking on 20 you know what I mean, well, he'll be 18. And I think that's where I missed out most, I mean me Dad's, about 58 now. It's quite a distance. I mean today, in them days they used to get married later and have kids later didn't they than today, I reckon it will be an advantage for me to be, still pretty young and active." (Furniture polisher, 22 years old)

Younger fathers (7), like older fathers, reported feeling a totally different experience when they became a father and as a consequence did not believe that anyone could prepare for such changes in perspective and lifestyle. They therefore did not see their age as being an issue in terms of their parenting. Although they admitted being young they did not however feel that they were unprepared. Many fathers commented how they felt and appeared to have aged very quickly when they had had children.

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"No .... I didn't think I was too young .... still don't .... get it over with (laughs) .... I feel old more than young, ever since Stuart came I've felt old."  
(Unemployed, 21 years old)

"I don't know, the question is, how old do you have to be? .... I mean, I could still be like this when I get older (laugh) old and unprepared." (Warehouse manager, 22 years old)

Lastly other fathers (4), when looking back retrospectively, had not felt unprepared because they had coped so well.

"I don't feel young, as if I'm prepared, I think we've coped really well, with Sarah and with Mark ... don't feel it in that way but I do feel young you know, to have two kids, but I don't feel as if I was unprepared .... no, I think we've coped really well, we ... we just got down to what we'd got to do, and you know, we did it ... we .... once we got Sarah, ....."  
(Print finisher, 21 years old)

For those who did feel young there were five who did not report any problems in their parenting but described situations which they had found difficult to cope with. Typically they had felt embarrassed either because they had been mistakenly identified as a child member of the household; or because they felt when walking down public streets with the baby, that other people perceived them to be "young" parents.



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"Yeah, I mean, one bloke the other day come, well not the other day say some time a couple of week ago, came to do some repairs to the house cos, like when we move in, and he said to me "Is your Mum in" you know what I mean (laugh), they still look surprised and say "Is your Mum in" or, "Can I speak to your Dad?" They still say it." (Unemployed, 18 years old)

Fourteen fathers had felt that they had been unprepared for the young child and this was directly due to their age. Some pointed out that it was more difficult being young and having children later was something which was socially desirable and so encouraged in indirect ways.

"I mean things are more geared up for the older you get the easier things become, mortgage, house buying ... silly things like that, loans for cars, we've just tried .... we had a house lined up to buy and the bloke that was selling the house he turned round to me one day and said that its easy, anybody that wants to lend you money this is for the repairs on the house that he was doing, its alright, him saying it from his point of view because he's got his own house, the bank will lend him money because he's got his own house, they won't lend it to me, they're not so ready to lend it to me because I'm not, from their point of view so financially stable." (Checker/loader, 21 years old)

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### Summary

This chapter has attempted to concentrate on how the young father perceives his role, and how adopting this role has affected his life. The majority of fathers believed they were considerably involved with their children and that they were also of assistance to their partners in childcare tasks. However, they did recognise that they did not take full responsibility for the child and that this sometimes meant they avoided tasks which were unpleasant. Perhaps because of this lack of responsibility, fathers described their role in somewhat ambiguous terms, stating that they were important to the child but not having a clear picture of how they were significant. Nonetheless fathers felt their lives had considerably changed since the baby's arrival both in negative (restrictive) and positive (enjoyment) ways. When reflecting on their young age, fathers were usually certain that age had little or no effect on them in terms of their parenting ability and also their amount of preparation.

If one considers that young parents are likely to be at the very least vulnerable to many social and economic stresses during the first year of the baby's life, one has to question the laudable perception of young fathers that they are indeed prepared for all the responsibilities of parenthood. Because they do not identify themselves as being members of any group which could be suitably described as "teenage parents". They therefore do not identify themselves as being parents with "special" problems.

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Although this has advantages in terms of their own self-esteem it may potentially have negative consequences, as firstly, they may not seek help when they need it, and secondly, they do not organise themselves so that they are viewed as a special group and thus have their problems voiced and perhaps addressed by official organisations.



## Chapter Eleven

### Discussion

When I first started this piece of research I naïvely believed I was examining the parenting differences between adolescent fathers and fathers who could be viewed as being from a more normative age range. Even though I had read a considerable amount of the research literature, I had a belief that I would easily be able to unravel the effects of "teenage" parenting on both fathers and children. However within a week of interviewing I was aware that there were other factors which were likely to mark the two samples (of old and young fathers) as being different. Much of this thesis has described the more obvious economic and social differences which separated these two samples. I have faced great difficulties trying to evaluate the exact consequences of starting parenthood when young. The first fundamental problem was defining which parents could be described as "young." This perhaps highlights one of the basic drawbacks of attempting to do socio-psychological research: in which the researcher investigates his subject group from his own viewpoint and not from that of the subject, despite going to

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considerable lengths in order to get a more knowledgeable perspective. In this study I have had to define certain parents as being young, however this was not based on their own self-identification as a group and has therefore imposed a criterion on a group who could justifiably argue that they should not be regarded as of interest solely because of the age at which they started parenting. In some ways it would have been beneficial to isolate a group of parents who categorised themselves as not suitably prepared for parenthood due to their age, but even this has qualitative difficulties in terms of definition.

It was also difficult to determine the relationship between "cause" and "effect". For example, young fathers were categorised as being members of low socioeconomic groups but whether this was a result of their poor school achievements or because of early parenthood is not clear. Perhaps the search for the "true" effects of age is a fruitless endeavor as teenage parenthood is not a unitary concept which can be examined by the conventional manipulation of variables.

There were considerable social class differences between my younger and Lewis's older samples and it was difficult to evaluate the reasons for this distribution. Whether fatherhood prevents young people furthering their educational career and forces them to take up unskilled employment because they have to take on parental responsibilities, or whether an early end to education removes the barriers to allowing conception, may or may not be a

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matter of conscious choice, but more to do with the situation at the time and the context in which it is viewed. In this sample most of the men had finished their education by the time the baby was conceived.

However parenthood did appear to have a detrimental impact in other ways. For instance, when fathers were unemployed they often could not financially justify going to work because the wages they could earn would not fully cover all the benefits they otherwise received. Since just under half of the sample were unemployed and also had few or no qualifications the issue of whether these young fathers would ever be employed becomes very pertinent. Many wished to be working, not only for financial reasons but also for their own self-esteem. The prospect of young men being unemployed from school leaving age to a point twenty years on was potentially a frightening reality in this sample. Many men saw no imminent prospect of future employment. Some means of re-introducing these men to the working culture is a problem with financial, psychological and skills-related implications, and has not been adequately addressed, by this government or by previous ones. One could have expected unemployment to be a particular problem for this population, as the time of interviewing was a period characterised by a high level of unemployment generally. Since then the unemployment figures have improved but there has been no shift in governmental attitude towards helping particular groups, like fathers, to re-enter work when circumstances dictate it



## Discussion

unprofitable to take up poorly paid jobs. In a society which is trying to encourage full employment there is a need to discriminate between fathers who have extra financial responsibilities and other men who only have to consider themselves. Thus it is important to help young unemployed fathers to enter schemes which up to now they have not seen as being financially worthwhile, by offering them at least as much as they would receive if they remained out of work.

There were a number of other situational problems which fathers faced. These problems lead one to believe that young men who take on parental responsibilities are under-prepared for difficulties which are not directly associated with child care giving. The nature of these problems are such that they are out of the young person's control and so can lead to a feeling of helplessness and perhaps even depression. Housing is a typical example; most couples were too poorly paid to afford private accommodation and they were forced to rely on the Housing Department to find them somewhere to live. However, the council only has a limited amount of accommodation at the comparatively short notice offered by pregnancy. As a consequence it would appear that many young parents were placed under considerable, if not comparatively greater stress at this point because they had not had the time or motivation to prepare for their housing needs, before the child was conceived.

In some situations the stress was made worse because the

## Discussion

young couples were made to move away from the support structure and community which they had been used to. Before many parents young had begun parenting they had been subjected to a considerable number of upheavals, which older parents attempt to dilute by addressing them before the pregnancy starts. It would be hoped that by helping young parents at an early stage, and also discussing with them the most suitable location in which to be housed, the pregnancy could be a more positive experience and not one which produced an excess of anxiety. A sad consequence of having little or no money, at this stage, was that parents were unable to afford many of the material goods which are frequently portrayed as symbols of "good" parenting. Thus fathers deeply regretted their inability to provide good quality baby clothes and accessories. How long-lasting these feelings of inadequacy might be is a matter for conjecture, but they might at the very least be seen as a bad start to parenthood - especially as they are still talking about them a year later.

However one of the characteristics of the parents which surprised me was their resilience and from their discussions of events during the pregnancy they certainly needed to have the capacity to tolerate being moved and manipulated in ways that paid little attention to their interests. Considering that for many young men and women this was their first move away from home, it was likely to have placed additional physical and psychological demands on these young parents.



## Discussion

These stresses could all be expected to have an indirect effect on the father, and they continued to have a bearing on the way he reacted and behaved towards his child. For instance, it was quite common for the fathers to admit to egotistical, selfish or impatient behaviour. However, the direct influences of age during the pregnancy period were most highlighted by the way the father perceived the mother. The younger fathers believed that the mother became short tempered and difficult to live with. These perceptions were not necessarily due to being young although it could be argued that adolescents are, in Erikson's terms,<sup>1</sup> more "self-focused" and therefore more concerned about their own needs. They may also reflect the other personal developments which were co-existing at that time.

This particular finding illustrates another problem of trying to determine the influence of age. Growing older does not just alter one aspect of someone's life; there are numerous biological and psychological features which change as a person matures. To explain findings in terms of one particular area of development (e.g. self concept) without considering other allied areas (e.g. interpersonal development) is at least narrow minded. But a further difficulty can be identified in that little is known about the way in which fatherhood interacts with and affects these other areas of development.

Much of the teenage pregnancy research has viewed the

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<sup>1</sup>Eric H. Erikson, *Identity: Youth and Crisis*. (New York: Norton, 1968).



## Discussion

adolescent father as being an isolated, unwilling and temporary member of the family system. In one respect young fathers do feel isolated; not as a consequence of becoming a father as such, but as a result of many of the social situations they then find themselves in. Although grand parents were a source of support and advice, many were in an extremely delicate position; the temptation to mother their daughter as she herself was having a child was often overwhelming. However, this often left the young father, the person who was supposed to be adopting joint responsibilities with the mother, without a role. It could be argued that grand parents need help and advice in order to come to terms with this difficult situation. Young fathers also appeared to be isolated from many of the institutional resources which are available to parents. Although they attended the scan and the birth, they did not feel able to take part in activities which have enjoyed favour with middle class parents e.g. ante natal classes. However, such a forum could potentially be a useful opportunity for young fathers to discuss their own problems and thoughts about the pregnancy; rather than a facility which has been established for mothers but has only "allowed" fathers to take a part. In such classes fathers have been shown how to change a nappy or bath a child. Many young fathers described this was an unfulfilling experience because either they had not enjoyed the female atmosphere or they already knew many of the skills being taught. In such a context it is necessary to ask whether the needs of these younger parents are being met. It is sometimes presumed that to attend ante natal classes is in the parents' best

## Discussion

interests but with so many other issues to be resolved younger fathers find such classes inappropriate.

Despite this relatively turbulent period, most of the parents were settled by the time the child was one year old, and the issue of whether they were too young to be parents was no longer perceived to be relevant. In many respects younger men responded to fatherhood in a similar way to older men and became engrossed in their role as parent. Some continued to socialise actively with their old friends but on the whole most fathers only went out with the mother and this was normally infrequently. In many respects the changes which had occurred in their social lives epitomised other changes in their lives where they both physically and emotionally turned away from peer group values and became fully integrated family members. These were similar to the changes described by the older fathers, except that younger men were likely to have had to go through a greater psychological maturing process more quickly as a consequence of being younger in the first place and also because of the likelihood of having been more deeply embedded in their own peer group. It was noticeable that some fathers found it difficult to adopt a family approach to their leisure time; this especially seemed to be the case if they had friends living close to their home. But on the whole young men did not appear to have any problems adapting to a very different social life and were glad that those changes had occurred as they now felt their previous social existence lacked a purpose and at times, in retrospect, had been bringing them close



to imprisonment.

Young fathers now found their attention focused towards the home; and although they did not share all the responsibilities for care giving they believed themselves to be a significant member of the household and to have an important part to play in the physical and psychological well-being of both child and mother. This appears to be no different from the attitudes expressed by older fathers.

The fact that unemployed fathers were unable to financially provide for their children was something which many had become resigned to. The long term effect of being unemployed and thereby not fulfilling the perceived male role, as provider, is difficult for the researcher to establish. At that time unemployment was so high that fathers were often surrounded by other men in a similar position; but since then employment figures have improved and the status of the unemployed person has again become more deviant, and identified by some as that of "sponger." In such an atmosphere fathers' self-esteem and confidence is likely to be reduced, especially as children grow older and tend to need less active care giving because they spend more time away from home. However at one year old many of the unemployed men were highly involved in care giving, and this could often help to structure and organise their otherwise empty days. Employed fathers on the other hand worked more conscientiously in order to come back and be involved at home.



## Discussion

In terms of child care this sample of younger fathers did not describe their behaviour as being qualitatively different from older fathers although they described smacking children more frequently. In many respects the differences between the two samples were quantitative and in this sense it could be misleading to describe the whole sample as qualitatively abnormal in respect to their child rearing. Although it has been hypothesised that younger parents have a lack of strategies for coping with children when in a difficult state, some recognition ought to be given to the consequences of stripping those young parents who have no financial resources, of all the support mechanisms which would be available to them if they were living in an area which was familiar to them. To physically isolate these parents was also to psychologically isolate them, as many could not afford a telephone or a car in order to bring them into contact with those people who could have helped them. Thus when they became anxious about the little problems which appear to be so important when first having to deal with them, the young parents can only turn to each other because they have such difficulty accessing the more usual family support. In such an atmosphere it is not surprising that young parents have a "take life as it comes" approach or "day to day" attitude towards their lives. Many had few plans for the future and often the ones they did have seemed to be unrealistic. I believe this lack of vision for the future not only characterised much of their life style but also illustrated why they sometimes had difficulties. They lacked long

## Discussion

term strategies; many of their decisions were justifiable in the short term, but often in long term the consequences made them still more dependent on agencies such as social services, and more vulnerable to stressful experiences.

One of the major criticisms I have of this study has been the detailed but momentary nature of the investigation. In a sense I took a verbal photograph of how young fathers perceived their past, present and future on one particular day. As I was interviewing I realised that, although there were benefits from using this methodology, there were a number of drawbacks. Most notably I missed gathering an accurate picture of events as they happened, especially the period during the pregnancy and directly after the birth. Because this was a time of such considerable change and turmoil, I believe that to truly represent young mothers' and fathers' feelings it would be preferable to study their emotions at successive times closer to the events which were happening. However, that does not indicate that interviewing at one year old is of no value, but rather that it offers a different perspective - which may in fact be more valid in the long term. For instance, it is more likely to indicate parents' more permanent feelings. Nonetheless, there is a need to investigate those initial feelings which occur at the time, which may only be transitory, but which still have the importance of having been a significant part of the maturational experience.

I also believe it is important to follow up these families to see how they fare in the long term in a similar way to the Newsons, in

## Discussion

their longitudinal study. If there is any compensation for being labelled a "young father" it is at least the knowledge that you will grow out of it, and indeed as I write this final chapter some of my parents will be twenty five - a normal age for parenthood. There would be some value in exploring how the pattern of fathering in this young sample changes as the children grow older, and whether the effects wholly wash out or remain visible.

A further research perspective might valuably be taken by observing parent child interaction in older and younger parents. Some young fathers explicitly say that their own youth makes it easier to interact with their children; does youth really have this effect, or does the greater patience sometimes claimed by older parents more effectively improve the quality of interaction?

Finally, this study has in no way addressed outcomes in the children themselves. A comparative study of this among the children of Lewis's and my own sample might give us necessary information about the effects on the next generation both of "premature" parenthood and (if they could be teased apart) of long term unemployment. These are effects which the society of the nineties will have to face.



## Appendix I



CHILD DEVELOPMENT RESEARCH UNIT  
DIRECTORS: JOHN AND ELIZABETH NEWSON  
TUTOR IN EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY:  
ANDREW MILLER

We are writing to ask whether you would be willing to help us in a research study. We are interested in the part young fathers play in the day-to-day care of their one-year-old children. For many years we have been doing research on how mothers bring up their children at various ages, and recently, at fathers' request, agreed that it was time that we talked to fathers as well. So far we have talked mainly to older mothers and fathers, but we now feel we should like to have the young couple's point of view, and especially that of the father. Your name has come up because you have a one year old child and a young wife, although we do not know your age.

The study is being carried out by our research assistant, Simon Lalonde. If it is convenient to you, he will call on during the evening to arrange a suitable date and time for an interview. We shall be most grateful if you can spare the time to talk to him. He will be very willing to come at any time - at the weekend if you prefer.

With many thanks,

Yours sincerely,

John and Elizabeth Newson.

## Appendix II



## Appendix II

University of Nottingham

Child Development Research Unit

Guided Interview Schedule

### Orientation Data

Child's Full Name ..... dob ..... B/G

### Mother

Name ..... Age .....

1. Is X working at all? FT/ PT/ Not working/  
YT/ FT ed/ PT ed
2. Before having N what did she do? .....  
*If any, Was this part time or full time?*  
*(If in work or education now) Who looks after the  
baby while she's at .....*
3. How far did she get with her education?  
*(If she stopped in last 2 years) Was the baby an  
interruption to her education or would she have stopped  
any way?*

### Father

4. Age .....

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Are you working FT/ PT/ Disabled/ YTS/ Ed/ Unemp

5. How far did you get with your education?
6. (*If stopped in last 2 years*) Did you stop partly because the baby was coming or did you intend to stop any way?
7. (*If employed*) What job do you do?  
  
How long have you done this?  
  
Have you had any other jobs?
8. Was there a time when you were trying to get a job and you couldn't?
9. What hours do you work each day?  
  
Is that 5 days per week?  
  
And do you work the same hours every week or does it vary at all?  
  
(*If shift work*) Do you do nights at all?
10. Do you have to be away from home at all, except during the day?  
  
*home: every night/ up to 2 nights away/ 2-5 nights away/ normally away/ other*
11. (*If unemployed*) How long have you been out of work?  
  
What jobs did you have before you became unemployed?

## Appendix II

12. Did you receive any training or apprenticeship for a job, or do any schemes?

### Birth

First of all I'd like to ask you some questions about N's birth.

13. Were you living together at that time?

14. Where was he born?

15. Was he premature or late at all?

16. Do you remember how much he weighed?

17. Were you there for the Birth?

All the way through?

*all/ last stage/ earlier stage/ no*

18. Was any one else there apart from the hospital staff?

19. *(If not present)* Would you have liked to be there?

What prevented you?

*(If present)* Did you ask to be there, or did someone persuade you?

Who persuaded you?

20. Did X want you there? Y/ N



## Appendix II

21. What was the hospital's (midwife's) attitude?

+vel/ -vel/ neutrall/ dk

22. Did there seem to be any difference of opinion between the hospital staff on this?

How did this come over to you?

23. How did X get on - did she have a good time?

*(If negative)* Was there anything special/else that made it an unhappy experience for her?

*(If positive)* Was there anything special/else that made it a good experience for her?

24. *(If present)* And what was it like for you?

25. Did you feel you had a job to do during the birth, or did you feel a bit in the way?

26. Was there a particular moment in N's birth that you think you'll remember all your life?

*(If negative)* And were there any good moments - that gave you a thrill or made you feel good?

*(If positive)* And were there any really bad moments - when you felt scared, or horrified or just disgusted?

27. *(All)* How do you feel now about fathers being there through childbirth?

*(If positive)* Do you think it's good for fathers to be

## Appendix II

there or is it just helpful to the mother?

28. What does X think about it now?

29. Was there anything that you thought could have been changed to make the whole experience easier?

30. How soon did you first hold the baby?

*immediately/ within the first hour/ within the first day/ later .....*

31. Some fathers say that they feel very odd when they hold their baby for the first time - was that true for you?

32. Did you feel immediately that N was really yours or did it take some time to realise this?

33. Some time fathers say that as well as feeling pleased they feel a bit trapped - did you feel like that?

34. Can you remember what it was like to hold him?

What thoughts went through your head?

35. When did you see him again after that?

36. How long was X in hospital?

37. How often were you able to visit?

38. Were you able to have time alone with X and the baby or were there always other visitors?

## Appendix II

Did you mind that?

39. Did you take any time off work after N's birth?

How long?

40. Can you remember what sort of things you did when you weren't with X and N?

41. Did X come straight home, or did she stay with someone else?

How soon was she up for the whole day?

42. Did she have any help in the house after the baby was born?

*Father home all day/ relative ....., neighbour/ friend/ other .....*

*(If neighbour or relative)* Did you pay for her help, or was it just for love?

43. What sort of things did you do for N or around the house while things were getting back to normal?

*(Prompt)* Is this something you would usually do, or just at a time like that?

### Preparation

Can we go right back in time?

44. How many brothers and sisters did you have?

father..... mother.....  
position ..... position .....



## Appendix II

*(If younger sibs)* How much younger is your younger/est sister/brother?

45. Did you ever look after any babies or young children when you were a child?

46. Before you had a child had you ever bottle-fed a baby?

Y/N

*(If yes)* How often?

47. What about nappies, had you ever changed any?

*(If yes)* Whose?

How often?

48. Had you fed a baby with a spoon?

*(If yes)* How often?

or soothed a baby to sleep in your lap?

49. *(If yes to any of the above)* Did you do this (these things) because your help was needed or because you wanted to? - *(prompt)* Did your parents encourage you to do them?

50. How about at school, were there any classes dealing with what it's like to be a parent?

*Yes, boys and girls/ only girls/ no or dk*

*(If yes)* What sort of things did you discuss?

Did you find it interesting?

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*(If no)* Would you have been interested in this sort of thing?

*(If not interested)* Do you think it could be made interesting to boys of school age?

51. Do you think schools ought to make a big effort to teach boys about being fathers or do you think they shouldn't bother?

Why do you feel that?

52. So before you met X did you have any ideas about how many children you wanted to have?

*(If yes)* How many did you want?

Had you definitely made up your mind about that, or were you going to decide later?

Can you say what made you decide?

*(If no)* Did you think that some time in the future you'd have children or were you just not interested in them?

53. How long have you known X?

54. Are you and X married?

*(If no)* Was that something you considered?

55. How long have you been married/living together?

*(If married)* Have you been living together in all that time?

56. Were you already thinking about getting married/living together before X became pregnant?

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57. When did you know that X was pregnant?

58. When did X first know that she was pregnant?

59. Did the fact she was pregnant speed up the decision to get married/live together?

60. Did anyone try to influence you in any way?

What did you think about at the time?

(Do you still feel that?)

61. Does anyone else live in this house?

(If yes) Do you live as one family?

Did it bother you at all moving in with other people?

How do you feel this has turned out, have there been many advantages?

What sorts of things do you not see eye to eye over?

How do these problems usually sort themselves out - or don't they?

Does X usually agree with you on these occasions or does it make difficulties between you?

62. What about before you moved in here, where were you living then?

(Prompt) Were you living with your parents?

(If yes) How did you find the change?



## Appendix II

(If no) How long had you been living away from home - how do you feel you have coped on your own?

63. Before X was pregnant did you both discuss the possibility of having children very much?

(If no) Was it the sort of subject you never discussed?

(If yes) Who usually brought the subject up?

64. Did you agree on the number of children you were hoping for?

How many?

(If not) Was that something you both knew was a disagreement or was it just a feeling that there were differences in what you wanted?

How did you think it would sort itself out?

Do you still think that?

Would X agree?

### Pregnancy

65. How did X feel when she first found out that she was expecting a baby?

66. What about yourself - how did you feel about it?

67. Did your feelings change in any way or did you go on feeling like that right through to the birth?

68. How about X did her feelings change during her

## Appendix II

pregnancy?

69. Was there anyone in your families whose attitude affected you?

70. Was X well in her pregnancy or did she have problems?

71. Had she had any previous problems - miscarriages or anything like that?

72. What about the ante-natal clinics - did you go to any?

*(If yes)* What did you do at them?

Were you made welcome by the staff?

*(If no)* Were you encouraged to go?

Would you have liked to go to them?

*(If no)* Was there any mention of you going?

*(If yes)* What do you think you would have got out of them?

Did she go to any ante-natal classes (with this pregnancy)

*(If yes)* Did you become involved in them at all?

*(If no)* Could you have gone?

What put you off?

73. Did you help X practise her exercises?

74. When X was expecting N, did you read any books or magazines about babies?

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(Can you give me some examples)

What about since?

75. Were your friends or relatives able to give any advice or information?

76. Once you knew that X was pregnant did you yourself spend much time getting things ready?

What did you do?

77. Would you have liked to have done more?

What?

78. Do you feel that X's being pregnant had any effect on you as a person?

79. Apart from the obvious physical changes, do you think that women change during pregnancy?

(If yes) Do you feel that (...../change) in X had any effect on you?

80. Do you think it's a time when couples get closer together, or do you think it tends to make them go their own ways a bit more?

81. Do you feel that X was as well prepared for childbirth as she could have been, or do you feel that it could have been done better?

82. And what about the first few weeks coping with the baby yourselves do you feel you were properly prepared for that?



## Appendix II

*(If no)* In what way not?

83. A lot of fathers find there are some things about looking after a baby which are much nicer than they expected - has there been anything like that for you?
84. And most find that there are also one or two things that are much worse than they thought they would be - what's the worst thing for you?

### Feeding

85. When N was a small baby did X breast feed him at all?

How long?

*(Check)* Was this when he finished with the breast feeding completely?

86. When did he start having bottles?

87. And when did he start having solid foods?

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Breast												
Bottle												
Solids												

88. *(If breast feeding 2 weeks or less)* Did she have any special reason for not breast feeding?

*(If negative physical reason)* Would she have gone on do you think she would have stopped anyway?

89. *(If breast fed at all)* Was she looking forward to breast

## Appendix II

feeding N or was she persuaded?

90. (*All*) How did the hospital/the midwife feel about breast feeding?

91. And did you have any views about it?

93. Had you ever seen a baby being breast fed before?

94. (*If any breast feeding*) How did you feel when you saw your own baby being breast fed?

(*If all positive*) Some men say they have mixed feelings about it - was that true for you?

95. (*All*) If you could decide which way your next baby was to be fed which way would you choose?

### Bottle

96. Did you have any difficulties over bottle feeding?

(Even at the beginning?)

97. Was he a baby who vomited a lot or did he mostly keep his food down?

(*If any vomiting*) Did that bother you at all?

In what way?

98. Have you ever bottle fed him?

(*If yes*) How old was he when you first fed him?

(*If no*) Is there any particular reason why you haven't?

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*(If bottle fed)* Have you done this on a regular basis, or just occasionally?

*(If regular)* From when he was how old?

*(If occasionally)* Has there been a time when you yourself fed him on a regular basis, if only for a few weeks?

99. Were you keen to give him the bottle yourself or did you do it just to help out?

100. Have you enjoyed giving him his bottle, or is it just another job?

101. *(All)* I suppose he's still on the bottle a bit is he?

How many does he have a day roughly?

102. *(If F has fed)* Do you ever give him the bottle these days?

How often?

103. When he was very young (had just started on the bottle) did you used to get the bottle ready for a feed?

(How regularly)

(Do you ever do it now)

### Schedule

104. Before N started on solids, can you tell me how his feeding times were managed - was he fed at certain times or just when he seemed to want it?



## Appendix II

If he cried before his usual time, would you feed him?

If he was asleep at the usual time, did you wake him for his feed?

*Rigid to clock/ flexibly rigid/ flexible/ demand*

105. Did either of you have any special reason for deciding to stick pretty closely to the clock (let him choose his own times?)

*(If father)* How did you come to want N to be fed in this way?

*(If mother)* Did you influence how X did it - or did you leave it up to her?

### Solids

I'd like to ask you now about the things he eats and drinks nowadays.

106. Can you tell me every thing he has to eat on a typical day - from the moment he wakes to the next morning?

107. Do you give him any of this food?

*(If yes)* Would you say you did this every day or just occasionally?

*(If no)* Do you ever feed N?

108. What about the weekends, do you feed him (more) then?

109. Do you ever prepare food for him?

110. Do you ever sit and chat to him while he is eating?

## Appendix II

(How often)

*(If feeding)* What do you do if you're feeding him something and he won't eat it?

*(If alternative prepared)* Suppose he still doesn't want it?

111. Do you find sometimes you (or X) have to spend a whole meal time playing little games with him to get the food down him?

112. Do the two of you agree about what you should do if he won't eat?

113. What would X do?

114. What would you do?

115. Does one of you tend to get upset about it and the other do the calming down; or do you both feel the same about it?

### Sleep

About his sleep .....

116. What time was he put to bed last night?

117. How soon after did he go to sleep or was he already asleep when you put him down?

118. Did he wake at all during the night?

## Appendix II

At what times?

How long did he stay awake (each time)?

119. Did you hear him or did you sleep through?

120. What time did he wake up this morning?

121. And what time did he actually get up?

*(If awake for more than 15 minutes)* What did he do, between waking and getting up?

122. Are these sleeping times fairly normal for N?

*(State abnormality and why)*

123. Is he always put down at the same time?

124. Where does he sleep?

125. Do you or X usually do anything to get him to sleep at bedtime?

126. Who usually gets him to sleep (/puts him to bed)?

*(If X)* Do you ever deal with that?

127. What happens if he won't sleep, or cries after he's been left?

And if he goes on crying?

*(If unclear)* Does he easily wake in the night nowadays?



## Appendix II

128. How many nights per week does he wake?

*4+/ 2-3/ 1 or occl Never*

129. Who usually goes to him in the night?

*(If X)* Would you ever go yourself?

*(All)* Why is it that (X goes rather than you?  
(you go rather than X?

What about when N was younger, did he ever keep either of you awake at night?

*(If yes)* Did you go to him more (/at all) then?

130. Do you think it does a child of this age any harm to be left to cry?

131. How long would you leave him if you thought there was nothing wrong with him?

What about your routine in the morning, who gets up first?

Who usually gets N up?

Does she (Do you) dress him?

Is there anything you do with N before he gets dressed?

*(If older children)* Does anyone help O get up?

Who?

*(If X)* Do you ever help?

132. Does his crying ever upset you?

## Appendix II

133. How would you describe the way you feel then?

134. Do you ever feel so upset by his crying that you want to get out of the house?

135. And do you usually get out?

136. Why so you think small babies cry?

137. Do you think there's anything you can do about it, or do you think you just have to put up with it?

138. Do you find that you are more tired nowadays than before you had N?

139. And X, does she seem more tired than she used to be?

### Bathing and Changing

140. Are you usually at home when N has a bath?

(How often?/How many times per week?)

What about the weekends?

141. Have you ever bathed N?

(If no) Is there any particular reason why you haven't?

(If yes) How old was he when you first bathed him?

Was this with help or alone?

Do you bath him regularly or have you done so just a few times?

## Appendix II

Is bathing N something you and X do together or do you do it to give X a rest?

142. (*All*) Do you ever sit and play with N while X bathes him?

143. How about changing him - do you ever change N's nappies?

How often?

(*If yes*) Even soiled and wet ones?

(*If no*) Have you ever changed them?

How often?

144. (*If ever*) Are you as skilled at bathing and changing as X is?

(*If no*) Do you think you could become so?

145. Do you ever take care of N on your own?

(*If no*) Not even when X pops out to the shops?

(*If yes*) Is this something you do regularly?

What sort of things have you done for him when you've taken care of him?

146. Do you ever take him out alone?

How often?

147. I want to ask you about the jobs that have to be done in the house; and for each one I'd like to ask you whether (*give card*) it's your job, or shared equally between you, or whether you help with it, or whether you'd only help



Appendix II

in an emergency?

	Father's Job	Shared Equally	Helps Mother	Emergency
Shopping				
Washing dishes				
Cooking				
Vacuuming/dusting				
Cleaning the house				
Tidying up				
Washing clothes				
Ironing				
Painting/decorating				

*Questions that are only applicable to fathers with older children*

How much do you have to do with O?    Y/N

Do you play with him a lot?                      Y/N

Do you bath him?                                      O / S / N

Read or tell him stories?                            O / S / N

Take him out without X?                            O / S / N

Look after him when X goes out?                   O / S / N

Is there anything else you do for O?    O / S / N

Or anything that you do regularly with him?

Since N's arrival have you had more to do with O or has there been less time to spend with him?

Looking back to when O was a baby - do you think that you were more involved in looking after him than N?

What sort of things were different?

## Appendix II

### Communication and Play

148. Can I ask you now about what N does during the day time when he's wide awake?

What does he do - how does he occupy himself?

149. Is he walking at all yet?

150. Does he spend a lot of time on the floor, or is he mainly in his chair or high-chair?

151. Some people say you can't really sit down and play with a baby of this age?

What do you think about that?

*(If playing now)* How old was he when you first felt it was possible to play with him?

Can you describe to me what you do when you play with him now?

152. Are there any special games you have between you - that he looks forward to?

Or any little sayings or songs that he likes?

153. Is there any special time which is his playtime with you?

154. How much time altogether do you reckon you spend playing with N on an average day?

155. What do you most enjoy doing with him?

## Appendix II

156. Do you often find that at the end of the day you'd rather collapse into a chair than play with N?

157. Does his mum play in the same way as you or differently?

*(If different)* Do you think that's the usual difference between a mother and a father playing or do you think it's more a matter of personality?

*(If same)* Do you think that most mothers and fathers would play the same way as each other or do you think that mothers play differently from fathers on the whole?

158. Do N and his mum have any special games or time for play?

159. Is there anyone else who will sit down and play with N?

What sort of things does he/she do with him?

160. Does N seem to enjoy one kind of play more than others?

Or any particular toys?

161. Is there anything else that you wouldn't exactly call play, but that N seems to get a lot of fun out of?

*(Prompt)* - something he does on his own?  
- something he does with someone else?

162. If you wanted to give N a little treat what would you do?



## Appendix II

163. If you wanted to make him happy and excited how would you do that?

164. I suppose he can't say any words yet can he?

(List)

165. Has he got any other ways of making you understand things?

What can he tell you?

166. How much does he understand of what you say to him?

*(Prompt)* Can you give me an example of something you say, that he understands?

*(For context)* For instance, if you said "Where's Mummy?" and Mummy didn't come would he go looking for her?

Can he understand "Wait a minute"?

167. If you point when he's out in the pram would he look to where you're pointing at?

168. In general, do you think that N is going to be a chatter box, or is he more likely to be the quiet type?

### Temperament

169. I'd like to ask you something about N's personality now. How would you describe him to someone who didn't know him at all?

170. Is he quite content for you to do things for him or does he like to be independent?

## Appendix II

171. Does he seem to be a very happy child, or is he one of those who tends to take life a bit hard?

*(If happy)* Would you describe him as placid?

172. Is he a cuddly baby?

Has he always been like that?

173. Does he ever just seem a bit miserable?

Do you know what makes him feel like that?

How do you cope with it?

174. Does he suck his thumb or fingers?

What about other habits, does he have any?

Does he rock himself, or bang his head on the pillow?

175. Does he play with his private parts at all?

176. What do you feel about him (doing whatever he does)?

Does it bother you at all?

Do you try to stop him in any way?

How?

Does X try to stop him?

Does he object to you/her stopping him?

## Appendix II

## Conflict

**177. Does he ever have temper tantrums?**

*daily/ most days/ 1-3: week/ less/ never*

**178. How does he act when he's in a tantrum?**

**179. What seems to start them off?**

## 180. What do you do?

**181. Do you feel parents should be firm about tantrums at this age, or do you think it's better to ignore them?**

182. Is he one of those children who once he has a tantrum you can't do much about it, or you can distract him or comfort him usually?

**183. How do you punish him when he's naughty?**

**184. What kind of naughtiness would that be for?**

185. Is there anything you can say to him that makes him understand he's

(been naughty?

(done something you didn't want him to do?

186. What do you usually say to him )

) when you feel a bit

cross with him?

What else do you say to him )

**187. How do you feel about smacking children of this age?**



## Appendix II

188. (*If doesn't smack*) At what age would you expect to start smacking him sometimes?

189. How does his mum feel about that?

190. Some people say that if parents were more patient they could manage without smacking - do you think parents should try to do without smacking?

191. Does N seem to take more notice of one of you than the other?

Who does he behave best for?

Why do you think that is?

### Paternal Interest and Involvement

192. Do you find that most evenings you and X have a chat about what he's been doing that day?

193. Do you look forward to hearing about those things, or does it sometimes get a bit boring?

194. How do you come to decide to start something new in N's routine?

195. Do you feel as if you sometimes sit down and make a decision about something to do with N or do things just seem to happen without discussing it?

196. Do you always go along with what X wants to do?

197. Does she ever ask your opinion over something like when to start potty training or whether to have vaccinations?

## Appendix II

198. Which of you would make the decision to call a doctor if he's ill?

199. Do you and X ever have different ideas about how N should be brought up?

200. Do you ever protest at the things she does with him?

201. Does she ever protest at the things you do with him?

*(If any)* What sort of things do you disagree about?

How do you usually come to an agreement - or do you just agree to differ?

Do you think your disagreements are likely to get worse or better?

*(If none)* Do you think you're likely to disagree when he's older?

202. How far do you find yourself chatting about N at work?

*(If unemployed)* - to people you meet?

203. Do you ever talk with people about bringing up your children?

Who with?

How often?

Is it mainly with women or do you talk to men about these things?

Is it mostly with older men?

*(If yes)* What sort of things do you discuss?

## Appendix II

Do you tend to swop information or do you discuss problems?

*(If no)* Why is that?

Would you like to talk about it?

204. What about with your friends of your own age?

205. Do any of them have children?

*(If yes)* Do you find that you spend much of your time talking about your children?

*(If no)* Do you ever discuss N with them?

206. Do you feel as if being a father has separated you from your friends?

Does that bother you at all?

### Perspectives on Role Sharing

207. Do you think that it's possible to lead a full life once you've got children?

What do you find you have to do less of ?

Do you mind that?

208. Looking back to before X was expecting N, how often did you go out in the evenings?

209. Did either of you have any regular hobbies or sports?

How often did you do .....?

How often did X do .....?



## Appendix II

210. Did you always go out together?

211. How did X's being pregnant affect the way you both spent your spare time?

Did you tend to go out more or less than before?

212. Did N's arrival then affect the amount of time you yourself were at home?

How?

213. So about how many evenings per week did you spend away from home during the first ~~90~~ weeks?

214. What about keeping up your outside interests?

Has that been a problem?

215. Do the two of you ever manage to leave the baby so you can both go out together?

216. Does someone come in to look after N or does someone just listen for him or what?

217. Do you ever get out on your own?

Would you like to get out more often than you do or are you happy the way things are?

218. Does X mind you going out on your own?

219. What about your friends do you see anything of them?

## Appendix II

How often?

220. Do you think they understand what it means to have a young child?

221. Do you think that in their eyes you have changed?

(If yes) In what way?

Does that make things difficult between you?

222. Do you think that they have changed?

In what way?

223. (If employed) Do you spend any extra time at work, doing overtime or at social activities connected with your job?

(If any) Has this changed at all since N's arrival?

(If none) Did you before N's arrival?

224. How good are your prospects at work?

225. What about X, has she any plans about  
(jobs  
(going back to work  
(education

226. How would you like her to organise children and job possibilities if you could choose?

How would she like to do it?

227. Some people say there's no reason why the father shouldn't look after the baby while the mother goes out to work - how do you feel about that?

## Appendix II

Have you discussed this at all?

Do you think it might be a serious possibility for you?

Would it be a matter of choice or a matter of having to?

228. What does X feel about your helping with N?

Would she like you to do less or more?

*(Not employed)* ..... and if you had more time?

Does she see you as someone to call on if she wants some help occasionally, or does she expect you to share looking after N when you're at home?

*(If shared)* Is that an equal share?

229. Are there any jobs that X does with N that she regards as her own?

*(If yes)* Is that because she enjoys them (/it) or does she feel she can do them better?

230. Are there any jobs which she tries to get you to do more with N?

What about around the home?

Is there anything with N which you'd like to do but she doesn't really want you to?

231. Looking back over the year, do you think you have more or less to do with N than when he was born?

What sort of things have changed?

Can you say why?



## Appendix II

232. Do you think that a father and his son/daughter can be as close as a mother and her son/daughter?

*(If no)* Why not?

233. Does N seem to prefer to play with you or X?

Who does he seem to have more fun with?

234. What about when he is upset or frightened, which one of you does he turn to?

Can you say why?

235. Can you say in what way a father is important to a child of N's age?

236. How would things be different for N if you weren't around?

237. How much difference has it made to X's life that you have a baby?

238. What about your life?

239. Have you found it difficult having a baby around or has everything come quite easily?

240. Have there been any big surprises for you in what it's like to be parents?

241. Some parents say they are surprised by some of the emotions they feel have you found that?

242. Some say that their emotions are much more mixed

## Appendix II

than they expected - is that so for you?

243. Have there been any really bad moments for either of you since the baby's been born - when you've felt a bit desparate?

244. Have you ever felt like crying?

(If yes). When was that?

What had happened?

245. What about X?

246. What do you find the most difficult thing to get accustomed to?

247. Is there anything that you think you have missed out on by having N?

248. Do you feel you've had to grown up a lot for the baby's sake?

(or perhaps that you should have given up more things?)

249. Do you think it's much the same bringing up children now as it was for your parents or do you feel there are big differences?

250. Looking back how do you remember your parents bringing you up?

251. Did your father take much interest in helping to bring you up or in helping in the home?

## Appendix II

252. What sort of things did he do?

How often?

253. What about your ideas and attitudes compared with your parents - do you think your ideas on bringing up children are different from theirs?

In what way?

254. A lot of people must have said to you that you are very young to be a father - do you feel very young in the sense of being unprepared ?

255. And do you ever feel that just by being older, things would be easier?

In what way?

256. If I read out some words could you say whether each one is more likely to be true of a father under twenty years or over twenty?

Patient

Understanding

Enthusiastic

Short tempered

Energetic

Too soft hearted

Happy

Lazy

Easy going

Interested in playing with children

Gentle

Strict

257. How far would you like N to go in his education - have you any ideas about that?



## Appendix II

258. I know it's very early to talk about it, but how do you see N growing up - would you like to cast your mind forward 20 years and describe to me what he'll be like then?
259. What kind of job do you see him in?
260. Looking at N now is there anything special that gives you a big thrill about him?
261. Is there anything now that really worries or upsets you?
262. Looking ahead, what stage of childhood do you think you're going to enjoy most?
263. What stage do you think you'll find difficult or worrying as a father?
264. Looking around at other fathers - is there anything that makes you think "I'd never do that with my children"?
265. Lastly, what does being a father mean to you personally - how would you sum it up, for someone who had never experienced it?

## **Appendix III**

Complete Tables Cited In The Text

Chapter Four: Young Parent's Relationship At Conception

Table 4.I      Young couples' discussions about living together or marriage broken down by young and normative age range father samples.

	Had had discussions	Had not had discussions
Father aged 16 to 20 years	10	11
Father aged 21 or 22 years	42	9

Missing cases = 18



# Appendix III

## Chapter Five: Pregnancy Period.

**Table 5.I. Father's attendance at ante natal clinic broken down by employment.**

	Did attend clinics	Did not attend clinics
Employed	30	22
Unemployed	20	27

Missing cases = 1

**Table 5.II. Father's attendance at ante natal clinics broken down by young and normative age range samples.**

	Did attend clinic	Did not attend clinic
Young father sample	49	50
Normative age range father sample	33	66

Missing cases = 2

**Appendix III**

**Table 5. III.      Mother's attendance at ante natal classes  
in the young and normative age range  
samples.**

	Did attend clinic	Did not attend clinic
Inexperienced young mother sample	3 8	3 6
Inexperienced normative age range mother sample	4 2	1 8

Missing cases = 66

**Table 5.IV.      Comparison of reading, during the  
pregnancy period broken down by young  
and normative age fathers .**

	Did read material	Did not read material
Young father sample	6 5	3 4
Normative age range father sample	8 3	1 7

Missing cases = 1

Appendix III

Table 5.VI. Father's perceptions of change in the mother during pregnancy broken down by the young and normative age range samples.

	Positive changes	Negative changes
Young father sample	26	72
Normative age range father sample	52	48

Missing cases = 1

Chapter Six: The Birth Experience And The Post Natal Period

Table 6.I. Experienced and inexperienced father's feelings about holding the baby for the first time.

	Mixed feelings	Positive feelings
Experienced with children	21	19
Inexperienced with children	39	40

Missing cases = 1.



# Appendix III

**Table 6.II. Father's feelings about holding the baby for the first time broken down by his reaction to hearing of the pregnancy.**

	Shocked/ surprised	Positive feelings
Mixed feelings about holding baby	23	17
Positive feelings about holding baby	19	40

Missing cases = 1.

**Table 6.III. Help received by the young couple after the birth broken down by where they were living.**

	Help	No help
Living with relatives	18	0
Living in own home	45	36

Missing cases = 1

### Appendix III

**Table 6.IV. Help received by the couple after the birth broken down by young and normative age range samples.**

	Help	No help
Young father sample	63	36
Normative age range father sample	46	54

Missing cases = 1

**Table 6.V. Father's time off work after the birth broken down by young and normative age range samples..**

	Took under a week	Took a week or more
Young father sample	50	10
Normative age range father sample	61	33

Missing cases = 46

## Appendix III

**Table 6.VI.**      **Father's involvement in child care and house work broken down by young and normative age range samples.**

	Some child care	Only House work
Young father sample	77	22
Normative age range father sample	60	40

Missing cases = 1

## Chapter Seven: Employment Or Participation

**Table 7.I.**      **Father's involvement in nappy changing broken down by employment.**

	Once a month or less	Twice a week or more
Employed	15	38
Unemployed	23	24

Missing cases = 0.



### Appendix III

**Table 7.II. Father's skill in changing nappies compared to the mother's, broken down by his employment.**

	Equally skilled	Not as skilled
Employed	14	39
Unemployed	27	20

Missing cases = 0.

**Table 7.III. The regularity with which the father feeds the baby during the week broken down by employment.**

	2-5 times a week	Once a week or less
Employed	15	38
Unemployed	23	24

Missing values = 0.

# Appendix III

**Table 7.IV. Father's involvement in feeding the baby at the weekend broken down by employment.**

	2-5 times a week-end	Once a week-end or less
Employed	21	32
Unemployed	28	19

Missing values = 0.

**Table 7.V. Father's attitude to the mother going out to work whilst he stays at home caring for the children.**

	No It Is Wrong	Fine Idea
Employed	38	15
Unemployed	16	31

Missing values = 0.

## Appendix III

**Table 7.VI. Fathers perceptions of future work prospects broken down by length of unemployment**

	Bad	Uncertain
Always unemployed	24	6
Unemployed for les than 12 months	12	5

Missing values = 53

## Chapter Eight: Social Life And Leisure Time

**Table 8.I. Frequency with which father went out before the pregnancy broken down by the young and normative age range samples.**

	Once a week or less	Twice a week or more
Young father sample	13	18
Normative age range fathersample	14	55

Missing values = 100.



## Appendix III

**Table 8.II. Frequency with which father went out before and during the pregnancy.**

		During pregnancy	
		Once a week or less	Twice a week or more
Before pregnancy	Once a week or less	64	15
	Twice a week or more	12	8

Missing values = 1.

**Table 8.III. Frequency with which father went out before the pregnancy and when the child was one year old.**

		At one year	
		Once a week or less	Twice a week or more
Before pregnancy	Once a week or less	54	25
	Twice a week or more	9	12

Missing values = 0.

### Appendix III

**Table 8.IV.** Frequency with which the young couples went out after the birth broken down by the young and normative age range samples.

	Less than once a week	Once a week or more
Young couples	36	64
Couples from the Newsons' original sample	156	552

Missing values = 0.

**Table 9.V.** Friend's reported understanding of young children broken down by whether or not they had children of their own.

	No friends	At least one friend
Had their own children	14	40
Did not have their own children	21	25

Missing values = 0.

Appendix III

Table 8.VI. Father's conversations about their one year old broken down by the young and normative age range samples.

	Talked every day	Did not talk every day
Young father sample	59	41
Normative age range father sample	72	28

Missing values = 0.

Table 8.VII. Father's conversations about their one year old broken down by employment.

	Talked every day	Did not talk every day
Employed	60	13
Unemployed	19	28

Missing values = 0.



## Appendix III

**Table 8.VIII. Father's discussions about changes in daily routine broken down by employment.**

	Discussed changes	Did not discuss changes
Employed	17	35
Unemployed	28	19

Missing values = 1.

## Chapter Nine: Young Father Sensitivity' And Responsiveness

**Table 9.I. Father's explanations for why the baby was miserable broken down by the younger and normative age range samples.**

	Ill or unwell	Moody or attention seeking
Young father sample	35	52
Normative age range fathersample	64	31

Missing values = 18.

## Appendix III

**Table 9.II.      Father's explanations for why the baby was miserable broken down by the ordinal position of the child.**

	Ill or unwell	Moody or attention seeking
Experienced fathers	12	23
First time fathers	8	44

Missing values = 13.

**Table 9.III.      Father's reported responsiveness in dealing with the baby's miserable behaviour broken down by the younger and normative age range samples.**

	Sensitive	Insensitive
Young father sample	60	26
Normative age range father sample	72	22

Missing values = 18.

# Appendix III

**Table 9.IV.**      **Father's opinion on whether leaving the baby to cry caused any harm broken down by younger and normative age range samples.**

	Will cause harm	Will not cause harm
Young father Sample	45	54
Normative age range father sample	72	27

Missing values = 2.

**Table 9.V.**      **How father's felt about leaving a one year old child to cry broken down by younger and normative age range samples (and controlling for social class).**

	Will cause harm	Will not cause harm
Young father Sample	29	24
Normative age range father sample	31	19

Missing values = 97.



### Appendix III

**Table 9.VI.** Length of time fathers were prepared to leave the baby crying broken down by younger and normative age range samples.

	Under 30 minutes	Indefinitely
Young father sample	82	17
Normative age range father sample	92	8

Missing values = 1.

**Table 9.VII.** Frequency of temper tantrums broken down by father's reported method of dealing with tantrums when categorised into sensitive and insensitive.

	Sensitive	Insensitive
Less than once a week	16	11
More than once a week	26	47

Missing values = 0.

Appendix III

Table 9.VIII. Father's reported method of dealing with tantrums when categorised into sensitive and insensitive broken down by the younger and normative age range samples.

	Sensitive	Insensitive
Young father sample	42	58
Normative age range father sample	49	51

Missing values = 0.

Table 9.IX. Frequency of child's temper tantrums broken down by the 'younger and normative age range samples.

	3 times a week or less	4 times a week or more
Young father sample	54	46
Normative age range father sample	71	29

Missing values = 0.

Appendix III

Table 9.X. Father's reported use of physical punishment broken down by the younger and normative age range samples.

	No physical punishment	Physical Punishment
Young father sample	17	83
Normative age range father sample	35	65

Missing values = 0.

Table 9.XI. Father's attitude towards smacking broken down by the younger and normative age range samples.

	non acceptance	acceptance
Young father sample	17	83
Normative age range father sample	35	65

Missing values = 0.



Appendix III

Table 9.XII. Father's emotional reaction when the child would not eat broken down by the younger and normative age range samples.

	Upset	Not upset
Young father sample	22	66
Normative age range father sample	12	82

Missing values = 18.

Chapter Ten: Roles And Responsibilities

Table 10.I. Mother's perception of father's role in care taking as reported by the father broken down by employment status.

	Help	Share
Employed	34	19
Unemployed	12	35

Missing cases = 0.

## Appendix III

**Table 10.II. Father's perception of his role broken down by employment status.**

	Traditional role	Mother- like role
Employed	29	24
Unemployed	30	16

Missing cases = 1.

**Table 10.III. Impact of parenthood on mother as perceived by the father broken down by the young and normative age range samples.**

	Restrictive	Non- restrictive
Young father sample	34	65
Normative age range father sample	15	85

Missing cases = 1.

Appendix III

Table 10.IV. Impact of parenthood on father broken down by employment status.

	Changes	No Changes
Employed	43	10
Unemployed	35	11

Missing cases = 0.

Table 10. V. Impact of parenthood on both mother and fathers.

	Restrictive	Non-restrictive
Mother	34	66
Father	17	83

Missing cases = 0.



### Appendix III

**Table 10.VI. Relationship between father's own report of impact of parenthood and perceived impact on mother.**

		Father	
		Restrictive	Non-restrictive
Mother	Restrictive	11	23
	Non-restrictive	8	57

Missing cases = 1.

**Table 10.VII. Impact of parenthood on father broken down by the younger and more normative age range samples.**

	Restrictive	Non-restrictive
Young father Sample	17	82
Normative age range father sample	4	96

Missing cases = 1.

Appendix III

Table 10.VIII. Impact of parenthood on mother as reported by father broken down by father's employment status.

	Restrictive	Non- Restrictive
Employed	10	36
Unemployed	24	29

Missing cases = 1

Table 10.IX. Father's reports of whether the mother or father have felt like crying.

	Cried	Not cried
Mothers	55	44
Fathers	23	75

Missing cases = 3

## **Appendix IV**



## Appendix IV

Summary Of Child Care Differences Between The Young Fathers And The Normative Age Range Fathers		
	Young Father Sample	Normative Age Range Sample
Father's response to unsettled behaviour		
Sensitive	60	72
Insensitive	26	22
How long father would leave to cry		
Under 30 minutes	83	92
30 minutes or over	17	8
Father's response to tantrums		
Sensitive	42	49
Insensitive	58	51
How father punished the child*		
Physical punishment	83	65
No physical punishment	17	35

\* Significant difference

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