Growing up to do 'women's work'

Exploring two generations of mothers' relational narratives of household work over the life course

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Contents

Abstract

This thesis explores the ways in which women make sense of their experiences of household work over the life course and in the context of various relationships, with a particular focus on mother/daughter relationships. Using in-depth interviews with 24 heterosexual women (comprising 12 pairs of mothers and their adult daughters, who themselves were mothers of young children), this research investigates the role household work plays in women's personal narratives and the construction of relational narrated selves and narrative identities.

By moving away from a 'snapshot' approach to housework that focuses on the division of tasks within heterosexual couples, this thesis positions household work as part of our personal lives (Smart, 2007), and something that is made sense of relationally, despite dominant discourses of individualism. Similarly, conceiving of people within personal timescapes in which multiple dimensions of time intersect allows for an understanding of household work as part of our personal lives over the life course, as well as inter-generational relationships and broader historical change.

Considering multiple social dimensions of gender, heterosexuality and family, allows for an understanding of how accounting for one's household practices in relation to various discourses can be understood as doing gender, heterosexuality and family. The construction of relational narrated selves in process show how growing up as a woman is shaped particularly by discourses of emphasised femininity (in the context of normative heterosexuality) and good motherhood, and constructing narrative identities in relation to these discourses involves demonstrating acceptable femininity and maternal responsibility, which works to (re)produce gender, heterosexuality and family.

By focusing on the themes of relationality, temporality and the interplay between gender, heterosexuality and family across multiple social dimensions, this thesis uses household work as a lens to draw out useful theoretical links between these key themes.

Acknowledgements

Chapter 1: Introduction

Much research on housework aims to explain the division of tasks among heterosexual couples; as the title of a recent review put it, the key question is 'why do women do the lion's share of housework?' (Lachance-Grzela and Bouchard, 2010). Despite continued 'optimistic and progressive voices about men and change' (McMahon, 1999, p.5) suggesting a contemporary shift towards a more egalitarian division of housework (such as Young and Willmott's picture of a 'symmetrical family' (1973)), studies consistently demonstrate an inequitable division, particularly regarding 'routine' housework[1], between men and women in heterosexual relationships (Lachance-Grzela and Bouchard, 2010; Treas and Drobnic, 2010; Kan et al., 2011; see also Coltrane, 2000, for a summary of earlier research). Although the overall time spent on housework by men and women in heterosexual relationships is converging, Kan et al. demonstrate a continuing segregation in the type of work, with men spending relatively little time on routine tasks and increasing their time through non-routine chores, concluding that 'gender segregation in domestic work continues to pose a barrier to gender equality' (2011, p.248).

Asking people about how they divide routine housework can provide a useful and illuminating snapshot of what is both an everyday, mundane activity and an ongoing contentious issue, popularly described as a 'battle' or a 'war' between women and men (such as 'Chore Wars' (BBC Woman's Hour, 2014)). As well as surveys highlighting

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[1] The phrase 'routine' housework and childcare is used within the literature to refer to the most time-consuming tasks that are less optional and less able to be postponed than 'non-routine' tasks, which have been found to be more enjoyable (Larson et al., 1994). In terms of housework, according to Coltrane, the former are:

a) Meal preparation or cooking
b) Housecleaning
c) Shopping for groceries and household goods
d) Washing dishes or cleaning up after meals
e) Laundry, including washing, ironing and mending clothes

(Coltrane, 2000). Cooking, cleaning, washing up and laundry are used in most studies and are described synonymously as 'routine', 'indoor' or 'stereotypically female' (Baxter et al., 2008; Baxter and Western, 1998; Cunningham, 2007; see also Coltrane (2000) on the gendered labelling of tasks). Grocery shopping can be positioned in either category (Hook, 2006 defines it as non-routine; Bianchi et al., 2000 defines it as routine).

the ongoing significance of gender, in-depth interviews have given us a sense of how people explain the division of tasks within their current couple relationships (Van Hooff, 2011). However, a snapshot is just that; a single moment in time, focusing on one relationship to the exclusion of others. If I were to talk about my own household work practices in the home I share with my husband, my answers to questions about who does which tasks, why that is and whether I think it is fair would contribute to an understanding of housework among heterosexual couples. Analysing my explanations as a 'wife' (not just in the legal sense, but also as the 'particular social position of women as subordinates of individual men' (VanEvery, 1995, p.15)), a feminist analysis could point to the ways in which my housework practices and the way I 'justify' these perpetuate gender inequalities.

However, if I also talked about my memories of doing household work[2] in other situations, or seeing others do so, how I would ideally like these tasks to be performed, and the ways in which household work plays a part in various relationships other than that with my husband, my household work would be seen as a facet of various identities I embody, all of which are relational and in process. Rather than a snapshot, one could imagine looking through family albums, in which my snapshot fits into various ongoing relationships with people who would all have their own stories to tell. When viewed as part of a larger collection, the nature of the photographs themselves highlight the changing context in which each 'snapshot' is produced: from the brown and white studio shots of the great-grandparents I never met, through the black and white photographs of my grandparents and parents when they were younger, to the colour photographs of my childhood and the lack of recent printed photographs as we share images digitally. Similarly, household work, and the identities of those doing and thinking about this work should be seen in the context of broader structural and discursive shifts (such as women's changing work patterns, an increased recognition of gender equality, and a move towards different understandings of motherhood and parenting).

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[2] I am using the term household work in a broad sense to cover 'the sum of all physical, mental, emotional and spiritual tasks that are performed for one's own or someone else's household and that maintain the daily life of those one has responsibility for' (Eichler and Albanese, 2007, p.248), in contrast to using 'housework' as a shorthand for the routine tasks described above. I will discuss how housework and household work have been defined in previous literature in Chapter 2.

In order to think about the household work practices of any one person in the context of webs of relationships over time, it is useful to think sociologically about how this person would make sense of these practices. While for women household work may in different ways contribute to the doing of particular gendered relational identities, for example, as a mother, a wife or a daughter, in thinking about practices over time it is also useful to think in terms of a self embodying these identities. Drawing on an understanding of practices as assemblages of doing, thinking and feeling (Smart, 2007), household work can be seen as part of one's personal life in that it is used as part of biographical explanations, and plays a role in ongoing relationships. In the research encounter, participants constructed personal narratives[3] in relation to household work, for example by emphasising how they have always been a particular sort of person and setting out how this explains their practices, or by emplotting events to present an account of a journey in which they have changed, and indeed, 'grown up'. It is these narratives that I will explore in this thesis.

Recognising that gendered and familial identities are not fixed indicates the ongoing processes of self-identification, and identification by others (Jenkins, 2008). Work on narrative identities (Somers, 1994; Somers and Gibson, 1994; Jackson, 1998; Lawler, 2014) has shown how people construct a sense of self through the stories they tell, linking events into a plot that explains how they have come to be who they are. Although the idea of reflexive self-narratives is used as part of a theory of individualisation (Giddens, 1991), I am using the term in a more relational sense, highlighting how people speak about various connections with others in their personal narratives (following, for example, Mason, 2004). In thinking about relational narrated selves, I would emphasise that these are gendered and sexual selves that are not fixed and continue to be renegotiated over the life course (Jackson, 2006b). Although this thesis does not address sexuality in the sense of 'erotically significant aspects of social life and social being' (Jackson, 2006b, p.106), I am making a case for recognising and making explicit that participants are constructing personal narratives in relation to *both* gender and heterosexuality.

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[3] By 'personal narratives', I mean 'extended accounts of lives that develop over the course of interviews' (Riessman, 2000, p.698), rather than in response to a single question. I also use the concepts of 'narrative identities' and 'narrated self' to draw attention to how identities and selves are constructed through these personal narratives.

For the women I interviewed, this involves the construction of relational femininities, gendered identities produced and reproduced through embodied practices which are made sense of in terms of cultural ideas of femininity (although such ideas vary by factors such as nationality, class, ethnicity and age), and in relation to others (including male partners, but also parents, siblings, children, friends and generalised others). In Oakley's early work on gender, in which she tried to pick apart the 'biological' and the 'social' aspects of women's lives, she argues that 'the biological role of motherhood takes on a whole aura of domesticity and cultural femininity' (1972, p.198). She points to the ways in which the gendered division of labour within heterosexual couples allows for connections between the tasks involved in caring for young children, and tasks involved in maintaining a house and male partner, with all these being understood as 'feminine'. Similarly, Connell's notion of 'emphasized femininity' (1987, p.183), or what Morgan describes as 'true femininity' (1996, p.76), is achieved by women through motherhood. However, as VanEvery (1995) argues, the difficulty of separating mothering from the identity of a wife highlights the heteronormative conventions of femininity that connect motherhood and household work.

While household work is frequently described as 'gendered', there has been less consideration of how the concept of gender in this context is conceived within a heterosexual framework. When researchers use dichotomous constructions of household work (such as 'men's work' and 'women's work'), this is an example of 'naturalised heterosexuality' where '(hetero)sexuality tends either to be ignored in the analysis or is hidden from view, being treated as an unquestioned paradigm' (Richardson, 1996, p.1). For instance, within survey research on housework, measures of 'gender ideology' are constructed in heteronormative terms (Bianchi et al., 2000; Cunningham, 2005; Martinez et al., 2010). While some of the statements 'about the appropriate role of women and men in the family context' (Cunningham, 2005, p.1045) use 'husband' and 'wife', others use 'man' and 'woman', as if the terms are synonymous. Other familial relationships between men and women (for example, as siblings) are not included as relevant to this understanding of gender (despite, for example, the relational femininities and masculinities constructed by brothers and sisters; see Edwards et al., 2006).

Feminist theorising of heterosexuality emphasises that this is a crucial aspect; heterosexuality is not just a sexual institution, but also founded on 'men's unpaid access to women's work' (Jackson, 1996, p.39; see also Rich, 1980; Delphy, 1984; Delphy and Leonard, 1992). Although there are different ways of doing heterosexuality through household work practices (VanEvery, 1995), Seidman suggests that normative heterosexuality regulates and 'creates hierarchies among heterosexualities' (2005, p.40). While arguments have been made for working towards a more equal division of household work within popular feminist texts (Oakley, 1974a; Maushart, 2002; Asher, 2011), the 'normal' woman within a heterosexual relationship is still positioned as thinking about, and indeed caring about, household work more than her male partner (see Doucet, 2001 on the moral dimensions of household work for mothers). Although this has been highlighted as a problematic aspect of heterosexual relationships, the act of writing about it in this way, and naming it as part of heterosexual relationships (for example, defining 'wifework' as 'shorthand for…the unwritten contract into which a woman enters upon marriage', (Maushart, 2002, p.18)), arguably normalises it as something women in heterosexual relationships may then expect to experience (and moan or laugh about with other women in heterosexual relationships).

Normative heterosexuality functions as both a discourse that can be used to make sense of household work practices (for example, in the way tasks were described as what 'you' do, as participants used the term in a generalising way), but also as what is achieved and reproduced as the result of practices. Thus, while heterosexuality was not spoken about explicitly within my study, it functions as a 'hidden organising principle of everyday life' (Hockey et al., 2007, p.12). As household work not only produces 'hot dinners and clean clothes, but also *gender* itself' (ibid, p.6), similarly normative heterosexuality is produced through, for example, women in heterosexual relationships taking responsibility for the planning and organising of foodwork (DeVault, 1991). Where foodwork practices involve cooking for others and are interpreted by the person engaged in the practice as demonstrating love and care, this may be experienced positively as 'a practice of femininity' (Lupton, 2000, p.185) in accordance with wider discourses, although it has been argued that conforming to

normative femininity in this way colludes with the subordination of women to men (Jackson, 1999).

Looking at the example of after-hours medical calls, Kitzinger has shown how 'family' can be understood in relation to a particular model of heterosexuality:

> 'The heteronormative definition of the family reflected and constructed by these social participants in the course of their everyday lives comprises wife and husband, co-resident with their biologically related, dependent children, with the wife/mother taking responsibility for caring for sick family members and for contacting the (shared) family doctor.' (2005, p.493)

She convincingly uses this as an example of everyday heterosexism that excludes non-heterosexuals, and furthermore, the assumption that mothers, but not fathers, will be available to bring in sick children in the morning can be seen as a subtle pressure on mothers to be available in this way (potentially leading to feelings of guilt if they are not). However, taking Morgan's idea of 'overlapping social practices…which might also be described in a variety of other ways' (1996, p.199), the out of hours calls and care discussed here could be described by the individuals involved in the calls as an example of maternal responsibility and care in which young children are prioritised over paid work in a way that best meets their needs. This could then function to 'display' family, in the sense of demonstrating that 'these are my family relationships and they work' (Finch, 2007, p.73).

This leads to different theoretical understandings of gendered, familial identities, and in terms of heterosexuality, these roles are key to its very definition:

> 'An identity defined primary in relation to desire for men and/or the social and economic privileges associated with being the partner of a man, in particular the traditional roles of wife and mother.' (Richardson, 1996, p.2)

Similarly, Jackson has suggested that women are identified in terms of their heterosexual relations (as wives, mothers and daughters) and women 'experience the institution and practices of heterosexuality' through emotional feelings related to these feminine identities, for example through wanting to show competence at housework to demonstrate valued skills (Jackson, 1999, p.130). However, given the ways in which tasks such as providing meals are understood as a way of demonstrating love and care for someone (DeVault, 1991) as part of a socially acceptable feminine

identity,[4] this could suggest that participants' accounts as wives and mothers may focus on the affective nature of practices involved in caring for family members in the way they talk about these tasks. Therefore household work practices can be conceived as both contributing to unequal gendered power relations and heterosexuality as an institution in which women as wives take care of the needs of their husbands and children, allowing the former to engage more fully in paid work (Acker, 1990), and a sense of the self carrying out these practices as part of a feminine identity or identities that are expressed in more positive terms, which potentially contribute to displaying a family that 'works'.

I would argue for an approach that recognises how viewing household work through different theoretical lenses can illuminate overlaps and conflicts between, for example, reproducing gender inequalities and maintaining family traditions. While it is important to continue to ask 'why do women do the lion's share of housework?' in the context of heterosexual relationships, by recognising the interplay between gender, heterosexuality and family within a wider web of relationships over time, in the sense of both the life course and historical time, we can approach the topic of women's household work in a different, and potentially useful way.

In order to explore how gender, heterosexuality and family intersect in women's personal narratives around household work, I want to make a case for a multi-dimensional understanding that recognises the acknowledged complexity of how these concepts are experienced. Following other integrative theories of gender that emphasise the complexity and multi-dimensionality of gender (Connell, 1987; Lorber, 1994; Martin, 2004; Risman 2004), Risman and Davis have argued for understanding gender as a 'social stratification structure' (2013, p.734) which operates across individual, interactional and institutional dimensions. Similarly, Holland and her colleagues suggest heterosexuality is constructed through 'a number of interrelated, interacting and permanently permeable "layers" or "levels"', and is historically specific and subject to change (Holland et al., 2004, pp.22-3). Richardson (2007)

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[4] I argue that what it means to 'do femininity' in a way that is socially acceptable is interactionally co-constructed in terms of prevailing discourse and gendered and heterosexual expectations, and that the term 'relational acceptable femininities' is useful for making sense of the identities that are constructed.

views the relationship between gender and sexuality as a multi-layered process, using the metaphor of a shoreline to illustrate how gender and heterosexuality blend into each other but are also distinguishable, specific to certain localities and historical periods and can change both rapidly and gradually.

In terms of the relationship between family and gender, Morgan (1996) has argued for a problematic relationship involving processes of constructing, obscuring and modifying. More generally his work recognises the relevance of family alongside other concepts, in order to develop a fuller understanding of what are complex social phenomena. Nevertheless, his discussion of gender is clearly heteronormative, without explicitly theorising heterosexuality (as he later acknowledges (Morgan, 2011a)). These examples are part of a larger trend of recognising social complexity, and the need to take account of how different aspects of our social world, such as people's interpretations of their experiences, how people live their lives on a day-to-day basis and the ways in which people identify themselves and are identified by others, all have sociological importance, as do the broader social patterns and trends that are less immediately perceptible.

Smart notes the difficulty involved in capturing the 'multi-dimensionality of relationships and personal life', which 'requires sociology to speak of (or write of) many issues, layers, places, eras and meanings all at the same time' (2011, p.14). Although she acknowledges that this is not possible, she argues for different ways of writing about and representing the lives of our participants. Attempts at multi-dimensionality include 'facet methodology' (Mason, 2011), 'sociological listening' (Back, 2007) or the use of 'spotlights' (Davies, 2011). Mason uses the metaphor of facets in a cut gemstone to refer to:

> 'Different methodological-substantive planes and surfaces, which are designed to be capable of casting and refracting light in a variety of ways that help to define the overall object of concern' (2011, p.77).

The role of the researcher is to consider which lines of enquiry and ways of looking can usefully help her to make sense of the research object in question; following the metaphor, 'deciding how best to carve the facets so they catch the light in the best possible way' (ibid, p.77). Similarly, the metaphor of shining a spotlight on particular

areas usefully implies that other aspects of social life, while not illuminated, are still acknowledged as relevant and part of the wider picture (Davies, 2011).

My approach draws particularly on Jackson's work (2005; 2006a; 2006b) to conceptualise a multi-dimensional social reality in which the women in my study reflexively construct personal narratives as a form of interpretive practice, which are given meaning through available discourses, and are shaped, but not determined, by structural factors. I also argue that these dimensions are relevant to understanding how women can be seen as 'doing' family in that the practices which constitute family contribute to the broader family discourse that gives meaning to these practices (and so on with a certain circularity), while being partially shaped by structural factors such as economic constraints or broader inequalities (Gubrium and Holstein, 1990; Morgan, 1996; 2011a). Similarly, Smart can be seen as recognising the structural (personal lives are 'embedded in the social (and cultural, legal, economic etc.)'), the discursive (thoughts about relationships are formed in social and historical contexts) and the everyday (personal lives are 'lived in many different places and spaces' and are 'cumulative') in her understanding of the inherently social selves individuals construct through the living of personal lives:

> '"The personal" designates an area of life which imparts closely on people and means much to them, but which does not presume that there is an autonomous individual who makes free choices and exercises unfettered agency.' (2007, pp.28-29)

This approach emphasises connectedness by focusing on various aspects of people's ongoing relations with others, including those that are imagined and remembered.

Among these ongoing relationships, one which stands out for me is that between mother and daughter, as the role of mothers in women's household work practices is highlighted by both participants and authors in previous research:

> 'In each case the woman is defining her own housework behaviour with reference to that of her mother...mothers are by far the most important "significant others" so far as housework behaviour is concerned.' (Oakley, 1974b, p.117)

> 'For most girls, learning about housework begins early...many interviewees spoke at length about learning from mothers.' (DeVault, 1991, p.106)

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It is not a straightforward relationship; women interviewed on some aspect of household work praise and criticise their mothers, as well as aiming to emulate and aiming to avoid various practices (Oakley, 1974b; Hochschild, 1989; DeVault, 1991; Bugge and Almås, 2006; Curtis et al., 2009b; Stapleton and Keenan, 2009; Meah and Watson, 2011). In other research, women reflect on the values and behaviour they hope to instil in their children (Berridge and Romich, 2010), show concern about the lifestyles they are demonstrating (Blair-Loy, 2003) or suggest a certain division of household work is inevitable for their daughters (Charles and Kerr, 1988). While some studies include both male and female partners, and others include dependent children and parents, listening to the household work stories of mothers and their adult daughters shines a spotlight on this relationship over time (as well as the relationships the older generation woman has with her own mother, and the younger generation woman has with her children).

This study uses in-depth interviews with 12 pairs of mothers and daughters to explore women's personal narratives of household work over the life course, focusing on the themes of relationality, temporality and the interplay between gender/heterosexuality and family across different social dimensions in order to develop an understanding of relational narrated selves in process.[5] I argue that the themes I have highlighted (or 'facets' I have 'carved') complement each other as part of a theoretical framework; as Mason puts it they are '*strategically illuminating*' (2011, p.77, original emphasis). For example, by considering the ways in which household work is presented as part of various relationships, including those with people no longer living, I explore ways in which attitudes towards household work are constructed relationally. Similarly, by looking at household work across the life course, and in relation to the children of participants, I illustrate how household work is linked to contemporary understandings of what it means to be an adult. I also argue that using household work itself as a lens also allows for theoretical development, such as contributing an empirical example of

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[5] The idea of relational narrated selves in process is explored in more detail in the next chapter, but I use this term here to refer to a sense of self constructed narratively, drawing attention to the ways in which this self is embedded in webs of relationships and can be understood as constantly changing as past events are interpreted and reinterpreted in the construction of ongoing narratives.

how the concepts of personal life interrelate within narrative accounts, or considering the importance of the temporal context of family display.

Chapter 2 of this thesis expands on this theoretical framework in more detail, making the case for using the idea of relational narrated selves in process in the context of more complex multi-dimensional processes of social life. I review the literature on household work, outlining different ways in which the division of household work within heterosexual couples has been studied and use the example of foodwork to demonstrate how mother/daughter relationships have been theorised, as this provides a useful example to draw out connections between gender, heterosexuality and family. In Chapter 3 I reflexively outline my methodological approach and discuss how the research was carried out in practice, focusing in particular on the analytical approach of using the Listening Guide (Mauthner and Doucet, 1998).

The following five analytical chapters set out my findings. Chapter 4 uses a case study of one mother/daughter pair to demonstrate how the core themes of this thesis interrelate within the accounts of both individual women, and across mother/daughter pairs. Chapter 5 explores how the concepts of personal life can help us make sense of the ways in which women demonstrate connectedness, despite evidence of a more individualistic discourse within the stories they tell. In Chapter 6, I consider how participants draw on different dimensions of time in order to construct narrative accounts, concluding the chapter with a short case study to illustrate how these interrelate. I also discuss the ways in which childhood and adulthood are understood within the narrative accounts of my participants, highlighting an understanding of adulthood framed in terms of independence, responsibility and self-sufficiency.

Chapter 7 focuses on the interplay between gender and heterosexuality in the construction of relational femininities by focusing on the division of household work in different living situations, including as children living with parents, as adults living with other adults as housemates, and living with a partner in a heterosexual couple. In this chapter I also explore how female participants construct masculinity in their narratives, and how they make sense of their own selves in relation to various specific and generalised men. Finally, in Chapter 8 I use the concepts of doing and displaying family to make sense of the ways in which participants constructed personal narratives

of the way in which they carried out particular practices (and compared these to the practices of others). In particular I look at narratives of continuity and change, and the different ways in which participants display family, focusing on the temporal context to show how a person multiply positioned as part of different families can display these in terms of past, present and future.

The thesis concludes in Chapter 9 by showing how a concept of relational narrated selves in process, as part of a multi-dimensional understanding of gender, heterosexuality and family, is useful for exploring household work. In analysing the topic of household work in relation to recent theoretical ideas on relationality, temporality, gender, heterosexuality and family, I have been able to make useful theoretical connections, and I set out my contributions in this regard. I also reflect on the limitations of this thesis, and outline potentially useful areas for further research.

Chapter 2: Theoretical Framework and Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

This chapter begins by setting out the theoretical framework that has informed this thesis. Starting with an interactionist understanding of self and identities, I then outline the concept of relational narrated selves in process, drawing on concepts of personal life and temporality. I consider how household work practices can be understood as part of various narratives through which someone makes sense of themselves embodying identities such as wife, mother or daughter in relation to others over time, drawing on culturally available discourses. In order to situate my research within the existing literature, this chapter outlines previous sociological research on household work, noting different theoretical and methodological approaches. Turning to mother/daughter relationships, I discuss previous multi-generational studies, and the need to theorise the interplay between family, gender and heterosexuality in order to make sense of how two generations of mothers talk about household work. I move on to discuss how mother/daughter relationships have been studied in this area, using the example of foodwork in order to demonstrate the potential usefulness of exploring women's relational narrated selves to approach the topic of household work over the life course.

2.2 Relational Narrated Selves in Process

2.2.1 Conceptualising Self and Identity

Mead (1934) sets out an understanding of mind developed within the context of social experience, which allows for the development of a social self, in contrast to a self that has always been present. This self can be an object to itself in relation to social action 'by taking the attitudes of other individuals toward himself within a social environment or context of experience and behaviour in which both he and they are involved' (p.138). Mead then separates this into 'I' and 'me'; it is 'I' who actively

responds to the attitudes of others, which are internally organised as 'me', and this reflexive process constitutes a self, which is thus inherently social.

Jenkins uses Mead's ideas in his processual understanding of identification, arguing for 'the *internal-external dialectic of identification* as the process whereby all identities – individual and collective – are constituted' (2008, p.40, original emphasis). Jenkins' understanding of identity is fundamentally relational and thus so is his sense of the self:

> 'The self as an individual's reflexive sense of her or his own particular identity, constituted *vis-à-vis* others in terms of similarity and difference, without which she or he wouldn't know who they are and hence wouldn't be able to act.' (ibid, p. 49)

Like Mead, Jenkins emphasises the process of identification whereby the 'I' which provides the reflexive point of view from which selfhood is constituted as always changing; one is always 'being' or 'becoming'. Similarly, Polkinghorne suggests that self is "not a static thing, nor a substance, but a configuring of personal events into a historical unity which includes not only what one has been but also anticipates what one will be' (1988, p.150). The idea of 'turning out' captures this ongoing process of simultaneously both 'being' and 'becoming' through time, while leaving a conceptual space for feelings that who we are, or parts of who we are, can become 'fixed' (Davies, 2011).

Elliot (2001) argues that self can often be *experienced* as an inner, 'true' self, a unitary selfhood that is arguably 'the earliest identification that humans develop' in the sense of being separate from others (Jenkins, 2008, p.70). While one's sense of self can therefore be understood as an internally unified, this is distinguished from the person who appears to the outside world; how we see ourselves is not always how others see us. However, it is important to recognise that 'selfhood and personhood are completely, intimately and utterly implicated in each other' (Jenkins, 2008, p.50). For Jenkins, this is where the idea of social identity is important, as the 'internal-external dialectic of identification' offers a way to link one's sense of self and person. Thus in the process of identification, identities represent 'our understanding of who we are and who other people are, and, reciprocally, other people's understanding of themselves

and of others (which includes us)' (2008, p.18). Similarly, Hall (1996) argues that identities are constructed within discourses which are historically specific and thus draws attention to the process of identification through which people are interpellated as part of particular collectivities as a process which changes over time. This understanding links personal and collective identities; how a woman identifies as a mother is both personal to her, and draws on a wider understanding of this identity circulating at that moment in time (and what this means differs by class, ethnicity, culture, age and sexuality), as does the way she is identified as such by others. Thus I would suggest then that we can consider how, over time, people's sense of self shifts as they reflexively embody multiple identities.

Following Mead, Jenkins emphasises the inherently social nature of identity in that 'individual and collective identifications only come into being within interaction' (2008, p.38). Goffman's (1959) work portrays the self in the context of performances, in which people engage in techniques of impression management. This could be seen to imply an existing self who is actively managing the impression they give to an audience. However, as Elliot (2001) argues, the self is an *effect* not a *cause* of these performances. In particular, the self is presented within the context of particular frames, which are specific social settings with recognised meanings and rules, and thus different selves are presented according to the situation (Goffman, 1974). The audience are important here in that they are necessary to recognise and validate the performances in relation to the frame; in terms of Jenkins' 'internal-external dialectic', the interaction between the presentations of one's self image, and the reception of a public image constitutes identification.

2.2.2 The Relational versus the Individualistic Self: A Personal Life Approach

In this sub-section, I set out an argument for the relevance of relationality to our understanding of identities and selves. The individualisation thesis emphasises the necessity of choice in contemporary society and the notion that adult individuals can and do choose in the pursuit of self-fulfilment; as Beck and Beck-Gernsheim argue:

> 'The ethic of individual self-fulfilment and achievement is the most powerful current in modern society. The choosing, deciding, shaping human being who

aspires to be the author of his or her own life, the creator of an individual identity, is the central character of our time.' (2002, pp.22-23; see also Giddens, 1991).

These authors view the self as a reflexive project, whereby how a person lives their life involves constant decision-making in the context of the disintegration of previous social forms, including family and gender roles. This shift away from 'normal biographies' to the 'do-it-yourself biography' then results in more individualised lifestyles. Thus family as understood from this perspective are made up of individuals who decide for themselves what sort of family they want to be in (Beck-Gernsheim, 2002).

Household work has been identified as a source of conflict for contemporary heterosexual couples because the organisation of the mundane activities involved in maintaining a household is closely bound up with the self-image and life projects of men and women (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2002). In terms of household work then, a reflexive biography would account for the practice and division of tasks as the result of an autonomous individual making 'identity choice[s]' (Lash and Friedman, 1992, p.7) within a couple relationship. However, the individualisation thesis has been criticised for misrepresenting agency as a characteristic of the individual taken out of a relational and structural context (Duncan, 2011). The idea that an autonomous individual chooses how to carry out the tasks involved in household work downplays the ways in which household work takes place within the context of various relationships. As Mason puts it, 'the gaze of individualisation creates the sense of individualised actors and selves, and in the process loses sight of the connectivity of social relations, identity and agency' (2004, p.178).

For Smart, an approach that focuses on the 'choosing, deciding, shaping human being' does not sufficiently acknowledge the ways in which people are embedded in 'history, tradition, biography and relationships' (2007, p.187). In contrast to proponents of the individualisation thesis, she does not see people as 'free-floating agents' (ibid, p.29) who can reflexively construct the self (Giddens, 1991). Rather, while identities are constructed in terms of culturally available discourses and 'meaning-constitutive traditions', that is, patterns of sense making passed down through generations (Gross, 2005, p.288), she recognises the role structural factors play in how a personal life is

lived (see also Jamieson, 1998 on the limited changes to inequalities between men and women). Smart sets out various ways in which we can understand the interiority of relationships, through the interrelated concepts of memory, biography, embeddedness, relationality and imaginary (discussed in Chapter 5). By considering how a person thinks about themselves in relation to others, for example through making sense of who they are in relation to how they were brought up, or as someone who wants to mother in a particular way, Smart points to the ways in which the relationships in our memories and imaginings should be understood as 'real', and therefore shape how we make sense of ourselves.

Smart relates her work to Mead's (1934) 'social self', with the personal life as 'me', rather than I (although her definition of I as the 'agentic ego' (2007, p.28) does suggest that she views these as parts of the self, rather than the whole self at different 'moments' (see also Crossley, 2001 on this distinction)). She explains:

> 'To live a personal life is to have agency and to make choices, but the personhood implicit in the concept requires the presence of others to respond to and to contextualize those actions and choices.' (2007, p.28)

While this includes family members, both those physically present and those in our imaginations and memories, she views personal life as non-hierarchical in terms of the importance of relationships, recognising the role friendships and wider kin can play in constituting the self. However, Smart deliberately avoids what she terms 'familiar terrain', including 'domestic labour' and 'gendered divisions of care work' (2007, p.184). I argue that by looking again at household work practices through different theoretical lenses, we can perceive how these are made sense of as a meaningful facet of various relationships over the life course, and part of the personal life, and are therefore made 'unfamiliar'.

2.2.3 Personal Timescapes

The idea of personal life conveys a sense of motion, both in terms of movement through the life course, but also in terms of relationships taking place in time (Smart, 2007), which more generally helps us to make sense of identities and selves as 'in process'. Adam's concept of 'timescapes' captures the complexity of time by

identifying various 'temporal features of living' (1998, p.11), challenging explanations framed in terms of assumptions shaped by 'clock time'. She suggests that we inhabit personal timescapes in which different dimensions of time intersect and shape our understanding, while mutually implicated but distinct elements of time operate at a structural level (2008). In relation to exploring women's narratives of household work, it is important to consider 'our temporal framework of observation' (ibid, p.8), as focusing on different aspects of temporality (and ignoring others) can shape what we see. I would suggest that concentrating on the experience of individuals in heterosexual couples in a 'snapshot' of time could ignore the ways in which personal and familial memories, imagined futures and the timescapes of people who form the broader web of relationships in which individuals live their lives, can contribute to shaping those experiences.

A life course approach focuses on transitions rather than an assumed sequence of events that are seen as universal and fixed, shifting away from a psychological model of development towards a more sociological approach that recognises varying transitions shaped by historical circumstances (Elder, 1975; Hockey and James, 2003). As Hareven explains,

> 'This life-course approach is concerned with the movement of individuals over their own lives and through historical time and with the relationship of family members to each other as they travel through personal and historical time.' (Hareven, 1982, p.6)

In order to explain this life course perspective, she considers the interrelationship of different dimensions of time: individual time, family time and historical time (Hareven, 1977; 1982).[6] The former refers to a person progressing through the life course, and is measured in terms of age. Nevertheless, she distinguishes between chronological age and 'social age', that is, an understanding of age as shaped by social context (although Aapola argues for a distinction between 'contextual age', as the estimate of a person's chronological age by others in particular contexts, and 'social age', as a broader term including 'various cultural, historically changing definitions of

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[6] In addition to Hareven's three dimensions of time, the idea of 'generational time' can also be studied as a timescape (as in the recent 'Timescapes' project (Timescapes, 2012)), one which 'provides links and attachments across generations of kinship relations' (Adam, 2008, p.7). Thinking in terms of generational time allows for a consideration of connections within and between generations, and I discuss the relevance of intergenerational relationships further in Chapter 6.

age' (2002, p.305), which I find theoretically useful). As a person ages, what can be termed 'historical time' is also passing, as we can recognise broader changes to a society over the years. This relationship between biography and history has long been a central focus of sociology (Mills, 1959), as we recognise that a thirty-year-old woman, for example, needs to be understood as a thirty-year-old woman living at *this* time, in *this* place and in *these* circumstances. In terms of exploring people's personal timescapes, we can consider how people relate themselves and their biographies to external events, on both a local and global scale.

However, it is not helpful to focus solely on individuals in isolation from the relationships in which they are embedded. Thus a notion of 'family time' adds a further dimension to our understanding of the relationship between history and biography. For Hareven,

> 'The concept of "family time" designates the timing of events such as marriage, birth of a child, leaving home, and the transition of individuals into different roles as the family moves through the life course.' (1977, p.59)

She suggests ways in which conflicts between individual and family time can be studied (in terms of the ways individuals do not make decisions solely based on their own preferences), while changing material circumstances and attitudes can also be seen to impact on the timing of family transitions (such as the increasing age of first-time mothers in the UK, (ONS 2013)). As Hockey and James recognise,

> 'Given the possibility of flux in family form within the lifetime of an individual, familial social identities and expectations, responsibilities, attitudes tied to these will shift and change through the life course.' (2003, p.88)

This understanding fits with an active view of family as something one *does* (see section 2.4.2); a lived experience rather than fixed social roles imposed on the individuals within a family.

While age is an important factor in how we see ourselves and how others see us (Pilcher, 1995), it is also useful to recognise the multi-dimensional nature of 'age' in this regard. Laslett (1996), sets out five related dimensions of individual age, which allow for an understanding of the discrepancy between how old people are as measured by calendar time, and how old they feel or are judged to be by others. However,

Aapola (2002) argues for thinking in terms of discourses of age to allow for an understanding of the ways in which dimensions can be seen to overlap, and how they are connected to relations of power. Thus when thinking about how 'age' shapes how we see ourselves and how others see us, we can consider particularly how, for example, one's subjective age is shaped by broader cultural, historically specific understandings of what it means to be that age.

Drawing on Jenkins' work on identity as a process, Hockey and James explore identification across the life course, arguing that 'ageing is the vehicle for transition between identities of all kinds across the life course' (2003, p.210). Returning to the understanding of self/identity, we can conceive of an ageing self that embodies different age-based identities, the transitions between which are carried out in relation to the identities of others, and which will also change as a result of these transitions. For instance, as a woman becomes a mother, her mother becomes a grandmother, her father a grandfather and any siblings aunts or uncles, and the way they inhabit these roles depends on 'the repertoire of choices available at particular points in time' (Hockey and James, 2003, p.53) but also differs in relation to their passage through the life course. Therefore for the women in my study, how they inhabited a mothering identity reflected shifting discourses of motherhood, as well as a relational sense of self at that point in their life course.

When thinking about personal timescapes, time is not strictly linear. As Morgan argues in relation to families, 'rather than a simple set of moves from past to present to future, we have a series of continually modified interactions between present, selected pasts and projected futures' (1996, p.144). This interplay can also be seen to take place in people's personal lives more broadly (Smart, 2007). Thus how people 'do gender' (and heterosexuality) or 'do family' in the present can be shaped by various personal memories and, perhaps, in the case of family, a desire to recreate a sense of the family one grew up in or to consciously do family differently. However, memories should not be seen as fixed, and if we consider how they can be reconstructed in relation to ongoing and changing situations, then the doing of family involves complex interactions between past and present. Added to this, the realm of the imaginary allows for possible futures, which are imagined in relation to a sense of past and present, which are themselves changeable. Therefore, when I talk about 'past', 'present' and

'future' throughout this thesis, I do so in a way that recognises the multi-dimensional nature of time as outlined above.

2.2.4 Relational Narrated Selves and Narrative Identities

The idea of narrative identities uses an idea of a reflexive self in process, as discussed above, and emphasises how we constantly reconstruct and renegotiate our sense of who and what we are through the stories we tell, both to ourselves and to others (Somers, 1994; Somers and Gibson, 1994; Plummer, 1995; Jackson, 1998; Holstein and Gubrium, 2000; Lawler, 2014). Storytelling has been recognised as part of people's everyday lives, as well as relevant to the research interview, encouraging a focus on how narratives are used to do this (Riessman, 2008). By thinking in terms of narratives, we can see how stories are constructed in interviews through the process of emplotment, that is, linking multiple, previously unconnected incidents into a culturally recognisable plot (Ricoeur, 1991a; see also Polkinghorne, 1995).

Elliot (2005) identifies three key defining characteristics of narrative, describing them as chronological, meaningful and social. It has long been recognised that narratives take place in some sort of temporal sequence, in which something out of the ordinary happens (otherwise, as Bruner (2002) notes, what is the point of the story). The 'complicating action' (Labov and Waletzky, 1997) or 'trouble' (Frank, 2010) is also evaluated by the storyteller, and 'conveys to an audience how they are to understand the *meaning* of the events that constitute the narrative, and simultaneously indicates what type of response is required.' (Elliot, 2005, p.9, original emphasis). This meaning is negotiated with an audience, and it is this interactional element that makes narratives social for Elliot; they are also constructed for an intended audience, as I discuss in Chapter 3 in relation to the interview context.

While people tell their own stories, it would be a mistake to see these as individual or wholly original. Instead a socio-narratological approach emphasises how stories can be understood as social, as they rely on narrative resources culturally available at that moment in time, to someone in that social location, which connect people who story their lives in similar ways (Frank, 2010). 'Narrative resources' in this context refers to the elements such as tropes, plots and characters of socially recognisable stories,

although I would follow Jackson in seeing 'discursive regularities' (1998, p.47) in how these are told. In conceptualising the relationship between narrative and discourse, I am using discourse to refer to a way of shaping what can be known and spoken about, in the sense of taken-for-granted understandings circulating in a particular society at a particular historical moment (Foucault, 1978). The narratives constructed in that society draw on discourses which are not chronologically ordered in the way narratives are, but make it possible for a narrator to conceptualise themselves, or another character, in a particular way (for example as the 'choosing, deciding, shaping human being' that is the central character of the individualisation thesis (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2002, p.22)). Nevertheless, narrators can draw on alternative rather than dominant discourses in the way they construct a story; as Baxter (2003) suggests, women are multiply positioned within competing discourses, and can therefore resist one discourse and draw on another in the way they construct a narrative identity.

However, the extent to which they can successfully do this depends on an audience who also participate in this process of identification. Plummer (1995) draws attention to the question of how stories are received and made sense of, and therefore the potential of an audience to accept a story, but also to discount or ignore what is being said. As Woodiwiss (2014) shows in terms of childhood sexual abuse, the dominance of one narrative (the 'damage narrative'), risks other stories being discounted as examples of abuse. In relation to mothers and daughters, where the daughter is understood as 'possessing a privileged insight into the relationship, and her account is seen as giving a "true" representation of the mother' (Lawler, 2000, p.15), a different story told by the mother may then be discounted for misunderstanding the effect her actions had on her daughter.

Nevertheless, such stories are not fixed as the selves of two women positioned in any mother/daughter relationship can be seen as in process (as discussed above), and therefore making sense of oneself in the context of this relationship through the telling of stories involves the incorporation of new interactions within this relationship, but also within others, as well as potentially changing cultural understandings of motherhood and daughterhood. Frank describes the 'symbiotic work of stories and humans creating the social', arguing that any story can be seen as continually in

process, open and dialogical (2010, p.15). Similarly Plummer conceives of a storied society:

> 'Society itself may be seen as a textured but seamless web of stories emerging everywhere through interaction: holding people together, pulling people apart, making societies work.' (1995, p.5)

These interlinked stories each have a purpose, and to that end, socio-narratology views stories as actors that enable those who tell and who hear stories to live their lives in a particular way, which can be seen as narrative identities.

Making a case for including temporality, spatiality and relationality as aspects of a concept of narrative identity, Somers argues that:

> 'It is through narrativity that we come to know, understand, and make sense of the social world, and it is through narratives and narrativity that we constitute our social identities.' (1994, p.606).

She proposes different dimensions of narrative, recognising both the 'public' narratives attached to various institutional formations, including the family, and the 'ontological', that is, the stories used to make sense of who we are, although as these are not fixed, this makes the self something one is always becoming. In relation to the ideas I have discussed above then, while the self is constantly in process, the stories we tell construct a more stable sense of self (Ricoeur, 1991b), although this may involve the reinterpretation of past events from the perspective of the present.

Feminist work on care has also argued for a 'relational self', embedded in various relationships and formed in historical and cultural situations, and thus 'continually in the process of being formed' through narrative (Sevenhuijsen, 1998, pp.55-56). Similarly Brown et al., argue that words such as 'care' and 'justice' used to describe the moral thoughts, feelings and actions of a person exist in a 'web of interrelationships' in the way they are narrated and made meaningful (1991, p.27). This follows Gilligan (1982) in understanding women's morality as relational rather than abstract, in terms of conflicting responsibilities towards themselves and others. While I would agree with those who have criticised this approach for making sense of morality as dichotomously gendered (Somers, 1994), the broader philosophical point

that the moral subject is narrated within a network of relations is a useful one, if we understand this in terms of female *and* male identities being constituted relationally (and this sense of a 'relational ontology' is part of the Listening Guide approach to analysis which I discuss in the next chapter).

Drawing on Taylor (1989), Benhabib (1999) argues that we are born into pre-existing 'webs of narrative' in which we start to learn how to make sense of ourselves, although we have the agency to draw on these narratives to construct our own life stories that make sense to us. However, our life stories can be challenged; as Benhabib suggests, the characters in any one person's story are 'also tellers of their own stories, which compete with my own, unsettle my self-understanding, and spoil my attempts to mastermind my own narrative' (ibid, p.348). Because narratives are interconnected in this way, they remain in process; they cannot have 'closure' because a connected narrative could always have an effect.

In particular, I find it useful to think about relationality from a narrative perspective, in that the construction of self-narratives relies on, for example, actions of others in the past as part of a biographical explanation for particular attitudes or behaviour. Mason argues for considering how 'relational and individualistic discourses and practices are interwoven' within narrative accounts (2004, p.163). She highlights how her participants spoke about changing relationships and connections in their narratives of residential histories, and even where some men in her study downplayed relationism in favour of a more individualistic framing of their decisions, their interviews revealed residential histories embedded in relationship histories. As a result, she argues that 'both agency and identity need to be understood relationally, and that the selves that emerge from our narratives are not simply "selves in relation", but relational selves' (ibid, p.177).

It is also useful to consider the use of a 'generalized other' as a reference point for constructing various relational narrative identities. Mead defines the generalised other as the amalgamation of various individual attitudes into 'a single attitude or standpoint' (1934, p.90) which enters an individual's consciousness and functions as the other to which 'I' responds in the process of forming a social self. Although they note the overlapping meanings of the term within Mead's work, Holdsworth and

Morgan (2007) argue for revisiting the generalised other as a multi-layered process. They suggest that the idea of the generalised other can include generalisations about broader social currents ('everyone says'), specific but unidentified people ('a lot of my friends say') and specific individuals influenced by more general forces (my 'old-fashioned' parent says). In these various ways, 'generalized others embody normalized practices' (Holdsworth and Morgan, 2007, p.414), and people narrating stories can position themselves in broadly the same way, or in opposition (whether through constructing an account of actively choosing not to engage in a particular practice, or as unwillingly unable to engage in a particular practice because of circumstances, or because of who they understand themselves to be).

In conceptualising a 'social self', Mead (1934) views 'me' as 'I' at a different moment in time. That is, the 'me' talked about was once (briefly) the 'I' in the present doing the talking, but the process of reflection is fleeting and the 'I' talking is quickly 'me' who talked in the past. Thus 'I' is not pre-social but a sense of the social self in the present that makes sense of previous 'moments' of the self (rather than different 'parts' of the self (Jackson, 2006)). Hockey and James (2003) suggest that there is a potential for a mismatch between 'me' as perceived by others, and a more consistent 'me' as imagined in memory. I can talk about myself as always having been the same person, and yet by virtue of the self always being in process, I can look back at myself in previous situations and feel a sense of disconnect with the person who thought or acted in a particular way. Using Mead's ideas allows for an understanding of how in the moment of narration, 'I' can reflect on 'me' in the past, and potential 'me' of the future. For example, instances of self-correction within interviews (such as the shifts between different voices which I discuss in Chapter 3, or unfinished or corrected words) show how the 'I' of seconds before who said one thing, almost immediately becomes a 'me' that did not necessarily express an idea as clearly as 'I' in this new present would have liked.

As narratives continue to be shaped by the multiple temporalities which their narrator inhabits, accounting for experiences in one's own life, or in the lives of others, as well as broader historical changes, can change how one narrates one's self. Miller's (2005) longitudinal narrative study of first-time mothers demonstrates how narratives can be

revised over time, for example as women re-evaluated essentialist expectations of what being a mother would involve. Similarly narratives of one's self can take into account subsequent events that allow for a sense of hindsight to play a part. Lawler notes the ways in which narratives '*naturalize*' their plots, so later events appear the 'natural and inevitable culmination of earlier ones', and similarly 'the subject of the story appears to *become* who they *always were*' (2014, p.32, original emphasis). In this way the memories used in constructing a story are framed in terms of the narrator's present sense of self.

The term 'narrative practices' emphasises the interpretive work that individuals engage in when telling stories; selecting from available resources, employing techniques and considering the audience (Gubrium and Holstein, 1998). In this context 'resources' covers 'any and all experiences that can accountably be incorporated into personal stories, as well as the discursive formations that are locally available and understandable' (ibid, p.164). The stories a person can tell at a particular time are historically and culturally specific, and involve the interweaving of a person's material circumstances with available discourses through these various narrative practices (Andrews et al., 2000). Thus in accounting for our practices, both as individuals and as family members (Morgan, 2011a), or constructing our narrative identities, we draw on culturally available discourses (Jackson, 1998). This reflects an understanding of discourses as a resource, and narrative as an example of this, rather than viewing social actors as deterministically produced by discourse. We can also speak of narratives beyond the individual, including canonical narratives that are seen as part of a wider culture (Bruner, 1987), and narratives constructed by identity groups, organisations and nations (Riessman, 2008). These public narratives can then shape our understanding of particular situations.

It has also been argued that individualisation can be usefully viewed as a discourse by which people make sense of their lives in their narrative accounts, emphasising autonomy and downplaying structural aspects (Brannen and Nielson, 2005). Similarly Rose suggests that we understand our lives in terms of an idea of an autonomous self that is the 'origin of its own actions' (1998, p.3). However, while this may influence the way in which women emphasise their ability to shape their own lives, and construct

themselves as independent and self-sufficient, looking through a different analytical lens (that of connectedness), points to ways in which these accounts rely on a relational sense of agency and identity (Mason, 2004). Thus it would be reasonable to expect that women's narratives of household work across the life course, constructed in the context of these discourses, would emphasise an individualistic understanding of the self in process, while at the same time reflecting connectedness in various ways. In the next section, I will provide a background on the household work, before moving on to argue for the usefulness of a concept of relational narrated selves in process in order to make sense of how two generations of mothers tell stories about household work.

2.3 Household Work Literature: An Overview

2.3.1 Issues of Definition

Much of the research on household work has highlighted the wide range of tasks involved, incorporating the physical, mental and emotional. There are a variety of approaches to defining the scope of housework, from a pre-defined list of tasks (Alger and Crowley, 2012) to a broader question that gives some examples (see Amato et al., 2003). However, the use of pre-defined terms has been criticised for not necessarily fitting with participants' experiences of household work (DeVault, 1990). DeVault suggests that interviewing women about "all the housework that has to do with food" (1990, p.99) worked for her because it was a category that made sense to them (similarly, VanEvery (1995) grouped tasks in her analysis into the general categories used by participants). VanEvery has also explored this in a later article in which she suggests the wording of many survey questions can assume communality or disguise inequality (the use of 'shared' to designate tasks such as shopping that involve many smaller elements may disguise gendered patterns in the ways individuals take responsibility for these elements (1997, pp.413-4)).

A further limitation is that particular types of work are not included in survey definitions, particularly emotion work and the mental work involved in planning and time monitoring (Eichler and Albanese, 2007; see Hochschild, 1983; Erickson, 1993 on definitions of emotion work). Erickson finds women are more likely to view emotion work as part of a work role, compared to men who saw the performance of

emotion work as part of an *interpersonal* relationship with their partner, and argues 'the tendency to conceptualize emotion work as *work* suggests that women recognized that they are held accountable for the performance of this work in ways that men are not' (2005, p.349, original emphasis). The idea of 'invisible work' has been used to encompass both mental and emotional work that women do to 'weave the [social] fabric back to wholeness' (Daniels, 1987, p.413. See also DeVault, 1991). Daniels suggests that:

> 'The closer the work to the activities of nurturing, comforting, encourage, or facilitating interaction, the more closely associated it is with women's "natural" or "feminine" proclivities. Such activity is not seen as learned, skilled, required, but only the expression of the character or style of women in general.' (1987, p.408)

For example, DeVault (1991) identifies sensitivity to the various concerns of family members, the monitoring that needs to be done to insure adequate provisioning and producing 'home' and 'family' through the social event of a meal as 'invisible work', while Eichler and Albanese (2007) found their participants, particularly women, engaged in mental work, emotion work, kin keeping, crisis management, conflict resolution and self-care as part of household work.

More generally this necessitates considering the relationship between housework and 'care work'. Eichler and Albanese suggest that both involve similar tasks, but in the former, the activity is emphasized, while in the latter, the relational aspect (2007, p.243). Significantly, some of their participants saw care work as part of housework and others did not. Thus a particular task can be interpreted in different ways, and importantly, have different meanings in different contexts, but this is not always recognised. VanEvery suggests that 'empirical definitions of housework also assumes that tasks have one predominant meaning: they are *either* work or leisure', which relies on an implicit exclusive association between leisure and enjoyment (1997, p.412).[7] That this also informs some participants' understandings is clear in some heterosexual

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[7] Conversely, it has also been suggested that 'often it is taken for granted as self-evident truth that housework is demeaning, a source of subjugation and inequality' and that by considering it in a moral context one can see it as a 'calling' in which the focus is on 'shared participation in family life' rather than how tasks are divided (Ahlander and Bahr, 1995, pp.61, 65). While this approach does not give enough consideration to structural influences (see Sanchez, 1996), it emphasizes the importance of the discourses participants use to construct their experiences and understandings in determining how they use concepts such as 'fair' or 'equal'.

men's conceptions of their partners' time spent caring for children as "leisure time" or "free time", while the idea of paid employment as enjoyable and potentially preferable to other activities is not discussed (see Dryden, 1999). Therefore I would argue it is important to use a term that draws attention to the wide range of tasks involved in maintaining a household, although I recognise that for some participants, particular tasks were not defined as 'work', following a dichotomous understanding of work and leisure. In the context of this chapter, I will use 'housework' for the routine housework described above, and 'household work' in a broader sense, following Eichler and Albanese's definition:

> 'Household work consists of the sum of all physical, mental, emotional and spiritual tasks that are performed for one's own or someone else's household and that maintain the daily life of those one has responsibility for.' (2007, p.248)

This allows for a consideration of the various topics that were discussed in the interviews, although I recognise that I did not cover everything that might be included as household work under this definition. Nevertheless, the use of a broader term allows for a recognition of the mental and emotional work of participants, and helps to draw attention to the moral context in which the tasks discussed took place.

2.3.2 Historical Overview

Household work has historically been characterised as something women in heterosexual relationships do, with functionalist notions of different but complementary roles in marriage whereby women are 'anchored primarily in the internal affairs of the family as wife, mother and manager of the household', while men's role is in the occupational world, providing status and income for their families (Parsons and Bales, 1956, p.14). This understanding of family as part of an 'institutionalized social system', in which different elements of the system reinforce one another, is similar to more recent understandings of gender as an 'institution' (Lorber, 1994), 'structure' (Risman, 1998) or 'order' (Connell, 2002) in which society can be seen as 'patterned' in various ways by inequalities between men and women (which includes women in heterosexual couples doing more of the housework than

their male partners).[8] However, what is different about Parsons and Bales' work is that for them this system is portrayed as 'natural' in terms of biological differences, and not in need of change:

> 'The bearing and early nursing of children establish a strong presumptive primacy of the relation of the mother to the small child and this in turn establishes a presumption that the man, who is exempted from these biological functions, should specialize in the alternative instrumental direction.' (Parsons and Bales, 1956, p.23)

Feminists have challenged the connection between the bearing of children, and the tasks involved in managing a household (Oakley, 1974b; Luxton, 1980; VanEvery, 1995; Asher, 2011), and a focus on the housewife role rather than housework as a potentially gender-neutral activity is evident in early feminist work (Friedan, 1983 [1963]). Early studies of housework focus explicitly gendered definitions such as 'women's unpaid work role in the home' (Oakley, 1974a, p.lx) or 'women who perform the social role of housewife' (Lopata, 1971, p.3), questioning how women characterise the social role of the housewife and analysing how women were socialized into this role (Oakley, 1974b).

Marxist and radical feminists sought to explain male domination of women in terms of the exploitation of their labour (Benston, 1969; Gardiner, 1976; Morton, 1970; Molyneux, 1979; Pateman, 1988). While the 'domestic labour debate' (see Malos, 1980; Kaluzynska, 1980) took the very fact of a division of labour between men and women for granted (Rahman and Jackson 2010), materialist feminists also draw on the notion of patriarchy to argue that the unique character of housework, compared to paid work, emanates from the social relations in which it is performed; domestic work is 'part of a system of *labour relations* in which men benefit from, and exploit, the work of women' (Delphy and Leonard 1992, p.1, original emphasis; see also Hartmann, 1981; Delphy, 1984; Walby, 1986; Adkins, 1995; Jackson, 1992). Here housework is what women in heterosexual relationships do and there is no fixed definition in terms of tasks; indeed, Delphy and Leonard define their topic as 'the

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[8] Although as Connell notes, there are gender patterns that are not 'inherently unequal' which can be understood by considering different relations of gender (2002, p.57).

practical, emotional, sexual, procreative and symbolic work done by women for men within family relationships' (1992, p.23).

However, Pahl criticises the definition of housework as work done by women, as this 'would have the effect of defining men's domestic work as *not* housework' (1984, p.122, original emphasis). Much of the survey-based research which aims to explain the division of housework between men and women in heterosexual couples follows this approach by asking about the performance of particular tasks, already defined as housework (and I will discuss this research in the next section). Although housework tasks are not only performed by women, a structural understanding emphasises the patterned inequalities that endure between men and women in terms of the division of housework.

While some feminist work has emphasised the oppressive nature of housework, other literature has considered women's unpaid caring work more generally (Graham; 1983; Finch and Groves, 1983; Noddings, 1984; Waerness, 1984), conceptualising caring as significant for the formation of feminine identities within contemporary society. DeVault (1991) positions her work on feeding the family at the intersection of feminist work on the significance of housework in women's lives, and analysis of caregiving. She argues that focusing either on the work involved using concepts traditionally applied to paid work, or the relationship in which this takes place and the emotions involved, risks obscuring the significance of the other aspect; as she argues:

> 'Women's own language suggests that material and interpersonal dimensions of these tasks are joined in their lives, and that these aspects of the work should not be separated in an analysis of what they do.' (ibid, p.10)

DeVault sets out what I understand as a 'multi-dimensional' concept of family, in terms of practice, meaning and structure. She uses the phrase 'doing family' to indicate the ways in which 'by doing the work of "wife" and "mother," women quite literally *produce* family life from day to day, through their joint activities with others' (ibid, p.13). Reflecting on this, she draws on discourses of family that 'prescribe particular ways of doing the work', and are institutionally reinforced (ibid, p.13). This allows for an approach that views family as an experience, lived daily, and an idealised institution that shapes what people aspire to when they are 'doing family'. While DeVault focuses

on the work involved in feeding the family, her multi-dimensional understanding of family, and the ideas of 'bracketing' family to consider both how the term is understood, and to challenge this as inevitable, points to a useful theoretical approach. Nevertheless, as I will discuss in section 2.4, expanding on my introduction, I would suggest that considering how women make sense of themselves, and identify as daughters, wives and mothers, is useful for exploring how accounts of foodwork practices constitute identity work.

2.3.3 Division of Household Work

Much of the literature aims to explain the division of household work tasks within heterosexual couples, specifically 'why do women do the lion's share of housework?' (Lachance-Grzela and Bouchard, 2010).[9] In the UK, Sullivan (2000) found a decline of 78 minutes per day for women's time spent cooking and cleaning between 1975 and 1997, and between 10 and 15 minute increase for men; nevertheless, although the ratios are now smaller, again these tasks remain highly gendered, with women spending around 100 minutes more a day. Many studies thus focus on the division of routine housework only, in order to assess whether there is a shift towards equality.[10] Researchers generally apply three key theories: gender ideology (partners behave in line with their ideologies, whether 'traditional,' advocating a male breadwinner/female housewife, or 'egalitarian' (Blair and Johnson, 1992; Arrighi and Maume, 2002; Braun et al., 2008)); time availability (the partner who allocates more of their time to paid employment has less time to allocate to housework (Coltrane and Ishii-Kuntz, 1992; Bianchi et al., 2000; Davis and Greenstein, 2004)); and relative resources (the partner with more resources, such as income or education, can bargain his/her way out of routine housework (Blair and Lichter, 1991; Brines, 1994; Artis and Palvalko, 2003))[11]. While there are statistically significant relationships between variables that offer some support for these theories, there are limitations regarding

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[9] Studies on non-heterosexual couples have shown a more even distribution of housework (Dunne, 1999; Heaphy et al., 1999), although more recently Downing and Goldberg (2011) have argued that claims of an 'egalitarian ethic' among lesbian mothers is an oversimplification, as their research found unequal divisions of household work, which were constructed as 'symbolically gendered' (2011, pp. 100, 114).

[10] Nevertheless, I am aware of the importance of non-routine forms of housework that are more often carried out by men within heterosexual relationships, such as household repairs and garden maintenance, and it will be interesting to note how these are considered by my participants.

[11] It is often taken for granted that they would want to.

their explanatory power (for time availability, see Hook, 2006; for relative resources, see Ciabattari, 2004; and for gender ideology, see Baxter, 2000); as Evertsson and Nermo suggest, significant findings in these studies still only explain a small part of the variation. They conclude:

> 'The fact that women whose resources are equal to those of their husbands still do the majority of the housework implies that unpaid work in the home is gender-labelled in the sense that women are expected to do the bulk of it.' (2007, p.467)

The most consistent finding is that gender is the variable with the most predictive power (Shelton and John, 1996), and, on average, heterosexual women do more housework within their intimate relationships than heterosexual men.

A gender construction perspective emphasises the gendered meanings that men and women derive from household work practices which contribute to identity work (Erickson, 2005). The notion of 'doing gender' (West and Zimmerman, 1987; see also section 2.4.1 for further discussion) highlights how gender is produced through such practices, and the broader understandings of what is expected of men and women in heterosexual families. As Bianchi et al. put it 'the cleanliness of one's home is a reflection on women's competence as a "wife and mother" – but not men's competence as "husband and father"' (2000, p.195). Approaching this issue from a different epistemological position, several qualitative studies focus on the justifications used by individuals within heterosexual couples to explain their division of household work. Examples include time availability; that the division was not discussed and happened naturally; women imposing 'too high' standards, or having to do tasks because their male partners fail to do them 'properly'; division based on enjoyment of tasks; and one partner having more experience or expertise at a particular task (Charles and Kerr, 1983; Hochschild, 1989; DeVault, 1991; Lupton, 2000; Doucet, 2001; Beagan et al., 2008; Wiesmann et al., 2008; Stapleton and Keenan, 2009; Van Hooff, 2011). As Charles and Kerr suggest, in giving such explanations, the individual 'assumes that women are free to *choose* their role within the family [but] it is worth noting that the choice made is actually in conformity with dominant gender roles' (1988, p.46; see also Beagan et al., 2008; Wiesmann et al., 2008 in relation to explanations based on time available). While egalitarian arrangements are

possible in heterosexual relationships, this involves doing heterosexuality according to alternative discourses, which is recognised in the negative responses of others (VanEvery, 1995).

There are suggestions that an insistence on particular standards is a technique used by women in heterosexual families to 'gatekeep' (cf. Allen and Hawkins, 1999) their sphere of influence. Chapman (1999) argues that being able to define standards for household work is a form of power, and one that women typically exercise; while others highlight the finding that women are often found to be responsible for household work, while men 'help', as evidence of inequality that disadvantages women (Wiesmann et al., 2008), Chapman points out:

> 'But through their helping, by definition, they not only have to submit to women's "right" to lay down the rules on the proper way of doing things, but also have the right to supervise and inspect the quality of the work done.' (1999, p.175)

Nevertheless he recognises that men within these relationships can exert power by leaving tasks undone or half-finished (according to the women's standards). The discourse of women having 'unobtainable' standards is also used by their husbands/male partners and children to suggest that they were willing to help but it was "never right" (Beagan et al., 2008). The authors argue:

> 'The notion that women choose to have high standards while men and teens cannot help their ineptitude holds women responsible for their disproportionate foodwork involvement. It is equally plausible to think of women as constrained by external expectations, while men and teens choose not to develop appropriate foodwork skills.' (p.633)

The idea of external expectations has been linked to reinforcement by other women, and feelings of being criticised or looked down upon (Chapman, 1999; Bugge and Almås, 2006; Beagan et al., 2008), and other studies specifically mention the importance of a woman's mother's standards as contributing to this (Pahl, 1984; Madigan and Munro, 1999).

2.4 Mothers and Household Work: Dimensions of Gender, Heterosexuality and Family

In exploring stories of household work over the life course told by two generations of heterosexual mothers, it is important to conceptualise the interrelationship between gender, heterosexuality and family. The identity of wife is recognised as heterosexual,[12] and the identity of a mother has traditionally been understood in a similar way, in terms of 'the social and economic privileges associated with being the partner of a man' in which having children is taken for granted (Richardson, 1996, p.2). However, it has also been enacted in ways that decouple 'wife and mother', both within heterosexual relationships (VanEvery, 1995) and outside them (Dunne, 2000; Ryan-Flood, 2009), although following changes to legislation in several countries, research with lesbian couples can include references to wives, for example, Downing and Goldberg (2011). VanEvery's work emphasises that having children was largely taken for granted among the women in heterosexual couples, although they tried to mother differently by raising their children in anti-sexist ways and achieving a balance between non-domestic work and mothering. More generally, the idea that the division of household work should be 'fair' means that both partners within heterosexual couples without children may claim to be aiming for gender equality (Van Hooff, 2011).

However, research shows increased inequality in household work when a heterosexual couple have children (Coltrane, 2000) and this is reinforced by various social institutions and an unequal distribution of household work portrayed within the media as entrenched, despite an increase in mothers in paid employment (ONS, 2013). Literature on combining motherhood and paid employment considers structural factors such as legal precepts and government policies that reinforce maternal responsibility for children (Brannen and Moss, 1991; Lewis, 2001; Scott and Innes, 2005; O'Connor, 2011); discourses that inform women's construction of themselves and their mothering practices, in particular related to what it means to be a 'good mother' (Hays, 1996; Duncan and Edwards, 1999; Lawler, 2000; Miller, 2005; Christopher, 2012) (and guilt about mothering that involves leaving children in the

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[12] Although this may become less taken-for-granted as a result of the Marriage (Same Sex Couples) Act 2013 (legislation.gov.uk, 2013).

care of others (Brannen and Moss, 1998; Gatrell, 2005)); and construction of multiple identities as mothers and employees (Bailey, 2000; Blair-Loy, 2003; Cunningham-Burley et al., 2005). In terms of household work, qualitative research shows that mothers in paid work continue to have responsibility for the majority of housework and childcare tasks, or arranging for, and paying, someone else to do them (Dryden, 1999; Gatrell, 2005). Gatrell found her participants expressed frustration about this, but in several cases felt 'resigned' to it (2005, p.122).

Linking this back to the earlier discussion of relational narrative identities suggests that mothering identities can be understood as relational and in process (as Miller (2005) shows in terms of first time mothers). Recognising how heterosexual women construct narrative identities as mothers in the context of a more coherent sense of self over the life course highlights the relevance of different dimensions gender, heterosexuality and family, and particularly how these interrelate. For example, the problems associated with having children and engaging in paid work are laid at the door of 'working mothers' specifically (including risks to infant and child development), which draws on both the 'naturalness' of motherhood and the moral responsibility to best care for one's children according to dominant discourses of what this involves within a particular social and historical context (Smyth, 2012). The understanding of caring as feminine and the notion of moral responsibility within families, combine in a 'motherly metaphor' of care, which as Sevenhuijsen (1998) argues, is problematic as it relies on a 'mythical image of "Woman"', particularly the 'image of the self-sacrificing moral mother' (1998, pp.16, 49). An understanding of mothering framed in terms of care and self-sacrifice may make it difficult to reconcile a mothering identity with a sense of oneself as autonomous and choosing to negotiate a more equal division of household work in one's own interest (although there are also problems with a rational framing of morality that considers women "as men" (Sevenhuijsen, 1998, p.49)). Nevertheless, considering how mothers construct narrative identities in relation to discussing household work across the life course provides a useful way to explore the relevance of different discourses that situate mothers in potentially contradictory ways. In this section, I will outline how I am conceptualising gender, heterosexuality and family across different social dimensions, before moving on to discuss how this approach can help us to better understand the

literature on mother/daughter relationships in relation to household work in the next section.

2.4.1 Gender, Heterosexuality and Relational Femininities

I view gender and heterosexuality as multi-dimensional concepts, which function as social structures or social institutions, as discourses and cultural understandings, as everyday interactional accomplishments, and as embodied aspects of personal identities. The idea of a social self has been taken up as part of a theoretical framework by Jackson (2005; 2006a; 2006b), who sets out a multi-dimensional understanding of gender, sexuality and heterosexuality, in which concepts of structure, meaning and discourse, everyday practices and social selves interrelate. The latter is at 'the level of subjectivity through which we experience desires and emotions and make sense of ourselves as embodied gendered and sexual beings' (Jackson, 2005, p.19), although generally Jackson uses the language of 'self' rather than 'subjectivity' to emphasise an interactional rather than postmodern influence. Like Jenkins (2008), Jackson emphasises that this is a reflexive self constantly in process, as 'we are constantly reconstructing our memories, our sense of who and what we are in relation to the present' (Jackson, 2006a, p.115), while also having the capacity to imagine possible futures (Jackson, 2010).

Drawing on the ethnomethodological tradition of Kessler and McKenna (1978), Jackson emphasises that everyday activities involve two aspects of 'doing' gender and sexuality, the first being the seemingly unproblematic attributing of gender and sexuality as a 'natural fact', which is actually complex processes of interpretation. The second aspect is the practical activities individuals do themselves that construct a gendered 'performance' (Butler, 1990). This invokes the idea of 'doing gender', Zimmerman's argument that 'a person engaged in virtually any activity may be held accountable for performance of that activity as a *woman* or a *man*' (1987, p.136, original emphasis). Similarly, Fenstermaker Berk argues that the division of household work facilitates the 'production of gender' and that it is this that determines what is possible in terms of time and task allocations:

> 'How household and market work *should* be allocated (according to the dictates of gender and work ideals) is brought to bear on how the work *can* be allocated (subject to the constraints of income and time).' (1985, p.207, original emphasis)

As well as doing gender, individuals may also be 'doing heterosexuality', as Jackson (2006b) emphasises. Particularly in the context of household work, the interconnections between gender and heterosexuality are very strong, as the 'performance' here is often seen in the context of being a wife and/or mother, understood in relation to husband and/or father, which contributes to the construction and reproduction of femininities.

Ingraham has argued for the use of the term 'heterogender', to draw attention to the 'asymmetrical stratification of the sexes in relation to the historically varying institutions of patriarchal heterosexuality' (1996, p.169; see also 2005). She emphasises the naturalising of heterosexuality through the 'heterosexual imagination', a way of seeing that conceals how heterosexuality structures gender. In terms of her emphasis on patriarchy producing a hierarchy of gender divisions, constructing gendered social practices that are presented as natural and universal and the ideological creation of heterosexuality, she and Jackson are in agreement. However, Ingraham stresses that 'gender as an "achieved" status does not address to what ends gender is acquired', and that this 'end' is 'institutionalized heterosexuality – that is, the ideological and organizational regulation of relations between men and women' (1996, pp.185, 186). While I would not argue for heterogender *replacing* gender (as the latter allows for other ways in which social life is organised, (see Jackson, 2005)), I would suggest that explicitly recognising interrelations with heterosexuality in discussions of gender is analytically useful, and where this is pertinent to my discussion, I will use '(hetero)gender' to draw attention to this.

Recognising the role of scientific essentialism in naturalising moral constructions of femininity and masculinity within the family (Rahman and Jackson, 2010), allows for an understanding of the prevalence of 'normative conceptions of essential femininity (including virtues, such as nurturance, protectiveness and caring)' to which mothers are held accountable (West and Fenstermaker, 2002 [1993], p.43). This points to a cultural representation of an essential feminine self, who is expected to embody these

attributes in all situations, including in the workplace (see Hochschild, 1983 on the ways in which the job of flight attendant was portrayed to woman as a natural extension of who they were). However, this ignores the ways in which femininities are reflectively constructed through practices and in relation to discourses that shape what are understood as 'traditional' femininities or 'acceptable' femininities, in a way which is often experienced as contradictory (Hockey et al., 2007). As Jackson suggests,

> 'Masculinity and femininity as aspects of the identities of subjects and agents are constituted in part by those subjects' understandings of what it is to be masculine and feminine.' (1999, p.35)

Focusing on femininities as part of how women construct their identities through self-narratives (while bearing in mind how femininity can be framed in contrast to an autonomous, real self (Lawler, 2000)), allows for an understanding of (hetero)gendered relational narrative identities in process.

Connell (1987) conceives of multiple femininities, both in terms of ideological representations that change over time, and as lived experiences, with the two not necessarily corresponding. In contrast to masculinities, she argues that 'all forms of femininity in this society are constructed in the context of the overall subordination of women to men' (1987, pp.186-187). While this can include what Connell terms 'emphasized femininity' (that is, 'defined around compliance with this subordination and is oriented to accommodating the interests and desires of men' (ibid, p.183)), other femininities can be defined by strategies of resistance, which allows to some extent a way to conceptualise the challenging, and changing of 'traditional' femininities. However, she emphasises that any construction of femininity cannot avoid the global dominance of heterosexual men, thereby drawing attention to the heteronormative context in which femininities are constructed.

Femininities (and indeed masculinities) are not fixed, and 'emerge as moments within the flow of individual choice and agency and across the life course' (Hockey and James, 2003, p.150), although these authors suggest that the exercise of choice can involve 'collusion' with normative heterosexuality. Similarly, Kimmel suggests that women learn the appropriate behaviours associated with exaggerated femininity and

then 'individually negotiate our own path in a way that feels right to us' (2004, p.16). While I would agree that women are able to exercise agency in the way they negotiate femininities (although as Skeggs (2004) argues, the ability to use characteristics of femininity as a resource can be understood in terms of class), I would suggest that a focus on individualism downplays the ways in which masculinities and femininities can be understood as relational. For example, if we understand peopled as embedded in webs of relationships through which they take forward parts of the past (Smart, 2007), then the practices which produce and reproduce femininities involve taking forward particular ways of doing gender and heterosexuality. Even the conscious rejection of, for example, the attitude of one's mother towards housework and the development of different mothering practices, can be understood as constructing a biographical account of one's own identity as a mother in relation to another form of femininity.

Therefore I would argue more generally for a relational understanding of femininities, drawing on the concepts of personal life and a relational narrated self as set out above. I will discuss in Chapter 7 how women in my study constructed their own gendered identities in relation to the masculine identities of various male characters, particular husbands and partners. However, it is also useful to reflect on how, in terms of constructing self-narratives in relation to mothers and other female characters, participants drew on a discourse of emphasised femininity in making sense of, for example, memories of mothering practices as part of biographical accounts. Following from a conceptualisation of selves and identities in process as set out above, similarly femininities can be understood as never completed. For Connell (1987), 'emphasized femininity' is culturally constructed differently over the life course, with a shift from sexual availability to idealised motherhood (although Bailey, 2001 points to ways in which pregnant women can reject both constructions). Nevertheless, in terms of understanding the self-narratives of the mothers in this study, I would suggest it is useful to consider how femininities are constructed through the doing of gender and heterosexuality, and what broader cultural understandings of femininity are being deployed in doing so.

The idea of 'doing gender' has been criticised for reinforcing the inevitability of systematic gender oppression, and for not considering how gender can be 'undone' through the practices of individual agents (Deutsch, 2007). West and Zimmerman's

original article implies a certain circularity; if people are held accountable for their actions as women or men, according to broader understandings of what that means within a particular context, and doing gender in a way that reinforces ideas of essential differences is 'unavoidable' (1987, p.137), how is it possible to change the oppositional conception of women and men? While doing gender 'is not always to live up to normative conceptions of femininity or masculinity; it is to engage in action *at the risk of* being held accountable for it' (Fenstermaker, West and Zimmerman, 2002 [1991], p.30, original emphasis), and potentially such actions weaken the accountability of particular practices to one gender over time (West and Fenstermaker, 2002 [1993]), Deutsch's (2007) argument is that to speak of 'doing gender' is to imply conformity to a pre-existing gender system.

This raises the issue of the relationship between structure and agency in terms of women's household work practices. Pink criticises West and Zimmerman for denying agency to individuals, and argues for understanding men and women with agency, who can engage in 'changing gender' (2004, p.41) through the performance of housework. This agency is exercised in the context of constraints, such as the materiality of the home, however these can be stretched and changed over time. Emphasising conformity rather than resistance, Johnson suggests that men and women in relationships may 'subtly customize how they do gender by emphasizing some aspects of the larger gender order and deemphasizing others' in order to craft gender identities, communicate emotional messages and interact in ways which produce the desired 'emotional energy' (2010, p.699). Using the example of household work, she argues that for some participants the doing of housework tasks such as cooking and cleaning contributes to an identity as a loving wife in that the performance of these tasks both meet (hetero)gendered expectations and demonstrate that a male partner 'matters' (ibid, p.705).

Hockey et al. (2004; 2007) consider the relationship between structure and agency in the living of heterosexual lives, taking account of the relationship between biographical and historical time. Using the case study of seventy-four-year-old Jean Brown, the authors analyse 'the nature of her agency across the whole series of discursive practice which have constituted her heterosexual history' (2007, p.54), rather than, for example, focusing on her agency to reinterpret her past in the context

of a research encounter. The approach challenges a tendency to overemphasise structural effects, particularly among older women (Wray, 2003; Clarke and Warren, 2007). Nevertheless, the data on which this analysis is based was generated in the context of a single interview encounter, and thus while Jean's account of her choices allow for an understanding of the different ways heterosexuality can be lived in practice in relation to the interplay of biography and history, it is important to bear in mind, as the authors do, that Jean's story is not '*the* life, which is in principle unknown and unknowable' (Plummer, 1995, p.168).

Considering the meaning of heterosexuality in this account draws attention to the ways in which what this meant for Jean was constructed through various 'discursive practices' (Hockey et al., 2004, p. 230). For Jackson, the dimension of meaning encompasses both discourses of gender and heterosexuality in circulation in a particular society at a particular historical moment, and negotiated meaning as 'deployed within, and emergent from, routine, everyday social interaction through which each of us makes sense of our own and others' gendered and sexual lives' (2005, p.29), as in the practices described by Johnson (2010). In the former sense, certain discourses become naturalised, including couple relationships between members of 'opposite' sexes and understandings of mothering practices, such as ideas of women having a 'little extra something' that makes them 'naturally' more suited to childcare or of a 'natural' bond between mother and child, and such discourses are used by men and women (Dryden, 1999, p.73; Blain, 1994, p.540). In terms of interrelations between the dimensions of heterosexuality, Jackson suggests that 'structural and institutional patterns give rise to and are sustained by forms of understanding whereby they appear natural or inevitable' (2006b, p.112), pointing to ways in which the discourses participants draw on to construct their accounts of their own and others' practices often function to present a normative model as 'natural'. However, feminist work on motherhood and mothering has demonstrated that what is often presented as 'natural' is historically, socially, culturally, politically and morally constructed (Rich, 1977; Boulton, 1983; Phoenix et al., 1991; Richardson, 1993; Silva, 1996; Lawler, 2000; Miller, 2005).

More generally, Jackson highlights these structural 'patterned social relations that shape the social order at a macro level' (2006b, p.108), as the dimension that is currently most underused in understanding heterosexuality, but for her, the most

important. Although she emphasises the intersections between the dimensions, the influence of social structures on the other three dimensions is highlighted more than a reciprocal influence. The role of social structures on gender and heterosexuality includes patterned inequalities in distributions of resources and divisions of labour, gender as an inherently hierarchical structure and the ways in which a particular form of monogamous heterosexual coupledom is institutionalised through, for example, marriage, the law and the state.[13] Jackson's conceptions of social structures are 'subject to historical change and cross-national variability' (2006, p.110), and the influence can be seen in macro-level studies on the division of household work across countries that take into account parental leave policies and other structural forms of institutionalized heterosexuality (Fuwa, 2004; Crompton et al., 2005; Fuwa and Cohen, 2007; Bernhardt et al., 2008; Treas and Drobnic, 2010; Kan et al., 2011).[14] Such national-level variations may play a moderator role; Knudsen and Waerness found that living in a gender-egalitarian country, such as Norway, Sweden or the United States, with higher income and less traditional gender values increases a woman's power to achieve a more egalitarian division of labour (2008). While this thesis does not focus on a structural dimension of gender and heterosexuality in the sense of mapping trends across a large sample, I do recognise that patterned social relations are an important part of a wider picture, and would suggest that a focus on relational narrated selves in process can offer a way to reflect on these.

Risman (2004) conceives of gender as a structure that operates at individual, interactional and institutional levels, following Martin's (2004) definition of social institutions that recognises both how institutions can constrain and facilitate the actions of group members, but also how they can be constituted and reconstituted by group members (see also Giddens, 1984 on this as a multi-directional relationship). Gender inequality is reproduced at each of these levels, which are then reinforcing (and Risman uses this to explain why women continue to 'hold themselves accountable for being personally responsible for more than good enough mothering

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[13] Examples of how the influence of structures in constituting heterosexuality have been considered include social policy (Carabine, 1996), citizenship (Richardson, 1998) and government marriage promotion (Heath, 2009).

[14] Much of the research cited above relates to the United States. However, as recent studies show, there are many similarities between these two countries as examples of liberal welfare states and in terms of findings on division of household labour in international comparison studies (Cooke, 2010).

and sparkling households' (2004, p.442)). Nevertheless, in emphasising the 'individual choice of gendered options', Risman and Davis (2013, p.746) downplay the ways in which the interactional practices which constitute gendered identities can be reflexively shaped by various personal relationships, as well as broader cultural understandings of gendered expectations.

2.4.2 Family Practices

I argue that family can usefully be considered in relation to gender and heterosexuality across these dimensions, by drawing on ideas of personal life and family practices. In section 2.2.2, I considered Smart's concept of personal life as a way to understand the interiority of relationships, involving thinking and feeling (in ways such as remembering, imagining, making sense of one's own biography and reflecting on ongoing relationships). While this approach is not limited to family relationships, it is useful for making sense of the self who reflexively engages in family practices. Morgan reflects that 'interview talk is itself a form of family practice, a way of constructing the family self in a particular context' (2011a, p.169). Although this 'family self' is not elaborated on, I would suggest that similarly, these are reflexive selves in process, who, through engaging in family practices as 'reflective practices' (ibid, p.163), not only reproduce family relationships and family discourses, but also selves who are multiply constituted through various family relationships. While these selves are gendered, naming them as family selves allows for a consideration of how a person engaging in an interaction as a mother may be subject to both heteronormative 'cultural gendered interactional expectations' (Risman, 2004, p.442), but also moral expectations as a parent which, while mediated through gender (Morgan, 1996) may differ from how a woman who is not a parent may be framed. Lawler has argued in relation to the way in which one women's motherly and daughterly selves are storied, taking up the position of mother 'evokes the sacrifice of personhood' because of the way motherhood is understood as existing in relation to children's needs, and therefore it was only by positioning themselves outside of this signifier that the women were able to 'assert a sense of themselves' (2000, p.156). Similarly, Ribbens McCarthy et al. (2003) highlight the moral nature of parents' and step-parents' stories in terms of a responsibility to meet the needs of children. Thus accounts of mothering (and fathering) practices can be understood as framed in terms of prioritising these needs

in order to constitute a sense of family in line with dominant discourses of what families, and specifically parents, *should* do.

A family practices approach, as developed by Morgan, includes a sense of the active, everyday, regular and fluid aspects of family and emphasises that family is something one *does* (for example, through the processes of mothering or fathering rather than just through *being* a mother or a father (1996; 2011a)). In this sense family, like gender and heterosexuality, is produced through practices and interactions.[15] In his earlier work on this concept, Morgan (1996) focuses on the relevance of family to a wide range of social practices, and defined by agents themselves as being to do with family matters. However, Finch's work on displaying family emphasises the relevance of the audience understanding certain actions as 'doing family things' (2007, p.67). Thus a family practices approach does not suggest autonomous individuals doing family in any way they see fit, as Morgan recognises:

> 'Individuals do not start from scratch as they going [sic] about family living. They come into (through marriage or parenthood, say) a set of practices that are already partially shaped by legal prescriptions, economic constraints and cultural definitions.' (2011a, p.7)

He talks about this in terms of 'structuration' (cf. Giddens, 1984), focusing on processes rather than external structures imposing themselves on families. By drawing on Bourdieu's argument that relations of kinship 'exist in practice only through and for the official and unofficial uses made of them by agents' (1977, p.38), Morgan suggests that the practices involved in maintaining these relationships, also reproduce broader social institutions.

Drawing on Widmer et al. (2008), Morgan recognises two forms of potential social constraints: 'the patterned and deep continuities within family relationships which continue over time' and 'those resources which are available to family members, which are allocated within families and households and which, almost inevitably are scarce' (2011a, p.66). Both of these are related to the work of Bourdieu, the former in terms of habitus, given the routine, unchosen nature of some family practices, and the latter in terms of various forms of capital exercised by persons within families.

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[15] As discussed in section 2.3.2, DeVault (1991) makes a similar argument.

Bourdieu posits habitus as made up of a system of 'dispositions', a term which encapsulates 'the *result of an organizing action*' (that is, structure), a habitual '*way of being*', and a '*predisposition*' or '*tendency*' (1977, p.214, original emphasis), and as embodied in human beings. This suggests a fundamentally unconscious character, and indeed Bourdieu has argued that 'it is because subjects do not, strictly speaking, know what they are doing that what they do has more meaning than they know' (1977, p.79; although see Jenkins (2002) on the contradictions in Bourdieu's work). However, considering both personal habits attached to individuals (which nonetheless may be responded to by other family members collectively) and collective habits of families, Morgan (2011a) suggests that despite their 'taken for granted' nature, such habits are routine rather than unconscious, and can therefore be recognised and accounted for by the agents who enact them. Bourdieu (1977) also argues that habitus only operate in relation to a particular social field (that is, a network of relations in which struggles take place over resources, or capital), so habitus would produce different practices within a family than in other contexts (Jenkins, 2002). This would seem to suggest that fields of a married couple and dependent children living in one house and a group of friends or 'housemates' living in another could be differently structured in terms of power relations. The theory of relative resources, which argues that the partner with the most resources in terms of income or education can bargain his or her way out of housework tasks, is an example of how this can be applied to families. However, Jenkins questions the relationship between habitus and field; if individuals acquire a habitus as they grow up within a field, how can either a) individuals embody a different habitus when they encounter a new field as adults or b) a field 'have' its own habitus if habitus are the properties of embodied humans? (2002, p.90). Nevertheless, I would broadly agree that it is useful to consider how power relations operate within different contexts (such as the two different households I mentioned above), and to remember the different experiences of individuals *within* families.

The idea of different social constraints allows for both structure and agency as part of a family practices approach, which has been recognised by Smart and Neale:

> 'Practices require agents to carry them out, so to speak. But because they are fairly routine and located in culture, history and personal biography, they are not free-floating, random or serendipitous.' (1999, p.73)

As I discussed above, a key question has emerged around the relationship of agency and structure in terms of women's housework, and Morgan uses this as an example of how women's practices can be constrained:

> 'For many women these activities seemed to be given as a consequence of becoming a wife and a mother (identities which, themselves, might have been chosen in only a very loose sense of the word). They were practices in that they were orientated to other members of the family and that they reproduced the very idea of family and the identities subsumed within it. But they were not chosen or, necessarily enjoyed.' (2011a, p.67)

While Morgan emphasises the reproduction of 'family' identities, and arguably family as an institution, he suggests in this context 'family practices are merged with *gendered* practices' (2011a, p.67, my emphasis), in terms of responsibilities for housework and breadwinning. However, as I argued in Chapter 1, this understanding of gender only makes sense in the context of a monogamous, heterosexual relationship (in which the norms of marriage and parenthood are also suggested). Morgan (2011a) acknowledges the idea of family practices has been criticised for its inherent heteronormativity (for instance, Roseneil, 2005) and recognises this tendency in his own work. However, there is still some conflation of gender and 'heterogender' (Ingraham, 1996). For example, Morgan suggests that 'kinship, inter-generational relationships and sibling relationships' (2011a, p.2) need to be studied through a lens other than gender. While I recognise the importance of a 'family' lens in relation to these topics, I would argue that an understanding of gender that problematises its connection to, and analytical distinction from, heterosexuality would offer a useful lens here (for example, how does gender play out among brothers and sisters, or in relationships between parents and their adult sons and daughters?).

In discussing constraints, Morgan also considers the role of discourse, which 'constitutes the context of constraints within which family practices are conducted' (2011a, p.68). Again there is an understanding of agency (in terms of individual negotiation of discourse, in which (non-dominant) discourses can play a part), while recognising the influence of dominant discourses:

> 'Individuals might wish to 'do' family in a particular way, to be 'good' parents, 'good' partners and so on but feel constrained, through the scarcity of key resources, from doing so too the fullest extent. It may be argued that these

notions of 'good' themselves constitute another kind of ideological constraint but nevertheless they do highlight a disjuncture between what is desired and what is practically achievable.' (ibid, p.67)

As Jackson (2005; 2006a; 2006b) argues in relation to dimensions of gender and heterosexuality, dimensions of practices and discourse are 'mutually implicated', as discourses of what it means to be a 'good' or 'proper' mother enter into everyday practices, while at the same time, these discourses draw on practices (for instance through the examples used to support an understanding of a 'good' family in popular culture (Morgan, 2011a, pp.68-69)).

Like Morgan, Gubrium and Holstein (1990) argue for a shift away from *the* family to just 'family', noting shifts in what family means at different historical times, how the meaning of family varies according to social context and considering the different constructions of family employed by related persons. Challenging the idea of family as a superpersonality with thing-like qualities, they suggest family is a 'practical achievement of a variety of circumstances and interests' which is different for different members, organizations and experts (Gubrium and Holstein, 1990, p.42). Family discourse not only describes particular relationships but also 'assigns meaning to the actions we take on behalf of the social ties designated familial' (ibid, p.14). Thus what it means to do something as part of a family is both understood in terms of existing discourse, but also contributes to a changing discourse. These ideas are similar to Morgan's idea that:

> 'Family practices are not simply practices that are done by family members in relation to other family members but they are also constitutive of that family 'membership' at the same time.' (2011a, p.32)

Similarly the idea of 'doing family' emphasises that family is a process not tied to any one location or situation, and Morgan argues that by grouping otherwise unconnected activities together under the label of family, people both give meaning to these activities and also reconstitute a sense of family as something distinct and recognisable in the process. Thus seemingly ordinary activities are given meaning by being recognised in terms of something a family does.

2.5 Mother/Daughter Relationships

Mother/daughter relationships have been theorised psychoanalytically within object relations theory which emphasises constancy in the inner world of women in terms of an ongoing relatedness and over-identification, whereby as a consequence of being mothered by a woman, women are more likely to seek fulfilment in such a relationship themselves, whereas men are more likely to separate themselves from their mother and what she represents (Chodorow, 1978). However, in focusing on how mothering is reproduced, Chodorow's theory does not explain changes between generations of mothers, or between mothers and daughters (who do decide not to have children) except through outside intervention (Schreurs, 1993). By considering the relevance of the shifting social context in which women become mothers, we can reflect on the ways in which women are situated (De Kanter, 1993).

Previous work on mothering across generations has drawn attention to both continuities and changes in what it means to be a mother, and the ways in which structural and discursive shifts have altered the context in which women 'do motherhood' and self-identify and are identified by others as mothers. For example, Vincent and Ball show how non-family care for pre-school children over the age of two is increasingly viewed as a 'good thing' (2006, p.117), in the context of more support for mothers with young children who are engaged in paid work. Such discursive shifts are related to structural changes, such as the growth in facilities providing formal childcare, pointing to the connections between discourse, structure and the practices of mothers, leading to positive accounts of participants with young children using formal childcare (in contrast to earlier discourses and a lack of childcare facilities that constrained the practices of participants' grandmothers (O'Connor, 2006)).

As multi-generational sociological work has shown (Brannen et al., 2004; O'Connor, 2006; Thomson et al., 2011) considering how women *make sense* of their relationships with their mothers shows that values and practices are both consciously reproduced and changed. Although this can also happen at the level of the unconscious (as identified by researchers studying mothers and daughters), I would suggest that it is important to consider the ways in which these women are accounting for their

behaviour as social actors. For example, in her study of the ways in which two generations of mothers combined childcare and employment, O'Connor (2006; 2011) suggests that the younger generation in her study could be characterised as 'mimics', 'resisters' and 'coincidentals'. Whereas the first two groups frame their decisions about combining work and childcare biographically in relation to their experience of their mothers' strategies, whether they are reproducing or avoiding these, the third group did not connect their mothers' practices with their own. However, O'Connor highlights ways in which their strategies either mimicked or rejected their mothers' practices, demonstrating how relational explanations can be denied as part of a personal narrative. While O'Connor does not explore the relevance of individualistic discourses on these 'coincidentals', I would suggest that it worth considering whether these women were making sense of themselves as autonomous individuals making identity choices (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2002).

Brannen et al. (2004) explore the transmission of motherhood as an identity, suggesting that women identified with or reacted against their mothers as role models in various ways. Looking at this across generations, they suggest that 'the youngest generation stood out in their emphasis upon their own agency in shaping motherhood', remaining silent about constraints they faced (ibid, p.112). While decisions about work and care were partly internalised and framed in terms of personal morals, such decisions were often explained biographically in relation to their mothers, and shaped by ongoing relationships, with working patterns facilitated by the relationship with the person willing to provide childcare. Although Chodorow's work suggests 'female identity is mainly a relational identity' (Schueurs, 1993, p.4), there is also a conflict for mothers between relational discourses of mothering, and individualistic discourses of 'choosing, shaping, deciding' actors.

2.5.1 Mother/Daughter Relationships and Foodwork

Oakley (1974b) conceptualises three aspects of mothers influencing their daughters' housework in terms of socialisation; direct rehearsal of housework tasks, general imitation of mother as role model, and repetition of mother's housework behaviour in daughter's own. An alternative relationship is that of rebellion, which is illustrated through examples of wanting to improve on what they saw as poor standards or relax

'obsessional' ones. Oakley suggests that 'continuing imitation' or 'direct rebellion against the mothers standards' are aspects of the same process, whereby 'the woman is defining her own housework behaviour with reference to that of her mother' (1974b, pp.116-7). These ideas of imitation and rebellion can also be seen in women's accounts of their household work (Hochschild, 1989). Similarly with regard to childcare, Everingham summarises two aspects that are in tension, that of welcoming support and resenting it:

> 'Although the young mothers welcomed the instrumental assistance and emotional support of their own mothers, and actively sought this support and advice, they deeply resented their mothers' inclination to define the child's needs for them.' (1994, p.67)

While this literature suggests tension in the mother/daughter relationships Everingham studied, the concept of 'displaying family' (Finch, 2007) would suggest the importance of showing this aspect of family 'works'. However, by recognising that the adult daughters in this situation are also mothers within families defined separately from the family they were born into (as a 'nuclear' family), then arguably displaying a family that 'works' can simultaneously involve displaying a family that in some way does not work, or does not work 'properly' according to broader discourses of idealised family practices (James and Curtis, 2010), if they are highlighting problems with their mothers' practices, or noting ways in which they are unable to do family in the same way in terms of reaching particular standards.

One area of household work that is also covered in a separate literature is the work involved in 'feeding the family', defined as 'all the housework that has to do with food: cooking, planning, shopping, cleaning up' (DeVault, 1990, p.99). I will use 'foodwork' as a term to cover all these aspects, following Beagan et al. (2008). Cooking is often identified as the most enjoyable aspect of housework (with grocery shopping, another important aspect of foodwork, also ranked as relatively enjoyable (Oakley, 1974b; Warde, 1997)). However, these studies also emphasise the importance of considering 'invisible work'; while cooking can be 'a challenge' or 'creative' (albeit affected by constraints of time and money), '"thinking what to eat" is an *endless duty*' (Oakley, 1974b, p.59, my emphasis). Participants emphasise the work involved in taking into account likes and dislikes, conflicting schedules and

health concerns, as well as feeling a need to provide variety (DeVault, 1991; Girard, 1998; Short, 2006). In some cases this involves physical as well as mental work, such as preparing more than one meal at a time in order to ensure all members of the intimate family can eat together, demonstrating the symbolic importance of sharing family foods (DeVault, 1991; Lupton, 1996; James et al., 2009). Within a heterosexual context, women's and men's foodwork practices are often conceived in terms of choice (men's choice of when and in what circumstances to do foodwork; and women's lack of choice and sense of overall responsibility) (see DeVault, 1991; Short, 2006; Metcalfe et al., 2009; Stapleton and Keenan, 2009).[16] Ashley et al. (2004) suggest that it is not cooking that is feminine, but feeding the family as a caring practice. Thus the effort involved in foodwork can be bound up with caring activities.

As I argued above, DeVault's work can be read as multi-dimensional, in that she conceptualises family across levels of meaning, practice and structure. Her discussion of maternal influence points to the apparent "naturalness" of learning through watching and picking up how to do things through "osmosis" (1991, pp.107, 106). DeVault emphasises that women 'interpret their conduct of household work as making them quite "naturally" like their mothers and shows how participants biographically frame their accounts of their foodwork practices and attitudes, often in relation to what they perceive as 'the "right way" to do family life', which draws on broader discourses identified in other research, such as the importance of the 'proper meal' (ibid, pp.109, 111). However, given the 'taken-for-granted character' attributed to the division of foodwork in heterosexual couples (ibid, p.107), doing family in the 'right way' also involves doing (hetero)gender. In this way, participants in her study can be seen to be constructing relational narrative selves in accounting for their foodwork practices, not just in relation to their mothers, but also more generally in relation to understandings of discourses and structures of gender, heterosexuality and family. In this rest of this chapter, I will consider the theorising of mother/daughter relationships in relation to foodwork.

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[16] As well as gendered differences, there are also differences where gender intersects with other factors, such as ethnicity (Beoku-Betts, 1995; D'Sylva and Beagan, 2011; Beagan et al., 2008) and class (DeVault, 1991; Bugge and Almås, 2006; Meah and Watson, 2011).

2.5.1.1 The 'Proper Meal'

The discourse of a 'proper meal' has been central to discussions of foodwork for the last thirty years (Murcott, 1983; Charles and Kerr, 1988; Coveney, 2000; Bisogni et al., 2005; Bugge and Almås, 2006; Curtis et al., 2009b; James et al., 2009; Stapleton and Keenan, 2009; Wilk, 2010). In Charles and Kerr's (1988) study, participants used the term to describe the main meal of the day, usually meat, potatoes and vegetables, which was cooked by a woman for her husband and children, who would all sit round the table and eat together. Over twenty years later, while the character of the food eaten is not necessarily the same and varies depending on culture, the key aspect is that it is still cooked by a woman for her husband and children (James et al., 2009). Thus women are defined as wives and mothers by their provision of 'proper meals', preparing and cooking 'wholesome' and 'nutritious' food 'for men and children' (Charles and Kerr, 1988, p.17). While participants may disagree that it *should* be women who necessarily do this, they also emphasise the importance of being a good cook for being 'a 'proper' wife' (Charles and Kerr, 1988, p.46). However, this can lead to what is presented as an internal conflict:

> 'Women generally feel a little uncomfortable with admitting that they have conventional roles in the kitchen. Ideally, men and women should "share alike", but this is rarely seen in practice.' (Bugge and Almås, 2006, p.209)

This points to the ways in which women are positioned by multiple, and potentially conflicting, discourses.

In addition to the construction as wife, there is also the construction of women as mothers/men as fathers, for example in the sense that the family meal is seen as a time for parents to teach children manners, and for families to talk together (Charles and Kerr, 1988; DeVault, 1991; Coveney, 2000; Wilk, 2010). Coveney argues that parents 'are effectively undertaking the role of the 'good' parent: one who is supposed to show interest and concern about children's activities.'(2000, p.154). This responsibility has also been ascribed to women specifically:

> 'The woman's role as wife and mother is to keep the household harmonious, provide emotional stability for the family and acculturate children into

appropriate norms of behaviour, including conventions of emotional management and eating habits.' (Lupton, 1996, p.39)

Arguably, the 'proper meal' functions more as an ideal than a reality, whether in terms of 'normal' practice (Bell and Valentine, 1997; Murcott, 1997) or in nostalgic terms as part of one's childhood that is no longer maintained, or at least not to the same extent in terms of frequency (DeVault, 1991). Similarly, the skills in 'home-cooking' construed as being necessary to produce a 'proper meal' can also be idealised; Meah and Watson found participants 'imagined some past halcyon period characterised by innate cooking skills against which narratives of erosion are framed' (2011, 3.2; see also Short, 2006). Nevertheless, although this is a recognisable discourse (and indeed, one which was evident in my research), arguably a 'good' mother needs to present herself as challenging this through her parenting practices.

The ideology of the proper meal seems particularly powerful for women who have expressed anxiety and guilt about not living up to 'idealized images of family life' (DeVault, 1991, p.133; see also Bugge and Almås, 2006). Often this is an area where women make comparisons with their childhood experiences, for example wanting to make food like their mother did or have family meals round the table as they used to (DeVault, 1991; Bugge and Almås, 2006; Curtis et al., 2009a; Green et al., 2009; James, et al., 2009). Indeed, in explaining how their own practices differed, women often appeared to assume that the interviewer would also expect these standards of them (for instance, "when I were a kid, we used to be like meat and two veg everyday...I know it sounds awful but some days, if I've been working, it's just like a quick pizza put in the oven" (James et al., 2009, p.40)).[17] This can be seen as an example of a discourse of convenience foods as a threat to the family meal, thus when women mention the practice of using convenience food, 'it is always explained and justified' (Bugge and Almås, 2006, p.21; see also Johnson et al., 2011).[18]

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[17] In other cases the explanations are not linked so directly to their own mothers. Nevertheless, it is still the power of the ideal of the 'proper meal' and particularly 'family togetherness' that means participants feel the need to justify why this does not happen (James et al., 2009, pp.46-7).

[18] However, Short (2006) suggests that the role of convenience foods in deskilling cooking is often taken as implicit, and found that her interviewees didn't necessarily see pre-prepared food as less acceptable than fresh, raw ingredients, although their appropriateness was context-specific.

2.5.1.2 Care Work and Identity Work

Women's food practices are also seen as both 'care work' and 'identity work' (Bugge and Almås, 2006). As discussed above, I take identities as something that are always in process and Bugge and Almås use the concept in a similar way, in terms of dilemmas and conflicts (for instance between the influence of their mothers' foodwork practices and 'new ways to be a woman', influenced by structural changes such as women's increased involvement in paid work (2006, p.215)). They describe women wanting to both recreate the traditions of their mothers and do something different. In her study of gender strategies, Hochschild (1989) identified internal contradictions between ideology of surface feelings and the 'real' feelings developed in childhood and/or adolescence. While I would agree with Duncombe and Marsden's (1998) critique of designating certain feelings as straightforwardly 'real', the idea of internal contradictions is an important one to explore. Stapleton and Keenan found participants who had similar experiences:

> "'...since I've been at home and I can kind of keep on top of things like what food we've got in [...] I kind of quite enjoy being prepared like that but I also get totally freaked out by how domesticated I'm getting and how it's just not me.'" (2009, p.46)

This can be seen as example of the reflexivity involved in constructing the participant's social self.

Women also present themselves as improving on their mother's cooking, for example a woman who likes to cook meals from scratch for her children using raw ingredients, contrasted this to her mother's use of convenience food (Curtis et al., 2009b). More broadly participants across different studies criticise their mothers in terms of lack of care (Stapleton and Keenan, 2009; Meah and Watson, 2011). Thus it is not just the provision of food that matters but how this is done and, importantly, how it is understood by the participants. Time is a key theme in many of the accounts, often used to set up an opposition between the interviewee's mother who had time to cook 'from scratch' and the interviewee herself who does not, due to the need to participate in paid work (DeVault, 1991; Bugge and Almås, 2006; Johnson et al., 2011). While this could be seen as an example of a structural constraint, it is important to bear in

mind that time can be constructed differently; for example Jabs et al. (2007) use the concept of 'timestyles', finding that,

> 'Mothers who said having home-cooked meals for their family was a priority "found" the time to cook even on hectic days, in contrast to mothers who said a home-cooked meal was less important.' (p.22)

While I would be cautious about framing such a decision purely in terms of individual agency, this can be seen as an example of constructing oneself as a mother through practices of mothering.

DeVault links women constructing caring as part of their identity explicitly to mothering:

> 'Both the material interests of women who might want to reduce their household work and the egalitarian ideals of sharing were undermined by the power of the socially organized practice and discourse of mothering. As these women grew up, they learned, both from their own mothers and from more general ideas about what mothers *should* be, to participate in the social relations that organize the family work of feeding.' (1991, p.96, original emphasis)

This discourse is also evident in advertising that emphasises women's responsibility as wives and mothers to manage emotions within the family, and more prominently nowadays, in discourses that focus on 'good' mothering as providing healthy food through classes and provision of information by public agencies (Burridge and Barker, 2009; Green et al., 2009). Furthermore, as Beagan et al. (2008) have shown, women construct themselves as having responsibility for both the health of family members and the emotional work needed to avoid conflicts through the performance of foodwork. Thus the continued inequitable division of household work is perpetuated in part by particular understandings of what it means to be a mother within a heterosexual relationship.

2.5.1.3 Children's Perceptions of Mothers and Foodwork

As well as women themselves constructing women in heterosexual relationships as primarily responsible for foodwork, this is also something recognised by their children. For example, different models of fathers' engagement with cooking all

involve a mother who is *routinely responsible* for foodwork (Curtis et al., 2009a). While parents may be 'dismayed' if their child picks up stereotypes, especially if they try to emphasize egalitarian behaviour, DeVault points out issues of visibility, as certain tasks are not observed by children (such as a father doing the food shopping during his lunch hour (1991, p.103)). More generally, dominant discourses of gender in a heterosexual context are represented through a range of popular culture, advertising and in the everyday practices of others, so these may influence children's understandings, even where they contradict knowledge gained from experience (VanEvery, 1995).

Often children (of both genders) are conflated with their fathers in studies on foodwork, in terms of seeing it as their mother's responsibility or though limited performance of foodwork themselves. A female teenager interviewed by Beagan et al. would cook and leave the kitchen in a 'mess', demonstrating that she has a choice of not cleaning the kitchen, while not affording that same choice to her mother ("it's more work for her because it's a bigger mess to clean up" (2008, p.664)). Similarly Curtis et al., suggest that 'both boys and girls, along with their fathers, in practice, do very little in relation to food preparation and cooking' (2009a, p.109). However, as demonstrated above, there are notable gender differences among adults. Curtis et al. believe that children don't do 'women's work' as children, but,

> 'As boy and girl children they are clearly observant of their own futures, as adults...Thus, the 11- to 12-year-old children in this study have the potential to develop a "common consciousness" of both a gendered and generational identity that may persist into their own experience of being mothers and fathers.' (ibid, pp.109-10)

Arguably this is a gendered identity that strongly interrelates with normative heterosexuality in the construction of 'women's work'.[19]

Given that studies on housework have found differences in the tasks and amount of housework done by children in terms of gender (Evertsson, 2006; Raley and Bianchi, 2006), there is potentially some aspect of preparing girls for being a mother/wife in a

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[19] I agree with Curtis et al. (2009b) that we can also think of this responsibility in terms of generational identities, and that parents outside of the context of a heterosexual relationship are also responsible for feeding their children.

heterosexual context that is seen as necessarily involving a particular division of labour (indeed this is sometimes acknowledged by women (see Charles and Kerr, 1988)).[20] As I have shown in terms of explanations, husbands and wives have linked their different abilities at various tasks to what they learned in childhood (Doucet, 1996). Therefore this is potentially a cyclical process, and while women may potentially have the agency to break this cycle, people in various studies imply, or indeed openly suggest, that it is easier to continue with dividing tasks by ability, despite the fact these often seem to continue gendered patterns (Blain, 1994).[21]

2.6   Conclusion

This chapter has set out a theoretical framework in which I have positioned relational narrated selves in process as part of a broader multi-dimensional understanding of social life, focusing on the interrelations between gender, heterosexuality and family. I have outlined an understanding of relational narrated selves and narrative identities in process, which draws on an interactional understanding of self and identity. A lens of connectedness challenges an individualistic understanding of self by drawing attention to the various ways in which we can understand the interiority of relationships. Similarly, a lens of temporality draws attention to the multiple dimensions of time which intersect, recognising the changing experiences of people moving through the life course and a sense of self and identity in process, but also how these experiences are shaped by timing of family events and broader social change. By recognising the ways in which selves and identities can be understood as narratively constructed, and highlighting how these are embedded within webs of relationships and how narratives change over time (in the multi-dimensional sense), I have set out a different theoretical approach to household work that argues for understanding this as part of personal life. In contrast to the 'familiar' understandings of 'domestic labour' and 'gendered division of care', which I discuss in this chapter, I

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[20] Martin (2009) has found parents assume their children are heterosexual and thus the idea of hypothesizing any other relationship for them seems less likely.

[21] This is even the case in heterosexual relationships where the participants are trying to do things in an anti-sexist way; VanEvery (1995) found examples of women doing particular tasks, such as sewing, because this was the task they knew how to do, and indeed also doing this with their children. This is in spite of an oft-expressed desire among couples in this study to challenge gendered stereotypes.

argue that approaching the topic of household work in terms of relational narrated selves in process makes it unfamiliar and worthy of further study.

This chapter has also situated this project in the context of the existing literature on household work, setting out the ways in which mother/daughter relationships have been shown to be a relevant aspect, focusing in particular on foodwork. However, by mapping out gender, heterosexuality and family across multiple dimensions, I have shown how mother/daughter relationships in regard to household work can be usefully theorised by drawing out some of the interrelationships in the ways in which these are understood in previous research. Overall this chapter has argued that conceptualising relational narrated selves in process in the context of a multi-dimensional understanding of gender, heterosexuality and family offers an original and sociologically useful approach that will contribute to the literature on mother/daughter relationships and on household work.

Chapter 3: Methodology

3.1   Introduction

In order to explore the household work narratives of two generations of women, I conducted qualitative semi-structured interviews with pairs of adult mothers and daughters, interviewed individually about their household work, which were intended to generate accounts of household work over time and reflections on their experiences as mothers and daughters. I take the view that choices made throughout a research project affect the process of carrying out that research, the data generated and the conclusions drawn, and therefore it is important to critically reflect on the ideas and assumptions which have informed my research.

This chapter provides a reflexive account of the research process in which my role as the researcher plays an important part, and I begin this chapter by discussing this approach in relation to feminist research. I then reflect on how the research was designed and undertaken, including sampling, interviewing and transcription. In doing so I draw on insights from other qualitative research in the field of families and relationships to consider methodological and ethical issues relevant to this specific area. Over the course of this project, my planned analytical approach changed from thematic analysis to a Listening Guide approach (Mauthner and Doucet, 1998), and I discuss this in detail in section 3.4.

3.2   Reflexivity

Following many feminist researchers, I understand reflexivity as interrogating one's choices in relation to research (including choice of topic, research questions, methods of data collection and analysis and sample of participants) and what assumptions inform these decisions (Stanley and Wise, 1983; Fonow and Cook, 1991; Harding, 1991; Letherby, 2003). Feminist epistemology views the self as a starting point for understanding (Griffiths, 1995), and turning this idea inwards, allows us to recognise how a researcher's self-reflection can serve as a resource for helping to make sense of the lives of others, through the weaving of one's autobiography with the biographies

of participants (Cotterill and Letherby, 1993; Edwards and Ribbens, 1998). Nevertheless, there are dangers that paying too much attention to one's own positionality can block out participants' voices (Finlay, 2002), which undermines another aim of feminist research, to oppose the silencing of women (Smith, 1987). Thus it is important to bear in mind the purposes of reflexivity within a research account, which I view as providing information about how understandings were reached, while achieving a balance between '[t]elling *their* story and *mine*' (Jamieson, 2011, p.131, original emphasis). In this thesis I have attempted to do this by including narratives from several participants, combining substantial quotations and analysis, as well as using this chapter to reflect on how data was generated in the research context and my role in this (see section 3.4 for more discussion of my analytical approach).

While reflexivity is often acknowledged as important, the practical difficulties are less frequently addressed. Firstly, of the various factors that influence one's decisions, there are some that are easier for researchers to identify in their work, and hindsight may be necessary to see our choices within the context of personal and academic biographies (Mauthner and Doucet, 2003). Naumann points out:

> 'A central problem of reflecting on one's own cultural bearings is that deeply held beliefs tend to appear so "natural" to us that we often do not even know we hold them. In fact it is usually only when our cultural understandings are challenged by different cultural frames that we realised exactly what we take for granted.' (2011, p.39)

This issue of taking things for granted is particularly relevant within research on families and relationships; which are characterised by theorists in terms of 'the close and necessary overlap in terms of understanding and experiences between researcher and researched' (Morgan, 2011b, p.29). While this draws attention to the ways in which the researcher's own relationships, and understandings deriving from those, should be reflected on in relation to the research process, it can downplay how, particularly in conversations about 'everyday' life, it is easy to assume a shared understanding. Furthermore, if we view interviews as examples of social encounters in which we as actors try to present ourselves according to socially valued expectations (following Goffman, 1959) then it can be difficult to question what are presented by participants as 'common sense understandings'. I would suggest this can play out in gendered and personal ways in terms of cultural expectations; although Pink (2004)

discusses her participants' definitions of dirt in detail, I found it difficult in the interview context to ask for definitions when participants characterised some houses as 'really dirty' because of how I felt I might be judged as a woman for not having this knowledge.

As this demonstrates, one's emotions as a researcher play a part in shaping the research encounter and the data generated. Throughout the research process, I have recorded thoughts and feelings, including reflections on myself as a researcher experiencing feelings of awkwardness. For instance, my experience of Claire's interview was quite difficult. Before the interview started, Claire had asked me about my research and I felt I had not explained it clearly. I was then unable to explain the sort of introduction I wanted (in previous interviews, participants had seemed comfortable responding to a similarly worded question, and I was not prepared for Claire to question this). This happened again at another point in the interview, and when I left I felt that I had given off an impression of incompetence. In my research diary, I wrote that I felt upset and doubted my ability to carry out this research. Clearly such feelings are not unique to me; Scott et al. have considered the idea of a 'reluctant researcher' who experiences 'feelings of fraudulence and perceived relative incompetence' in the field (2012, p.728), and argue for the importance of sharing such experiences with other researchers. I would agree that acknowledging and reflecting on such feelings is a useful, if difficult, part of the research process.

In other post-interview reflections, I recorded a strong sense of recognition at something a participant said. In particular, I noted feeling 'inspired' by two very different participants, Kim (40) and Hannah (43). Kim spoke about how her friends would say she was 'always cleaning', although she felt 'I probably do less housework then people think, I think it's because I pick up every day…so because I do a little something every day I don't have to do a massive clean'. She appeared to be very organised, and was able to do what sounded like enjoyable activities with her children and maintain a high level of tidiness:

> 'Last week we had a sewing day so we had all the sewing machine out and we made the little heart that's on the sofa, Molly made that and then they just run up stuff on the sewing machine so there's threads everywhere. But then I tidied

it away [Jennifer: yeah] and pack it away and then it's all done ready for next time.'

Although I felt the division of housework in Kim's relationship was not ideal, her positive attitude helped to 'sell' this more traditional way of doing things as something I wanted to achieve with my imagined children.[22]

In contrast, Hannah spoke about making a choice not to bother with what she viewed as non-essential housework in order to have more time with her daughter, and doing the things she wanted (such as learning to surf), and again I felt that I wanted to mother my imagined children in this way. Describing one example of doing something fun with her daughter, she noted that 'this is why nothing gets done, it's just [..] why would you, given the choice?' and I responded emphatically: 'No this looks a lot of fun, honestly'. Afterwards, I wrote in my research diary that I felt that I was trying to validate what Hannah was telling me about her choices. Reflecting on these two women together, I feel that I was inspired by their confidence and self-belief, and what I personally felt were 'good' mothering practices, despite how different they were, and recognising this is important in trying to understand my interpretation of their narratives (as I discuss further in section 3.4.1).

3.3 My Study

3.3.1 Research Aims

In the previous chapter, I set out my theoretical framework, which conceptualises social reality as multi-dimensional and socially constructed. Nevertheless, this approach still recognises material consequences of, for example, gender inequality, and also acknowledges the often entrenched nature of particular dominant constructions. In order to generate data, I recognise the need for ontological, epistemological and methodological coherence, and therefore I reflected on the nature of the reality I wanted to study, and considered how I could obtain knowledge of this. By focusing on the primacy of multi-dimensional connections to my understanding of

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[22] I do not currently have children but I hope to in the future, and in reflecting on interviews with mothers of young children I found myself considering their accounts in relation to my imagined children in a way that reflects Smart's (2007) work on the realm of the imaginary.

social reality, I view my ontological position as connective (Mason, 2011) and relational (Ruddick, 1990; Somers, 1994; Tronto, 1995; Mauthner and Doucet, 1998; Sevenhuijsen, 1998; Benhabib, 1999), which emphasises the relational context in which people engage in practices, construct meaning and constitute the self through interactions and accounts which are narratively framed. I also recognise the importance of historical, social and cultural contexts in which narrative identities and selves are constructed in accounts of engaging in household work practices, and which to some extent constrain what narratives *can* be constructed. Where I discuss 'self', this a relational self, constructed through narratives generated in the interview context, not any sort of 'true' self. I therefore focus on narrated selves, as constructed by participants and my role in contributing to the narrative constructions in the interview context. Consequently, the aims of this research are:

1) To explore the personal narratives mothers constructed around the theme of household work
2) To analyse how mother/daughter relationships are narrated and the construction of these relational identities
3) To analyse the way in which participants make sense of themselves and their household work over time (referring to both the life course and historical time)
4) To analyse the interrelations between gender, heterosexuality and family across different social dimensions in women's personal narratives of household work

3.3.2 Research Design

Given my interest in how women *make sense* of their household work practices over time, rather than aiming to record, for example, how the amount of time spent on such practices had changed, I recognised the need for a qualitative approach that focuses on how the social world is interpreted (Mason, 2002). More specifically, as I wanted to explore heterosexual mothers' accounts of their household work practices over time, and how they narrated themselves in relation to these, I decided that in-depth interviews would allow for participants to tell me their personal stories which, while relational in nature (see Chapter 2), are constructed by the individual woman, rather

than working with her mother/daughter or other women of the same generation to construct a joint narrative, as in joint interviews or focus groups.

Recognising the importance of questions inspiring methods (rather than the other way around), I specifically wanted to address the adult mother/daughter relationship around household work in a way that did not privilege the account of one woman over another. While the literature on household work discussed in the previous chapter has highlighted how women's mothers influence how they construct their own household work practices and identities, this research is based on the perspective of one generation of women. In her study of mother/daughter relationships, Lawler (2000) argues that many analyses of mother-daughter relationships are based on the daughter's account which is presented as a 'true' understanding of the mother and thus privilege the daughter's story over the mother's. Lawler's work explores the multiple positioning of one generation of women as both mothers and daughters, and considers both their personal understandings, and discourses of mother/daughter relationships that shape the stories they tell. Similarly, I focus on stories of relationships, rather than claiming to provide 'a privileged account of what the mother-daughter relationship is "really" like' (Lawler, 2000, p.14). Nevertheless, in the context of a body of research based on the experiences of mothers of young children, I wanted to address the silencing of these women's mothers by taking a multi-generational approach. The simplest way of doing this would have been to interview a sample of unrelated women spanning an age range of, say, 20 – 70, to allow for voices of different cohorts and women at different stages in the life course. However, I was also interested in constructions of the adult mother/daughter relationship from the perspectives of both women, and so decided to interview women and their mothers.

While an important aspect of qualitative family research is participants' shared understanding of family, research with multiple family members points to the different experiences and understandings of individuals with a family group (Ribbens McCarthy et al., 2003). While couple or group interviews can provide examples of jointly-constructed family narratives, they can also obscure tensions within that group (Mansfield and Collard, 1988; Valentine, 1999, Reczek, 2014). In comparing individual and couple interviews, Valentine (1999) found that the former included more discussion of power dynamics and relationship secrets, while the latter provided

a valuable opportunity to see couples interacting, including challenging each other's accounts. However, there are also issues with individual interviews with members of the same family which relate to the order in which interviews are conducted (Reczek, 2014). In my own research, I frequently found that during my first interview (usually with the daughter), I formed an impression of the other woman. While I consciously decided not to use the second interview to attempt to verify anything from the first, I did use information from the first interview in formulating my questions in the second, for example, in displaying sensitivity to women who had been widowed.

One limitation of my research is the focus on women's perspectives, excluding the voices of their male partners and family members.[23] Women's role as 'spokesperson' for their family has been widely recognised (Daly, 1992; Valentine, 1999; Hockey et al., 2007). Traditionally, this represented an assumption about men and women's separate spheres of knowledge (as in Blood and Wolfe, 1960). However, the idea that the 'truth' of a marriage is accessible in this way has been challenged in the idea of his and hers marriages (Bernard, 1972). Similarly, there are limitations to relying on a single perspective to provide an objective account of how a couple divide household work, as research with both partners in a heterosexual couple has shown discrepancies in perceptions of how household work is carried out (Geist, 2010). I would agree with the limitations of relying on women's accounts if one is claiming that they describe an objective reality. However, they are important for understanding the role that constructions of men's attitudes and behaviour play in women's narratives of their own experiences.

3.3.3 Pilot Stage

I initially conducted six individual interviews with a convenience sample of three pairs of heterosexual mothers and daughters, recruited through personal contacts. The initial aim of this pilot stage was to highlight any methodological issues, and to help me refine my interview guide. While the role of prior relationships with interviewees has been highlighted (Garton and Copland, 2010), I also found that ongoing relationships played an unanticipated part in my research. This included an instance of seeing a

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[23] Although as the perspectives of female family members outside the mother/daughter dyads are also not taken into account, the silent voices are not only male ones.

participant in a different social context and hearing comments about participants from mutual acquaintances after the interviews, which added to the impression I had formed in the interview encounter. While these are not part of my data, it is important to recognise the potential for such additional information to unconsciously colour my interpretation of these participants' accounts.

Following these six pilot interviews, I reflected on the encounters and changed my approach. These interviews were conducted thematically, and listening to the recordings, this seemed disjointed. Given my increasing interest in narrative identities (which I will discuss below), I felt that a chronological approach would help to structure participants' responses, and make sense to them as a way of addressing this topic. Therefore, I redesigned my interview guide to begin with experiences of housework in childhood, rather than current experience (see Appendix 5 and Appendix 6). I also asked participants about why they took part in the research. Most saw it in terms of helping out a friend/relative of the personal contact of mine who had told them about the research. Given that I planned to recruit through advertising rather than personal contacts for the main period of research, I decided to provide a £10 voucher as a thank you for taking part.

3.3.4 Sampling and Recruitment

Following my pilot stage, I recruited more widely, advertising at playgroups, nurseries, primary schools and local libraries, which led to six interviews. I then recruited a further twelve participants through a university mailing list (see Appendix 2 for my research advert). I did not interview everyone who contacted me, as several people did not reply to my emails or phone messages following up on their initial contact. Other people were interested in taking part, but their mothers were not, or were not able to. The final sample was 24 women (12 pairs of mothers and daughters); see Appendix 1 for details of the participants.

During my research, I continually grappled with the issue of how diverse I wanted my sample to be. I weighed up concerns about silencing black women, versus those that, given I was conducting a relatively small study, I did not want to overgeneralise from one or two participants. Although I advertised across the city, the majority of people

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who contacted me to take part in the research were white British, and it was only near the end of recruitment that women from other ethnic groups contacted me. However, in these cases their mothers lived abroad or did not speak English, and I felt that conducting interviews using Skype[24] or translators would have made these interviews too different from the rest of the interviews I conducted, in which I spoke to women individually and directly. I therefore decided not to interview these women, although I do acknowledge that my research may have been about whiteness in ways that I did not fully recognise. Frankenberg (1993) argues that whiteness is often unnamed as a way of making sense of particular practices, and other work has drawn attention to the importance of theorising whiteness and not taking it for granted (Dyer, 1997; Byrne, 2006) and I recognise that not doing so is a limitation of this work.

The use of personal contacts and a university mailing list potentially led to a sample that was not representative of social class within the UK, although respondents included clerical staff, professionals, managers and academics. In mother/daughter pairs, there often appeared to be variation in class measures. For example, while the majority of the younger generation participants (10 out of 12) had studied at university, the majority of the older generation participants had not, although several had engaged in formal training to be nurses or teachers. As Hockey at al. (2007) suggest in relation to class across generations, 'it is difficult to unambiguously assign an extended family to a particular class location' (p.18). Byrne describes a 'broad brush' approach to designating working- or middle-class 'based on a combination of economic position, educational and social background and cultural outlook' (2006, p.178) and similarly I drew on what participants told me about these factors in the way I read their class positions (or struggled to do so).

When interviewing participants, I did not use a formal background questionnaire to record details about participants and their households. As my interest was in how women construct personal narratives around the theme of household work, I was more interested in how they introduced themselves in response to a general request to tell me about themselves and their family. Thus I do not have, for example, income levels for participants, and I have limited information about partners' employment in a lot of

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[24] Skype is a form of telecommunications software which can be used for international video calls.

cases. However, in telling me about themselves, the women I interviewed all mentioned some information about their current employment (or previous employment for those who were retired or on maternity leave) which I have included, without giving specific details, as part of the participant profiles in Appendix 1 in order to give the reader a sense of each woman as she presented herself to me.

3.3.5 Interviews

The pilot interviews took place between December 2012 and February 2013. The other eighteen interviews took place between May 2013 and February 2014. I offered interviews at a time and place to suit the interviewee and all the interviewees chose to be interviewed at their home or (in the case of some of the older generation) at the home of their daughter.[25] In these latter cases, the interviews were arranged when the mother in question was visiting her daughter, and there was clearly some concern to make things easier for me. Adler and Adler suggest that 'interviewing in a respondent's home casts a guest ambience over the researcher's presence and imbues the researcher with an aura of friendship' (2001, p.528), and I felt that this reflected how I was treated, always being offered a drink and often being directed to somewhere 'comfortable' to carry out the interviews.

Interviews were arranged around participants' schedules, and generally took place on a weekday during the day (with a few in the evenings, and two on a Saturday). Of the twelve interviews with younger generation mothers, six took place with a child or children present in the room, or wandering in and out of the room during the interview, and at other interviews children were being watched by another family member and I briefly met them at some point. MacLean (2011) has written about some of the practical issues of interviewing people at homes, and the way that these can play on one's mind during the interview (for example, being aware of the needs of children in the house and skipping questions in order to finish on time). When planning the research, I did not reflect on the role children would play, and I did not seek consent to speak to any children of the younger generation mothers. In one interview, the

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[25] One pair of participants were both going to be interviewed on the same evening at the daughter's home, however, there was a misunderstanding about the nature of the interviews. As it was not convenient to conduct two individual interviews at this time, I interviewed the mother and the daughter's interview was rearranged for her place of work.

daughter of the participant joined us, and by the end of the interview was joining in. Although I transcribed her comments, in order to make sure I had the context for what her mother had said, I did not think it would have been acceptable to use anything she said in this thesis. Similarly, I also did not seek consent to comment on my observations of, for example, tidiness or cleanliness of houses, or any mothering practices during the interview.[26] While I recognise that what I observed may have shaped my interpretations in various ways, I would argue that what I include in this thesis is data generated with the consent of my participants. What I am trying to be aware of in making these decisions is the power that I have to undermine their accounts through the use of critical observations.

This approach is shaped by discussions on feminist interviewing which consider how power operates within the interview context. Early feminist accounts drew attention to the benefits of women interviewing women, emphasising common interests and shared knowledge (Oakley, 1981). However, this approach was critiqued by writers reflecting on the impact of differences between women, for example relating to class and ethnicity (Riessman, 1987; Edwards, 1990). Nevertheless, as Weiss points out, 'there are so many different interviewer attributes to which a respondent can react that the interviewer will surely be an insider in some ways and an outsider in others' (1994, p.137). Furthermore, such differences can be viewed as beneficial for research, for example when they lead to more detailed explanations from interviewees who do not presume a shared understanding (Woodward and Chisholm, 1981). In my case, I found that the wider the age gap between me and my participants, the more likely they were to assume a lack of shared understanding and experience (for example, older generation participants assumed I would not have previously made a fire in a fireplace or cleaned the floor 'on hands and knees', both of which I had done). Therefore they were willing to explain terms, such as the use of a 'donkey stone',[27] which indeed I had not previously heard of, and talk about how they did things in detail. One younger generation participant, Kim, who was 12 years older than me at the time of the

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[26] I am aware that this choice is different from those made by other family researchers who also draw on such observations as part of their data (see, for example, Gabb, 2008).

[27] A donkey stone is a scouring block, used to clean and colour doorsteps (one participant, Rita, recalled that 'you held the donkey in your hand, the donkey stone, and you went all round the edge of your step so it left a clean yellow or orangey line. And it was a pride thing, you know [um] if you donkeyed your step it always showed that you were sort of houseproud.').

interview, also thought I might not be old enough to remember the television programme 'Friends' (in relation to describing herself as 'Monica'). [28]

Reflecting on the relevance of ethnicity and social class points to factors that may be downplayed in my work such as whiteness and class difference. Byrne (2006) shows how the parenting practices and identity construction of white, middle-class mothers can be understood as raced and classed, and how white, middle-classness is normalised through what was taken for granted in mothers' discussions of their friendship groups. As someone who identifies as white and middle-class myself, I may have been poorly attuned to some of the underlying assumptions in the narratives of several of my participants. Despite this, I was aware of the relevance of money in discussions of household work, particularly in the narratives of participants who spoke about this as a constraint. In contrast, other participants spoke about being able to pay for cleaners, and how this gave them more 'quality time' with their children. Nevertheless, I acknowledge the lack of attention to financial constraints is a limitation of this work.

In terms of my questions, I am aware that I may have made assumptions relating to social class in particular. After completing my interviews, I read Glucksmann's *Cottons and Casuals*, for which she asked working-class participants who were born between 1895 and 1924 about 'tipping up' wages to their mothers. She argues that the domestic labour and financial contributions of these girls was integral to the household economy, and this was not merely 'helping out' (2000, p.81). Looking back at my transcripts, I realised that I often asked participants about their household work as children using the phrase 'help out', without having fully considered the implications of doing so (and the extent to which it may minimise the work involved). Arguably this reflects my middle-class understanding of children's household work as non-essential, whereas when parents lack resources of time or money, the involvement of children in household work is necessary (Gill, 1998). Similarly, Steedman writes about cleaning the house as a child, and how it was 'understood' what she would do at eleven before doing homework (wash the breakfast things, light the fire when it was cold and scrub the kitchen floor), and how this has become part of who she is ('I think until I

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[28] Monica Gellar was one of the six main characters in the television programme *Friends*, and was portrayed as being obsessed with tidiness and cleanliness throughout the series.

drop I will clean wherever I happen to be on Saturday morning' (1986, pp. 42, 43)). She also wonders 'with scorn' about women who do not know how to do these things and 'what it must be like to learn to clean a house when adult, and not to have the ability laid down as part of the growing self (ibid, p.43). In this way, she conveys a sense of a classed self in terms of household work practices. While I do not feel that I can comment on broader class differences, this distinction between women who had been brought up expected to do more substantial amounts of household work in all areas of the home, and those who, for example, were only expected to keep their rooms tidy is noticeable as part of the different narratives constructed by participants in my study. Nevertheless, even within this small sample, these memories of growing up are not used in the same way.

When carrying out the interviews, I used the interview guide as a prompt rather than a script. Reflecting on some of my earlier interviews, I noticed that I sometimes could have asked more follow up questions, and that I occasionally changed topic in a way that sounded abrupt when listening to the recording. As I conducted more interviews, I referred to the interview guide less frequently, and felt more comfortable in my role as the interviewer. However, this did mean that I did not ask every participant about exactly the same aspects of their experience (although the main topics were covered in every interview). Even while using the redesigned chronological interview guide, occasionally participants skipped ahead in their answers by linking their accounts of childhood to later experiences, demonstrating the way that memories are constructed in the context of the interview. As I viewed the interview guide as a prompt, rather than a guide that had to be followed exactly, I was willing to discuss these experiences at the time they were mentioned in the interview, in order to maintain a flow where questions logically follow answers. I then returned to questions about earlier experiences later in the interview.

All but one interview was recorded and transcribed verbatim, which allowed me to reflect on the way that participants paused, stopped part way through a particular word

or laughed during interviews.[29] In transcribing the interviews, I tried to convey when participants spoke in a different way:

> 'Oh she used to despair of me…Yeah she was very disappointed a lot of the time, "oh darling really" [said in a posh voice] [laughs].' (Nicola, talking about her mother)

> 'I never really did the whole "having a baby won't change my life at all" [said in a different, slightly silly voice] thing because that's just [.] fantasy and naivety.' (Amy)

However, it is difficult to give a sense of the voices these women used. Similarly, at other points noises were made to indicate something. When Nicola made a sound which I transcribed as 'duhduhduhduhduh', this appeared to indicate quickly getting something done, and the context in which it was used supports this: 'I know it's just going to take me two minutes to go duhduhduhduhduh and I'm done and dusted'. These examples of different voices and sounds, rather than recognisable English words, highlights the importance of *listening* to recordings as well as relying on transcripts once these are completed, and I will discuss this further in section 3.4.[30]

3.3.6 Ethical Considerations

Ethically, my work was informed by the principles of informed consent, confidentiality and avoiding harm or distress for my participants. In order to gain informed consent , I produced an information sheet (Appendix 3) and consent form (Appendix 4), which I discussed with the participants prior to beginning an interview, as well as answering any questions they had about my research. I ensured that participants had my contact details and were clear that they could withdraw consent to part or all of the research at any time.

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[29] At the request of one participant (Irene), I did not record her interview and instead took notes during the interview.

[30] Although it is awkward to not have the transcript from one interview, after I had left, I made detailed notes on my reflections, as well as writing up what I had jotted down during the interview, and while I am unable to return to a recording to listen again to tone, pauses etc. As I had already interviewed her daughter, I decided it was more useful to interview both women, and not have a recording of one, than to either only interview one or to not use the first interview. In hindsight, I may have been able to discuss Irene's reasons for not wanting to be recorded and persuade her, but at the time she made the request, I was most concerned with not pressurising a participant to do something that made her uncomfortable.

To maintain confidentiality, I have used pseudonyms throughout and stored original recordings securely. Despite this, I recognise that in a small-scale project that considers personal narratives in depth, that participants in the project are likely to recognise themselves, and by implication, their mother or daughter. Participants engaged in the research knowing that their mother or daughter was also taking part and that I would be using quotations from the interviews, and therefore may have discussed their relationships with an awareness that their mother or daughter could read what they said. However, I recognised that participants relaxed during the interviews, and may have not consciously thought about this while they were talking. Nevertheless, I also found that participants spoke openly about disagreements as part of their mother/daughter relationship. Bearing this in mind, while I do discuss reported tensions between mothers and daughters, I have tried to do so in a way that is balanced and considerate of the potential feelings of the participants. This includes not mentioning comments that I felt might cause harm to a relationship, although clearly this is a personal judgement on my part. One participant used the phrase 'this is just between you and me', and I have decided not to include what she said at this point in my analysis because it appeared that she was not talking to me as a researcher.

More generally, I approached the interviews with the aim of avoiding harm or distress. Although household work does not appear to be a sensitive subject, at times the interviews touched on related topics that were potentially more distressing, in particular the death of partners. Throughout the interviews, I tried to remain attuned to how participants were responding to questions, in order to avoid pushing them to talk about topics that appeared upsetting or in some way 'off-limits' to me as the researcher. While one participant did get visibly upset near the end of the interview (recalling an upsetting memory in relation to her deceased partner), overall she appeared to find the interview an interesting experience, and reassured me that it was the 'raw' nature of her emotions around the death of her partner that had affected her, but that this was 'part of life' and something she accepted.

3.4   Listening Guide Approach and Analysis

In my initial research proposal, I planned to analyse my data using a grounded theory approach to identify cross-cutting themes (Charmaz, 2006). However, as I transcribed

my interviews, I was aware of wanting to spend more time on individual transcripts. In my first attempts at coding, I included codes for pronouns such as 'I', 'you' and 'we', as I noticed in transcribing that the women I interviewed changed between these in interesting ways. For example, in my first interview I asked:

> 'So just sort of thinking of kind of as he gets older and obviously there's going to be another one, have you sort of thought at all about [..] what you kind of want to teach them?' [31]

I was thinking in terms of household work, but Laura (32) interpreted the question more broadly, outlining concerns about formal education. Highlighting the different voices in her answer shows that 'I' dominates, particularly the phrase 'I want' (for example: 'it's on my mind quite a lot [er] about what kind of educat, what I want for him and his life. What I want for him and [er] how I want him, how, how he's going to learn'). Although there are references to 'we' (Laura and her partner), on two occasions she changes 'we' to 'I', and throughout her answer, there is a strong active 'I' who has 'spent a lot of time' thinking about this issue. However, a sense of desire (as well as 'want', Laura often talks about what she 'would' like) contrasts with uncertainty ('I don't know', 'I'm not sure'), problems of circumstance ('there's just nothing' is repeated) and lack of familial support ('I don't know anybody who does it and nobody in my family's supportive of it, they find it alien').

By starting to pick apart the voices in this answer, it is possible to recognise the ways in which Laura's agency is constrained through factors such as a lack of the services she would like to use, and not receiving support within relationships she values; an idea of relational agency (Mason, 2004) emphasises making choices in the context of wider relationships, and the lack of support from family members appears to make this more difficult. This approach allows for an understanding of Laura's sense of narrative self in terms of shifts within her relationship with her husband since the birth of their son, but also a continuing independence in the way she thinks about and approaches decisions, both of which are relevant throughout her interview. However, in looking thematically across interviews it would be hard to justify focusing on an issue which was specific to one participant.

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[31] The participant had told me she was pregnant at the start of the interview.

It was at this stage in my reflections that I read Mauthner and Doucet's 'Reflections on a Voice-centred Relational Method' (1998) and found an approach that made sense to me. Natasha Mauthner and Andrea Doucet were part of a research group led by Carol Gilligan, who had worked with Lyn Mikel Brown and other colleagues at Harvard University to develop an approach to psychological data analysis which is designed to 'bring the researcher into relationship with a person's distinct and multi-layered voice', particularly those of women (Gilligan et al., 2006, p.255; see also Brown and Gilligan, 1992; 1993). Brown et al. claim that listening to the voices of participants through the process of multiple readings, and particularly reading for self, begins a process of connections between the 'feelings and thoughts' of the participant and the reader (1991, p.41).

In outlining their more sociological conception, Mauthner and Doucet explain:

> 'The voice-centred relational method, and our version of it presented here, represents an attempt to translate this relational ontology into methodology and into concrete methods of data analysis by exploring individuals' narrative accounts in terms of their relationships to the people around them and their relationships to the broader social, structural and cultural contexts within which they live.' (1998, p.126)

Focusing on 'narrative accounts', Mauthner and Doucet challenge Gilligan and Brown's original intention of accessing an "interiority" (Brown and Gilligan, 1993, p.16) through listening to the voices of participants, arguing that,

> 'All we can know is what is narrated by subjects, as well as our interpretation of their stories within the wider web of social and structural relations from which narrated subjects speak.' (2008, p.404)

While there may be subjects '*beneath*, *behind* or *beyond* narrated subjects' (ibid, p.407), as researchers, we cannot claim to *know* this. Ontologically then, the nature of reality for Mauthner and Doucet is the relational narrated self.

Brown and Gilligan (1992) set out an approach to analysis based on multiple listenings in order to attend to different aspects of the story being told, and similarly Mauthner and Doucet set out four readings: 'reading for the plot and for our responses to the

narrative', 'reading for the voice of "I"', 'reading for relationships' and 'placing people within cultural contexts and social structures' (1998, pp. 126-135). The authors highlight how this approach can be adapted, and while it is based around multiple readings of data, that these readings can reflect the research interests of each individual researcher. While I have drawn on Mauthner and Doucet's suggested readings, I have slightly adapted these to suit my research project.

3.4.1 Reading 1: Reading for the Plot and for Our Responses to the Narrative

The first reading draws on narrative analysis, in particular the thematic approach set out by Riessman (2008). Although the focus on content is similar to other forms of qualitative analysis, Riessman notes that a key element of this approach is to concentrate on preserving the stories produced within an interview, rather than working with 'segments of data' (Charmaz, 2006, p.3). While comparisons can be made between stories, this works to illustrate patterns and to highlight underlying assumptions, rather than making claims about distribution (Riessman, 2008). For me, these 'underlying assumptions' draw attention to the historical, structural and cultural context in which narratives were constructed, and includes identifying discourses that shaped participants' accounts. Nevertheless, as Riessman argues, there is a limitation with this approach in that comparing across cases 'obscures the particularities of meaning in-context' (2008, p.76). Therefore I also acknowledge the specific context of the interview, in which I, a white woman in my late twenties who identified as a doctoral researcher, asked about household work (which draws on a more dialogic approach to narrative analysis that highlights that 'identities are situated and accomplished with audience in mind' (Riessman, 2008, p.106)). Kvale's (1996) metaphor of the interviewer as a traveller alongside their participants, remoulding what they say into new narratives, is useful for recognising that narratives were generated, not collected.

I started by outlining key events chronologically, and used this to make analytical notes on the plot of each interview, which I then wrote up as a 'story' for each participant based on my interpretation of what they had said. During this reading, I also identified themes that recurred in an individual transcript (see Appendix 7 for an

example of the themes I identified for Laura and Mary) and prepared summaries which included quotations as examples of each theme. It was through doing this I noticed that Sally used variations on the phrase 'having to ask' several times in her interview, for example, which I discuss in Chapter 4. Although I noticed some similarities between participants (such as the theme of 'mutual support'), at this stage I tried to keep the analysis of each transcript separate by producing a summary document for each participant including their story and themes.

In terms of analysis, Brown and Gilligan argue for explicitly acknowledging the relationship between ourselves and our participants on the basis that 'our thoughts and feelings may affect our understanding, our interpretation, and the way we write about that person' (1992, p. 27). Their work highlights the importance of reflexivity, and expanding on this, Mauthner and Doucet suggest that this involves:

> '(1) locating ourselves socially in relation to our respondent; (2) attending to our emotional responses to this person…(3) examining how we make theoretical interpretations of the respondent's narrative; and (4) documenting these processes for ourselves and others.' (1998, p.127)

As suggested by Brown and Gilligan, I copied the transcript into one column, and read through it, noting my own reflections in a second column (see Appendix 8).

In terms of (1) there were some grounds for commonality with respondents as we were all white, British, heterosexual women. However, my participants shared a characteristic which I did not; they were all mothers. This experience contrasts with those of other researchers who have reflected on interviewing mothers as mothers (Ribbens, 1989; Doucet, 1998; Miller, 1998) or as visibly a mother-to-be (Orbtals and Rincker, 2009). Ribbens discusses interviewing mothers as a mother, suggesting:

> 'Motherhood is a core identity for many women, and therefore also not one that women can easily split off from the rest of themselves – it is an overarching and organising status, and thus tends to lead mothers to relate to each other as whole people rather than within specific and instrumental roles.' (1989, p.588)

In a study on the role of gender, environment and biography in qualitative research, Broom et al. highlight that research with mothers by a woman who was herself not a

mother was met with 'scepticism about the researchers' legitimacy as 'feminine' and 'motherly' from some of the female participants' (2009, p.61). Several participants asked, usually after the interview, if I had children and I often found myself responding 'not yet'. This answer represents both an honest reference to my own desire to be a mother, and a response that acknowledges the participant's choice to be a mother as something that I value. Some interviewees also asked if I was married, and if they asked I told them that I was. In all the interviews I wore wedding and engagement rings, and while I was often not asked explicitly about my own relationship status, this may have served as a symbol of my own heterosexuality.

More generally, it is important to reflect on how each interview encounter was between two adult women. I did not challenge what any of my participants said, and reading for different voices highlighted a generalised contemporary female 'we' that I felt expected to identify with, which for some of the women was framed in terms of popular understandings such as women trying but not being able to have it all:

> 'I think we're expected to do everything really now.' (Karen, 55)

> 'So now the expectation is we go to work and do all the stuff as well.' (Kim, 40)

There was also joking about male incompetence, for example:

> 'Anyway when he wasn't working *once* he got the ironing board out, I thought it was going to take him forever to do this ironing and he had this very sheepish look so I said I'll, I'll do the ironing, leave the ironing [Jennifer laughing] because I just couldn't, I don't know, I just thought "well he'll take for*ever* to do it".' (Mary, 64)

> 'He's quite messy, the children are cleaner than he is and they're tidier than he is, they will at least take off their dirty clothes and put them in the wash basket whereas he would more leave them on the floor. Whereas, you know [Jennifer: mm] the children'll say "Daddy, the putting washing in the washing basket fairy says it hasn't been today" [Jennifer laughs].' (Amy, 33)

Again I felt expected to agree with this, and potentially my laughter appeared to support this understanding. Bell has reflected on feelings of complicity when co-opted into a statement by an interviewee who assumes a shared understanding on the basis of nods, smiles and sounds such as 'uh-huh', which the researcher uses to say 'I am

interested in what you are talking about, please carry on' (2011, p.83). Reflecting on the interviews as I transcribed them, I felt there was a conflict between protecting the faces of others (Goffman, 1959) by showing that I recognised the tones of voice and facial expressions which indicated a particular comment was supposed to be amusing and responding appropriately, and challenging a dominant discourse which contributes to justifications for an inequitable division of household work (for example, Beagan et al., 2008). Arguably I took advantage of being positioned as someone who would understand a particular situation in a similar way (despite not being a mother). The suggestion of shared experiences, and assumption of shared sources of humour in relation to men's housework highlights how participants' narratives may have been shaped in relation to me as a female researcher (see also Van Hooff, 2013 on discussions of men, household work and relationships in all-female focus groups).

In other areas there were opportunities for having more or less in common with participants in terms of level of education (a participant with a PhD asked about my analytical approach after the interview), age, numbers and gender of siblings, current relationship, class background and what appeared to be shared experiences or attitudes. In my notes for this reading, I reflected on how my understanding of my own biography could be compared to those of my participants, using the worksheet method. I also recorded emotional responses and reflections inspired by what the participants said. I found that this helped me to make sense of my response to an individual participant and her story.

3.4.2 Reading 2: Reading for the Voice of 'I'

The second reading involves focusing on how the respondent speaks of herself. For this reading, I followed the recommended approach of using coloured pencils to physically trace where respondents use personal pronouns (I, me and my) on printed copies of the transcripts, along with the associated verb and any important accompanying text (Mauthner and Doucet, 1998; see also Edwards and Weller, 2012). Using these transcripts as a guide, I then copied the relevant statements into 'I-poems' using Microsoft Word, with one statement on each line, kept in the same order from the interview. I added spaces to break up the poems into stanzas, including both spaces between answers to different questions, and within answers to questions where this

appeared to reflect different sentiments (see Appendix 9 and Appendix 10 for examples from a mother/daughter pair).

Gilligan et al. (2006) describe 'I poems' as sometimes capturing something that is not said directly by picking up on 'an associative stream of consciousness' (p.260). Their work emphasises accessing an inner self, whereas I would argue that paying attention to the voice of 'I' is more useful for considering how a participant constructs a narrated self at different points in the interview. Edwards and Weller (2012) have used this approach to trace the participant's sense of self over time, comparing I-poems from one participant at different ages, and similarly I found that comparing I-poems constructed from answers about different stages of the life course and around different themes demonstrated how a relational self in process can be constructed in the interview context. While in my case participants were remembering themselves at different ages and in different situations while taking part in the same interview, I-poems help to capture 'I' in the present and potentially different 'I's in the past, which helps me to make sense of the personal narratives being constructed. For example, some of the stories I explore in the rest of the thesis that involved not being prepared for the responsibilities associated with household work could be seen in I-poems that repeated "I don't know" (Eleanor (34) remembering herself as a student) or 'I didn't have a clue' (Fiona (48) reflecting on when she left home). Fiona contrasts 'I' in the present with 'I' in the past:

> I would be much more likely
> "I want to make that"
> "I'll go and work out how to do it"
> I'd do it
>
> But then, no, I probably
> "I'm not going to take it on"

She presents herself as capable of independently finding solutions to cooking problems now that she is 'loads older and everything', but recognises how when she was younger things seemed 'too difficult', and how she 'benefitted' from being taught by an employer when she worked as an au pair. As I discuss in my thesis, stories of 'growing up' in relation to household work combined different understandings of what

was relevant, such as natural processes (ageing) and biographical experiences (learning in a specific situation), in order to construct narrative accounts of a relational self in process.

I sometimes found it particularly difficult to construct an I-poem, and tried to make sense of why that was. By highlighting personal pronouns, it was noticeable when participants did not use many of these, and I used separate colours to highlight statements relating to 'you', 'we' and 'it'. Other researchers using I-poems similarly found that some participants talk about themselves using 'you' (Edwards and Weller, 2012; Smith, 2014), which can make it difficult to construct an I-poem, although Edwards and Weller claim 'you' and 'we' statements are about a sense of self. While I agree this can be the case, I suggest looking at the difference between the use of 'I', 'you', 'we' and 'it' can be illuminating, and for each participant, I commented on the uses of different voices in their summary document. I also experimented with constructing 'you-poems', which in some cases captured participants' constructions of 'normal' experiences.[32] I decided to exclude 'you know' as a phrase that was used on its own in most of the interviews and was partly a normal feature of people's answers, in order to focus on shifts between voices.

From an answer Jean (66) gave to my question about when she got married, I constructed the following 'you-poem':

> You went from being looked after
> You learn by observing
> You learnt a lot like that

June talked about everyday life as a mother of young children:

> You tend to get into a routine
> You get up, feed them, change them, put them down, or get them to play nicely
> You'd do one job
> You'd end up stopping
> You get into a routine

---

[32] I also paid particular attention to the use of 'you', in order to consider how I personally was constructed by my participants, and I discussed some examples of this in the previous section.

This suggests this was her sense of 'normal' life for mothers (in contrast to more personal memories of what she had to do compared to her brothers, where she uses 'I'). In this sense, 'you' can be part of a collective identity that links the experiences of women, or more specifically, mothers.

Jean's daughter Eleanor used 'you' at times in relation to what is 'important' for her (for example 'that you can think for yourself and have the confidence to go and do things for yourself'), and I constructed the following you-poem from another answer

> You should be
> You actually are
> You shouldn't be
> Other people want you to be
> You should be how you are

This followed from this stanza of

> I think
> I was growing up
> I tried to fit in to that
> How I thought she wanted me to be
>
> I realised

Following the shift to you, Eleanor returns to 'I':

> I think maybe
> I just feel
> I don't somehow fit in
> I'm not like that
>
> I think she probably finds that quite difficult

Recognising this shift from 'I' to 'you' and back to 'I' allows me to consider how Eleanor narrates herself as not being who her mother wanted her to be and not 'fitting in' (despite trying to), realising she shouldn't be who someone else wants her to be (and presenting this as a wider lesson learned 'as an adult'), and now accepting 'I'm not like that', while acknowledging this might be a difficult aspect of her relationship with her mother. The use of 'you' in relation to ideas of an authentic self ('who you actually are') conveys a broader understanding of the nature of selfhood, and the

repetition of 'should', particularly in relation to 'growing up', links this to an idealised understanding of autonomous adulthood.

The use of 'we' was used in different ways, including 'we' (me and my siblings), 'we' (me and my family of origin), 'we' (me and my partner), 'we' (me and my child or children) and 'we' (me and my family I live with now). For instance, at times the use of 'we' emphasised similar experiences (or assumed experiences) of siblings, which could be compared to occasions when 'I' is distinguished from 'they', 'he' or 'she' to highlight differences. In other cases, tracing 'I'/'me' across the transcript compared to 'we' (me and my partner) emphasised the contrast between shared parenting ideologies and personal experiences of differences within a heterosexual partnership. Amy (33) used 'we' in some places which stressed the joint nature of decision making in relation to their children, and adding in other voices also presents a narrative of two individuals who grew up separately coming together, drawing on a shared understanding of how a particular aspect of their childhoods was remembered in order to make a decision together about raising their own children (although Amy's 'I'm sure' before saying Chris was smacked undermines the picture of a mutually disclosing conversation):

> We decided
> We didn't want to like smack the children
>
> I was smacked
> I'm sure Chris was smacked
>
> We kind of talked about that
>
> Your kind of memories
> How it made you react
>
> We decided
> We didn't want to smack the children

However, at other times she uses 'I' and 'he' to talk about different experiences and responsibilities, and the poems for 'I' and 'he' here would look very different:

> 'When we started trying to get pregnant I stopped drinking [Jennifer: mm] whereas he carried on drinking and going out with his mates and I was more pregnant and tired and in bed at 9 o'clock and he would be out with his mates in the pub just like he always was.'

Again, tracing different voices allowed me to recognise how different characters and relationships were presented, and how these were woven together into broader personal narratives.

I also highlighted what was depersonalised, for example in discussions about 'it'. I found this particularly relevant in discussions about household work when it functioned to separate the individual from the work. Laura (32), who at times spoke with a very strong 'I' voice, in describing household work shifted to 'it' and 'you':

> 'It's all the jobs that you do to look after your, your house and the work you need to do within it which […] isn't paid but it's [er] extremely valuable work that's necessary, you know [Jennifer: mmm]'.

I interpret this description of household work in terms of necessity as representing her perceived lack of agency, and it is interesting to consider how 'you' functions in this regard. It is difficult to tell within the limitations of the English language if she means a generalised 'you', in the sense of 'one', or if she is specifically trying to co-opt me into her account of necessity, potentially as another woman of a similar age, who can reinforce the lack of choice in determining what work is done (and I oblige with my 'mmm' in response to her 'you know').

3.4.3 Reading 3: Reading for Relationships

This reading recognises how participants construct 'the narrated self-in-relation' (Doucet and Mauthner, 2008, p.406), by focusing on how participants speak about interpersonal relationships. Within their interviews, participants spoke about themselves in relation to various people, in particular mothers, fathers, partners (and ex-partners), children, grandchildren, siblings, other relatives, friends and generalised others. For this reading, I printed another copy of the transcripts, and read these again, highlighting each relationship in a different colour and making notes on how a participant spoke about each of these people or groups of people. I wrote a summary in relation to each of these relationships, or groups of relationships for each participant

which was included in their summary document. Following Bekaert (2014), I also used 'relational poems' to show how particular characters were constructed across the interview, including references to 'my husband', 'John' (if that was the pseudonym I had used), 'he', 'his' and 'him'.

In relation to her work on women seeking asylum, Smith has argued that,

> 'Listening to how they spoke about relationships was pivotal to providing me with a sense of how women understood themselves, how they located themselves within relationships and how they wanted to be understood in relation to others.' (2014, p.148)

Similarly, I found that by drawing together quotes that showed how a participant spoke about a particular person, or set of people, that identifying others in various ways (as a good mother, an untidy sibling or an incompetent partner), provided a relational context for their own identity construction. For example, comparing how Jo (32) spoke about her sister Abby, with how she spoke about herself shows how Jo's construction of herself as 'naturally tidy' is in relation to being 'massively different' from her sister:

> Abby and I were massively different
>
> I'm a naturally tidy soul
> I would
> I remember
> I took pictures of my bedroom
> I have pictures of my bedroom
> I'd tidied it up
> I'd alphabetised my books
> I'd got everything and it was all pristine
>
> Abby's room always looked like a tip
> She could never find anything
> That was just Abby's room

I was also able to make comparisons between how one participant spoke about, for example, different men they knew or had known, and the consequences of these relationships (as I discuss in relation to Sally in the next chapter).

3.4.4 Reading 4: Placing People Within Cultural Contexts and Social Structures

In this reading, I focused on the ways in which participants' personal narratives were shaped by structural and cultural contexts. I looked for occasions where participants drew on discourses of gender/heterosexuality, family and childhood/adulthood, as well as recognisable narratives of the transition to motherhood, drawing on my knowledge of the literature discussed in Chapter 2. Following Mauthner and Doucet (1998), I also looked for examples of constraint and choice in participants' narratives, for example in relation to the organisation of household work, and comparisons around these themes (including intergenerational, gendered and (hetero)gendered). By focusing on narratives, I was able to consider how discourses were seen to change, and how relational ideas of constraint and choice were incorporated into wider stories (for example, the way in which women contrasted their experiences of becoming and being mothers to those of their partners as fathers). Again, I included notes on this reading for each participant in their individual summary document.

3.4.5 Thematic Coding

Following the four readings set out above, Mauthner and Doucet suggest a thematic "breaking down" of the data (1998, p.135). Although some researchers using the Listening Guide have chosen to avoid thematic analysis in order to focus on broader narrative frameworks (Smith, 2014), I found that in my readings I had identified similarities between participants in terms of the way the recurring themes in their stories and the way they positioned themselves in relation to others, as well as in the broader structural constraints and dominant narratives that shaped their accounts. In order to explore this further, I used Nvivo to code interview transcripts across the dataset. Building on the readings above, I coded for the themes I had identified in Reading 1, linking related sub-themes where this was helpful. For instance, I included Laura's valuing of her own self-sufficiency, and this as a value she was trying to teach her son, along with Mary's theme 'Pride in teaching children to do things (rather than doing everything for them)' (see Appendix 7) as sub-themes within a larger theme of valuing independence and self-sufficiency, which became a key way in which I theorised the data. I also coded for the relationships identified for each participant in Reading 3 across the sample, as well as dominant discourses (such as 'cooking from scratch') and structural factors. As well as this, I coded for topics from my interview

guide, such as particular household work tasks, stages of the life course and questions I had asked in all interviews.

On the basis of this analysis, I was able to develop a multi-dimensional theoretical framework that drew on both my data and the wider literature. While I was aware that gender was a relevant theme within my research on the basis of reflecting on each interview, my analytical approach allowed me to explore how participants constructed themselves as heterosexual girls and women. By reading for each woman's relationship to various male characters in her story and generalised others, as well as reading for discourses that formed the cultural context in which stories were constructed, I was able to consider how my participants made sense of themselves in relation to both specific and generalised men. Themes around 'heavy' work, men being 'good' (and their female partners being 'lucky') and strategies for designating some tasks as 'boy jobs' led me back to the literature, and Connell's (1987) work on 'emphasized femininity'. The initial literature review I conducted highlighted the relevance of gender within studies of the division of housework, as well as the idea of 'doing gender' as a way of making sense of why 'the ability to use one's relative power to negotiate out of unpleasant tasks is not the same for women and men' (Davis and Greenstein, 2004, p.1268), in relation to gendered expectations, and being held accountable to these. I was able to build on this to explore how accounting for one's household work practices constituted 'doing gender' (and (hetero)gender), and the relevance of presenting oneself as 'acceptably feminine' in relation to male partners and men in general. I undertook a similar process in relation to other broad themes within this research, moving between the data, including my own analytical notes and reflections, and the literature, in order to build up my initial theoretical framework in an empirically grounded way.

3.5   Conclusion

This chapter has outlined the way I approached this research and the decisions I made, in order to offer a reflexive account of how I carried out the research and analysis. I have demonstrated how I approached this research reflexively, and how I have critically assessed my decisions as a researcher in relation to designing the research, recruiting participants and conducting interviews. I have also reflected on the ethical

principles that informed this research. A key part of this chapter is the discussion of the analytical approach, informed by Mauthner and Doucet's work on the 'Listening Guide' (1998; 2003; Doucet and Mauthner, 2008). By showing how my analytical approach included identifying themes and narrative within each interview, as well as recognising the relevance of different voices, how participants spoke about different relationships, and the influence of structural factors and cultural understandings, I have demonstrated how I was able to analyse each transcript in depth, before moving on to cross-cutting thematic analysis in which I drew out broad themes and sub-themes.

As the focus of this work is the development of productive theoretical connections, I chose to organise my chapters thematically in order to allow for detailed theoretical reflections. Nevertheless, I recognise the importance of the choices we make as writers (Richardson, 1990) and that I could have done this differently by, for example, dedicating chapters to the broad stages of the life course that participants discussed, or by separating analysis of the narratives of younger and older generation participants and comparing these. Another approach I considered was the use of a small number of in-depth examples as chapters, as well as an overview of themes, which has been used very effectively by Milnes (2003). Although I decided not to do this, given my aim of exploring the key aspects of my theoretical framework in more depth, I have chosen to use one in-depth example of a mother/daughter pair in order to demonstrate how my analytical approach allowed me to make sense of the relational narratives constructed by participants and I present this case study in the next chapter.[33]

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[33] I also use examples of participants' stories within the other analysis chapters, although I recognise that I have chosen how to arrange quotes, where to summarise rather than quoting and what to leave out, and therefore 'what appears in these narrations is a selection only' (Stanley, 2002, p.144). I would also note that adding my own analytical comments works to draw the reader's attention to what I have deemed pertinent. Nevertheless, I would suggest that the use of narrative analysis is a useful approach to explore how participants construct selves and identities in the interview context through the use of emplotment (see Lawler, 2002).

Chapter 4: A Mother and Daughter Case Study

4.1 Introduction

The previous chapter set out how I used a Listening Guide approach to analyse the data I generated during my research, which involved spending time focusing on respondents individually and in mother/daughter pairs, before identifying themes and sub-themes across the whole dataset and engaging in a 'dialectical process' of moving between particular transcripts and the overall picture (Mauthner and Doucet, 1998, p.136). Although the rest of this thesis looks at themes across the dataset as whole, I would argue that it is important to recognise how these themes interrelate within women's personal narratives and the context of a mother/daughter pair, by considering how relational narrated selves emerge over the course of particular interviews.

Doucet and Mauthner (2008) demonstrate how a Listening Guide approach lends itself to understanding narrated selves as relational, noting, for example, how the third reading focuses on the self in relation to others. Similarly, reading for the voice of I, and noting where the participant shifts between 'I' and other voices (such as 'we', 'you' and 'it') can suggest different perceptions of the self. As Stanley (2002) discusses in relation to the letters of Olive Schreiner, ''I' is located within, and also without, a range of 'we' positions'; in Schreiner's case, she both disapproves of 'we' and recognises how she is part of it. In my study, women's 'I' voice was constructed in relation to various 'we' positions, such as me and my partner, me and my children, me and my mother, and me and other women of my generation, as well as shifting over time. Looking in detail at the narrated self of a particular woman, as well as considering her narratives together with those of her mother allows for an exploration of the various ways in which narrative identities are constructed relationally and temporally.

Case studies of a small number of participants within larger samples (or even a single participant) have been used to demonstrate how key themes emerging from the data play out across the life course and in different contexts. By drawing out connections between, for example, the construction of narrative identities, the broader cultural

narratives that are used to make sense of everyday life, and the structural factors that affect what can be told, this can provide empirical support for multi-dimensional conceptualisations of social life. Hockey et al. (2004) focus on the life history of one of their participants to explore agency in the context of institutional heterosexuality, illustrating how she has practiced and reproduced heterosexuality over the course of her courtship and marriage, and how this approach allows us to recognise the interrelationship between different dimensions of heterosexuality (Jackson, 1996). Davies' (2011) research on 'turning out' considers how young people make sense of themselves in different situations (at school, among friends and in sibling relationships), but by using a case study of two sisters, she is able to show how they make sense of themselves, and who they might be able to become, can be understood as interrelated, as power dynamics within the family and a relational sense of oneself as a sibling, plays a part in the narratives of who they are at school.

In particular, in studies that generate narratives, the use of detailed examples of a few participants allows for illustrations of the way in which each person constructs a narrative identity, but also the drawing out of themes that are relevant across a wider sample (such as the narratives of conception as 'survival', 'inevitable' and 'earned' in Thomson et al.'s (2011) study of the transition to motherhood, each illustrated with the case of one woman, all demonstrate recurring themes in how they are constructed). Other studies based on the Listening Guide analytical approach have used case studies to preserve the 'holistic view of the participants' (Golding, 2011, p.132) through the telling of the stories recounted during interviews, which reflects how they were initially analysed. By considering one participant's story in depth (or by looking at a small number in relation to one another), the researcher is able to explore how a participant makes sense of herself in relation to other characters, in different times and places, that is, relationally, temporally and spatially. As Somers argues, bringing these dimensions into our understanding of identity avoids 'rigidifying aspects of identity into a misleading categorical entity' (1994, p.606), and thus the use of case studies allows us to focus on how identity can be understood in process (Jenkins, 2008).

This chapter therefore presents a case study of a daughter and mother, in order to illustrate how themes of personal life, time, gender and heterosexuality, and family played out across social dimensions in the narratives of two participants. In the next

four chapters, I will explore each of these themes in detail, in relation to the multi-dimensional framework I set out in Chapter 2. However, I want to highlight how these themes overlapped within personal narratives in order to avoid presenting them as purely distinct parts of women's stories. I start by looking in detail at the narrated self of Sally as constructed over the course of her interview, and then consider this in relation to the narrative account of her mother, Karen, in order to explore how these women construct narrative accounts around the themes of division of household work in different situations, and mother/daughter relationships. In the final section, I outline the key themes that will shape the rest of this thesis.

In order to give some context to the stories presented below, I have provided some basic demographic information:

> Sally was 32 at the time of the interview, and was married to Liam with a two year-old daughter, Leah. She works part-time as a social worker, while her partner works full-time. She grew up with her mother (Karen), father (John), and two younger brothers (Gary and Paul). Her parents have now divorced and Karen, now 55, lives alone (although Paul is about to come back and live with her) and she also works part-time as a nurse. Karen has had different working patterns, including having time off work to be at home full-time with the children, and working full-time while her husband was unemployed and at home full-time. She was an only child and grew up living with her parents, and for a time, her maternal grandfather.

Clearly this is the first way in which I have selected from the interview encounter as a whole; see Appendix 1 for a more detailed discussion of all the participants, which focuses on how they introduced themselves. In interpreting Sally and Karen as narrated subjects, I consider both the selection and temporal organisation of events, and recurrent themes that I identified during my first reading of their transcripts.

4.2 Sally's Story

4.2.1 Childhood

Sally begins her story with a period of her life that she does not personally remember, when her mother was working night shifts as a nurse and her father was looking after Sally and her brothers. She says:

> 'I know from speaking to her that it, I, she was still expected to do most of the housework. So my dad would look after us, but she'd come home from work or she'd get up or whatever from being asleep [um] and he'd have done the kind of childcare aspect of it but not done the housework aspect of it….so my mum did more than her fair share I think [Jennifer: yeah] when we were little.'

The way Sally talks about this reflects how families can function as a mnemonic community in which memories are socially formed (Misztal, 2003); the stories Sally's mother has told her become part of what she 'remembers'. Sally reinforces this from 'what I can actually remember myself', recognising 'my mum always did more of it and she did the bigger stuff', although she qualifies this: 'I feel that my dad was not terrible, he's not the worst because he used to like do the pots every night'. This response, framed in terms of fairness within a couple, recognises the discourse of household work as inequitably divided between husbands and wives. In describing her father as 'not the worst', Sally is making an implied comparison between men, which functions to downplay the difference between her parents.

Sally also reflects on her contribution, comparing herself to her brothers. Her initial response to my question about how all three of them helped was to emphasise 'I did' (and to laugh). She then expands:

> '[Um] It's a bit of a, I always think my mum didn't expect them, even though I wouldn't have thought this of her because she's quite, like forward-thinking and kind of doesn't think men should do stuff. I still feel like I was expected to do, maybe because I was older or maybe because I was a girl I don't know, I did, I did quite a lot…I would do the tea quite often and I helped out with like hoovering.[34] Not all the time, I wasn't like a slave.'

While one of her brothers did sometimes tidy his room, the other 'would do like the very least that he could do. He would have a nervous breakdown if he was asked to set the table more than once a month'; thinking back to herself as a teenager, Sally concludes 'I felt like my brothers didn't do their fair share'. I would argue that

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[34] 'Hoovering' is a propriety eponym used in the UK to refer to vacuuming, and the term was used frequently by participants.

highlighting the theme of fairness (and the repetition of the phrase 'fair share') is one of the first ways that Sally makes a connection between herself and her mother as women in heterosexual relationships, and throughout the interview she returns to situations where women do more than male partners. In this case, while she suggests a potential gendered understanding of the division between herself and her brothers, this is tentative and references a context in which gender and heterosexuality are not conflated. As with her father, Sally positions her brothers as doing 'more than some other people', giving the example of her husband who as a child and teenager 'didn't do anything, ever'. Again, the comparison is made between male characters in her story, which implies different expectations of men and women.

When Sally talks about cooking, she starts off by talking in terms of herself and her brothers: 'My mum always involved us in baking so I think it started from there, we'd always do baking'. Nevertheless, she distinguishes herself from her brothers:

> 'I think I was interested, I liked cooking'

> 'I used to like, if it was my mum and dad's anniversary I'd cook for them'

Later she picks up on this theme of being 'interested' in relation to gardening:

> 'Like my mum's good at gardening and I kind of wish I'd followed that or DIY, she does all the decorating. But I didn't, I guess I didn't show any interest so she didn't teach me to do it.'

It is noticeable that Sally seems to be taking responsibility for these events; emphasising how she, rather than her mother, could have done things differently. Considering the role time plays in this account highlights that Sally in the present is trying to make sense of the actions of Sally in the past, in a way in keeping with the narrated self emerging across the interview. Thus rather than frame this narrative in terms of what a mother should do (as occurs in other interviews), the reflective self she constructs here (and at other points in this interview) is contrasted with a past self that did not appreciate the usefulness of these skills.

In terms of being 'taught' how to do things, Sally recounts a story her mother has told her:

'My dad, when he left home, couldn't do anything, couldn't even boil an egg. That's the story that my mum tells me, he couldn't even boil an egg. And he admits that, he didn't do anything, his mum did it all. [Um] So she had to like teach him to cook [um] and he didn't know how to use a washing machine and all that sort of thing. So my mum, I think that's why she did it with my brothers as well, even though she expected them to do less, she didn't want them to leave home with no skills whatsoever.'

Again, we can see in this extract how Sally's story is tied up with the narratives of her father (leaving home unprepared) and her mother (drawing on her experiences as a wife in how she mothered her children). Although at this point in the interview she is making sense of her mother's practices when she and her brothers were children, later in her story Sally makes sense of her own practices with *her* daughter in terms of these family stories (see section 4.2.3), demonstrating how she is constructing her biography in relation to those of both her parents.

When I asked more about her relationship with her mother, Sally's narrative starts with the key point she wants me to take away from this: 'It's gone through stages [um..]. We probably see it quite differently.' She tries to give a sense of who she was when she younger: 'I was very independent as a child apparently, and wasn't very cuddly and my brothers were much more so.' Interestingly, the 'apparently' suggests this is how Sally's identity as a child was constructed by others, and this seems to be something she has taken on in her understanding of herself. In terms of the emotional nature of the relationship, Sally explains:

'We did get on and then I just, but she can be quite, challenging [Sally says 'challenging' quite slowly] and quite, I don't know how to put it. [Um] I don't know what it was about, maybe it was just teenage rebellion, I don't know [Jennifer: mm]. I think I had quite a strong character and she's quite a strong character and we argued quite a lot. [Um] So there were a few years as a teenager that maybe we didn't get on.'

As well as being quite careful in how she describes her mother, and how she presents her to me, the interviewer, Sally then returns to an earlier 'stage' in their relationship:

'But as a child I always remember having a good relationship with my mum. Like she's quite critical but we like had a laugh together and, [er] year, so it depends what age. There was different stages'.

This setting up of their relationship in terms of 'stages' allows for a narrative of how it has changed more recently.

4.2.2   Living as an Adult

Sally then describes how she left home at 18 and how she felt at the time:

> 'I just wanted to get out [Jennifer: yeah]. Cos I wanted to be independent, you know [Jennifer: yeah], it wasn't even necessarily that I wanted to be away from my parents, I just wanted to do my own thing. My mum encouraged that because she felt like it is good to be independent. I think she left home when she were eighteen and went to do her nursing training.'

She moved into a shared house with friends and housework at this stage was a difficult issue. She talks in terms of standards ('everyone's got different standards of what's acceptable haven't they') and comparing experiences up to that point to add to a biographical understanding of their behaviour ('both of them had been taken care of more than maybe I had, like they'd not been expected to do much housework'). She then relates a specific occasion, and frames this in terms of 'your typical story of like shared houses when you're like younger':

> 'I do remember coming back one day from, I'd been away for the weekend and there was just like mould growing on some food…And [er] I was just like, I do remember ringing up my mum actually and being like 'I just, I can't take it'. So my dad came and picked me up and I came home and had a chat about it' [Um] But unless I organised it nobody did anything really like.'

When I asked for more details, she describes it as quite out of character for her to have gone to her parents: 'So it was like, yeah so I think my mum was quite taken aback because I never really asked for, I never really asked for anything really.' While this story could have been a narrative of ongoing parental support, Sally uses this story to reinforce her identity as independent. This seems to be both who Sally sees herself as a person, and how her family see her, and is presented as a worthwhile trait that she sees as having been fostered in the way she has been brought up, in contrast to her friends who had more done for them.

The next stage Sally talks about is when she was in her early twenties and living with a now ex-partner, who 'was really lazy, really really lazy. He didn't do anything unless

I asked him to'. This is a theme that recurs several times in the interview, that of 'having to ask' someone to do housework, and is something she recognises that her mother did, which is mentioned both in passing and reflected on more explicitly:

> 'This is again something I remember from childhood, my mum getting really really angry, because my dad would say to her "if you want me to do something, just ask me" and she'd say "but you should *know* it needs doing". And like I get that.' (original emphasis)

As her parents' relationship and Sally's relationship with her ex-boyfriend are both identified as being ultimately unsuccessful, with her parents having now divorced, this is presented as a problem and something that links her own experience with that of her mother's.

As with other characters in her story, Sally frames her account of her ex-boyfriend in terms of his biography, highlights the importance of how someone is brought up (as with her father, husband and various friends and housemates): 'But again he'd been brought up by a mother who never expected him to do anything [Jennifer: mm]. So he just continued that pattern'. This was something they argued about a lot but was never really resolved. Sally then reflects:

> 'I think, you know it was one of those things, it was, it probably mirrored the pattern that I'd seen with my mum and dad where it, I'd do it for so long and then it would start annoying me and then we'd have a big row about it and then for like a week he'd do more, you know and kind of be "ok, I'll try and do more", and then it just went again. And it just seemed like that was kind of like the cyclical thing of it. And I think that was the same with my mum and dad that was probably the pattern that they followed of yeah, just going round and round.'

Sally's repeats the word 'pattern', and in talking about it as 'cyclical' and 'just going round and round', shows how the ways in which gender can be structured in heterosexual relationships. However, arguably this should be seen as a process, allowing for the inclusion of agency. While there seems to be a sense of inevitability in the way Sally talks about this 'pattern', elsewhere, she discusses various strategies for managing her feelings about this, thereby incorporating agency into a narrative of repeating patterns. Nevertheless, as I discuss below, the way in which she appears to

make sense of being able to choose how to address this issue in her relationship highlights the ways in which her choices can be understood as constrained.

We returned to Sally's relationship with her mother at this point, which was 'quite poor' as 'we didn't have a lot to do with each other', as Sally 'experienced her as very very critical and very [intake of breath] and never wrong and never said sorry for anything' (although she suggests her mum experienced Sally as very stubborn and defensive). As Sally suggests, she has clearly thought about this 'stage' in their relationship and suggests her mother's unhappiness with her own life, and Sally's character as someone who 'would give some back' were what made her an easy target at this time. She also mentions that her mother did not like her boyfriend, which 'in hindsight, was right'. Thus while Sally's narrative demonstrates different feelings over her life course, she is constructing this from a present in which her current relationships with her partner and her mother influence how events are emplotted. For example, Sally makes comparisons between this stage of her relationship and the current stage in terms of how often she sees her mother (every couple of months compared to weekly); the former is not seeing each other much, in comparison to a present arrangement which is implicitly a reasonable amount.

The next stage in Sally's story is when she lived with her parents again for a short time, using her brothers as a point of comparison in establishing her own identity:

> 'Living with my parents for a very short time felt quite easy cos I was used to being quite self-sufficient and I do think maybe that helped my mum's and my relationship because my brothers, we've all kind of gone backwards and forwards as I do think people often do now because, you know you go to university and then it finishes or things finish so you go back, and forwards. And my brothers tend to just fall back into the pattern of like being looked after and being kids, whereas whenever I've gone back, which I've only gone back a couple of times for very short periods, but I live then as I live on my own, like I take, you know, responsibility and I'll do stuff around the house and I'll bring shopping in so I think she values that and sees that I do, that I don't take advantage of her.'

The way Sally talks about time here suggests that while clock time is going forward, that when they go back to living with their parents, her brothers can act younger than their chronological ages by 'being looked after' which Sally equates to 'being kids', according to a particular understanding of what it means to be a kid. She contrasts this

with her own behaviour, taking 'responsibility' in the same way she does living on her own, that is, as an adult.

Similarly, she also describes living in a shared house with nineteen year old undergraduates as 'like going back a bit [Jennifer: yeah], like to being a bit younger' and like 'going back in time' in terms of arguments about cleaning the bathroom. While Sally described this as like being younger, she also discusses how she took on a role as 'mum' in the house: 'I kind of became mum, I didn't want to become mum but I kind of became mum sometimes cos there was the same issues [um] and sometimes the house was like really mucky'. When I asked her to elaborate on what she meant by 'becoming mum', she draws on a biographical understanding of her housemates to explain their household work practices, or lack of them (for example leaving dirty pots for several days):

> 'I suppose because they were like, all the people that I lived in the house with in the second year had gone from living with their parents to being in halls, and they were catered halls too [Jennifer: mm] so they like didn't do anything there [laughs] [Jennifer: yeah]. They were cooked for, they were cleaned for, [um] and then they came to the house and it was like you know just basics.'

She talks about 'being mum' as 'I kind of had to take charge a bit and be like, [puts on voice] "Can we do stuff? Can we keep this house reasonably clean?"', for example by trying to organise rotas. Nevertheless, she also talks about speaking to people rather than leaving notes (unlike other people in the house) which she explains in terms of 'being a bit older and being a bit more used to confrontation', suggesting that leaving notes 'puts people's backs up'.

This identification of Sally as 'mum' in this situation draws on broader understandings of motherhood in terms of responsibilities for household work and responsibilities for children in the way she describes practices of trying to organise other housemates, but also teaching one friend to cook. Sally also links age to implied expectations of what is normal as one progresses through the life course: 'And I feel like the older you get the more you think, I don't want to be like doing other people's pots for the rest of my life'. It appears that 'other people' as used here is distinct from family members; later in her interview, Sally uses an example of being 'allowed' to wash up at her in-laws

as a way in which is accepted as 'part of the family', and by emphasising how helping out marks her out in this way, she is also displaying what family means.

4.2.3 Marriage and Children

When Sally introduces the character of her husband, she talks about the importance of the stage of his life course in terms of his ability of household work:

> 'I was always very glad that I met Liam when he'd lived with other people because, like I say, he didn't do anything as a child, like so he left home not knowing how to do anything, he couldn't cook, he couldn't use the washing machine. But he went to university at eighteen and like learnt, gradually. And by the time I met him he was living in a house with other guys and they used to take it in turns and cook once every night [Jennifer: oh] so that was really nice. So he was quite a good cook when I met him.'

As well as talking about the family her husband grew up in as part of an explanation for his household work practices, Sally comments on his family in the present. She describes his mother as 'a slave to the family' who has spent her whole life looking after people, while Liam's father 'doesn't lift a finger' and his siblings 'don't do bugger all either'. As with her brothers, Liam 'would regress back to, which is something that you do sometimes with your parents, he would just do nothing'. By describing these family practices, Sally is both disassociating herself from what she is presenting as negative behaviour and displaying a different way of doing family, which involves everybody helping: 'And I'd be like "well your mum's just cooked us all dinner so shall we all do the pots?"' Nevertheless this can also be understood in terms of Sally recognising gender inequalities within heterosexual relationships; she states that 'I guess the feminist in me comes out and is like "you know what, actually Moira [pseudonym for Liam's mother] you don't have to, you're not just a slave"'. The idea of a feminist as only a part of one's self that can 'come out' allows Sally to criticise this aspect of Liam's parents' relationship, while downplaying what appeared to me to be inequalities within her own heterosexual relationship.

In talking about her husband, Sally returns to the theme of 'having to ask' which I highlighted above as a phrase she used to describe her mother and father's relationship,

and her own with a previous boyfriend. She uses the same phrase in referring to her current relationship, giving a few examples of things her husband will do if she asks:

> 'But the hoovering, he'll never think to do hoovering. I'd have to ask him to do hoovering [Jennifer: yeah]. He never dusts, he never, well I don't dust that often, he doesn't clean the bathroom unless I ask him to. [Um] He doesn't, he would never, I don't think he's ever cleaned the kitchen floor [Jennifer: mm]. So like I suppose like the more, the less frequent cleaning tasks, he just wouldn't do unless I asked him to.'

However, she tries to frame this in a more positive way: 'If I do ask him to do housework I don't have to ask him like six times, if I ask him to do something he will do it, generally'. She emphasises that she tries not to get annoyed, in contrast to her mother who she remembers getting 'really really angry', and moves on to emphasise the 'fairness' in her current relationship, which again, is in contrast to her mother who she felt did more than her fair share:

> 'Whoever's at home cooks, is the rule [Jennifer: yeah], whoever gets home first cooks [um]. So I would say that the cooking is really fair [..] The pots is quite fair, like who washes the pots and everything.'

I interpreted this as Sally trying to learn from her parents' marriage, as she appears to empathise with her mother's experience ('she'd say "but you should *know* it needs doing" and like I get that' (original emphasis)), but is concerned about her own psychological wellbeing. Her suggestion that otherwise she might 'spend my whole adult life being annoyed with him because he doesn't see it' indicates an inevitability about this dynamic in their relationship. As I have argued previously (Kettle, 2014c), this idea that the problem to be solved is her feelings of annoyance, rather than inequities in how she and her partner take responsibility for tasks in the home, demonstrates how, by focusing on her own individual self-fulfilment, the pattern of 'having to ask' one's male partner to do a task has continued from mother to daughter.

As well as commenting on patterned ways in which she and her mother both do gender and heterosexuality, Sally also discusses patterns over time in her relationship with Liam:

> 'I feel it goes in cycles, it's this cycle thing, I think that's just my pattern for life is that I'm fine, like I let it all go and it's like "oh we're having a great time

and we're doing stuff" and then maybe when I'm stressed from work and then I come home and it's a bit of a mess and then it'll get to me, and it'll get to me and it'll get to me and then I'll say, I'll end up saying to him "you've got to do stuff to help, you have to do something because I can't, I can't do everything". [Um] And so then we'll, and he'll say "don't, tell me what to do" so I'll tell him and he'll do it and he'll make a bit of an effort for a week [laughs] and then it. So it is like a cycle of how annoyed I get about it really [Jennifer: yeah].'

As with the similarities between Sally's relationship with Liam, and her parents' relationship, Sally's understanding of the 'pattern' here is a process which appears to repeat itself (and is presented as being 'for life'). Reading for the different voices within this extract highlights the distinction between Sally and Liam, the only use of 'we' (apart from at the start of a sentence which is then changed to 'he' and 'I') is to talk about 'having a great time'. However, as Sally starts to feel the effects of stress from work, she repeats that 'it'll get to *me*' (my emphasis) and it becomes a problem which she highlights as hers, and which she has to address. This reflects a broader discourse of female responsibility for household work within heterosexual relationships, which is demonstrated in Sally's narrative in the way that Liam says 'tell me what to do'; the responsibility of *thinking* about what household work is necessary is placed on Sally's shoulders.

Sally also returns to her relationship with her mother, which is described in relation to understanding herself ('I think I just realised that you know some of it was me being defensive'). She mentions that they can still have arguments but 'we got much closer and then having Leah made us really close'. Expanding on this, she talks about mutually 'needing' each other after her daughter was born and her mother was going through a divorce: 'Mum and Dad split up just before I had Leah [um] so she kind of needed me. But I needed her so it was nice'. She focuses on how they spent time together, including doing things with Leah, and describes this as 'emotional support' (a phrase she repeats). This is contrasted with practical help in the form of the doing of housework ('she's not really like that'), whereas Liam's mother would help with the housework (or at least try to). Again, Sally is displaying a way of doing family that is different from the negative practices of her in-laws (she repeats her description of Moira being 'like a slave to her family') and that is based on a discourse of spending quality time together ('just someone to be there and you know, we, we can have a

really good laugh together so we can just spend time together' (see also Sarre, 2011). This can be seen as displaying family in the sense that 'this is my family and it works' (Finch, 2007, p.70). As I mentioned above, Sally displays this emotional support in the context of different stages in her relationship with her mother over time. Thus while she is displaying family in the present, by considering the temporal context, it is notable that her narrative includes times when their relationship did not work as well.

In this section, I have explored how, through narratives of housework, Sally has constructed a coherent sense of self, albeit one that is in process. Thus she describes ways in which she has learnt from past experiences, as Sally as 'I' in the present reflects on the actions of Sally as 'I' in the past. In relating these narratives, Sally has commented on various practices in terms of both gender/heterosexuality and family, in relation to other characters. For example, her relationship with her husband draws on understandings of his upbringing and family, her parents' marriage and generalised examples of heterosexual relationships. Nevertheless, she frames these practices in terms of her own strategies for dealing with particular situations (within the constraints that these situations involve, such as the apparent inevitability of certain aspects of people's behaviour), and is thus able to account for how she has shaped her life so far.

4.3   Narrated Selves: Connectedness and Individualisation

In the previous section, I outlined how Sally narrated her self in process over the course of her interview in ways shaped by connectedness and individualism. While Sally's account of herself emphasises a coherent sense of self as a 'choosing, deciding, shaping human being' (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2002, p.22), considering Sally's story in relation to that of her mother, Karen, highlights various connections between their stories. Although both women construct narratives that are personal to them in which they both exert agency and are constrained in various ways, by looking at these stories together, it is possible to explore how their narrative identities are located in 'cross-cutting relational story-lines' (Somers, 1994, p.607). As I suggested above, the themes of relationality, temporality, dimensions of gender/heterosexuality and doing

and displaying family play a part in Sally's narratives, and considering this alongside Karen's shows the similarities and differences in how these key themes interrelate.

Like Sally, Karen starts her interview by talking about when she was a child and the division of housework between her parents, although unlike Sally, Karen's grandfather was also involved in helping (whereas her father was much less so):

> 'My mother I would say was quite houseproud [Jennifer: mm]. She did most of the housework although for a period of time, from being about five or six, her father came to live with us and he did also help, so he did quite a lot... Can't ever *really* remember my father doing anything particularly in the way of housework.' (original emphasis)

She also then talks about her own contribution

> 'I [.] was an only child and quite early on quite enjoyed helping so I used to help my mum with the housework. Never sort of expected of me but she encouraged me to do it and I was quite happy to do the bits I did.'

Karen's use of the word 'happy' here hints at a broader theme from the research around emotion work and household work (Kettle, 2014c). While I discuss this idea in relation to gender, the picture Karen paints here of a happy child enjoying helping her mother also functions to display family as everyone willingly contributing and downplaying any tensions or conflicts. However, while her grandfather did quite a lot, as she notes, her father did not do much in terms of housework. Thus there is an overlap here between discourses of family and of traditional gender roles within heterosexual couples.

Karen also particularly emphasises how much she enjoyed cooking when she was younger and mentions that she 'often cooked meals [er] for family', as Sally did. This was partly due to her father who 'certainly didn't cook', so 'quite often it did come to me'. Nevertheless, this was an activity in which her mother was involved, including suggesting things for Karen to 'have a go at', and later supervising when Karen had decided on a meal from one of her cookbooks. Karen says that she has 'got more adventurous', but is not a 'real adventurous cook'. Expanding on this, she draws on a comparison that her daughter makes:

'I'm one of these people who, my daughter laughs at me because I stick to a recipe a hundred percent, I don't veer from it. And I've always been like that. Whereas she will go off and she will try and make things up and she'll adapt and what have you. I don't tend to do that.'

While both women talk about enjoying cooking, what this means for each of them involves a different approach (and for Karen this is part of who she has 'always been').

In a similar way to Sally, Karen compared herself to her friends in terms of what they did at home. She suggested that the people she knew as a teenager 'all enjoyed cooking' but 'I probably did a bit more as far as housework was concerned' which made her 'a bit *different*' (original emphasis) and 'a bit strange'. This was explained in terms of their mothers; because they either did not go out to work or worked part-time, her friends were not expected to do much in the way of housework. Although Karen said above she was not 'expected' to help, it is implied here that it was necessary for her to do more to compensate for her mother not being around as much. Nevertheless, this help was shaped by understandings of gender, for example Karen was not expected to help out with the car, although she comments 'if I'd been a boy I probably would have done'. As an only child, Karen does not have brothers with whom she can compare her treatment, and so the possibility of how her parents would have treated a son exists only in the realm of the imaginary. Unlike Sally she remembers enjoying gardening, in her case with her grandfather, and later in the interview comments that she is 'far more interested in gardening than I am in actual housework', suggesting that this interest, like cooking, has continued over the life course. Throughout their interviews, both women indicate the importance of learning skills at a young age, both in terms of themselves, and highlighting the problems when this does not happen.

As I set out above, Sally described the men in her family as not being 'the worst' in terms of the amount of housework they did, and when comparing her family with the families of her friends, she noted that:

'I always felt like we were kind of in the middle [Jennifer: yeah]. In terms of we weren't perhaps the most progressive family in terms of fairness, equality of how it was handed out, but we weren't really, really traditional as in the men do nothing and the women do everything [Jennifer: yeah].'

Karen also positions her mother as between extremes, noting,

> 'She wasn't meticulous but generally speaking things, she liked things to be tidy. Certainly wasn't one of these people who constantly using cleaners and disinfectants…so she was very much of keeping a house clean, but you don't have to go over-the-top with all those sort of things.'

Both Sally and Karen also construct themselves in similar ways in terms of their attitudes to housework. Karen talks about liking the house 'relatively tidy' but being more interested in other things; she says 'I do what I have to do to keep it reasonable'. In terms of how she constructed a sense of self, she linked housework to being a particular 'sort of person': 'I've never got to be the sort of person who would put cleaning over going out or doing something I really enjoyed because it, in the scheme of things it isn't that important'. However, she also wants to emphasise that this is not to the extent of accepting 'dirty' conditions:

> 'But I couldn't necessarily sit in a really dirty house and it not affect me, I'd have to think "that looks dirty, I need to get up and do something about it". I wouldn't relax, I don't think I'd relax, couldn't relax if I was sat in a dir, in a really dirty house.'

Sally also mentions various situations when she wanted the house she lived in to be 'reasonably clean', but also stated 'I'm not a housework-obsessive by any means', similarly implying that there is a continuum from dirty to obsessively clean. When arranging the interview, she mentioned having a planned day of housework, and when I asked her about this, she said 'I thought it was funny when I said that because I was like, makes it sound like I'm really houseproud but I'm totally not'. In both cases, these women seem to be trying to position themselves as between extremes in relation to standards of cleanliness. Both women seem to suggest that there are different 'sorts of people', which links household work to an overall sense of self. This echoes Pink, who found that the housewives she interviewed did not want to be seen as 'obsessive': 'whilst they spoke of what "you ought to do" it was part of their self-identity not to do all those things' (2004, p.93). This understanding can also frame how the relational self is imagined, in the sense of an idealised way of relating to others; for example, Karen says 'I wish I wasn't as concerned about what people think'.

As I mentioned above, Karen emphasises how much she 'enjoyed' cooking and baking, repeating the word several times, and noting that even when she was a teenager and 'all you want to do is lie in bed all day on a Saturday and you don't want to get up' she 'can remember wanting to cook and always enjoying getting up and doing that'. In terms of time, there are some interesting connections with Sally's story. Karen talks about 'rebelliousness' and a 'sort of stroppy phase'. Similarly Sally talked about her own 'teenage rebellion' and that there were 'a few years as a teenager that maybe we [her and her mother] didn't get on'. Despite being of different generations, both women invoke a similar understanding of this part of their respective life courses. However, generation is used as part of an explanation of the attitude of Karen's father to the gendered division of household work, as he was fifteen years older than her mother and thus 'a sort of, generation before really'. Previous research has identified various ways in which an inequitable division of housework is justified within heterosexual couples and men's agency is downplayed, and this occurred across the sample in my research, for example through the use of biographical explanations that emphasised the role of men's mothers (as both Sally and Karen do).

Interviewing across generations can also help to illustrate shifts in what is seen as 'normal' for couples to do:

> 'You're going out with somebody and you're not actually living with them, because at that time we didn't live together until we got married.' (Karen)

> 'So we moved in together before we were married. Sounds obvious but we did.' (Sally)

There were also differences in living arrangements outside of heterosexual partnerships; while Sally lived with 'a guy and a girl', Karen's response to me asking if the shared house she lived in at nineteen was 'all girls or mixed' was to imply it was obviously all girls. Nevertheless, both had lived with several other young women in a shared house at some point, and as with Sally, Karen talked about how some people in this situation did not contribute as much as others:

> 'We sort of took it in turns then to do cooking and cleaning but [um] as I think happens in a lot of these situations there were certain people who did most of the cooking and cleaning, and certain people who didn't, you know what I mean, and just let other people get on with it.'

Like Sally, she mentioned arguments about this, and trying to make rotas as a way of organising housework more fairly. Using a similar turn of phrase to her daughter, she notes 'the other two that sort of, you know let us get on with it basically unless we said to them "come on, it's your turn now"'. Both women drew on biographical explanations around how these other people had been brought up and what they had been expected to do:

> 'If I think about it now probably because they hadn't been expected to do anything [Jennifer: mm] as children and teenagers. [Er] And the ones of us who did, had been I suppose really, thinking about it now.' (Karen)

> 'Both of them had been taken care of more than maybe I had, like they'd not been expected to do much housework.' (Sally)

Karen mentions several times that she did not think about this at the time, suggesting that this reflection is part of the process of constructing a narrative in response to my questions.

However, when talking about women in relation to men, rather than other women, Karen draws on a discourse of gender differences in terms of *noticing* what needs doing (as has been found in other work on explanations for the division of household work within heterosexual couples):

> 'I just think [laughing] that a lot of men, and I don't know why, just don't seem to see the things that need doing in the way of housework that a woman would.'

> 'I think as women we're far more likely to notice it, I mean. I don't think many men would go into somebody else's house and come back and say to you, "that was disgusting".'

While Sally uses fewer generalisations about the differences between women and men, she does imply that 'men who are very very clean and tidy and do lots of housework' are relatively unusual and that she does not know 'how they come about'. As I mentioned above, while Sally notes some ways in which she can encourage Liam to change his behaviour, this is on a temporary basis; there is a sense of inevitability in the way she talks about him not seeing what needs doing. Although both Sally and Karen described examples of women they had known who did not do much

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housework, their narratives include several male characters set up in binary opposition to female characters.

This understanding of inherent gender differences also reflects a sense of what women, and particularly mothers 'should' be, and potentially how they are naturally different from men (particularly when the language of bodily functions, such as 'seeing', is used). In terms of caring about one's family, and the home in which they live, 'care is primarily seen as an ability and a willingness to "see" and to "hear" needs, and to take responsibility for these needs being met' (Sevenhuijsen, 1998, p.83). Doucet (2001) argues that by considering the moral dimension of household work, we can recognise why some aspects of this work remain gendered, and how this is perpetuated by both men and women. She suggests that domestic responsibility should be understood relationally, as part of a larger web of social relations which is ideologically structured by ideas of morality (this draws on Finch and Mason's (1993) work on the moral dimensions of families). In the examples above, the idea that women notice what needs doing, and that this is defined as a 'need', arguably then also results in a moral responsibility to meet that need (or to arrange for someone else to do so). If this ability to notice is understood in gendered terms, this also perpetuates differences in how women and men are held morally accountable for the performance of household work.

As I mentioned above, Sally drew on biographical explanations when accounting for the housework practices of various men in her life. Similarly Karen notes that her husband had,

> 'Been brought up to basically not really be allowed to do anything at home [Jennifer: mm], so I don't know that if perhaps his mother didn't think he would be able to do it, anyway he was just never given the opportunity'.

Later in the interview, she talks about getting help from all her children ('I used to give them jobs in turn') and connects trying to make it equal with her experiences of marrying someone who had little knowledge of housework:

> 'I just thought back really to the fact of what my mother-in-law had done and thought that he, you know, John had come into the marriage with me unable to do anything really and that I didn't really want to put my sons into that situation, I wanted them to be able to do something. And if they went to university or something they'd got co, to look after themselves [Jennifer:

yeah], I wanted them to be able to do, you know basic things anyway and not to have to go out and have takeaways every night [laughs].'

In explaining her approach in this way, Karen is drawing on a particular understanding of adulthood involving self-sufficiency, but also doing foodwork 'properly' by cooking (James and Curtis, 2010 have discussed how displaying family involves doing family things according to wider discourses, see Chapter 8 for a discussion of this). She also emphasises the normalcy of the meals she tried to teach them: 'the *usual* sort of easy things you can throw together'. Nevertheless, she comments that 'Sally was always very good and I got the lads to do as much as I could', which suggests a gendered understanding of the willingness of her children. The implication that there is a limit on what her sons would do that is not applied to her daughter reflects the broader theme throughout Karen's narratives of different gendered expectations.

Karen referred to a realisation that her children were very different in their attitudes to housework. She describes one son as 'very houseproud everything always in its place', Sally as 'much more laid back', as the house is 'clean but very messy' and her youngest son as needing 'constant reminders to clean up and obviously does not have any problem with mess and disorganisation'. She concludes that this is 'strange' when they have all been brought up together. She also noted different levels of interest in cooking, although she tried to teach them all some 'basics'. As I have suggested, both Sally and Karen have used biographical and gendered understandings to account for differences in housework practices, and therefore it is understandable that Karen finds it 'strange' that two sons, brought up the same have such different attitudes. Nevertheless, Karen seems to distinguish between Gary and Paul's attitudes and practices more than Sally does, which I would argue is because to do so would be to undermine her own personal, gendered narrative. However, as Karen demonstrates, the different combinations of interests and behaviours that she identifies in her children cannot be easily understood according to a dichotomous view of masculine and feminine practices, nor as simply the result of one's upbringing.

Just as Sally noted about Liam not doing the 'big stuff', Karen suggests that when her husband was at home full-time, he did not think to do all the housework tasks that 'as a woman you would do if you were at home with your children such as wash the

curtains or wash upstairs or do the bathroom'. However, she does speak positively about how he looks after the children ('he was really good with them, played with them, did everything') and mentions that he did the cooking and 'everything you'd *have* to do' [my emphasis]. While the other tasks she mentions might not be seen as essential to bringing up children, they are still important enough to Karen that she could 'catch up' by doing them the next week (she worked seven nights on for seven nights off).

Karen babysits Leah one day a week, and also goes over to Sally's house and plays with Leah 'so Sally can get on with things'. As I asked her about helping out with Sally, this question seemed to trigger some consideration of what she does at Sally's:

> 'I'll play with Leah so Sally can get on with things [Jennifer: yeah] [um] so I don't tend to go there and do housework in the same way [Jennifer: mm] [um] and she's not really asked me to. I don't know really I suppose I've not really thought about that bit.'

She links this to when she had young children herself:

> 'But going back and thinking how I was with them, it's often quite nice for somebody else to come along and take the child away to play with so you can actually get on with stuff you want to get on and do it in the way you want to do it.'

The reference to 'the way you want to do it', may be shaped by how Karen experienced her mother helping when Karen had young children as in some ways problematic (she mentioned getting 'agitated' that her mother would 'iron everything, absolutely precisely, where I wouldn't have bothered' and describe it as 'I'm helping you' despite Karen seeing it as unnecessary). As I mentioned above, Sally spoke positively about her relationship with her mother since having Leah, and the emotional support that Karen provides. She also mentions that her mother does not do her housework and offers an interpretation of this: 'if I asked her to do she would have done it but I think she just thought "I don't want to intrude"', which fits with Karen's account. Nevertheless, in constructing an identity as a mother, Karen also points out that she would help her daughter with housework if required: 'But if she asked me, if she said "Mum will you come across and clean for me one day?" then obviously I would'. More generally, the way Karen talks about how she continues to help Sally as an adult

through, for example, comforting her when she is upset about Leah's behaviour, but also giving her advice, can be seen as contributing to this construction of a mothering identity.

Karen expressed feelings of surprise at how Sally embodied the identity of a mother: 'She's not how I thought she'd be as a mother, I thought she'd be a lot stricter and, than she has been really [Jennifer: mm] so I'm quite surprised'. While Sally's account emphasises similarities between herself and her mother, Karen highlights differences in their mothering practices, in a way that connects her more closely to *her* mother:

> 'I can remember my mum making me sit, and sit at the table for a long, long time if I wasn't eating something. [Um] And I think I can remember doing the same with my children [Jennifer: mm] [um] and *I* always think that's why I wasn't particularly a picky eater [um] because I learnt that, and if I hadn't have eaten it, I probably wouldn't have got anything else. She wouldn't have turned round to me and said "oh right, alright you won't eat that we'll give you this". Whereas I now watch Sally and if Leah doesn't want to eat something say "Oh alright then" and she'll get something else, whereas my mum certainly wouldn't have done that and I wouldn't have done it I don't think with them, I'd have said "well that's it then, if you don't eat it, you don't eat it" [Jennifer: yeah]. So those sort of things are different I think.' (original emphasis)

In various ways, Karen emphasises the importance of strictness, which seems to be linked to her sense of self. She mentions telling Sally 'you've got to be more strict and when you *say* something *you've* got to try and stick to it a bit more' (original emphasis). This can be seen as fitting with how she identifies and is identified as a 'strong character' and 'stubborn'; as she puts it 'I do tend to think a two year old is not going to get the better of me'.

While Sally also described herself using these words (see above), and indeed constructed a narrated self in this way, Karen's account of her not liking confrontation with Leah serves to undermine this (although as Karen noted her 'surprise' that Sally was not more strict with Leah, this may be linked to her understanding of Sally as a mother, rather than more generally). As she says,

> 'Leah knows when *I* say no, I mean no and that's it. And she's now, she doesn't try it on with me whereas I see her try it on with mum because I think she knows when her mum says no it doesn't necessarily mean no.' (original emphasis)

Similarly, while Sally talked about her daughter as generally being a 'demanding child' and ascribed a certain amount of agency to her ('Leah rules the roost [laughs] and tells us who does what, basically'), Karen suggests that her behaviour is part of interactions with particular people. While Sally uses 'us' to refer to her and Liam here, Karen mentions a difference between Liam and Sally in that while Sally has problems getting Leah to go to sleep, 'her husband Liam and I seem to be able to…we have no problem getting her going to bed'. She also recalls Sally commenting on the different way Leah behaves for Liam and herself. It may be then that Sally is downplaying the difference to me as part of constructing a competent mothering identity

Karen talks about the historical changes in advice aimed at mothers of young children, including what she sees as an attitude of 'oh just let them do what they want' which she does not agree with, commenting 'that 'I just like well-behaved children'. Karen also compares her own experiences with her children and her grandchild in this regard:

> 'I can remember taking the three of my children out and people saying how well-behaved they were and how proud that made me feel.'

> 'I have gone out with Leah and she's had a major tantrum in a shopping centre, I've been embarrassed by that.'

In highlighting her emotional responses to this behaviour, Karen is linking the responses (or perceived responses) of others to her sense of self. As I mentioned, in describing herself as someone who values strictness with children ('children should do as they're told') and prides herself on her abilities to manage the behaviour of her children, and now her granddaughter, I would suggest that a tantrum could disrupt that. Although in the present narrating this, she can describe her response as 'probably ridiculous, because lots of children do do it'; this account makes sense in terms of how she has narrated herself throughout the interview.

While above I discussed how she talked about the housework she expected women at home with their children would do, in comparison to men, and specifically her ex-husband, when she looks after Leah 'I don't do any housework or anything so obviously that's completely different from when you're a mother at home with your child, so my attention is on *her*, *all day*' (original emphasis). Thus as well as the

distinctions between the identities of mothers and fathers, there is also a distinction between *her* identities as a mother and grandmother. Nevertheless, this comparison also plays out over time; as Karen comments in her interview in relation to changing attitudes, for example.

I discussed Sally's account of her relationship with her mother above, and the way that she has experienced her as 'critical'. Karen mentioned that her mother 'didn't really criticise me I don't think' and 'she never passed comment, she never passed judgement' (although she would sometimes decide a task needed doing and 'do it subtly', for example by dusting something herself). She similarly talks about 'sometimes I bite my tongue and don't say things' and trying to be 'subtle' with advice, suggesting that she sees the benefits of this approach. She also demonstrates to me throughout her discussion of Sally as a mother that she recognises how 'difficult' it is to bring up children, and indicates that it is this understanding that shapes her behaviour. This may be something she does in contrast to the way her mother behaved, as she remembers when her mother did make odd comments that it would contribute to a sense that she did not understand Karen's experience: 'I'd think to myself "you only had me, and I've got three children"'.

Karen also provides a longer narrative account of one occasion when her mother did tell her that she disagreed with her 'supporting the family'. Karen explains her view of the situation and how she explained this to her mother:

> 'Cos at that point I just thought, we're a partnership [Jennifer: mm] and it was in the early eighties when there was mass unemployment and I thought, you know "it's not going to be easy for him to get a job, I have got a job that I can do and earn a salary that will support us" [um] and I just thought "that's what I've got to do". And I wasn't, so I didn't feel, I just thought "well that's it, that's what you do as a couple", you know. My mother had different thoughts about it. She wasn't that happy about it and I just sort of said to her, you know "what do you want me to, us to do then, do you want us to be on the dole or would you rather that we did this when we're both happy to do it and we can work it out?" So in the end she came round to it but she wasn't particularly pleased about the fact that we were doing it.'

This narrative supports her account of being a strong character, showing how she rationally approached the situation and did not allow it to upset her. She also demonstrates how she presented the argument to her mother, and how she was

eventually able to persuade her to 'come round to it'. This extract also demonstrates how time interrelates as Karen reflects on responding to particular historical circumstances, in a way that invokes both generational comparisons with her mother and a particular understanding of marriage as necessitating choices that are not ideal. Karen narrates this account in which her mother criticised this way of doing things in relation to her mother's experience at the same time of supporting herself and her husband (who was then working part-time), and felt that she 'couldn't really understand' why her mother was ok doing this herself, but not with her daughter doing it. While I am arguing throughout this thesis that connections with others play an important part in the construction of relational narrative identities, it is also important to be aware of this acknowledged difficulty of understanding the motives and attitudes of others.

In this section, I have discussed some of the ways in which Karen and Sally's narratives can be seen as relating to each other as part of a larger web of narratives (Benhabib, 1999) which contribute to the ways that construct both particular identities, but also a sense of coherent self-identity. I have considered how other characters can play a part in personal stories of housework over the life course, and how such stories are constructed temporally. I have also shown how identification by others can 'spoil' one's own self-understanding; as Benhabib (1999) suggests, a character in one person's story is also the teller of their own story, which can depend on a different and competing self-identification.

4.4   Themes

Sally and Karen's stories illustrate some of the themes that emerged across the dataset as a whole, and that I will explore in subsequent chapters.

4.4.1 Relationality

Both Sally and Karen talked about the ways in which their identities were connected with those of others, whether through constructing a narrative identity in opposition to another character or characters, or suggesting how particular relationships shaped behaviours and attitudes. In Chapter 5, I will use the concepts of personal life outlined

by Smart (memory, biography, embeddedness, relationality and imaginary) to show how this occurred across the sample. In this chapter, I have demonstrated how some of these concepts play a part in Sally and Karen's narrative identities, for example the use of biographical explanations for the actions of other characters or Sally's account of the changing nature of her relationship with her mother. In Chapter 5, I will consider how participants drew on an individualistic discourse emphasising independence and choice in the service of self-fulfilment, as Sally does when she talks about the issue of an inequitable division of housework with her partner in terms of choosing not to be angry for the sake of her own well-being.

4.4.2 Temporality

Another key theme that emerged from the data was that of interlinked understandings of time, including life course, generation and history. As I showed, Sally talked about how her attitudes had changed over her life course, and commented on how the life courses of other characters in her story played a part in how they related to each other. In Chapter 6, I will explore in more detail how participants talked about household work across the life course, including what they remember doing as a child, when they first left home, as mothers of young children, and for the older generation participants, their current experiences. The ways in which understandings of both childhood and adulthood played a part in Sally and Karen's narratives represents a broader theme that I will discuss in Chapter 6, in which participants talked about household work as part of a preparation for adulthood, in a way which drew on particular discourses of childhood and adulthood around themes of responsibility and self-sufficiency. I will also discuss the way generational understandings played a part across the sample in relation to shifting expectations of mothers and fathers.

4.4.3 Gender and Heterosexuality

In Chapter 7 I will explore the interrelations between gender and heterosexuality across different social dimensions, and some aspects of this are evident in these stories. For example, Sally refers to patterns, both within her relationship with her husband over time, and between this relationship and that of her parents, as well as making sense of her household work practices in relation to various discourses. While both

Sally and Karen talked about women in the context of heterosexual relationships, they also both recounted experiences of living with other women in shared houses, and I will use these, and other examples from the dataset (including sibling relationships), to critically explore the way in which gender is talked about in my research. Although I did not interview any men, the stories above illustrate some of the ways in which specific men, and men as a generalised group are constructed, and I will discuss this in more detail in Chapter 7. Both Sally and Karen drew on generalised understanding of men in order to construct relational identities of specific men they have known, and similarly, other participants made sense of their partners as 'good' in relation to a notion of what was 'normal'.

4.4.4 Family

In their accounts, both Sally and Karen display particular ways of doing family in contrast to practices of specific or generalised others which are presented as more problematic (such as Sally's in-laws). In Chapter 8, I will discuss the concepts of doing family and displaying family, and how, as with Sally and Karen, the ideas of both continuing and changing family practices emerged in how participants spoke about their household work practices and those of previous or future generations. I will also explore notable themes around displaying family, such as displaying one's family in relation to the family a participant or her partner grew up in (as Sally does).

Chapter 5: Relationality in Personal Narratives of Household Work

5.1   Introduction

In this chapter I focus on ideas of relationality that highlight the ways in which our selves, and the stories we tell about who we are and how we have come to be this way, are connected to others, and argue for this as a useful way to explore women's accounts of household work. In Chapter 2, I set out my understanding of relational narrated selves and in analysing relationality within women's personal narratives, I am drawing in particular on the work of Smart (2007) who has argued for a need to employ connectedness as a theoretical lens through which to view people's 'personal lives'. This is framed as an antithesis to the individualisation thesis, in that considering how people live their lives while embedded in relationships allows us to consider how relationships shape choices and actions, while also bearing in mind the ways in which people are able to express agency in terms of the relationships they choose to maintain (or not) and how they are able to shape and reshape these over time (see, for example, Finch and Mason, 1993; Lawler, 2000; Mitchell and Green, 2002). By focusing on questions of how women as individuals make rational decisions, for example about combining paid work with the household work involved in looking after a dependent child (Gerson, 1985; Hakim, 2000), we can lose sight of the way in which this household work, and the construction of oneself through household work practices, can be understood as relational (Doucet, 2001). Although Smart has purposely decided not to focus on 'more familiar terrain such as trends in family structures, domestic labour or gendered divisions of care work' (2007, p.184), I would argue that the personal life concepts she outlines can be usefully deployed to develop an understanding of how a relational understanding of household work practices and responsibilities figures in their personal narratives.

Returning to the stories of Sally and Karen discussed in the previous chapter, I suggest that the toolbox of concepts Smart refers to (memory, imaginary, biography, relationality, and embeddedness) helps to show how narratives, and indeed narrative identities and narrated selves are constructed in relation to others. For example, Sally's

account of the disagreements with her partner about the division of housework relies on her memories and imaginative understanding of her parents' relationship and trying to not make what she sees as the same mistakes, as well as understanding her husband's behaviour in terms of his biography (being brought up not to do anything) and in comparison to other men she has known. In this chapter, I begin by briefly outlining the core concepts that Smart conceives as constituting 'interiorities', which provides a way to consider how people 'do family' (Morgan, 1996) in their personal lives, understanding practices as involving thinking and feeling, as well as doing (see Chapter 2 for a more detailed discussion of this).[35] I will then draw on interviews from across the sample to show how a relational analysis can illuminate additional dimensions in the personal narratives produced and the identities constructed, and how an understanding of connectedness can contribute to the household work literature. Although these concepts cannot be fully separated, I will focus on one at a time, exploring how they help to illuminate the connectedness that came through in interviews, while also highlighting links between them.

5.2   Personal Life Concepts

5.2.1 Memory

Memory itself is relational as it is shaped by those around us; it is 'profoundly social because it relies on communication to become a memory and on context to be meaningful' (Smart, 2007, p.39). This approach draws on Misztal's (2003) intersubjectivist understanding of memory whereby what a person remembers is shaped by their social relations, and as the site where many early memories are formed, families are key here. Misztal argues for families as mnemonic communities that play a crucial role in the construction of our memories, particularly through adults' telling of stories to children. Smart reflects on how emotional responses to remembering families contribute to broader cultural understandings:

> 'There is therefore a circular process in which families occupy a special place in the "laying down" of strong memories, but the feelings generated by

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[35] Although as Smart (2007) emphasises, the relationships that are part of one's personal life are not just family relationships, and similarly I found the role of friends and former partners (for example), a key part of participants' personal narratives.

remembering one's childhood in a family can create anew the sense that these memories feed into a possibly unwarranted 'intuition' about the importance of one's family.' (2007, p.39)

More generally, Smart sees memory as strongly related to the present. Remembering can be understood as an active process (one that is in a reciprocal relationship with a process of forgetting (Ricoeur, 2004)) whereby memories are constructed in ways that can differ depending on context, for example to suit a particular audience or in service of identity construction (see also Frank, 2010; Lawler, 2014). Thus, the telling of stories about one's past can be seen as a form of identity construction, and the use of memories plays an important role in this.

5.2.2 Biography

The construction of a biography relies on the selection of memories to fit a particular narrative which results in a story of one's life history that encapsulates both movement through time (from year to year or decade to decade) and through the life course. This idea of biography as a story of one's 'present identity' is usefully set out by Hockey and James: 'A coherent and explanatory narrative is carved out of a set of diverse experiences and a set of past identities are assembled to account for a present identity' (2003, p.210). While biographies do reflect choices made by their narrator, these choices are made within a particular social context and are not freely chosen, and thus accounts of a similar experience (such as partnering across a cultural 'boundary) use common biographical signifiers (Smart, 2007). Thomson et al. (2011) suggest that the younger generation participants in their study 'understood their biographies as an extension of those of their mothers' (2011, p.118), and explored how this played out in the way they discussed plans for paid work and caring for their child. Similarly, Griffiths (1995) draws on autobiographical material to explore self-identity, using examples such as Steedman (1986) to show how such accounts highlight the importance of being embedded in a mother/daughter relationship within particular social circumstances (although Steedman focuses on her mother's psychological self, and the stories she told about longing for what she did not have). While Giddens (1991) also emphasises the importance of individual biography to self-identity, considering this concept through the lens of connectedness recognises that biographies

are constructed within a web of relationships, and that storying oneself builds on an understanding of the biographies of others.

5.2.3 Embeddedness

Drawing on the idea of 'linked lives', which views the lives of individuals as meaningful in the context of other lives (Elder, 1994; Bengston et al., 2002), Smart argues that people are embedded in webs of relationships that go beyond couple relationships, stressing the importance of vertical connections to children, previous generations and ancestors (although the influence of horizontal relationships to siblings and friends should not be overlooked (Davies, 2011; James, 2013)). Individuals are seen to be taking forward parts of the past, which can be physical resemblances, skills and personal characteristics, or shared values. Thus people make sense of themselves in relation to others to whom they are linked in this way, which Lawler (2014) sees as the active identity work of 'recognition', between the extremes of complete choice or determinism. Using the example of the television series 'Who Do You Think You Are?' she argues:

> 'The person who is the focus of the programme makes sense of their own identity through invoking ancestral character traits…What is stressed, then, are forms of individual identity embedded within a collective (familial, kin) identity.' (ibid, p.46)

Returning to the previous concepts, the idea of being embedded in relationships can be seen as something that influences biographical accounts of oneself and that relies on both personal memories and family stories. Nevertheless, as with the concepts above, it is important to recognise the *work* of identification, both in terms of characteristics one sees oneself as taking forward, and in the embedded characteristics identified in others.

5.2.4 Relationality

The concept of relationality expresses the idea that people are constituted through their close kin ties, which may or may not be blood relatives, and this can be understood in terms of the idea of a social self discussed above. As with the other concepts, and in keeping with her theoretical links to Morgan's family practices approach, Smart

stresses the active nature of relationality as a constant process, suggesting 'the term relationism conjures up the image of people existing within intentional, thoughtful networks which they actively sustain, maintain or allow to atrophy' (2007, p.48). These processes of relationality depend on the *quality* of relations, not just their existence (Gabb, 2008). Various studies have shown how caring acts between people work to maintain the relationship between them (see, for example, Ellis, 2010; DeVault, 1991). Finch and Mason (1993) show us that responsibilities between people develop over time through a process of negotiation, rather than being seen as an inherent part of a particular family or kin relationship. The active sense of relationality serves to remind us that the other concepts are not fixed. Thus how someone may be seen to be embedded within relationships may change over time depending on the nature of their ongoing relationships.

5.2.5 Imaginary

Smart's final concept is that of the imaginary, which helps us to understand how relationships exist in one's imagination (for example, through wishing for a better relationship, comparing a current relationship to those in the past, or trying out arguments on an imaginary version of a family member). Gillis' (1997) idea that we all have families we live 'with' and families we live 'by', with the latter as constituted through myth, ritual and image, recognises that it is through imaginings that family takes on meaning. Smart notes 'the "idealized" family we live by is a social, historical and cultural phenomenon' (2011, p.27) and we need to recognise the extent to which particular ideals are applicable to individuals' imaginary families, and how these differ and also change over time. Returning to the first concept of memory, and given an understanding of remembering as shaped by one's current situation, these shifts in how we imagine 'normal' and 'ideal' families to be may shape how memories of the past are constructed.

5.3   Household Work in Biographies

In the previous chapter, I presented the narratives that Sally and Karen constructed about their lives in relation to household work, and in later chapters I will look in more detail at the connections between biography, generation and history (Chapter 6) and

how biographical personal narratives are linked to doing and displaying family (Chapter 8). In this section, I want to reflect briefly on how the biographies of others were seen as relevant to their household work practices. In particular the influence of mothers on men's housework practices was a recurring theme in the data, among women of different ages:

> 'He was a traditional young man brought up by his mother not to work.' (Brenda, 67 on her father)

> 'My husband came from a family…and his mother more or less did everything for the boys… so I don't think that helped particularly when we lived together because [.] he was, he was untidy. Whereas his mum used to put things away for him and he used to leave things out, it, you know, I didn't really want to do that but it was sort of expected.' (Kate, 54)

> 'And I think as well I realised he wasn't really taught to do, he wasn't taught to cook, he wasn't taught to clean, he wasn't taught to do anything by his mother…When I met him every meal would be like oven food, he wouldn't cook anything from scratch.' (Amy, 33 on her husband)

In contrast, the absence of this was noted in the biographies of other men:

> 'My ex-husband he was brought up by [um] by his mum, by herself and he was always a very good cook and used to do a lot around the house…And, he always credited that to the fact that he had to do the things because his mum was working and so he did, you know he did maybe have to make his own tea.' (Claire, 42)

> 'His mother doesn't really cook [um] so he'd done an awful lot of fending for himself'. (Sophie, 41 on her husband)

In Hochschild's *The Second Shift* (1989)*,* similar biographical understandings are used to make sense of participants' self-identification and household work practices (for example, one participant, Evan, was not expected to help with housework as a child, and this forms part of his wife's explanation of his current attitude). Nevertheless, as Hochschild argues 'many other men, who had also done little housework when they were boys, did not talk so fatalistically about "upbringing," because they were doing a lot of it now' (1989, p.55). Thus, we can see how biographies of previous housework experience, constructed in the present, can be used to create different selves in the process.

Amy, quoted above, compares her husband's upbringing to that of her and her brother:

> 'He was certainly not how my brother was, he was not kind of encouraged to do things and encouraged to help, and he was not shown how to do things, so there was a difference between my husband and I.'

Laura (32) talks about going to boarding school as part of her husband's biography, and like Amy, makes comparisons to her own experiences. She suggests that as her husband was not at home as much as she was, he did not have the same level of influence from his parents, so while she describes her cooking style as similar to her mother's ('I'm like my mum who doesn't necessarily follow recipes and just kind of guess with putting in amounts of stuff and sometime, now and again it goes wrong but a bit slapdash doesn't really matter'), he may have been more influenced by teachers. In terms of tidiness, she compares the two of them, noting that 'I don't like things to be out of their place, but he leaves things around the house…he's not bothered about tidying'. She then provides a biographical explanation: 'I suppose when he was in boarding school he had very little of his own stuff, maybe he just loves the fact that he's got his own place and his own stuff'. Nevertheless, there are (acknowledged) contradictions when she tries to explain their differences in this way. For example, she links his perfectionism to both he and his mother working as engineers, and then recognises this does not fit neatly with an account that plays down the influence of his parents.

As with Sally and Karen, these biographical understandings are used to explain differences in present behaviour. In some cases there is discussion of gendered differences, for example, while Kate's former mother-in-law did 'everything' for her sons, her daughters were expected to help more (see Chapter 7 for a discussion of gendered household practices within families). In contrast, Amy emphasises the similarities in how she and her brother were brought up and reflects on how this was different for her husband, emphasising the familial and the biographical over gender-based explanations. While I will explore this further in Chapter 7, the point here is past experiences were used as part of an account of why one's husband, for example, was the way he was.

However, growing up without being expected to do much household work can be part of a different story, as Kim (40) shows:

> 'I didn't leave home till I was twenty seven and my mum did everything for me. So likewise I do everything for Joe and Molly [laughs]... I think that's kind of where I've kind of become the way I've become because it's kind of, it was always done for me so I expect it to be done for my children, for me to do it.'

Kim uses this aspect of her childhood as part of her story of why she behaves in the way she does, as other participants do in accounting for the behaviour of the various characters they introduce. These biographical stories can be seen as a way of accounting for one's present self, and thus past events are made sense of as part of a process of forming the self. As Smart suggests, stories about one's parents can be used in different ways as part of explanations of one's own identification and behaviour. She argues 'these are not "rational" or causal explanations, but stories of emotional connection and modes of personal accounting' (2007, p.93). Thus rather than seeing the behaviour of parents, and particularly mothers, as *determining* the behaviour of children, it is the process of telling the story of one's self that makes sense of these practices, giving them meaning in the context of the plot developed by the storyteller.

5.4   Remembering and Imagining Household Work

The idea of a personal life approach involves exploring the relationships which exist in memory and the imaginary, as well as considering those in the here and now. In terms of household work, this can involve what a person remembers about their own practices, or what they wish they had done, or would like to do in the future, as well as memories or imaginings of others. Participants in my research recounted memories of engaging in specific household work practices, or seeing others do so:

> 'I remember always putting in jacket potatoes, washing and putting them in the oven every day so they were ready by the time my mum got home.' (Laura, 32)

> 'I remember things like, you know she'd strip all the beds and every, you know do, so if she was going to do one thing she'd kind of do it all at once, you know. All the beds would get stripped or all the towels would get put in the wash and so I remember that.' (Amy, 33)

'But I always remember my mum and dad used to go out most evenings to the civil service club, and when we got back it was always, my mum always used to make sandwiches for the family, whoever was up and my dad. And it was always my mum that did it, my dad never did that part. It was always mum who made the sandwiches and that was sort of the tradition.' (Kate, 54)

'Windows, windows. I know they were polished with newspaper, I do remember doing that [Jennifer: yeah]' (Maureen, 68)

While household work can appear to be a mundane activity that does not occupy much mental space, it can also be an aspect of people's lives which they reflect on for years afterwards. For instance, participants spoke about things they wished they had done differently, in Mary's case reflecting on whether she had infantilised her mother by treating her 'like you do with children' (see Hockey and James, 1993):

'I *wish* now that I had let my mum do a little bit more when she was older instead of leaving her to sit there, I wish I'd made her, not made her h, *let* her, instead of looking after her, let her do more housework [Jennifer: yeah]. Because I've seen documentaries since about, you know about ageing and the ones who do the most it's better for brains, you know [Jennifer: yeah] so I do have that slight regret that I said to her "No, I'm alright, I can do it", that haven't, you know like you do with children [Jennifer: Yeah]. That same, you know. I do wish really that I'd let her do that.' (Mary, 64, original emphasis)

Mary makes a connection between household work and adulthood, recognising that both children and older people can be seen in terms of dependence on adults to carry out the tasks that maintain their daily life. While adulthood is constructed in terms of responsibility (Blatterer, 2010), and children are taught to be more responsible in preparation for this (see Chapter 6), Mary's recollection here points to the difficulties in deciding what is best for those who *were* identified as independent as they age. Nevertheless, as she was 'looking after' her mother, this can be seen in terms of her identity as a caring daughter.

If a sense of family is created through family practices (Morgan, 1996), one way of doing this is through the creation of shared memories. Some of the mothers and daughters referred to the same things, or particular aspects of family life were presented as shared memories. For example, June (59) talks about what her daughter remembers:

'I mean even Kim remembers Saturday afternoon with the drop leaf table in the, cos we used to have a kitchen like in the little room here. The kitchen, the table was in front of the window. Saturday afternoon, the football results used to be on the telly, she'll tell you. And my mum used to stand there with a rolling pin and a big pudding basin doing an apple pie for Sunday [mm] so yeah.'

Kim (40) also remembers her grandmother making pies, which supports what June has said:

'My maternal nan [er] grandmother, she [um] when we were little she would always bake, loads…my nan would make apple pies, like with ease. You wouldn't even know she'd done something, she would just slip in there, do it, and before you'd know it you'd got a pie in front of you so.'

For Kim this was linked to her mother 'cooking from scratch' and not using ready meals, which then feeds into her account of encouraging her children to cook and bringing them up in the same way, and as I have argued previously, works to construct a mothering identity that is framed in terms of these memories (Kettle, 2014a).

There were also examples of mundane memories of mothers' everyday cleaning that participants could still visualise:

'I remember cos when she was going to clean she'd get changed. You know like she'd have her old trousers on or her old t-shirt or shirt. And she'd have her rubber gloves, and she'd have a bucket which she'd take…She'd have a bucket and her gloves on and a bottle of Ajax is it called? [Jennifer: mm] [Um] So she'd always put that down the toilets and in the sink and it'd always be the same products that she'd use.' (Eleanor, 34)

'My mother washed windows every week, I can see her now sitting, we had sash windows, sitting on the ledge out of the window washing these windows.' (Jean, 66)

However, at this point I want to discuss how, as well as remembering, a theme of 'not remembering' emerged. For example, Nicola (32) talks about some of the housework her mother does when she is at Nicola's house looking after Alfie, and how this is something she does not remember:

'I'm like "I don't remember you doing any of this when I was at home!" [Jennifer laughs]. So she just seems a lot more, I don't know if I just didn't

notice it when I was at home or [..] it's more relevant now. I don't know, it's weird.'

While this example shows how the process of remembering can be related to one's present circumstances and vary at different points through the life course, the idea of not noticing is a common one. Indeed, the very mundaneness of housework is presented as a reason for forgetting; as Mary suggests, 'I think the reason I don't remember is because it was just such a normal thing'.

Nevertheless, in the context of an intergenerational study, it is interesting to note the vivid memories of some of the older women, particularly with regard to laundry. For example, Rita (68) recalls her grandmother washing clothes on a Monday:

'She had a, at one time, one time she had as I remember firstly it was a washing machine with a big agitator in the middle [um]. And you used to fill that, I presume with some sort of hose, I can't remember but I remember filling it from somewhere, it didn't directly fill. [Um] And you'd sprinkle your washing powder in and it had a lid that you then put on top and you'd got tongs, wooden tongs that had metal across the top going one side to the other [um] and you'd [mimes] poking your washing and then you'd lift it out and after going to the sink…And it had a ringer, but it was an electric ringer [um] but you just fed your stuff in and the two rollers just roped together [trying to demonstrate how it worked]. Can't do it [Jennifer laughs]. [Um] And the washing went between there and you could adjust that at the side.'

While Rita 'can't remember' certain aspects, the detail included in this memory, and those of other older generation women, struck me during the interviews. As a woman of thirty, I recognise that I do not remember much of my mother washing clothes, although I was aware of always having clean and ironed clothes available. The technological shifts also have implications for the visibility of laundry practices; when washing is hidden away in washing machines that can be left on a timer, I would suggest that it does not impact on memories in the same vivid way.

As is clear from Rita's account, much of this memory is physically demonstrated through miming, and this happened in other interviews; for example, Eleanor mimed ironing while describing how she learned about it:

'She [um] she taught us, I remember her specifically teaching us how to iron so she'd teach us with my dad's shirts, you know that you do [.] the shoulders first of the shirts, then the collar and then [er] you know the arms of the shirt

then the front then the back and how to move it around the ironing board.'(Eleanor)

Smart suggests that,

> 'The emotional reaction people often have to recalling these memories can create a sentimental aura around the past of "the family". So, often memories of this sort appear to be embellished, bringing into focus a perpetual summer and dimming the routine drudgery of everyday life' (2011, p.18)

As I showed previously, this was reflected in what some of my participants 'don't remember' about housework. In particular, problems remembering has been identified as an issue in multi-generational studies of motherhood, due to the length of time that has elapsed (Brannen et al., 2004).

Plummer has argued that we can recognise selective recall, where particular stories, potentially those most habitually told, 'seem to have taken a life of their own' (2001, p.234). O'Connor (2011) found this in relation to recounting pregnancy as opposed to everyday childcare arrangements, and emphasises 'the "unique" experience of falling pregnant unexpectedly' (2011, p.410). Nevertheless, it is also important to consider the embodied nature of what are otherwise mundane memories, as the physical nature of some household work can strengthen a memory of 'routine drudgery' through being 'sedimented in the body' (Connerton, 1989, p.72). This can lead to significant memories, for example, Brenda's 'oldest memory of being a kid is going round with the mangle handle, you know the big, I think the top was just about as far as I could go'. Similarly, when I asked June about memories of housework, she instantly replied,

> 'Yes on your hands and knees polishing floors. We used to have black stone floors upstairs in mum's house and my job, even in the winter, was on my hands and knees polishing these black stone floors.'

These embodied personal memories can offer a different way of understanding how household work can be remembered (see also Hecht, 2001 on sensory memories, and the notion that recollections of particular rooms are the outcome of embodied experiences of cleaning).

In terms of constructing self-narratives, participants could emplot events differently by, for example, presenting themselves as following or breaking family traditions. As I mentioned in the previous chapter, Sally (32) spoke about memories she had been told about by her mother, as did other participants. Hannah (43) recounted a story her grandmother had told her about the importance of having your own money, because she remembered having to save up change from her housekeeping to buy a necklace she wanted. Hannah uses an interpretation of her grandmother as someone who 'in a different circumstance would have you know done stuff outside the home that would have been really stimulating to her but as it was she was a wife and a mother' to support her account of the importance of being rebellious. This was a characteristic Hannah emphasised throughout her self-narrative, in contrast to the conformist streak in her mother and grandmother who Hannah saw as being miserable in their domestic roles. Smart argues that

> 'A grandparent or parent telling stories of her or his childhood links a child to a time that is past, but also to a being who no longer exists in the same form. It is an imaginary link, but profoundly meaningful nonetheless' (2007, p.82)

Thus the recounted memories of a grandparent or parent can become part of the imaginary of the child to whom they tell these stories.

Amy (33) talked about how having children brought her closer to her grandmother, who had told Amy about *her* experiences of having children. She notes that:

> 'Actually having children has made me kind of appreciate the women in my life very differently actually. Especially the women that have had a lot to deal with, which is probably all of them, you know whether it be work or home or juggling everything or having lots of children or having lots of things on, it's probably made me appreciate the women in my life very differently so it's been quite an eye-opening experience and it probably makes you think back to your own childhood in a different way when you know what they were dealing with at the time.'

As she suggests, the narrative recounted by her grandmother altered how Amy understood her own life story (and potentially unsettled her self-understanding (Benhabib, 1999)) but the increased appreciation and feelings of closeness she expresses indicates a less conflictual experience than Benhabib describes. Therefore I

would suggest that while one's self-understanding can be 'unsettled' by the narratives of others, that the relationality of narratives need not be a negative experience.

Irene (75) referred to taking the grandmother role seriously, in memory of her grandmother, who played a dominant part in the upbringing of Irene, her brother and a large number of cousins. While she admits having 'forgotten' how much her grandmother did until last year, an email to all the cousins asking for contributions to repairing her gravestone prompted reflection on what they owed their grandmother, and for Irene this is to take her grandmother as inspiration: 'I think the best way to repay is to be a "hands on" grandmother'. Subsequently, the way in which she looks after her grandson is shaped by nostalgic memories of the way in which she herself was looked after.

While Irene's grandmother lives on in her imagination, for other participants, household work tasks prompted imagined connections with generalised others. For example, Mary reflected how various foodwork tasks led to feeling connected to others who she imagines performing these tasks in the past or in other countries (for example she describes thinking about 'poor people who used whatever they had to feed their families', those in domestic service and 'people from other cultures' when she makes soup). These thoughts and feelings are not so much about a family Mary 'lives by' (Gillis, 1997), but about being part of something bigger, a wider network of social relations in which the act of making soup to feed people could be understood as a caring practice in constraining circumstances, or part of a paid work role, or potentially have meanings of which Mary, as a white British woman, is not fully aware. In this way, imagining household work practices in different situations can draw attention to the varying meanings that the same act can have in different contexts. As I will show throughout this thesis, the concepts of memory and imaginary draw attention to the way in which the past and future are constructed in personal narratives of household work.

5.5 Household Work as Embedded

As I discussed above, work on inheritance shows how various attributes and behaviours are presented as inherited, and understandings of inheritance are developed

from a variety of sources and may rely on contradictory discourses in relation to different questions (Edwards, 2000). In my research, describing oneself in terms of inherited characteristics also extended to tidiness:

> 'I just remember all around the edge of the room, floor to ceiling was newspapers piled high, same in her [grandmother's] sitting room, just piles and piles of papers and letters and rubbish. Hoarder, that's where I get it from; my dad's the same, we've got stuff hoarded away everywhere.' (Nicola, 32)

> 'So I was *really messy*, and cos my dad was really messy as well so I think I took after him more.' (Eleanor, 34, original emphasis)

> 'I think the really interesting thing like with the family dynamic is actually I'm much more like my dad, personality-wise, but I seem to have got Mum's tidying things, whereas my sister is much more like my mum, she's like a mini-me of my mother to look at, the way she talks, everything, but just tidying she seems to have got my father's genes.' (Jo, 32)

Jo described herself as a 'naturally tidy soul', which is also how she presents her mother. The idea of mother and daughter as the same kind of 'soul' evokes a tangible affinity between them that goes beyond simply behaving in the same way (see Mason, 2008). Other women also refer to themselves in this way (such as Rita (68)) or talk about tidiness in terms of natural processes. While Leanne (24) describes herself as messy when she was younger, she draws on ideas of a 'nesting instinct' to explain why she became tidier when she had her daughter:

> 'I didn't really think, it was just like instincts you know when you're pregnant at the end they say that you get that nesting thing, I think I started with that and then it just like continued.'

This explanation is also framed in terms of natural biological changes associated with motherhood, and this language of nature and instincts has similarly been identified in women's narratives of anticipating motherhood (Miller, 2007).

While 'natural' explanations did not resonate for all my participants, it was at least recognised as a way of understanding one's self in relation to household work. For instance, Nicola felt tidiness 'was never something that came naturally' and later talks about making a 'conscious effort' to tidy up when she gets home from work. Nevertheless she says 'I've always just assumed it comes naturally to some people

because I'm just, just being rubbish at it and hating it'. Sophie (41) made a similar point: 'I think it doesn't come naturally to me. It's not something that I will immediately do, I've had to train myself to be more organised'. Participants also described various practices of mothering as 'natural', for example

> 'Mum just naturally would pick up and do jobs.' (Jo, referring to when her mother helped out post-pregnancy)

> 'She's a natural mum I would say, she's very caring and wanting to look after you that way.' (Kim, 40)

These understandings contrast with a feminist understanding of the *work* involved in mothering, including the mental work of maternal thinking (Ruddick, 1990). DeVault (1991) similarly draws attention to the reluctance of women to categorise activities within the home as 'work' (or 'leisure'), the limitations of these concepts for making sense of their experiences of practices in the context of caring relationships, such as that of a mother and child.

Ideas of 'natural' tidiness or untidiness could be read as evidence of different personality types. However, from my analysis, participants combined the language of natural characteristics and personalities with more relational accounts. For example, early in her interview Kim described herself as 'a very organised person, so I kind of let everything get in a mess but it's always put back tidy and a place for everything and everything in its place' and she describes this as her 'personality'. She also links this to her job, explaining these personality traits as 'probably why I do accountancy as well because we tend to be quite [um] rigid people'. This linking of home and work in relation to one's self was also evident in Jo's account ('I like systems and processes, that's why I'm good at my job, I do market research, I do data analysis, I like systems and processes'). In other cases, it was part of how others were identified (for example, Laura (32) discusses the differences in her and her husband's cooking styles, and portrays his job as an intrinsic part of who he is: 'maybe the engineer in him but he's much more defined and has to measure everything out and be really exact'). This suggests a strong sense of self, rather than behaviour tied to a particular place or context. However, Kim then frames her tidiness in a different way:

> 'I can't settle if it's not tidy. I blame that on my mum because our house is always, we could play but at the end of the day it was always put back tidy so it's kind of how I've grown up, how my nan was so it's kind of a generation thing in that's how I think we should be.'

Thus Kim also sees her 'personality' as being partly formed through these family relationships. Thinking in terms of how Kim understands herself, there are echoes here of the complex understandings of the self identified by Davies (2011), whereby disciplinary boundaries between sociology, psychology and biology can be downplayed by participants who understand 'turning out' to incorporate all of the above.

This concept of 'turning out' was relevant for other participants. As the mother of three daughters, Kate (54) talks about their 'different personalities'. She notes that her youngest daughter, Natalie 'thinks it's because she's got her dad's genes, untidy genes' and finds it 'funny that she blames her dad's genes rather than herself'. However, Kate combines ideas about 'personalities' with more biographical explanations that consider the effect of her relationships with each of her daughters. For example, she suggests Natalie's untidiness is 'my fault' because 'I didn't expect that much of her'. Similarly she reflects on how the way she treated Leanne may have had an effect as she describes being 'over-protective towards her which, might of, I suppose could have manifested itself in "oh well, you know, won't push it too much, won't force her to do it"' (although her recollections seem to differ from Leanne's on how much she was expected to do).

Rita also talks about the personalities of her daughters, but emphasises similarity in terms of how they were treated. While her eldest daughter Claire (42) 'was always very compliant, [um] she always wanted to please and she was, she read early, she, she naturally loved, she was [.] an ideal school child really', Rita's youngest daughter Allison 'was really independent' and 'sort of quite self-willed [um] and difficult to bring up'. Rita emphasises these differences as fundamental to the different selves of her daughters, for example, noting differences in Allison 'from being a new baby', and contrast to suggesting any different parenting practices:

> 'Claire was a dream to bring up and Bert and I always thought "Oh haven't we done a good job, we've really brought, we know how to bring a child up

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properly" and then we got Allison and we thought oh [laughing] we've done it just the same but one turns out one way and one turns out the other way.'

However, she also explained how she and her husband actively modelled a particular way of doing family to their daughters and reflects on the influence this had. While Rita talks about the differences between her daughters as children, she also suggests that how Allison 'turned out' did not end at this point (Rita describes her adult daughter as 'the most loving, caring, super daughter', while recognising 'at one time I never thought she would have come round [um] to that way'), reflecting the ongoing nature of this process (as Davies (2011) argues, the concept of 'turning out' relies on an understanding of time which does not separate past, present and future). Thus the ways in which the process of turning out was discussed were often contradictory, and drew on both natural and relational discourses.

Brenda (67) suggests that while mothers may have their own understanding of the origins of aspects of their daughters' behaviour, this is not always echoed by their daughters:

> 'But you know sometimes you'll think, they'll do something and you'll think "that went in?" [Jennifer laughs]…when you see your daughter doing something that you know you taught them to do [Jennifer: yeah] and I can't, I honestly can't put my finger on anything at this point in time but it's something you'll *see* and you'll think "oh, yeah, I taught her to do that" [Jennifer: mm]. But she probably doesn't realise that [Jennifer laughs]. And if I even suggested it, Kirsty [Brenda's eldest daughter] particularly would say "no mother, I don't do that" [Jennifer: yeah] no.' (original emphasis)

Brenda's reflections here demonstrate that, while a person may develop their own narrative identity through an autobiographical understanding of why they are the way they are, this is necessarily subjective. This is not to suggest that Brenda has a 'better' understanding of her daughter, rather, it is to emphasise the multiple identities of one person, as constituted through the internal-external dialectic of identification (Jenkins, 2008). Thus while (in Brenda's account), Kirsty would see herself as different from her mother, Brenda identifies her as carrying on particular traits, thereby linking mother and daughter. I would argue that the idea of taking forward parts of the past discussed here is not only useful for discussing personal identity, but can also be used

to analyse how ways of doing family can be seen to be embedded, which I will discuss in Chapter 8.

5.6   Household Work as Relational

As well as traits that were developed through relationships, household work was also described as part of ongoing mother/daughter relationships.[36] Early literature on grandparenthood suggests that the role of the grandparent is projected on the basis of biographical and intersubjective knowledge and is shaped by ideas of 'not-interfering', 'sharing' and 'not-spoiling' (Cunningham-Burley, 1985). The idea of 'not interfering' was found to be the most evident, emphasising that new families should be 'left on their own' and that they should not go against their children's wishes in terms of bringing up children. The importance of encouraging autonomy and choice, as in theories of individualisation, is clear here. Nevertheless, while 'not interfering' is still a prevalent cultural norm, it co-exists with a contradictory norm of 'being there' (Douglas and Ferguson, 2003; Mason et al., 2007). Mason et al. (2007) argue that, as they are also parents to adult children, grandparents experience ambivalence from the contradictory norms that children should be encouraged to be independent, autonomous selves, and that grandparents shoulder a sense of responsibility for how their grandchildren 'turn out'. Thus how the grandmothers do and display family is shaped by an attempt to balance these aspects of both parenting and grandparenting, and I will explore this in relation to household work. In this section, I first give some examples of how household work played a part in these relationships, illustrating how participants talked about practical help and about advice, and then go on to discuss how this can contribute to an understanding of relationality as a concept.

5.6.1 Housework

As well as providing childcare,[37] mothers helped their adult daughters in various ways with household work. Several of the daughters talked about their mothers helping with

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[36] Household work was also seen as part of other ongoing relationships, including with siblings, children and partners, which I will explore further in Chapters 7 and 8.

[37] Grandmothers are recognised to play an important role in looking after their grandchildren and providing childcare for their daughters (see, for instance, Wheelock and Jones, 2002). Among the younger generation participants, there were different examples of childcare provision from

household work when the children were born, including cooking meals, washing baby clothes and cleaning the bathroom, and some also talked about continued help:

> 'She still ends up, I don't ask her cos I just manage but she, she will do, do some ironing. She wants Oliver's clothes to be ironed and everything so she actually does that a bit for us and she's still like happy to do washing for us. I think she's just so [um..] she just wants to look after us I guess and, and help out so she does.' (Laura, 32)

> '[Um] Before we had children I think, I'm fairly sure that if my mum came she'd clean the bathroom. Cos it's kind of just the thing that she did, she'd just come and clean the bathroom…And then I think when we'd just had children, I think she would come and [um], she'd help me with the baby [um] and probably do some, cook some meals and do some housework [um] as well.' (Eleanor, 34)

> 'But I know when she comes round, you see when she comes round now, cos she has Alfie twice a week [Jennifer: yeah] so she's here twice a week during the day and she does loads, she'll, she'll hoover up sometimes and she'll clean things and she'll do the washing and then she'll clean bits on the washing machine.' (Nicola, 32)

This was also reflected in the interviews with these women's mothers, who discussed helping their daughters in various practical ways. Some of the older generation participants also talked about receiving help from their mothers when they had young children, and June (59) was unusual in the sample in talking about how she had helped her mother out with housework after she had left home:

> 'Well I used to go and change her beds, clean the windows, as I said do the gardening when I'd left home [Jennifer: Yeah]. General things like that. Sometimes I'd do her washing for her and [um..] yeah. She had the [..] children occasionally but it were very occasionally, for an hour while I popped to the shops or something [Jennifer: yeah]. But that was about it, it was usually me that helped my mum [Jennifer: mm].'

As I discussed in Chapter 3, it was not easy to attribute one social class to my participants, but on the basis of June's interview, and that of her daughter Kim, I noted

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grandparents, including regular help on a set day and childcare on an ad hoc basis. Other women spoke about a lack of childcare from parents, which in Eleanor's case shaped her decision to give up work for the period before both her children started school. Hannah described her mother being '*adamant* that she and my dad shouldn't babysit because young families, you know when you've got a young family you don't go out and have a social life' (original emphasis), which contributed to the 'tension around domestic stuff' in their relationship.

in my reflections that I read her as working-class and that these practices may reflect class differences in expectations of daughters (as discussed by Steedman, 1986). These household work practices demonstrate the active way in which mothers and daughters relate to each other and maintain their relationships.

However, as I suggested in the previous chapter in relation to Karen, a mother's practical help with the housework was not always a positive experience. In section 5.6.3 below, I discuss an example from Kate's interview, where she talked about a difficult relationship with her mother-in-law. One aspect of this was taking it upon herself to clean items in Kate's house:

> 'I think I remember one day she walked in and I got a little crystal vase and she looked at it and she just walked, she got hold of it, walked into the kitchen and washed it out. "It was so dusty, it's such a shame so I've washed it for you", you know [Jennifer: yeah], she used to do that kind of stuff yeah, to make me feel embarrassed [.].'

Kate (54) spoke about how being made to feel like she had 'failed' used to upset her, and how this subsequently affected other decisions, such as those around childcare, which was part of a broader public narrative of constraint (see Mason, 2004) in which she was not able to continue working in the same job; as she put it, it was 'just not worth it' to ask her mother-in-law to watch her children, because she felt under pressure for the house to be 'spotless' if her mother-in-law was going to see it.

Kate then draws on this example in explaining how she helps her daughter in a different way:

> 'It's not anything like how it was with my mother-in-law, you know her coming in and looking at vases and washing them to prove a point. It, it's [.] and it's not belittling [Jennifer: yeah], her, it's not belittling them and how they live, it's a genuine help. I don't just walk in and say "right I shall do this and I'll do that", I say "do you want to give me, do you want me to give you a hand?" Or Jodie will say "oh, I've got all these dishes" and I'll say "oh, do you want me to help you?" "yes, yes" [Jennifer: yeah].'

Although this does not relate to being a grandmother (as Jodie does not have children), the idea of not-interfering (Mason et al., 2007) is key here; any help from Kate should be requested or approved by her daughter. Returning to the role of biographies in

accounting for women's selves and their housework practices, Kate's explanation of how she helps her daughter with housework is shaped by her experiences with her mother-in-law, and thus the way in which she maintains her relationship with her daughter is framed biographically.

Talking from a different perspective, Lynne (58) mentions her daughter Abby who had, as her mother puts it, a 'horrendous' room. Jo (32) also talks about this in relation to her sister:

> 'Abby's room always looked like a tip, she could never find anything, it was always just kind of casual, disregarded and you'd climb over mounds of clothes to find the bed and it, that was just Abby's room.'

Jo's repeated use of 'always', and her description of the mess that was 'just Abby's room' suggests this is seen as who her sister is. As Davies (2011) has argued in relation to young people, there are various ways in which aspects of the self can appear to be 'fixed', for example in relation to differences between the natural or inner selves of siblings. Earlier in this chapter, I considered ideas of 'natural' tidiness, and to some extent Jo's account of her and her sister as 'massively different' in this way suggests 'natural' characteristics which could be seen to fix them as, effectively, 'the tidy one' and 'the untidy one':

> 'The thing that I still find really interesting is that Abby and I had exactly the same upbringing but our approaches to household management are so massively different and I wonder whether, is that just a natural characterisation of who we are.'

According to Jo, her mother is also a 'naturally tidy soul', and thus there is the potential for this mother/daughter relationship to be one that is fixed in terms of inherent differences. Lynne remembers that,

> 'Very occasionally she would invite me up and say "look I've done my room" and it was spotless but it wasn't spotless the next day, and I could never understand that because it had taken her all day and to me I can't understand if it takes you all day that you can't, that you don't then.'

Although she does not finish this point, moving on to talk about Abby buying a house, Lynne's inability to put into words the idea that having put in so much effort to tidy a room, somebody would not then *keep* it tidy points to a difficulty making sense of this behaviour. Later she highlights how her daughter's untidiness is something she personally struggles with ('I can't, I can't cope with that [Jennifer: yeah]. It doesn't, doesn't gel with me').

However, Lynne's account appears to emphasise Abby's untidiness as an immature practice that could be changed. When Abby moved into her own place, Lynne mentioned that 'I really thought it would be lovely and she'd be inviting us occasionally for meals', however she is not invited often (at the time of the interview, Lynne estimates it was eight or nine months ago). From Lynne's account it seems that Abby is particularly concerned about her mother's opinion: 'And if I've got some stuff for her she'll say "can you send me Dad down with that stuff?", I'll say "well no, Dad's not available" "well can you come and keep your eyes shut then?"'. This does not appear to just be Abby's perception; Lynne comments that 'I find it very difficult to bite my tongue' and admits to saying things like 'well it doesn't take much to keep it tidy like this'. Jo is also aware of her mother finding the state of Abby's house 'riling', but that she is trying to 'chivvy Abby on without sounding like a nagging parent'. From Lynne's account, the difficulties in her mother/daughter relationship with Abby seem to be partly based on expectations that having bought a house, her daughter would 'grow up' (in the sense of developing an identity of a responsible adult) and take care of her home, a transition her sister Jo spoke about in her interview (and I will discuss understandings of adulthood in relation to household work in the next chapter, in particular with a mini case-study of Nicola). However, Abby's continued untidiness limits the extent to which she and Lynne can relate as equals, two adult heterosexual women who can enjoy spending time together, having meals in a 'lovely' home. Instead, Lynne appears to be trying to avoid maintaining a parent/child dynamic, but by implicitly trying to avoid being 'told off' for the state of her house, it appears that Abby is continuing to identify her mother as a 'nagging parent'.

Lynne also mentioned tidying up Abby's house when she was away and cleaning the bathroom and kitchen as a 'nice surprise'. The doing of tasks that the daughter has chosen not to do (or not to do as often or in the same way) can be read as intending to

embarrass or belittle (as Kate does in the example above). In other cases, tasks can be included as part of a generational difference (see Chapter 6). Laura comments that she 'very very rarely' irons because 'I don't really have time and I don't see it as being *that* important' (original emphasis) but that her mother does some ironing for them. Reflecting on Laura's cohort more generally, Mary notes that

> 'I noticed all of Laura's university friends, none of them seemed to do any ironing, you know it was kind of unusual, only if they were going out did they ever iron. And they just don't bother and Laura *does not* iron.' (original emphasis)

She then comments that she 'would *have* to' (original emphasis) iron some of Robert's shirts, which she thinks 'look a bit creased'. Similarly, she remembers her daughter-in-law saying that '"I've never thought of washing my curtains" and I thought "Why have you never thought?" I, I was just so shocked at people'. She then notes that Laura 'wouldn't necessarily think of washing the curtains' (and indeed Laura includes this as something she 'very very rarely' does).

Different opinions on doing housework were also reported among friends; Kim (40) gives an example of the way one woman she knows talks about another: 'my other friend who's a lot like me will go "if she did some housework instead of sitting in bed reading a book in the afternoon, she may find her house is tidier"'. Kim uses this as a counter point to her own position (that it's her friend's house, so 'she can do what she wants in it to be honest'), and suggests that letting people get on with doing things their way is 'maturity'. However, within mother/daughter relationships, the sense of maternal responsibility for teaching children to be tidy and to take care of belongings (and the recognition of this by others) may frame these encounters in a different way.

5.6.2 Advice

As with other participants, Nicola and Brenda both talk about the role cooking, and advice about cooking, plays in their relationship:

> 'That is one of the things that [.] my mum sort of passed on and I've enjoyed, we've enjoyed doing it together and her showing me how to do things and I always ring her up and say "how do I do this?"… [Um] But I never knew how to make, I always use, anything to do with cooking I'll always ring my mum

up and she always knows [um]. So I quite like that we've got that kind of relationship with the cooking side of things.' (Nicola, 32)

'Oh yes, Nicola's on the phone all the time [laughs]…she'll ring me up and say "how do you make so and so?" "[sigh] what?" [laughs, Jennifer laughs] and "give me a break and I'll ring you back". So I have to look it up in the books.' (Brenda, 67)

Some women also talked about getting advice on various other household work tasks, and there were examples of speaking to both mothers and fathers:

'Cleaning tips sometimes I'd go like "Oh I've got a mark on such and such" and she'd tell me how to get it out.' (June, 59)

'If I have to do something I'm not sure about doing like, I don't know cleaning the curtains or sewing which I'm not very, I don't do often, she will help me with that as well so I do get some guidance from my mum, yeah.' (Laura, 32)

'We only moved to this house in the summer and it needs a lot of decoration and there's a lot of rooms without curtains so there have been housey kind of things that have cropped up [Jennifer: yeah] where I've thought "I'll just ring my mum". But equally my dad as well cos he's very practical [Jennifer: mm], DIY things it would be him that I'd ring.' (Amy, 33)

'DIY things I'd always shy away from doing those if I could. I've always had a Dad who's very good at that so [um] so [.] I've always shouted for my dad to help me [um].' (Claire, 42)

Margaret also noted how advice about particular household products could be passed 'down the generations', as 'my mum had a Kenwood[38] and I've got one and Amy's got one now on my advice and I would get that from my mum'. As I will discuss in Chapter 8, the idea of being able to get help from a parent in this way can be seen in terms of displaying a family that works in terms of ongoing support.

Advice about bringing up children was also mentioned, for instance:

'She'll be the first person I'll go to for advice, and when she was a new-born, you know she wouldn't stop crying, like, I'd get Mum down here [laughs] just to check she was ok.' (Leanne, 24)

'I mean Jodie, my eldest, went through a horrible [.] phase of being bullied at school and yeah, I'd talk to her [Kate's mother] about that.' (Kate, 54)

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[38] Kenwood is a brand of food processor.

Lynne (58) remembers thinking through decisions herself, deciding on a planned course of action but then asking her mother (she mentions starting her daughter on solid foods as an example). She links this to the way in which they spent time together:

> 'Yeah you just [.] I suppose with seeing my mother couple of times a week anyway, you know it [..] you just talk through things while you're eating don't you, as you're having [Jennifer: yeah] I mean we never ever sat with food on our knees we always, we always sat round a table and we ate together so you talked about things.'

Rather than needing to actively choose to ring her mother to ask for advice, spending time with her every week allowed for support as part of their family practice of eating at the table and talking, rather than eating in front of the television. This functions to display a close family that works in contrast to an implied generalised other that does not have 'proper meals' (see Chapter 8 for further discussing of how participants displayed family in terms of foodwork and 'proper meals'). As well as displaying a sense of a family that works, Lynne makes a generational comparison between her getting advice from her mother and her daughter looking on the Internet, looking things up in books 'and all the rest of it'.

The issue of generations was raised by several participants in relation to advice about bringing up children, and maternal advice was not always accepted and acted upon, if it conflicted with other sources of guidance which were seen as more official. Nicola (32) gives some examples of her mother dismissing doctors' advice as 'a load of twaddle, it wasn't like that in my day', including the position in which babies should sleep, what Nicola could eat when she was pregnant and managing Alfie's behaviour. However, Nicola sees this as 'old-fashioned' and comments that 'no way I would do some of the things she says'. Sophie recognises that advice has changed so she takes her parents' suggestions 'with a pinch of salt', but she also comments that her parents were always 'very good' in that they would say 'oh we did it like this but obviously you do it differently'. The idea of finding advice 'old-fashioned' is not limited to the younger generation. Jean (66) discusses how her children will not listen to her advice:

> 'Eleanor and Rosie, you know both went to the childbirth trust and all this, that and the other. As Eleanor'll say "Oh no it doesn't say this in the book and the

midwife said this and the midwife said that, no no. And the computer says this and the computer says that" so no [laughs].'

However, she also remembers how she disagreed with advice from her mother about wrapping babies, and recognises 'again it's a generation thing'. While this theme of generational differences emerged (which I will discuss in more detail in the next chapter), some women talked about getting advice from their peers, including siblings, cousins and friends which reflected more recent parenting guidance.

Some of the older generation women also emphasised their self-sufficiency, or at least their sufficiency as a couple, in terms of not having someone to go to for advice:

> 'I think I just learnt. Cos when I left home that was it more or less. I mean I'd go down mum's three, four times a week but like you'd go back home and cook, wouldn't say anything [Jennifer: yeah]. I'd just get on with it like.' (June, 59)

> 'Bert and I just supported each other really.' (Rita, 68)

> 'You rely on books and stuff and, well, fine, I did alright.' (Brenda, 67)

Both Rita and Brenda lost their mothers as children, and talked about a lack of family support. Brenda emphasises self-sufficiency, in terms of how she was brought up (or indeed 'brought myself up'), and this forms the basis for why 'I brought them [her daughters] up to be fairly independent and look after themselves'. However, Rita sees a lack of family support as a reason for why she and her husband 'were always conscious showing them [her daughters] what we believed a good family life would, would be'. I will discuss this relationship between biography and family further in Chapter 8.

5.6.3 Reflections on Relationality

In interviewing mothers and daughters, I was able to consider one of the mother/daughter relationships of my participants from two perspectives. For some of the daughters, becoming a mother was linked to a positive change in the relationship with their own mothers, as with Sally and Karen in the previous chapter. Finch and Mason (1993) have written about reciprocal assistance over time, and the personal

investment in particular relationships. As I will show, it is important to recognise that a close, mutually supportive relationship was not always the case, and therefore this should not be understand as a 'natural' part of these relationships.

Amy (33) discussed the changing relationship with her mother:

> 'I always had, I would describe my relationship with my mum when I was younger as a very difficult relationship and people always said it was because we were too alike which I hated and she hated I think. But we had quite a difficult relationship when I was growing up [um]. I think we just clashed a lot. Whereas when I had Joseph was the time when we were probably closest because it felt like she knew what was going on more than anybody did. So she kind of appreciated how hard it was and how difficult it was and she was the one who said "you're just going to have to tell people no, you're just going to have to tell people if they do want to help this is what you want" and she's a very practical person so I think I just needed that practical help at the time so actually we have a much better relationship now that we have, now that I've had children.'

Looking back at Sally's account of her changing relationship with her mother discussed in the previous chapter, there are clear overlaps in how these are narrated (the difficult teenage relationship, framed in terms of similarity, leading to a characterisation of the mother as the person who can best understand what her daughter is going through). Where daughters did not understand their relationships with their mothers in this way (as with Hannah and Eleanor), they seemed to construct narratives framed in terms of difference and a lack of understanding from their mothers. This then supports an account of trying to do gender/heterosexuality and family differently through making different choices and developing new practices with their own children (see Chapters 7 and 8).

Daughters also reflected on ways they actively maintained their relationships with their mothers as their children got older. Fiona's mother, Irene, picks up her grandson Isaac from school one day a week and gives him an evening meal, before his father picks him up. Fiona (48) explains this as a conscious decision, at least partly in response to what happened when her brother's family moved away:

> 'My mum used to tell me, I don't know if she ever told my brother, but she used to tell me that her relationship with Douglas, my nephew, it just seemed to dwindle because she hardly saw him and then that meant when they did want a sleepover or babysitting or something he was more reluctant.'

Thus while she could find an alternative arrangement for her son (such as an after-school club), she explains that regular time with his grandparents is important:

> 'I want Isaac to feel like, you know, that's his grandparents' home and he feels really comfortable there and I don't want him to see them only occasionally and only when we're with him. So I've made that happen.'

Nevertheless, she recognises that looking after Isaac, particularly overnight, could potentially be a 'strain' on her mother, and as 'she'd never say it to me', this suggests that she sees a need for continued awareness as part of this relationship.

Smart (2007) emphasises that relationality is not inherently a positive thing, and looking at household work as part of ongoing relationships can be seen to demonstrate this. In her interview, Kate (54) told a story about her mother-in-law, which she sets up as being about 'the worst thing we ever did really' and then sets the scene, about three years into their marriage, when they were both working full-time and she was finding doing all the housework as hard work:

> 'A few girls had cleaners so I suggested we got a cleaner, and guess what he suggested, that his mum did it. She used to do a bit of cleaning. And that was the worst thing that we did because [..] oh she used to, for a start I used to feel that everything had to be impeccably clean before she actually came [Jennifer: mm] which defeated the object. But no matter how clean it was and tidy, she'd always look down her nose and criticise and say "oh I came, I had to do so much, your kitchen was a disgusting mess" and, you know "gosh I got all that dust down from such and such a place". And it was always addressing me, you know [Jennifer: yeah] yeah [Jennifer: yeah], so not Rory, you fail, basically "you failed, I had to do this, you're not keeping your house clean" so it. And I used to, I was so, a bit different nowadays but I just used to cry [laughs], she used to make me cry [Jennifer: oh].'

These continued actions impacted on both on how Kate experienced their relationship, and her sense of self. For example, talking about after she had children she notes that

> 'I didn't have anybody else. If I called on my mother-in-law then it was just not worth it, you know cos of the house situation and having to, everything to be spotless so I did feel slightly [..] isolated.'

Thus her understanding of her options at this time was influenced by the ongoing relationship with her mother-in-law, and issues of household work were felt to play a

significant role in that. This is similar to the ideas of 'relational thinking' discussed by Mason (2004), in which decisions are made in the context of one's relationships. Mason explores various ways in which narratives of decisions about where to live drew on connections with others, and the way Kate talks about deciding to work from home as a child-minder can be seen as a relational narrative of constraint and conflict (as well as conflict with her mother-in-law, she mentions a lack of input from her mother who was working full-time and a husband whose career 'was just so important, he couldn't support me', so that her attempt to work outside the home with two daughters was unsuccessful). Kate also compares her situation to that of other women she knew whose mothers would look after their children while they did other things and notes that she 'used to think "oh, I wish I had that"'. This imagined relationship then plays a part in her explanation of how she arranges her timetable to try and spend at least some time every week with her daughter and granddaughter. Thus narratives of both past and present decisions are framed relationally.

As I have previously mentioned, values of independence and self-sufficiency were evident across accounts. This influenced how some women talked about their relationships with their mothers. For example, Kim (40) emphasised that she never 'took advantage' of her mother, and discussed some of the ways in which she 'would give her stuff back in other ways', such as paying for her mother to have her hair cut or buying her a sofa as a thank you for the childcare she provided 'because she wouldn't have money off me'. Similarly, Nicola (32) talks about trying to do nice things for her mother, like take her out for lunch and getting her 'a really nice Christmas present. Cos I thought well [.] cos she does so much for us I can splash out on her, cos she saved us however much in [er] childcare fees'. She also discusses how she feels bad about not going to her mother's house more often, something she recognises her mother would like but is deterred from doing because of the cost of petrol (and she does not want to take money from her mother for petrol). Such financial considerations point to the way in which other structural factors influence how relationships can be maintained.

As discussed in the previous chapter, Sally (32) talks about the occasions when she has lived with her parents as an adult and describes how,

'I live then as I live on my own, like I take, you know, responsibility and I'll do stuff around the house and I'll bring shopping in so I think she values that and sees that I do, that I don't take advantage of her'.

This is in contrast to her brothers who are still 'looked after', and Sally's contrast between 'responsibility' and being 'looked after', with the latter as something inherently childish, draws on contemporary understandings of adulthood in how she constructs her sense of self (which I discuss further in the next chapter). However, it is possible to see ways in which Sally too is 'looked after' by her mother. Karen (55) talks about how her daughter has been finding some aspects of childcare difficult, and how 'she has had a couple of occasions where she has got quite upset recently, and I've sort of had to take Leah up and put Leah in her cot and then comfort her [Sally]'. Karen also talks about both reassuring Sally (telling her Leah not behaving for her is a 'normal thing') and trying to give her advice.

Nicola's mother, Brenda (67), describes how she helps her daughter by doing vacuuming and washing up, and explains why she does this:

'So really my other days, Mondays and Thursdays I do as much as I can for Nicola, do some washing for her if I can. [Um] Because it's, I know what it's like when you're working and you've got children, it's, you've got to balance haven't you what, what's important and what's not. You know, it's not good making yourself exhausted [um] cos, you know you're no good to anyone are you when you do that? [Jennifer: no] So I see the, part of looking after Alfie is helping Nicola out with other things that she needs doing.' (Brenda)

One way to interpret these practices is through the lens of the mothering of adult daughters. In her work on maternal practice, Ruddick defines a mother as 'a person who takes on responsibility for children's lives and for whom providing for children is a significant part of her or his working life' (1990, p.40). For Ruddick, these practices take place in the context of various 'demands' as to what maternal work involves, which she views as emanating from children, social groups with which a mother identifies, and contemporary society more generally. While Ruddick's understanding of children in this context is as dependent people at a particular stage in the life course, 'children' is also a term that can be understood relationally with reference to parents; at 30, I am still, and always will be, the child of my parents. Thus while the work of mothering, as with other family practices, should be understood

temporally and relationally in terms of how it changes, 'providing for children' in a broad sense does not necessarily end at some arbitrary age at which the child is deemed to be an adult. Furthermore, the idea of a role-reversal, in which a child 'mothers' their parent complicates our understanding of the term (see, for example, Sharpe, 1994 on father/daughter relationships over time).

However, an understanding of 'adulthood' in Western, neoliberal society is framed in terms of independence and responsibility (and this is implied in the idea of a 'delayed adulthood thesis', in which these characteristics are seen as being deferred (Blatterer, 2010)), and the theme of valuing self-sufficiency evident across my interviews reflects this. Nevertheless, and as I have shown, there are various ways in which mothers' household work practices are used to actively maintain mother/daughter relationships (and vice versa). Assertions of the importance of individual independence, and ongoing supportive family practices reflects the contradictions between individualistic and relational understandings of the self in contemporary society, contradictions which are evident within personal narratives.

5.7   Conclusion

In this chapter I have shown that by recognising household work as part of a 'personal life', it can be understood as playing a part in processes of identification, and this can be demonstrated in relation to the concepts of Smart's connectedness thesis (2007). My research has demonstrated some of the ways in which biographical understandings of household work can be used to explain why someone is the way they are, and account for particular practices. By looking at household work biographies, it is possible to see how what appear to be similar experiences can be used to serve different narrative purposes in terms of explaining a current identity. Personal narratives were also framed in terms of ideas of inheritance and naturalistic discourses. However, recognising how participants also produced relational understandings of themselves and others, demonstrated the contradictory ways in which people were identified as being embedded within relationships. I also considered how examples of household work, including childcare, housework and non-routine housework played a part in ongoing relationships, as did advice about these topics. These practices were seen as contributing to the relationships, although not necessarily in a positive way, as

relational narratives highlighted conflict, as well as inclusion and co-presence (Mason, 2004). Thus daughters in both generations described mothers and other characters providing helpful advice and assistance, but also criticising or not being actively involved in ways which shaped the subsequent decisions and actions of the daughter in question.

Overall, I have identified ways in which participants' accounts of who they were and how they got to be that way were constituted relationally (in terms of both formative and ongoing relationships (Smart, 2007)). However, as I set out in Chapter 2, an understanding of the self as relational conflicts with more individualistic constructions of a reflexive self living an 'elective biography' (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2002, p.3; Giddens, 1991), and I have started to explore the ways in which ideas of independence and self-sufficiency influenced how participants constructed their narrative identities. In the next chapter, I will consider how different dimensions of time shape stories of household work, reflecting on how ideas of independence and interdependence are invoked in discussions of childhood and adulthood.

Chapter 6: Temporality in Personal Narratives of Household Work

6.1   Introduction

In the previous chapter, I discussed Smart's work on personal life, and demonstrated how concepts of relationality provided helpful analytical tools with regard to women's narratives of household work. In this chapter I will argue for the importance of considering various aspects of temporality in relation to narratives of household work, and reflect on how a temporal understanding complements a relational one. The aim of this chapter is to explore how different dimensions of time shape women's narratives of household work, continuing to build on the idea of a 'relational narrated self' which can be seen to change over time as women embody different identities over the life course (or make sense of an identity in different ways, as in Miller's (2005) longitudinal study of first time-mothers). The relationships in which narrated selves are embedded also shift over time (Somers, 1994). Similarly the discourses and public narratives which are used in the construction of personal narratives should be understood in their historical contexts.

As Hockey et al. (2004) demonstrate, one participant can weave an agentic account in which history, generation and biography interrelate. This allows for an understanding of her 'emerging narrated self' (Doucet and Mauthner, 2008, p.406), as she describes taking up various 'positions of resistance' (Hockey et al., 2007, p.61) in relation to the gendered, heterosexual and familial identities she embodies. As I argued in the previous chapter, this is a *relational* narrated self (Stanley, 1993; Doucet and Mauthner, 2008) and the various relationships with other selves and other narratives that form the material reality in which any particular self is narrated can be seen to shift over time. The various forms of relationality described in Smart's connectedness thesis (2007; see the previous chapter for a detailed discussion), allows for a temporal dimension, for example in terms of how relationships can be maintained or allowed to fade as chronological time passes, or how moving through the life course and shifts in family relationships can change the context in which memories are constructed. It is

these links between temporality and relationality and how they play out in terms of household work which I aim to explore further in my work.

Within a life course framework, our understanding of 'growing up' is not simply a matter of having been alive for a particular number of days, but shaped by understandings of adulthood which are historically and culturally specific. As I will explore in this chapter, contemporary Western ideas of individualistic and autonomous adulthood influence how the participants in my study narrated themselves, and others, in stories of household work over the life course. Hockey and James have suggested that within families 'childish dependency on parental care is expected to give way at a certain age to independent adulthood, a pattern inscribed most readily through familial role expectation', and a functionalist understanding of 'growing up' would be understood as 'the movement towards the achievement of independent personhood', a role with more power than that of the dependent child (2003, p.167, p.164). However, this expectation can suggest an overly simplistic conflation of dependence/childhood, independence/adulthood (and dependence again in old age, see Hockey and James, 1993), which obscures the more subtle ways in which dependence and independence can interrelate across generations within families.

Blatterer argues for understanding contemporary adulthood in the context of broader individualistic challenges to the notion of standard biographies, claiming:

> 'When individuals thus act and think against a background of a seemingly infinite plethora of options, the way we *do* adulthood too is subject to pluralisation and to interminable change.' (2010, p.11, original emphasis)

While the 'story' of what adulthood should be is based on various juxtapositions with apparently adolescent qualities, including replacing 'self-centredness with responsibility and commitment for self and others' (ibid, p.13), Blatterer argues that an idea of being a responsible and independent 'grown up' in paid work, married, raising children and living in a house of one's own reflects an imagining of what adulthood should be based on post-war understanding (when full-time long-term work was within reach for the majority, early marriage and family formation were common, and what being 'grown up' meant was clear).

Being born at a particular time and moving through the life course as part of a particular cohort (or social generation), does not *determine* 'certain definite modes of behaviour, feeling and thought' (Mannheim, 1952 [1923], p.291). A narrative approach takes into account how people can use generationalism as part of explanation of why they, or another character, behaves in certain way, along with the biographical explanations discussed previously. As well as connections to various specific people, narratives of household work can also be framed around intra-generational connections (for example, foodwork practices or standards of cleanliness). White (2013) has explored how generationalism manifests in various ways in public narratives, in the sense of a focus on different experiences of groups of people born at different times, while downplaying divisions *within* these groups. Other recent studies have suggested that consciousness has shifted between generations to such an extent that young people are left without 'route maps' for how to live their lives (Furlong and Carvel, 2007). Nevertheless, Bertaux and Thompson (2005) argue for evidence of continuity between generations in the form of intergenerational transmission of culture, emphasising how cultural habits are passed on by individuals. A synthesis of themes of *both* continuity and change can shape a story; narratives framed by notions of difference between generations can also work to connect the narrator with a particular, and implicitly superior age cohort, and thus 'asserting change and difference may well contribute to achieving a narrative goal which is in fact about connection and continuity' (Hockey, 2008, p.18).

In this chapter I will look at how household work is discussed in relation to the life course, in particular focusing on the theme of 'growing up', before moving on to look at how ideas of generational shifts shape how participants construct relational narrated selves, as well as how they identify other people. I will then reflect on the relationship between biography and history using one participant's account as a case study, demonstrating how she constructs a sense of herself in relation to others over the life course, and in terms of a shifting historical context. Throughout the chapter as a whole, I will demonstrate how an understanding of the interplay between temporality and relationality across social dimensions offers a useful theoretical framework for understanding women's accounts of household work.

6.2   Life Course

In this section, I will look at how the women I interviewed talked about household work over their own personal life courses. As I set out in Chapter 2, I am focusing on analysing the relational narrated selves generated in my research and thus reflecting on how continuities and/or changes discussed by my participants contribute to the personal narratives they are constructing throughout their interviews.

6.2.1 Household Work as Children

I asked all my interviewees about their experiences of housework as children, covering, for example, what they remembered about their parents' housework, what they themselves did and were expected to do, and whether they were taught or shown any household work tasks.[39] Participants' narratives varied in terms of how much they did as children. Some of the women in their thirties and forties talked about doing very little, for example Eleanor (34) and Fiona (48) did not have any 'set tasks' or 'duties' around the house, although both suggested that anything they did do to help their mothers was appreciated. Similarly, Sophie (41) was not expected to do much: 'So we were supposed to, kind of, you know get stuff off the floor [um] but we weren't particularly expected to clean our own rooms.' Claire (42) also does not remember doing much, although she did ironing and cleaning as a teenager for extra money.

Others of a similar age were expected to do regular jobs and to help their parents out with various household tasks:

> 'Abby, my sister and I, always had really set things that we had to do on certain days….[Um] And we always used to change our beds and one of us had to help mum and dad change their bed so there was kind of set things and then periodically we'd have to do the hoovering or the dusting.' (Jo, 32)

> 'We'd get down from the table and we'd stack the dishwasher, we'd empty the dishwasher, you know we kind of had those as our jobs, washing up as well, I do remember kind of taking turns to, who's going to wash and who's going to dry [Jennifer: yeah]. So yeah we were encouraged and asked and if the answer

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[39] Clearly there are overlaps here with my discussion of memories in the previous chapter. Again in this section I am considering how memories were constructed in the interview context, but also reflecting on the ways in which these are linked to understandings of one's particular family, cultural understandings of childhood and a sense of self.

was ever no, it was kind of politely encouraged that it did have to happen.' (Amy, 33)

'We were expected to help out, and we had [um] but not in an awful way but just shown what to do and expected to participate really rather than [Jennifer: mm] [um] rather than of necessity, and I think we were both pretty compliant. But I remember we both had kind of diagrams on our wall of what each job was and what we were meant to do.' (Hannah, 43)

As I suggested in the previous chapter, women's biographical household work narratives incorporated similar childhood experiences in different ways, and so women who were expected to help did not necessarily use these memories in the same way. Hannah talked about her mother's attitude to housework more broadly and the influence this had on her later decisions to view certain tasks as non-essential (see Chapter 7 for more discussion of this), while developing housework routines played a more significant role in Jo's narrative, as she talked in detail about the various systems she had put in place for managing housework tasks.

There were also differences among some of the older women. Mary (64) did not have particular jobs but she helped her mother by doing things with her younger siblings in the evenings. She comments:

'I did have a lot of responsibility. They used to go to church and, see I was nine when they were born and my mum used to go to church on a Sunday evening and I used to bath my brother and sister and put them to bed.'

She also talks about doing spring cleaning, although 'it wasn't something that was expected, I just sort of did it every so often'. June (59) mentions various jobs around the house (including washing up, cooking with her mother, hoovering and laying the table for lunch on a Saturday). However, Rita (68) notes that

'I don't think I had a regular job that I had to do [um] you know, to earn spending money or anything like that…And I was spoiled really [Jennifer: mm]. I think I could have, if I wanted something I could have it so I never had an incentive to try and earn myself some money.'

Some of the participants who were expected to help related this to perceived social norms at that time:

> 'I think we must have washed up because I think everybody washed up in those days. I think [..] I do remember having a visitor…she went straight to the kitchen sink and started washing up and people *always* used to, offer to help. You, you're, you were kind of brought up to do that [um].' (Mary, original emphasis)

Similarly, June notes that it 'sounds daft but from being a child we always had our jobs to do [Jennifer: mm] so it's something that you just did.' While Rita describes doing less, referring to herself as 'spoiled' suggests this was less usual. The idea of being expected to wash up in other people's homes was also one that Jo, a younger generation participant, remembered, both on family visits and when she went on her own to friends' houses, where her behaviour would reflect back on her parents, and particularly her mother. As a result, she comments that 'even now I find myself offering to help a bit at somebody's house just because that's, I suppose because that's a product of my upbringing'. Although there is a sense that there have been some cohort shifts in terms of the discourses of appropriate chores for children (from responsibilities for routine household work, to a focus on schoolwork, to a concern with responsibility but only in relation to 'relatively trivial tasks' (Rutherford, 2009, p.348)) it is important to recognise people in the context of various relationships which may have shaped understandings of what they feel expected to do.

Fiona was a teenager in the late 1970s and early 1980s, and perceives factors that influenced her mother *not* encouraging her to do housework:

> 'I don't think she wanted me to grow up thinking doing housework or being a homemaker was the be all and end all of everything, and that it was much more important to think about [um] I mean if I say having a career that makes it sound like I was pushed academically which I wasn't but it was much more considered, [um] you know, you've got other skills as well as being a homemaker. And I think perhaps she pushed that a little bit more because of her own generation and so on, so like I said we were never expected to do any formal tasks apart from maybe tidy our bedrooms.'

Some of the women who had children in the 1970s and 1980s reinforced this idea in terms of their motivations, for example Jean (66) commented that while she didn't have a 'career' she encouraged her daughters, telling them 'look, there's no job you can't do' and that their brother 'doesn't have to be the doctor' when they were playing. Her daughter Eleanor recognised that,

> 'My mum put a lot of emphasis on us doing schoolwork, like homework, and then when we got a bit older and doing exams, a lot of revision. And she'd rather that we focused on that than helping her do jobs.'

However, Jean recalls learning how to look after a house as part of her education at secondary school, including cleaning, laundry, cooking and meal planning, which she described as 'very good training'. Karen (55) recalled a division between girls and boys at school, with the girls learning about 'looking after the house and all that sort of thing' while the boys did metalwork and woodwork. Thus as well as memories of housework at home, school played a part in the stories that were constructed.

As with accounts of family, in talking about their formal education, women weaved narratives from personal memories and a broader sense of educational shifts. Jean compares her own education described above to that of her children, who 'maybe did five sessions of cookery' but 'learnt a lot of other things we didn't have to learn'. While women construct personal accounts of household work, these are shaped by their reflections of historical circumstances. Nevertheless, in constructing different narrative identities, the influence of, for example, particular education policies can be minimised in comparison to more recent events and active choices of the participant herself. For example, Irene (75) downplays her family and school experiences in a narrative that emphasises her actions in learning to cook, such as putting together an 'encyclopaedia' of Good Housekeeping magazines and working out how to make recipes from those. Therefore some accounting for one's current household work practices and attitudes can be framed *in spite of* childhood experiences.

6.2.2 Household Work as Adults

The period of late teens and early twenties was narrated differently by participants, although they seemed to draw on wider discourses, which varied in availability depending on what a woman did after leaving her parents' home. Most of the participants went to university, lived away from home for nurse or teacher training or lived with other adults outside of family or couple relationships. Those who went to university drew on a discourse of students as not caring about housework to explain 'messiness':

> 'Really messy. We were both students so we just didn't care, it was just like either like doing uni work so we didn't have the time or going out partying so the next day you wouldn't feel like cleaning up [laughs, Jennifer: yeah] after a party.' (Leanne, 24)

> 'But the house did get into quite a, bit of mess really as a lot of student houses do though I must say nowhere near as bad.' (Laura, 32)

> 'I mean we would clean it but not very often and every time you did it was a massive job, you know cos of all the bits you hadn't, it wasn't something you kept on top of or did on a regular basis, it was something you did when the house was so vile that you couldn't stand it anymore [Jennifer, yeah].' (Sophie, 41)

Jo also suggests this is reinforced by landlords who provide older equipment: 'And of course they're always some really old-fashioned, ancient hoover that weighs a ton because they never give you nice ones in student accommodation'. As I had introduced myself to my participants as a PhD student, I felt that my participants recognised that I had also been an undergraduate student and therefore potentially assumed a shared understanding of how things were organised among students (as in Jo's 'of course').

Moving on from university and 'growing up' is also used as part of explanations about shifting to doing more housework, and to caring more about the tidiness and cleanliness of one's home:

> 'I think because it was house that he bought it wasn't a st, we owned, well he owned the house. It wasn't a student house, it wasn't a shared house. So we did do, we did do more housework there than we would, definitely would have done in sort of, than I did in a shared house.' (Eleanor)

Jo also talks about 'my, sort of, that sort transition period if you will from us kind of being university students and then being kind of fully fledged grown-ups with, homeowners', giving the example of buying 'nice' table lamps and cushions for her room when they lived in a shared house. However, in some cases this was also connected with home ownership (as for Eleanor). Margaret (60) spoke about wanting to keep their newly built home clean and tidy:

> 'I suppose the house we moved in and we were finishing it off gradually, it was quite novel because it was all new and it was what we'd designed and built so therefore you were very proud of it, and it wasn't difficult to do, to keep something nice and clean and tidy that you'd achieved [Jennifer: mm].'

The link between 'growing up' and taking care of possessions and spaces was also noted by Nicola (32), who constructed a detailed narrative about 'my journey from an absolute scruffbag [laughs] to, I don't know, a mum', in response to a question about leaving her parent's home. This covers various living arrangements, including a former partner and various housemates, but also offers an interesting self-narrative that illustrates how she has 'grown up' (and what that means to her).

6.2.2.1 'Growing Up': Nicola's Story

Nicola first moved out to live with a fiancé, who did all the cooking, washing and cleaning. She tries to make sense of this division, and draws on a biographical understanding: 'I think because I just moved out of home, and I wasn't used to doing that much really [er…] I was just very untidy and messy'. She describes 'looking back' on doing nothing in the house as 'shameful', assessing her past behaviour from the context of the present. The idea that one should feel 'shame' for not contributing to household work indicates the potential importance of this work to one's sense of self. After splitting up with her fiancé, Nicola moved in with a friend and her boyfriend, and describes how in her bedroom 'the floor was covered, you could not see the carpet, oh it was disgusting [laughs]'. Explaining this, she notes that 'I just couldn't be bothered to pick my clothes up' and remembers thinking 'oh it's so messy now, it would take too long to tidy up, I'll just keep putting stuff on top'. Nevertheless, Nicola distinguishes between this untidiness and being 'unclean', commenting that she did used to clean the bathroom and kitchen (while her friend's boyfriend 'used to leave stuff festering everywhere'). While Nicola expresses a certain level of disgust at the actions of her former self, there is a limit as to how far she will take this characterisation, and using a more extreme example allows for this.

After moving out, Nicola lived with various other housemates, including an older friend who she thought 'with her being older she wanted to look after me' which was 'like living with another mum again'. The idea of being 'looked after', particularly by 'another mum', suggests that despite being chronologically an adult, that Nicola's subjective age at this point in her life course did not necessarily correspond. In particular she is implying a social and gendered understanding of 'proper' adulthood

in terms of idealised motherhood against which she constructs her own relational self. While Nicola continues to describe living situations in which she was untidy, she also mentions a potential turning point:

> 'But I think then was when I started to think "right you need to get your act together now, this is ridiculous". I'd come in, walk into the bedroom, again couldn't see the carpet cos there was stuff everywhere. "You can't keep living like this" [laughs, Jennifer laughs].'

Interestingly, Nicola frames this in terms of heterosexuality, as she was concerned about the views of the occasional 'gentleman caller' who came to stay, and commented 'I'm never going to get a keeper if they come in and see this everywhere [laughs, Jennifer laughs]'. The implication that men value tidiness in a potential female partner points to a way in which the identity of a 'good wife' is understood, and subsequently seen as desirable for many women (Jackson, 1999; see also VanEvery, 1995). As I will discuss in the next chapter, several individual women within participants' stories were described as messy and several individual men were described as tidy, however, participants still often drew on a discourse of gender difference. Elsewhere in her interview, Nicola suggests that while her partner does not expect her to do everything,

> 'He does [..] he never really says it but I think he would like me to be more, a lot more domesticated and sort of, be your typical sort of housewife, come home from work, tea's on the table, everything's clean. Ain't never gonna happen [laughs].'

While Nicola is happy to describe herself as 'the wrong girl' for someone wanting 'a domestic goddess', in this narrative, she does highlight an increasing sense of responsibility for the tidiness of the house she lives in.

Nicola makes sense of this as 'starting to grow up a bit really' and a desire to 'settle down'. The idea that while she was getting over her past relationship she was 'like '[dismissive noise] whatever' and just did what I wanted' can be seen as reflecting a lack of consideration for others, that can be associated with childishness (and, as I discuss below, some mothers mentioned trying to teach their children to not expect someone else to tidy up their things and to take some responsibility for their own belongings). However, as I mentioned above, 'growing up' is understood to include thinking more about the effect of one's actions on others, with the replacing 'self-

centredness with responsibility and commitment for self and others' (Blatterer, 2010, p.13). In the next house Nicola shared with a friend, she describes making 'more of a conscious effort' to be tidy, and remember 'I was always, always hoovering' (this contrasts with the first time she lived with a friend and doesn't remember vacuuming at all). Nevertheless, despite a reflexive account of this process of growing up, at times Nicola offers a naturalised understanding of appropriate adult attitudes, linking wanting to be tidier and cleaner with 'getting older'. As I discussed in Chapter 5, in various aspects of their narratives, participants drew on a range of understandings, including biological, cultural and relational, and it is important to recognise the way that all of these understandings can be incorporated into an account of 'turning out' (Davies, 2011).

Although Nicola mentioned an earlier moment of thinking about 'getting her act together', it was when she was living on her own (and after the flat had quickly become a 'tip') that she thought 'no, this is it'. She talks about cleaning the whole flat and getting rid of stuff, and realising that leaving clothes screwed up so they got mouldy 'isn't any way to live'. She described that as 'my epiphany moment', as part of a more general 'finding myself moment' and a 'new beginning' of being in a new place, with the possibility of being a 'new me'. This language reflects the 'psy discourses' (Rose, 1998) that emphasise an inner psychology that strives for self-realisation, and like the natural explanation of 'getting older' and the narrative constructed from various memories, illustrates the different ways in which people can make sense of how they have become the person they understand themselves to be at the moment of the interview.

While Nicola still describes herself as untidy, she is not 'horrendous' (compared to five years ago). She summarises the way in which she described her attitude changing since she left home:

> 'I mean my side of the bedroom at the minute is a little bit messy and I keep looking at it thinking "I need to sort this out" [laughs]. Now it's things start to annoy me and grate on me a bit, whereas before I'd be like "[pffft], whatever" and now I'm like "no I can't deal with this" and I'll have moments where I'm like "right, I'll just blitz things", which I never used to do [Jennifer: mm].'

The idea of 'I' changing over this period reflects the way in which Nicola has constructed a narrated self that has been through a 'journey' in order to become a mother. While participants such as Nicola and Sally describe different levels of 'natural' tidiness, both narrate growing up as a process that extends beyond the age of 18, and that seems to end with 'settling down' into a heterosexual relationship and motherhood (see Chapter 4 for analysis of Sally's personal narrative). Similarly VanEvery begins her account of the research she conducted on alternative living arrangements with the same normative conflation from women she lived with at university: 'we all knew that one day we would grow up, get married and have kids' (1995, p.1).

Participants spoke about the importance of providing a good environment for children as part of how they displayed family (see Chapter 8). Arguably, the ways in which some participants highlight how a clean and tidy house can contribute to longer term goals, such as the way they wanted to bring up their children, points to a motivation for doing tasks that includes delayed gratification, despite the repetitive nature of the tasks themselves. Much of this assumes a need to have a clean and tidy house in order to mother in the 'right' way. However, Hannah (43) actively challenged this assumption in terms of the tidiness of her house (although like other participants, she explicitly states that 'everything is clean, it's just messy', reflecting a theme that while she is prepared to be seen as untidy, she does not want me to think of her as unclean). Hannah talks about blurring the lines between adulthood and childhood in her relationship with her daughter:

> 'Because we live together so closely and I don't, there is no other adult here [Jennifer: mm] and there are no other children we do have, we do live in each other's worlds a lot so it makes her more adult [Jennifer: yeah] and it also makes me completely unselfconsciously in a kid world as well [Jennifer: yeah] so it, but that's how it has to be.'

This contributes to how she challenges perceived expectations of her as an adult, and specifically an adult woman, and I will discuss this more in the next chapter.

6.3   Meanings of Childhood and Adulthood: Children's Housework

While admitting to untidiness, Nicola's account of 'growing up' outlined above draws on an understanding of adulthood framed in terms of responsibility, in particular as a mother. This fits with an understanding of Adult and Child as social categories that are morally evaluated: 'to be Adult is to be positioned firmly as a moral agent, and as such, adults must exercise responsibility and be accountable for themselves and for the care of others who are not Adult', which leads to a moral imperative to '*put the needs of children first*' (Ribbens McCarthy et al., 2003, p.57. original emphasis). These authors argue that to be positioned as a moral Adult, a narrator must show how they have tried to make moral choices in the interests of their children. Elsewhere, Blatterer (2007; 2010) has emphasised an understanding of idealised adulthood in terms of independence, and I would suggest that narrating oneself as a morally responsible adult also includes demonstrating a lack of 'childish dependency' (Hockey and James, 2003, p.167) on others. Thus for some of the younger generation participants in the study, the way they constructed their sense of self drew on particular cultural understandings of what an adult should be:

> 'I am somebody who's like, you know will do what I want to do. And I'll do it my way. [Um] And I'm quite comfortable with who I am and what I do, kind of "well you do it your way and I'll do it mine".' (Kim, 40)

> 'So I tend not to ask Mum and Dad advice about that because generally speaking I can see it for myself or they might not know the nuances of our day to day lives.' (Jo, 32)

Nevertheless, rather than simply seeing these accounts as representing individualistic attitudes, I want to highlight the ways in which the women in my study developed a sense of themselves as becoming independent. For example, Jo also comments that 'I mean Mum and Dad have always been, kind of, wanting us to go out and make our own mistakes so to speak [Jennifer: yeah], you know learning how we do things'. Ribbens McCarthy et al. argue that 'overall, though, in Western societies childhood is constructed and idealised as a separate phase of life, a time of freedom and spontaneity' (2003, p.54; see also Prout and James, 1997 [1990]; James et al., 1998), and I would agree with this, there is a tension with displaying a family that works in terms of preparing children to be independent and autonomous adults. Rutherford's account of childrearing advice demonstrates that children are increasingly encouraged

to express their individual identities and make good choices, however, this is in the context of increased parental surveillance in order to protect children, and less willingness to give children 'meaningful independence and responsibilities' in terms of household work (2009, p.348). Therefore, in thinking about 'growing up' as a woman, it is useful to consider how participants made sense of their children's household work practices in relation to discourses of childhood and adulthood.

As well as discussing their own experiences of household work as children, I asked all the participants about what their children did or currently do in terms of household work. Seven of the women currently had at least one child below school age, and discussion about their ability to 'help' was qualified:

> 'Sally: But I guess you know I can do the hoovering when she's here,
>   you know like she helps me and we can play
> […]
>
> Jennifer: And you mentioned Leah helps you, what does she do?
>
> Sally: I just mean like she like holds the hoover, she doesn't really
>   help [Jennifer laughs]. She gets in the way more than anything.'
>   (Sally, 32 mother of Leah, 2)

Rita talks about having young children and uses the phrase 'pseudo-help', which seems a useful way of describing this sort of behaviour: 'Yeah they'd sort of pseudo-help. Like my granddaughter does now if I'm ironing and she's here she'll get her ironing board out and iron a tea towel and things like that.'

Participants also talked about wanting to do things with their children when they were older (for example, baking), but highlighted difficulties doing this when children were very young (for example, Nicola, 32, whose son was eighteen months at the time of the interview, commented: 'We did scones not so long ago but like I say I gave him the spoon, he stirred it a bit and then chucked it everywhere'). Nevertheless, the idea of involving very young children in household work as a game was also seen as a way to teach them about household work as part of everyday family life:

> 'What I'm starting to do now, she loves helping me take items out of the
> dishwasher and the washing machine so we make it part of the activity, because
> she loves watching the washing machine do its final spin cos she's like "oh

this is amazing" so I open the door and she helps me pull bits out. Interestingly I was putting, she wanted to take the items out, because whenever we've finished tablecloths or tea towels or whatever, I just throw them in the washing machine so they get involved in the next load, so they don't get forgotten. And she kept trying to go in and take it out, "no, no darling", right, ok. So I brought down the wash basket and I was trying to show her how to put things in, so I put an item in and she tried to pull it out, and I was "no, no, you watch". And then I gave her a sock and she learnt very quickly that she could start putting items into the washing machine.' (Jo, 32, mother of Grace, eighteen months)

Walkerdine and Lucey (1989) have looked at theories of psychological development which presuppose a 'sensitive' mother who meets her children's needs by being available, rather than doing housework tasks (and any housework tasks she does undertake have to be used to teach children and aid their intellectual development). While Jo does not refer to this teaching in terms of a particular skill (such as sorting or one-to-one correspondence), there seems to be a similar idea of taking more time over a task in order to use it as a teaching opportunity. As I will talk about below, there were also examples of using household work to try to teach children about taking responsibility and think for themselves. In Jo's case, part of what she wanted to teach her daughter was that she sees both parents engaging in housework, and I will discuss teaching children about gender more in Chapter 7.

Perceptions of age also shaped participants' expectations for children's housework:

'I mean I think with the dishwasher obviously [.] until about the age of about four/five we wouldn't have trusted Daniel with a hot plate [Jennifer: yeah] over the tiles into the dishwasher because it would have got dropped or smashed in the dishwasher. But now he's kind of at an age where he's got the skills, you know sort of dexterous enough to be able to put things in without then banging them against each other. And the same with the cutlery, I mean at a certain age he wasn't high enough [Jennifer: yeah] but now he can see the cutlery and he knows what, you know that Katie has the pink ones and he has the ones with the elephants on and we have bigger ones. So he sort of knows now what everybody has.' (Eleanor, 34)

'But I just think because they're, Joe's only nine and Molly's six then I kind of think Joe, now he's getting that bit older, like Joe could make a sandwich [Jennifer: mm]. And he's not discouraged to [um] so now he's getting that bit older and as he starts getting into senior school and things like that I think yes he should, and I will encourage him to do, like he could do pasta but I'm like, you're only nine, don't, I'll do it [Jennifer: yeah]. You know, the hot water and everything so [um] but yeah they're around it, it's just an age thing with me why I've not let them do more so.' (Kim, 40)

Kim also compares her own practices to those of other mothers, who 'have started to give them [their children] more responsible things to do', including cleaning the bathroom, but she maintains that this does not fit with her understanding of what childhood should be ('I think "you're only nine"').

However, there were differences in what was deemed acceptable across accounts that did not map neatly onto the ages of the children involved, for example:

> 'He likes to chop up, he gets on a stool to the work surface and he's got his own special, sort of safe knife and [um] a children's knife but it's not one of those stupidly blunt ones that does nothing it's actually one that actually does cut but you know under supervision and so he does.' (Laura, 32 – talking about her son Oliver, 2)

> 'If they do, if they do do vegetables then they, I just give them a plastic knife and they're pretending, not really doing it.' (Eleanor, 34 – talking about her son Daniel, 5 and her daughter Katie, 3)

As Hockey and James argue more generally,

> 'Ageing, it would seem, thus legitimates access to certain social experiences, while denying access to others, and also embraces sets of implicit expectations about behaviour in relation to aged identities' (2003, p.4)

However, as the quotes above show, while age is understood in terms of expectations, these are not universal, and even vary between people who in terms of social characteristics such as gender, age, ethnicity, nationality, sexuality and class, are largely similar (as with Laura and Eleanor). What is evident here is the way in which different discourses of age overlap and intersect (Aapola, 2002). For example, Eleanor talks about Daniel's functional age in the way he has mastered particular skills and developed knowledge about the different cutlery used within the family, but also mentions changing physical attributes (such as growing taller as he gets older).

Participants also highlighted teaching children to 'cook from scratch':

> 'But then we both like cooking so hopefully she'll learn from us because we cook from scratch a lot [Jennifer: yeah], we don't just do ready meals and things.' (Sally, 32)

'For me I want him to know that preparing meals, it's not something you open out of a box, that there is stuff that goes into it, you know and I try to cook, I'm not saying every meal I cook is from scratch but most of them are. But I definitely want him in the kitchen to be around that idea that food preparation doesn't mean opening a box and putting it in the microwave. So I do talk to him a lot about food when I'm cooking, I do show him what's going on [um] sometimes he helps me [um] obviously it's difficult with chopping and things, with knives and hot cookers and stuff with a small child but I want him to be very much aware of that and have an input into it.' (Fiona, 48)

While she did not use the phrase, Kim (40) described encouraging her children to cook in a way that involves combining different ingredients and 'making', rather than merely cooking, burgers:

'So [um] they would know about [um] you need to cut meat up, you need to put oil in with the potatoes to become roast. [Um] You need to put a pinch of salt in for your potatoes so they know all that type of thing and they know about herbs and stuff like that so [Jennifer: yeah] they are around me when I cook [um] and if they show interest or want to do something then we'll say "ok then", like the burgers, they love making the burgers. And then they'll say "can we put more black pepper in?" "Yeah ok, put more black pepper in", so they know "oh I don't like it with the black pepper". But they're encouraged to try and I say "if it doesn't work, if you don't like it doesn't matter".'

In talking about what they want for their children, Sally and Fiona are imagining how they want their children to grow up and the way in which they want them to think about food and cooking. James and Curtis have shown how narratives around family life an eating practices can display 'doing family things properly' (2010, p.1166), and here participants are similarly displaying how 'cooking from scratch' can be seen as the 'proper' way to engage with food.

When mothers talked about the household work of their young children, a key theme that emerged was around children's responsibility:

'And all the time yeah we do try to give them responsibilities in the house and try to get them to figure things out for themselves [Jennifer: yeah]. I try to get them to think for themselves instead of me *telling* them what to do, I try to get them to think.' (Eleanor, 34, original emphasis)

'So I am *trying* to say to Joe, "You need to take some responsibility now and you need to pick your clothes up"'. (Kim, 40, original emphasis)

'I mean like, at the moment we're just at the stage of trying to get her to tidy up after herself [Jennifer: ah] which is quite an achievement on its own because she's [er] like a toddler isn't it so it's, I suppose it's just that starting of an

understanding of "actually people don't follow you round clearing up after you". Which they do but trying to get her to take some responsibility for it.' (Sally, 32)

As I discussed in the previous section, this connection between household work and responsibility is part of a process of growing up, based on an understanding of adulthood in terms of independence rather than dependence. While all these children are dependent on their parents and other adults (and this involves cleaning up after them, as Sally notes), in order to fulfil their responsibility *to* their children, these mothers also talk about preparing them to be adults in keeping with contemporary understandings of what that means (see Hockey and James, 1993; 2003; Blatterer, 2007). Similarly, the importance of children being 'independent' and 'self-sufficient' was mentioned in several interviews, and was related to household work:

> 'Being able to manage, being able to, well I guess to be independent and self-sufficient…I'd like him to be able to manage himself like his finances and look after a household.' (Laura, 32)

> 'To be able to stand on their own two feet and not be bringing their washing home when they're at university.' (Claire, 42)

> 'I want them both to be able to be useful and self-sufficient and be able to look after themselves.' (Amy, 33)

These quotes reflect a standardised understanding of adulthood, in which being dependent on one's family is 'supplanted by the relative independence that an income and living arrangements of one's own afford the adult' (Blatterer, 2010, p. 12). Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (2002) have argued that the activities involved in maintaining one's own household are closely bound up with self-image, and this understanding shapes how participants in this study spoke about how wanting their children to grow up to be able to look after themselves according to an idealised image of middle-class adulthood.

In relation to this, mothers also talked about wanting their children to be confident in themselves, for example:

> 'I want him to be a confident young person who knows what he wants in life.' (Laura, 32)

'I just want her to be confident and capable and, you know be able to not do stuff if she doesn't want to but certainly not to feel scared of ever trying anything, and to feel that she's entitled to try anything, and to reject anything as well if she wants.' (Hannah, 43)

Hannah talked about various activities that Megan chose to do, such as using a pole lathe at a festival to make a magic wand, and her own conflicted feelings which arguably draw on multiple discourses of age ('And I was like, "you're six, six and chisels, not a plan" but as I, "ok I just won't watch, this woman obviously knows what she's doing"'). Kim (40) also discussed the process of encouraging her children to think for themselves as they got 'bigger', and the importance of making decisions about what they liked, rather than being influenced by friends or fashion:

'Now they're a bit bigger they want their bedrooms doing so now they're being encouraged to think about what they would like in their bedrooms, what colours do they want, not what we want cos it's not our rooms. Within reason. [Um] "Why, why do you want it that colour?" like so to think [Jennifer: yeah] to think really about the decisions they're making and why they're making it. Is it because it's trendy or is it because you like it? Is it because your friends have got it? Is that a good reason? [Jennifer: yeah].'

The idea of making decisions based on individual preferences reflects the discourse of self-fulfilment through the exercise of choice discussed in Chapter 5, and in linking this with being 'bigger', this is presented as part of 'growing up'. As Hockey and James suggest, full membership of Western society is considered in terms of 'autonomy, self-determination and choice' (1993, p.3), and this discourse of adulthood shapes what the mothers in my study talk about their children needing to learn. While these children are being encouraged to develop more 'grown up' behaviours, this is a gradual process in which Kim still has a role to play, implicitly defining what would be 'reasonable'. This therefore supports arguments against seeing childhood and adulthood as 'fixed times and spaces between which the individual makes their transition' (Hockey and James, 2003, p.17).

As well as drawing on broader discourses of adulthood, the women in my study also framed their discussions of encouraging independence and self-sufficiency in terms of their own biographies in which the ability to look after oneself as a self-sufficient adult was valued. For example, Brenda (67) emphasised her own self-sufficiency and suggests that she brought her daughters up to look after themselves as she herself was

brought up (and indeed brought herself up) (see also Chapter 5 for more discussion of this). However, for some women an emphasis on fostering self-sufficiency in their children was framed in terms of a biography in which they described difficulties from not having been encouraged to take responsibility themselves (see Chapter 8 for further discussion of this point). While self-sufficiency is valued, this is not necessarily presented as a 'natural' attribute, rather, one that is cultivated through parent-child relationships in which children have to learn to take responsibility and to become an autonomous, independent adult member of contemporary society.

6.4   Generational Understandings

In constructing personal narratives, both younger and older generation participants drew on cultural understandings of generational difference in relation to mothering in different historical contexts. As the term generation can be used to refer to both parent-child relationships (as in kinship terminology) and to what might also be described as 'cohorts', it may be useful to recognise the multiple ways in which it could be used in relation to my study. Pilcher suggests that the term can be misapplied, resulting from 'the conflation of biological generation with cohort and an insensitivity to the multiple nature of time and to the complexity of biographical and historical connections' (1994, p.484). Fiona (48) suggests that her mother not giving 'massive importance' to housework tasks could be understood as 'her generation, I definitely think that's her generation'. However, her mother Irene (75) provides a biographical account emphasising being academic at school, while Hilary, who was also in her seventies, reflects on whether she gave too much importance to housework when her children were at home.[40]

Nevertheless, I would also recognise the ways in which women's narratives were constructed in relation to various discourses, which, as I discussed in Chapter 2, can

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[40] Irene had a professional job and was able to pay for a cleaner when her children were younger, and having access to this option (while Hilary describes having to take on bar work at a time when she and her husband were struggling financially), draws attention to the classed nature of these narratives. While arguably both Irene and Hilary recognised expectations placed on them to maintain certain standards, the structural constraints that play a part in Hilary's narrative, and a broader pressure to be 'respectable' (Skeggs, 1997), did not allow her as a mother of young children access to the same feminist discourse of not ascribing 'massive importance' to housework (although as I discuss in section 6.5, she now appears more aware of alternative views, and questions the importance of housework 'in hindsight').

be seen to shift over time, as well as in relation to the narratives of others. As any one woman's narrative account is not formed in a vacuum, shifts in dominant discourses may influence the resources which women can draw on when forming their own narratives. Similarly, broader historical events may have an influence, in particular how these are interpreted from a woman's position in the life course, and in various families and broader networks of relationships. Thus, while women ascribed viewpoints to a particular generation, I would argue that by carefully considering the interplay between biography, history and generation, we can further explore the expression of different attitudes.

One example was around attitudes towards various items in the home, in relation to making, mending and buying. Amy (33) discusses her parents' views on making things, which she links to their own skills, but also their generational experience:

> 'My mum made a lot of things that other people would have probably bought, you know would have bought biscuits and cakes rather than buy things in. They al, she always kind of made clothes for us and everything was mended, mended and mended again rather than buy things [Jennifer: yeah]. You know my dad would mend a lot of to, things that he could mend rather than buy from new [um] and again I always thought that was more they're, because they were good at doing that kind of thing but also probably because that was how they were brought up [Jennifer: yeah], that's how their generation I guess probably had a lot less things new when they were kids, everything was made.'

While she seems to be suggesting this was a normal experience for people who were children at this time, she also differentiates her mother from 'other people'. She attributes this partly to her mother being a farmer's daughter, and the influence this had on her being 'quite traditional in a lot of ways'. Elsewhere in the interview, she talks about realising that other people had different experiences as children, and as I argue in Chapter 8, this feeds into displaying her family more generally.

Her mother Margaret (60) makes a similar generational comparison, talking about keeping old things (and giving them 'a really good spring clean'), rather than buying new ones:

> 'And the other thing [um] and I again it's, I suppose [.] the furniture and the things that my mum and dad had, they were bought or they were given to them, and they had to last a lifetime [Jennifer: mm] whereas now it's a throwaway society like [er] you know, a new piece of furniture or a new suite, well we'll

throw that one away and we'll go to Ikea and get a new one.[41] Whereas this suite's, I daresay is 25 years old, we're waiting for a new one. My kids pull my leg, why haven't you got a new suite and I think "why should I?" whereas they maybe want to keep more of a fashion or a trend or keep their house modern. Or maybe they've more money to spend than we had. But they're very much of the, and I think that furniture and everything is very much of a throwaway society [Jennifer: yeah] whereas some of the, you know furniture and things I got from my mum I wouldn't dream of throwing away, just because I either didn't like it or had gone off it. It would be there for, I expect it to be there for gen, for the next generation and my mum would certainly expect all her furniture to last, whereas these days probably you youngsters think "oh well I don't like that I'll replace it".'

What is interesting in this extract is the shifting voices Margaret uses, firstly using 'we' in contrast to her parents ('we'll throw that one away'), and then moving to use 'they' to talk about her children, and associating them with a 'throwaway society'. At this point, she clarifies that 'I' wouldn't throw things away, and this distinguishes herself from what was potentially a more generalised 'we' at the start, referring to society more broadly. In this way, she is linking herself much more closely with her mother than her children, and seems to be narrating how she got to be this way, drawing on both her biography and a sense of herself as a person with particular values. In making these comparisons, she positions me as a 'youngster' who shares the values she attributes to her children, and to society more generally. As I discussed in Chapter 3, age differences between myself and my participants played a part in the interview encounters, including assumptions being made about my behaviour.

This process of constructing a narrative identity in relation to both previous or subsequent social generations, parents and children, and contemporaries of the same cohort involved different understandings of particular generations, and relied on various comparisons. For example, Mary (64) discusses dominant discourses when she was younger:

'And I mean you must remember I grew up in the era where women used to, well where the magazines were still around where women sort of brought their husbands' slippers and newspaper and kept the kids quiet, you know. That was like the generation *before* [Jennifer: yeah] and I was well aware of that and just thought it was ridiculous, you know I didn't [um] I mean I could see where it was coming from that somebody could be tired [Jennifer: mm] and people could be physically tired if they were doing a physical job [um] and that people

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[41] Ikea refers to a popular multinational chain of stores that sell home furnishings.

should be kind of treated with respect but I didn't like the idea of the, you know role of women to be there rushing around waiting on people.' (original emphasis)

In constructing herself in opposition to prevalent ideas associated with the previous generation, this contributes to a broader overall narrative self throughout the interview. For example, she compares herself to a contemporary with a different attitude: 'I had a friend who said to me "don't tell anyone but I do get my husband's slippers" and I thought "well fair enough"… But that wasn't for *me*' (original emphasis). This is linked to her own family as she 'didn't have that role model because my mum wasn't particularly like that anyway' and 'my dad was very very good'. She compares her father washing nappies before he went to work as something she saw as 'a normal thing' that left her with 'high expectations' of men, with the idea that 'in my time I do remember, you know, if men were seen pushing a pram it was kind of "wow, he's pushing a pram", you know it wasn't usual'. This juxtaposing of behaviour in one's own family with that of a generalised other can be seen as highlighting more recent ideals against a particular understanding of the practices of previous generations. McMahon (2003) also looks at the example of men pushing prams that Mary refers to here, and demonstrates the similarity between accounts of dads out with strollers produced in the 1980s and those of fathers with prams produced in the 1950s in which this was presented as something symbolising change. Both accounts assume zero male participation among previous generations of fathers, despite evidence to the contrary and this construction is therefore employed to serve a narrative of progress, rather than continuity. I discuss this idea of particular men as 'good' in comparison to an implied understanding of men in general in the next chapter.

An idea of progress seems to be a theme in Mary's account more generally, as she emphasises things she had that her mother did not:

> 'Things really did change in the, you know in the time. You know, from her lifetime to mine. And I used to sometimes drive to school and think "I can't believe that, you know here I am, I'm going to a professional job in my own little car", you know. When my mum, you know did, had nothing like me, you know had nothing like us.'

In contrast, her daughter Laura (32) highlights various continuities between her mother and herself. For example, she discussed her decision to stay at home full-time when

her son was born in relation to other women in her family: 'I just, you know, carried on being at home and that's what really suited me and I think with my upbringing and my mum and my nan, everyone's very maternal in my family and focus on the family'. She also talks about the division of labour between herself and her husband as being similar to that between her parents (see Chapter 7 for further discussion about this). However, she also suggests that her decisions are made within a different context, for example a time when being a 'stay at home mum' is not as 'normal' as it was in the eighties when she was born, and also discusses how her own personal values play an important part. As discussed in the previous chapter, the idea of characterising oneself as a reflexive, autonomous, choosing individual reflects dominant ideas of individualism, and thus listening to the voice of 'I' shows how the women in my study constructed themselves in this way in their narratives.

When Mary talked about making decisions about paid work as a mother, she also talks in terms of changing expectations and norms across the generations:

> 'I think the expectation now is that people do go back to work. It, people that have always said to Laura "when" you know "when are you going back to work?" not "*are* you going back to work?" whereas in my day it was whether you could afford it or not really. And whether you wanted to. Whereas I think now there's, it's more that people feel they have to, have to pay the mortgage. And that the norm as I see it from Laura's friends and people I know is that people tend to work like three days a week with children, with babies whereas [um] a *lot* of people of my, quite a few of my friends didn't, you know would have all their children in a row and then, then go back which is what I did.' (original emphasis)

Another mother of a similar age, Jean (66), noted this expectation in relation to her eldest daughter: 'I know again, with Rosie in London, her and Jay [Rosie's husband], there's no, she's had no choice in the matter, she's had to go back'. Jean describes her and her husband as a 'typical northern couple' in their division of labour, and she uses her friends for comparison: 'most of our friends were exactly the same: the men went out to work and did the gardens and things, the women stayed at home'.

Jean's daughter Eleanor (34) is currently at home full-time and reflects on this:

> 'I think when she [Jean] was a housewife it was very different because I think a lot of women were housewives and it was kind of, she, that was more the norm. And [um] she, I don't think she had the expectation or the pressure to

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go back to work. Whereas I'm constantly thinking that I should be earning money and that I need, that I should be going back to work and [um], you know I only see this being at home as a short-term thing. Whereas for her once she finished, once she finished work before she had her first child that was, you know she never worked again [Jennifer: yeah]. So I think it was a very different sort of world really because there wasn't the financial, maybe problems that there are now that you feel that you need to earn money.'

Reading for the different voices in this extract demonstrates how Eleanor is reflecting the 'pressure' to go back to work, as she repeats 'I should'. She also compares the 'norm' of being a housewife with a generalised sense that 'you feel that you need to earn money'. In relation to this, some of the older generation women talked about shifts in expectations on grandmothers to provide childcare, for example Hilary (71) comments that 'We seem to do more childminding, my generation of grandparents, because of the work situation'.

Walkerdine and Lucey have written about the emotions of working-class mothers whose daughters pursue middle-class careers:

> 'Some of our mothers felt pain and envy: hurt that we wouldn't go back and give them children and envy that we didn't have to, that we "had our freedom"…Other mothers were excited by our independence, encouraged and pushed us, warned us off getting "tied down and having kids". And yet they were at the same time confused and dismayed that we had changed so much, had so many ideas they didn't understand' (1989, p.15)

Hannah (43), who went to university and now works as a lecturer, discusses her experience of receiving conflicted messages from her mother,

> 'I've had a fairly traditional upbringing by someone who clearly resented doing it but whose other message was "you can do anything". And when I did try to do anything, the message was "you can do anything as long as you still clean up".'

A friend of a similar age to her mother explained this to her in terms of how Hannah's behaviour goes against the prevailing consciousness of her mother's generation:

> '"What you don't understand was that women *could* have everything, as long as they *did* everything. Yes you *could* have a brilliant career but you were supposed to make sure that the home was secure first, whereas you have taken the brilliant career things and just *abandoned* the home bit".' (original emphasis)

As for Walkerdine and Lucey, Hannah's account emphasises the conflict for her mother between wanting to encourage her daughter that "you can do anything", while also struggling to understand the very different reality of her daughter's life as Hannah experiences it. This is illustrated in her mother's questions about her availability (see Chapter 7) and her proposed solutions to Hannah wanting to leave the house when she was a single mother with a baby of having coffee mornings, which Hannah dismisses, pointing out her friends are engaged in paid work and 'this isn't 1970 dot dot'.

Some of the women also expressed different views about caring for children, which could be tied into the experiences of different generations by both women in a mother/daughter pair:

> 'Most of our friends say, my friends would say it's awful that children have to be in nursery so, you know, cos their mums, we can all see why they go back to work but you know, we think it was better for the children to be at home.' (Jean, 66)

> 'But I just think it's a very different world from when we were little, because I think when we were little children just didn't go to nurseries [Jennifer: yeah]. Whereas now most children go to nurseries from the age of nine months so because a lot of my friends went back to work and their children went to nursery, I felt I had to take my children out to do lots of activities, otherwise I thought they were going to miss out socially. [Um] And Daniel when he started at preschool he probably found it harder than a lot of children who had been to nursery because he wasn't used to, you know being independent.' (Eleanor, 34)

These views reflect different discourses about what children need, although in both cases these women describe their decisions in these terms. Lawler has argued that 'what children are considered to need rests on (historically and socially specific) conceptualizations of what counts as the (good) self' (2000, p.4). For example, Eleanor is concerned about her son not being independent, and as I mentioned above, refers to trying to teach her children to think for themselves. Thus the attributes she is trying to foster in her children are shaped by an individualistic understanding of what the 'good' adult should be.

6.5   History and Biography: A Case Study

In this section, I will use a case study to explore how different dimensions of time were connected within one personal narrative, and how this contributes to the construction of a relational narrated self in process. As I discussed in Chapter 4, the use of case studies when reporting research allows for a focus on narrative identity by considering how one participant constructed a story during the interview. As Hockey et al. (2004) show, a detailed example of one participant's life history can illuminate the interplay of different social dimensions. Hilary was 71, retired (from working part-time in various jobs) and a widow. She has two daughters who both have children, and I interviewed her at her daughter Sophie's house when she was visiting. As with other participants, I began Hilary's interview by asking her to tell me a bit about herself, and give me an introduction to the family she grew up in and the family she had formed with her husband and children, and she responded by talking for around half an hour, with no further questions or prompts from me. While this was not a typical beginning to an interview, I found it an illuminating account in terms of a multi-dimensional understanding of time. In this section, I will use this extract as a case study to explore how various dimensions of time are brought together in relation to narrative identities.

At the end of this part of the interview, she suggested 'I've rambled on as old memories have flooded in'. The idea of memories 'flooding in', implies both a flow of connected memories, as we might talk about a 'stream' of consciousness, but also a lack of control over what is remembered in this moment. While I wrote in the previous chapter about the ways in which memories can be constructed through processes of selection, and clearly I cannot know what Hilary may be deliberately leaving out at any point, it is also worth considering how this idea of memories 'flooding in' can help us to make sense of the process through which stories are told in the research interview. What is also noticeable in this extract (and illuminated through the second analytical reading I conducted) is the way that Hilary's 'I' incorporates both Hilary in the present, who is remembering and indeed applying 'hindsight' to these memories, but also Hilary at various points in the past.

Hilary's account is weaved around particular historical events, and a more general sense of what was 'normal' at a particular time. Born during the Second World War, her account of her early life draws on specific policies from this time; for example, she went to nursery and explains 'but children did go to nurseries during the war

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because their mothers were needed to work in the factories' (the 'but' suggests an understanding that this is not ideal, reflecting the closure of nurseries post-war on the assumption they would not be needed; see Richardson, 1993). In general, Hilary recounts various events from her childhood, such as the ending of rationing on sweets in 1953 or the death of King George VI in 1952, although at one point she notes,

> 'I think I have a memory of sitting in a pram outside my mother's house, I must have been [.] two and a half, three, *don't know if they've told me or it's a memory*, and the German prisoners of war would go past' (my emphasis)

This uncertainty about a particular memory, and the possibility of her family shaping this memory hints at the crucial role families play in constructing memories (Misztal, 2003), which indicates an influence on how Hilary connects her early biography to a broader historical context.

When she discusses her early married life, there is a sense of inevitability in the way she talks about what 'you' did:

> 'I didn't leave home till I got married, but you didn't in the fifties and sixties.'

> 'I met my husband and [um] we lived in a flat when we first got married and [um] I never expected Dick to do anything around the house because that was the norm, you did it and you went to work.'

However, this follows from an account of her mother, who was able to exert agency in this respect: 'because she worked, she paid someone to do the housework because she didn't like it'. Hilary's mother was also able to not do particular tasks, for example, touching poultry, which Hilary 'had to' do as the oldest daughter. This is a reminder of the ways in which women are able to exert agency in heterosexual relationships across the life course and in different social and historical contexts (see Hockey et al., 2004), although as the tasks in question were allocated to other women, this raises the question of how far her actions could be seen to be transforming gendered relations at a structural level. Hilary also reflects on whether she had influenced what her husband did around the house: 'maybe I didn't let him do it because I wanted to be the perfect wife, you know sort of cooking, cleaning, going to work, rearing the children'. The idea that women can 'gatekeep' the domains of home and family in various ways (Allen and Hawkins, 1999) offers a way in which agency can be expressed, although

as Hilary suggests, the idea of not letting a husband contribute because of a desire to be 'the perfect wife' highlights the ways in which women's practices as a wife and mother can be seen as constrained. As I will discuss in the next chapter, women can be identified as 'bad' mothers or wives by not doing particular housework tasks, or not doing them in the 'right' way. Thus having become a wife, and bearing in mind that in a society in which monogamous heterosexual coupledom is institutionalised that this choice itself is not made 'freely', the 'choice' to then try to show oneself as a 'perfect' embodiment of this identity by resisting help with what is understood as 'woman's work' can be understood as a choice within constrained circumstances (see Chapter 2 on the multiple dimensions of gender, heterosexuality and family).

Hilary also looks back on the decisions she made as a mother:

> 'I often wonder whether now housework took too much of a priority over the children and maybe I could have spent more time playing with them but you didn't then, we had a, a playroom built on the house so the children could play in there [um] and they were always with me but I used to think it was more important to get the ironing and the washing done, things like that, which probably wasn't in hindsight.'

There is a suggestion here of the shifts in understanding motherhood, as Hilary is potentially drawing on the idea of a 'sensitive mother' who is available to her children rather than doing housework (Walkerdine and Lucey, 1989) but also recognising that this was not a dominant discourse at the time she had young children. The importance ascribed to housework appears to be part of trying to be a 'perfect wife', however, as she suggests here, a discourse of 'intensive mothering' (Hays, 1996) leads to a reframing of this in the context of her narrative account. Nevertheless, she later notes 'I don't feel guilty about it because that's how it was' (although there is potentially an assumption that she might be expected to feel guilty). She also raises some practical difficulties, for example around shopping ('there wasn't the convenience there is now').

In terms of the division of housework, Hilary's account includes ways in which this changed, in relation to responding, as a couple, to both historical events and biographical and familial changes. She describes how they bought a house on the basis of a pay rise which did not materialise due to the government policy in the early 1970s

of freezing pay, and therefore she got a part-time job at the local pub. She explains 'that was when he started volunteering to do housework when I was trying, when we were trying to struggle to survive'. She also suggests later changes in their relationship once their daughters had left home and her husband had retired: 'That's when Dick started doing more, we'd share jobs so we could have'. Although she doesn't finish this sentence, and goes on to talk about the activities he enjoyed with his daughters, my impression was that this was partly around spending time together.

In talking about how she brought up her children, Hilary makes sense of her practices as a mother in relation to her own experiences of having to help with housework:

> 'Because of that I think I overcompensated with the children, I didn't ask them to do housework [Jennifer: mm] because I'd been expected to do so much, I thought I didn't want them to have that burden so [um] really I did spoil them to a certain extent to that, I didn't expect them to do, they'd clear the table and things like that but I didn't expect them to do cleaning and stuff.'

In her interview, Hilary's daughter Sophie talked about university as a 'steep learning curve' and mentioned 'cooking very inedible food' in part because 'I didn't have to at home'. Similarly she mentions taking washing home to her parents' and cleaning as 'a massive job, you know cos of all the bits you hadn't, it wasn't something you kept on top of or did on a regular basis'. While she says that now 'I try and keep on top of it' (because of the consequences of not doing it), she also talks in terms of herself as a 'messy person' who has an 'inward battle' about keeping the house clean, and links this back to not being 'particularly clean or tidy' as a child. By considering this in relation to what her mother says, it is clear that while both women are constructing biographical narrated selves, that Sophie's biography is also shaped by Hilary's, and how her understanding of past experiences has influenced how she has made decisions about household work. In Chapter 8, I explore how biographies in which the woman in question was not expected to do much as a child and subsequently felt unprepared were used to produce narratives about trying to do family differently.

As her daughters have grown up, Hilary partly makes sense of her relationship with them through a generational lens:

> 'I try very hard not to be critical of my daughters [um] because I think their priorities are so much different to mine. And I think life's harder for younger

women nowadays because I at least had a choice, I don't think many of them had a choice about whether they work or not. I think it's, because things are expensive [um], but I suppose in relation to wages they're not, but there's so much peer pressure on them [um] that you're seen as a bit of an eccentric if you don't conform with how other people think you do [um]…So I do have a big sympathy for young women nowadays so I don't, I try not to be critical about how they fit in housework.'

Rather than make sense of Sophie's experiences in terms of her biography, here Hilary is linking her daughters in with other 'young women'. Later in the interview, she suggests having a different experience in terms of living near her mother and seeing her every week, whereas 'you don't have that as much now', again framing Sophie living further away as part of a broader shift. Talking more about how being a parent has changed, she comments that,

> 'I think their children are more [um] are more sure of their parental love, because I think parents do spend time, well my children do spend time with their children and do things with them.'

This contrasts with how she has described a lack of affection from her mother ('she didn't ever, ever [.] tell you she loved you'), which is potentially framed in terms of her mother's own upbringing as well as changing norms of parental behaviour ('I wonder whether she got, she didn't get hugs and kisses from my grandparents and that reflects how life was').

In this section, I have analysed how one participant narrated herself and her household work across the life course, and how this interrelates with generational comparisons with her mother and daughter. While constructing a personal biography, and accounting for some of her practices in terms of previous events in her life, she also draws on broader historical events and discursive shifts in how the roles of wife and mother have been understood. Similarly, she also uses a multi-dimensional understanding of time to account for the practices of her mother and daughter.

6.6   Conclusion

In this chapter, I have illustrated the ways in which discourses of childhood and adulthood have shaped women's stories of household work over the life course, and their accounts of the housework of their children. I have also considered the role of

generational understandings, and how these are incorporated into the narratives of the women I interviewed. Using a case study from one participant, I have been able to explore in detail how a relational narrated self is constructed temporally with reference to different dimensions of time. By recognising how a woman's household work practices take place at particular times in her life course, in relation to people of different generations and in a broader historical context, I have argued for the importance of considering the doing of household work within the timescape of the person doing it.

In particular, this chapter has drawn attention to the ways in which participants' accounts of household work during childhood and adulthood, and their discussions of the household work practices of their young children, both in the present and in an imagined future, draw on discourses of childhood in terms of freedom and enjoyment, and an individualistic understanding of contemporary adulthood that emphasises independence and self-sufficiency. Furthermore, mothers drew on a moral understanding of adulthood that involves a responsibility for the needs of children (including the need to 'grow up' according to an idealised understanding of what this process involves, and to 'turn out' as both who they really are, but also to do so in a way shaped by values of independence and self-sufficiency).

Using the example of Nicola, I have also shown how household work can be part of personal narratives about 'growing up', and started to demonstrate how such narratives are shaped by gender and heterosexuality. For example, in talking about her levels of tidiness in relation to potential male partners, she recognises 'the domestic goddess' as an ideal. While she is willing to tell me this 'ain't never gonna happen', she does talk about being increasingly tidy as she grows up. In framing her narrative as a journey from a 'scruffbag' to a 'mum', she links an increasing sense of responsibility for the tidiness of the house she lives in to a moral understanding of motherhood that involves meeting the needs of children (Ribbens McCarthy et al., 2003). I would suggest that accounts of growing up as a woman, in terms of household work, are shaped specifically by understandings of emphasised femininity and idealised motherhood, which I will discuss more in the next two chapters.

Chapter 7: Dimensions of Gender and Heterosexuality in Personal Narratives of Household Work

7.1   Introduction

In this chapter I discuss how an awareness of the ways in which gender and heterosexuality intersect across different social dimensions can be useful for exploring women's personal narratives in relation to household work and the construction of femininities and masculinities. Following on from my discussion of how ideas of relationality and temporality can help us to understand how a sense of self is narrated in relation to household work, I consider how this self can be understood as gendered, and heterosexual. As I set out in Chapter 2, I am drawing on a multi-dimensional understanding of gender and heterosexuality in which a reflexive gendered and heterosexual self can be understood as always 'in process', constituted through interpretive practices, which draw on available discourses and are shaped by structural factors at a macro level (Jackson, 2005; 2006a; 2006b). Jackson argues for recognising self as narrated, as we 'construct a sense of self, at least in part, through the stories we tell about ourselves' (1998, p.45). While this sense of self is a 'reflexive, narrative construction' (ibid, p.49), Jackson highlights both the discursive context in which narratives are constructed and the institutional structures that perpetuate material inequalities between narrators. As she suggests:

> 'Once we begin to ask what stories can be heard when and by whom – and which stories are heard and found credible and which are unheard or discounted – we begin to move out from the analysis of subjectivity to consider wider social contexts and structures.' (ibid, p.49)

Relating this back to gender, heterosexuality and household work, Jackson's work calls for attention not just to personal narratives, but to use a 'feminist imagination' to illuminate how 'personal' experiences can be shared and part of broader social patterns.

Plummer highlights the 'gendered heterosexism' of stories, something which:

> 'Takes on many historically varying forms but here it will mean that those stories that will be most readily said and heard will be those which facilitate standard gender divisions and the paramountcy of heterosexual relations.' (1995, p.31)[42]

As I discussed in Chapter 2, heterosexuality is recognised as not just about sexual practices, but also about domestic labour (amongst other things) (Delphy and Leonard, 1992; Jackson, 1996; VanEvery, 1995), and therefore it is possible to identify gendered heterosexism in dominant cultural narratives about household work, which can be found in various cultural texts, as well as in the personal stories narrated in interviews. Justifications for an inequitable division of housework can be part of broader discourses of gender and heterosexuality in which female responsibility for housework and childcare is seen as fair as this complements the male responsibility for earning money to support the family.

In terms of the importance ascribed to housework in women's stories, there are different narratives that have been identified over time, which draw on broader discourses of gender and heterosexuality (Jackson, 1998). Johnson and Lloyd (2004) have argued that second wave feminist narratives are framed around escaping from what Friedan (1983) described as the 'happy housewife' myth, despite evidence of popular discussions of domesticity of problematic and political activism by housewives. The narrative Friedan (and others) present involves women recognising the inherently oppressive nature of the housewife role and finding a new, autonomous sense of self, leaving the past self of the housewife behind (Johnson and Lloyd, 2004; see, for example, De Beauvoir, 1959; Oakley, 1974b; Malos, 1980). However, Genz (2008) has explored the cultural trend towards reviving domesticity since the beginning of the twenty-first century. She argues that post-feminism has allowed for a renegotiation of what it means to be a housewife, with women emphasising their choice in this regard, in contrast to patriarchal constructions in which domesticity is enforced. This acknowledgement of agency and self-determination allows for narrative accounts in which women can be happy housewives because they have chosen this path for themselves. Similarly, Pink (2004) has emphasised the role of individual agency in how both men and women practice and make sense of housework,

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[42] An example of this is the assumption that a pregnant woman is heterosexual because this fits with recognised heteronormative narratives of motherhood (Walters, 2000).

with narratives as an example of the way they can choose to affirm or depart from traditional discourses of gender.

Pink also discusses other characters in the stories of housewives, suggesting that some of her female participants characterised those who were 'obsessive' about housework as an example of a type of person who has 'something missing in their lives' (2004, p.95). She notes that most of the housewives she interviewed represented themselves as 'normal women who cut corners in their housework, had happy fulfilled lives, and whose priorities lay elsewhere' (ibid, p.107), with the approach to housework functioning as only *part* of an emotional narrative. Therefore, these narratives of housework played a part in broader stories of the self; for example, one of the participants links having a massive clearout to purging, and her Catholic upbringing, a practice which Pink interprets as 'expressive and constitutive of *her* self-identity and 'feelings' (ibid, p.50).

However, what could be explored more in this work is the various ways in which these stories highlight connectedness between participants, and specific and generalised others. One participant 'intertwined' a description of his approach to housewife with a representation of his mother, with an assertion of the importance he ascribes to having clean clothes linked to his upbringing, but also to characteristics he feels he has 'inherited' from her. Discussing his own limitations at being able to clean a particular jacket, he comments that his mother "can do it", because she "always got my washing right". While this is analysed as a binary opposition of gender, in relation to other comments about "special mum power" compared to his own "laziness", this can also be seen as part of an ongoing mother/son relationship that is partly maintained through such practices; as the participant states, she can do it "because she's my mum" (Pink, 2004, pp. 93-94). In this way, the construction of masculinity and femininity interrelate with an understanding of what family relationships should be. This short example demonstrates the various interrelated concepts that Smart has outlined as constituting 'interiorities' as part of our personal lives (2007). Thus while it is important to consider Pink's assertion of the potential for 'individual agents to act as the instigators of change' (2004, p.43), I would also make a case for considering how the actions and narratives of individuals take place within various networks of relationships.

In my research, participants constructed personal narratives in which they made sense of themselves as women embodying different identities, both within the context of heterosexual relationships and in other situations in which they engaged in household work practices. Rahman and Jackson argue that:

> 'While heterosexuality is rarely consciously adopted as an identity, many of the identities that are likely to be important to heterosexual adults derive from their location within heterosexual ordered family or kin relations – such as husband or wife, mother or father – and these identities may in turn be important to their sense of self as competently masculine or feminine.' (2010, p.187)

As well as much evidence of participants constructing themselves as 'competently feminine' within such heterosexually ordered relations, there were also accounts that challenged prevailing discourses of what femininity means in this context. Furthermore, in stories of household work across the life course, participants also constructed gendered identities in situations that were not heterosexually ordered in the same way (for example, in comparisons with siblings or other female housemates).[43]

Drawing on the multi-dimensional framework set out in Chapter 2, I explore some of the themes that emerged from my research in relation to how an interplay of gender and heterosexuality shaped the narrative accounts of my participants. I consider how the gendered division of household work was discussed in different situations, such as within heterosexual couples, between participants' children, among housemates and in participants' families of origin, and reflect on how these different situations are incorporated into women's personal narratives. I also outline how men's identities and masculinities were constructed by participants, and how they narrated their selves in relation to specific and generalised men.

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[43] Although as 'heterosexuality circulates as taken for granted, naturally occurring, and unquestioned' (Ingraham, 1996, p.169), even in such a research project as this which seeks to explicitly name and draw attention to the operation of heterosexuality, I may be downplaying the influence of heterosexuality on how gender is constructed in these contexts.

7.2 Gendered Division of Household Work in Heterosexual Couples

My aim in this section is to reflect on how accounting for the division of household work within a particular heterosexual couple was part of a longer story, and contributed to the construction of a gendered and heterosexual relational narrated self. In Chapter 2, I outlined previous research in which gender was downplayed as an explanation for the division of household work, and that finding was echoed here. As with Sally in Chapter 4, who explained that 'whoever gets home first cooks', participants talked about things being divided in terms of who had the most time available:

> 'Although that was instigated by Greg I've done the last couple but that's probably only cos I just happened to have more time than he did at that time but he might end up doing the next one, you know.' (Claire, 42, referring to online food shopping)

> 'I do think a lot of family now, the structures of the family is what hours the people do cos my brother will do tea on the two days he has off cos his wife works in schools and he works in retail so the two days he's off he does tea [Jennifer: yeah] so I think it's about the hours that people are working to be honest [Jennifer: mm]. Cos if Neil's here he will start tea whereas because I'm here. I think it's who's here most who does it to be honest [Jennifer: yeah].' (Kim, 40)

This could function to downplay the relevance of gender, particularly in the context of a narrative that emphasised how partners were equal and interchangeable (see below in relation to Claire). Although Kim emphasises time available in a gender-neutral way, elsewhere in her interview she also mentioned that most mothers she knew had a similar working pattern to her (reduced hours) and therefore time availability can be seen to be related to broader structural patterns of employment for women with dependent children; Kim works part-time (and therefore does the housework when she gets home) but she works these reduced hours 'so that can fit in with Joe and Molly'. Thus while the division of tasks may be 'about the hours people are working', the 'people' who work fewer hours in paid work in order to be available for their children are more likely to be women. As Jamieson (1998) has argued, while participants may account for their division of household work in terms of choices that are framed in

gender-neutral terms, the bigger picture is of persistent structural inequalities between men and women within heterosexual relationships.

Participants also spoke about having different skills from their partners as a non-gendered explanation. While Fiona (48) said her partner would do the gardening, she explained that this was 'not because I think it's like a male role but I'm just not very good at gardening at all.' She then emphasised that this was not about gender, by giving the example of her parents with a mother who is a keen gardener while her father hates gardening, and suggests she takes after him. This is an example of how participants sometimes described particular traits as inherited as a way of making sense of their tendencies towards various practices (see also Chapter 5 on ideas of inherited attitudes and behaviours). As well as the theme of someone not being expected to help by their mother (see Chapter 5), other participants spoke about other biographical differences from their partner in accounting for the skills they had developed, commenting about what they learnt at school, for example. In various ways then, participants produced narratives that drew on individualistic discourses to emphasise how they as individuals within their relationships divided household work.

Nevertheless, some of the older generation participants did speak more explicitly in terms of gender as an explanation for the division of household work. For example, Jean talks about different male and female roles as normal when she was the mother of young children:

> 'Very much, you know, a division of labour….now the men do as much as the women in the house and looking after the children. Whereas in those days it didn't work like that [er]. And my friends were exactly the same, I mean none of us had husbands who cooked.' (Jean, 66)

Although Jean does not talk about equality in terms of sharing the same tasks, she does talk about her marriage as a 'partnership', in which 'I was doing my share of [er] looking after the home and the family so he could come home to a meal and all his shirts washed and ironed and things like that'. June (59) described her husband as 'a proper like "it's your job"', and comments that more generally 'I think it was expected then, men didn't actually do a lot in the house then', describing men who married in the seventies thinking that their wife would look after the house and they would go out

to some form of paid work. Later in the interview she describes this as how 'it was supposed to be'. Both Jean and June recognise that women in heterosexual relationships increasingly work full-time, and suggest that work within the home should also be shared more evenly, although they also both see mothers working full-time as problematic in terms of how children are brought up.

This points to a contradiction in Jean's interview, between telling her daughters 'look, there's no job you can't do', and encouraging them to consider a wide range of careers, and agreeing with her friends that it is 'awful' that children are in nurseries because their mothers have gone back to work and 'it was better for the children to be at home'. While Jean recognises a general argument for gender equality in terms of the imagined futures of her children, within a heterosexual context, she highlights what she perceives as the benefits of distinct roles for men and women. This can also be seen in terms of how Jean makes sense of family; while she identifies her daughters as girls who should be able to do anything they want (in line with an individualistic discourse that emphasises choice), as mothers they, and other women in similar situations, are identified in relation to the needs of their children (Lawler, 2000). While Jean does facilitate her daughters' paid work by engaging in childcare for both her oldest and youngest daughters, in suggesting it would be better if they were at home, she does not consider the implications for the careers they were encouraged to pursue. Thus motherhood marks a point in which women are identified according to different discourses, as has been recognised in literature that highlights the contradictory positioning of mothers (see, for example, Hays, 1996 on the cultural contradictions of expecting mothers to both selflessly nurture children and invest time, energy and money in their upbringing, and to act rationally in the interests of their own careers and the capitalist system more generally).

Some of the participants with young children constructed personal narratives in which motherhood was a turning point in their lives, as they noted how things changed in terms of how they divided tasks with their husbands:

> 'When we were both working, both working or stroke I was studying…it was very different because we were both out of the house similar amount of time…now and with a child and the dog it's mu, it's just much more work…So in the past we lived [um] in like a flat and it was rented so it, housework didn't

take up anywhere near as much time and it was probably more *equal* but still I did the majority though not, like now I do nearly all of the cooking and in the past David would probably cook about once or twice a week whereas now it's always me.' (Laura, 32)

'I think because, I think up until that point I'd sort of seen mine and Rob's roles as very equal because we both went to university and we both got degrees and then we both graduated and got professional jobs so I kind of saw all the house jobs as shared and equal [Jennifer: yeah]. [Um] And if anything he did more because he was more competent at cooking than me… but then when I had Daniel and I was off sort of full-time, it then felt that obviously I should probably do more of that because he was at work all day. But I think for a while it took a while to kind of shift because it'd been for so long equal, and that took quite a long time to shift [um] really.' (Eleanor, 34)

In both cases, these women talk about how shifts between them 'naturally evolved' rather than being discussed, which serves to undermine the idea that they are actively choosing to divide household work in this way. Again, this suggests a conflict between an individualistic discourse which frames individuals as able to make choices about negotiating the division of household work in a way that is closely bound up with their self-image (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2002) and moral discourses of maternal responsibility (Duncan et al., 2004).

Similarly, Amy (33) highlights the differences in how she and her husband take responsibility for their children, and how much time each of them spend thinking about the practicalities of their children's lives:

'I do think the whole practical side of organising life is probably less of a priority to him than getting his own stuff sorted. And I don't mean to sound that unfairly, I just think it's a bit of fact of life that he doesn't think about, you know before you go to bed I'll check the calendar and check what's on in like what order the next day to make sure they're each doing what they want to do and which parent's going, you know, it's a bit of a juggling exercise. And the practicality of juggling life I think is something I do more than my husband [Jennifer: mm].'

Putting this in the context of their relationship, she recognises that things changed for her before they did for her husband, as she stopped drinking whereas 'he would be out with his mates in the pub just like he always was'. Even after their son was born, Chris was still going out for most of Saturday to watch the football, and Amy talks about having to say something, pointing out that 'it's not fair' and 'it's not really how it

should be'. She explains that they now have a system where things need to be booked in the calendar, but she takes on additional organising tasks, such as finding a babysitter. She compares their approaches:

> 'So I would sort that out, because he would think to arrange the night out, but he wouldn't think to arrange the babysitter which is kind of what I mean in that the practicalities of stuff with the kids [Jennifer: mm] isn't his first thought, whereas my first thought would be "can I get a babysitter for that night?", then I'll arrange the night out [Jennifer: yeah], whereas he would arrange the night out and not even think about the babysitter.'

As with some of the other participants, Amy's narrative highlights the mental space that household work takes up, as well as more generally thinking about the children and their needs. In this narrative, Amy is both reflecting on gender inequality within heterosexual relationships with children, comparing her experience to that of her husband and talking in terms of 'fairness', but also constructing herself as a mother in relation to her children in the way she talks about thinking about them ('I always think that for me the children are the first and the last thing I think about before, you know when I wake up in the morning and when I go to bed'). While she is clear that her husband loves his children, she describes him as having 'things on his mind' and not prioritising his children's needs in the same way. Again this indicates a contradiction; there is only so far negotiations over household work can change things if, as a mother and a father, Amy and Chris relate to their children in inherently different ways on what Amy presents as an individual level of how they think and feel. However, considering thinking and feeling as ways in which people do gender, heterosexuality and family emphasises how gender inequality can be perpetuated across multiple dimensions.

Sophie's children were the oldest of the younger generation mothers (11 and 14), but she still talked about the division of tasks in relation to her own maternity leave:

> 'But as I've had more time, or I've been at home more because of maternity leave and then going part-time I guess I do more of the household stuff [Jennifer: yeah]. [Um] More of the cleaning…. So yeah I think we have drifted into a kind of traditional way of doing things, he cuts the grass, he does the car, I tend to do a lot of the cleaning and the remembering the children, that kind of thing. Not remembering that we have them, but they're doing this on this day, this on that day, that kind of domestic management I think that has ended up being me.'

She also remembers that she used to clean 'like all of the downstairs and the path to the toilet' before people came round for the National Childbirth Trust classes that she used to teach at her house, and suggests that 'part of that contributed to how the rest of the family expected it to happen'. While these mothers were at different stages in the life course, there is a sense in which patterns are established during maternity leave and when children are very young.

As well as the doing of household work tasks, previous literature has shown the relevance of asking about responsibility for organisation, as an invisible aspect of the work which continues to be performed predominantly by women within heterosexual relationships (including in relation to organising handymen to perform traditionally *male* tasks such as DIY (Kilkey et al., 2013)). The mental work involved in, for example, deciding what to cook (as highlighted by DeVault, 1991), was recognised by participants, and was pointed to as an aspect of household work that other family members tried to avoid:

> 'I do find a chore sitting there and going "anybody got anything they want to offer for us to have for tea tonight?" and they'll all go "not bothered" and I'm like "any inspiration?", "not bothered" [uhh]. So yeah I do find that a bit, a bit of a chore to be honest [Jennifer: yeah] just the thin, if you told me what you want I'll cook it [Jennifer: yeah] "Oh I don't mind really, what do you think?" and I'm thinking "[sigh] somebody please tell me what you want for tea", you know.' (Kim, 40)

> 'The cooking's not the thing that I think is the hard work, it's the thinking about what you're going to cook and buying it all and planning in advance. That I think takes kind of time, brain time and he doesn't like doing that at all.' (Sophie, 41)

Bearing in mind an understanding of practices as assemblages of thinking, feeling and doing (Smart, 2007), considering the mental work involved points to how practices can be seen to produce gender and normative heterosexuality in the way these practices are expected of women as wives and mothers (DeVault, 1991).

While most of the participants did not refer to gender as an explanation in a deterministic sense, there was a recognition of a tendency for household work within heterosexual relationships to be patterned by gender:

'I would say that most people I know tend to grumble that despite them [um] maybe having equal jobs in terms of commitment and salary to their husbands [um] that the cooking and the cleaning and the supermarket shopping still fall on their shoulders. [Um] And I can, most people, most of my friends I can think of that I've ever discussed it with would probably say the same, whether they were [um], you know whether they worked or they worked part-time and were looking after children or they worked full-time. It does tend to fall on their shoulders I would say [Jennifer: yeah].'(Claire, 42)

In Chapter 3, I discussed how I was included in a 'we' who are expected to do everything now, which similarly recognises a more general tendency towards continued and seemingly entrenched gender inequality in terms of the division of housework, as reported in newspaper headlines such as 'How career women still do most of the chores…even when they're the main breadwinner' (Daily Mail, 2013) or 'Forty years of feminism – but women still do most of the housework' (The Observer, 2012).

Similarly, various comments implied a gendered understanding in that the behaviour of a specific individual was presented as in some way not to be expected:

'Actually my brother is a better cook that I am' (Kim, 40)

'She'll, and my son believe it or not, they'll both ring up and ask about recipes' (Margaret, 60 talking about her children)

Eleanor also talks about her husband and two brothers-in-law who are better cooks than their female partners and that this is 'really noticeable':

'Me and my two sisters, all of our partners are much better cooks than we are. My younger sister, her husband's actually a chef, and my older sister her partner is just, you know he cooks really exotic meals because his family originate from the Caribbean. So he cooks with a lot of kind of spices. [Um] yeah so that was really noticeable that you had three, you know. My mum, I think she wonders why that she's brought up these three daughters and all of our partners are better like cooks than we are [Jennifer: mm].' (Eleanor, 34)

This suggests that while participants in my study were unwilling to explain their division of household work as simply a result of, for example, male and female roles,

they were still aware of particular stereotypes and normative traditional femininities.[44] As Risman has argued, this can be seen in terms of 'cultural gendered interactional expectations' (2004, p.442), which I am also expected to be aware of and thus frame what is mentioned as surprising.

Across the sample then, there was a general finding that participants spoke in terms of a recognised stereotype of a (hetero)gendered division of household work, in which women generally do more of the housework and childcare and take responsibility for the organisation of tasks. In making sense of the division of household work within their own relationships, some older generation participants did talk more clearly in terms of gendered expectations at the time they got married, although several also spoke positively about male involvement (see section 7.6). For the three mothers of young children who were at home full-time (Laura, Eleanor and Leanne), motherhood and maternity leave appeared to have marked a turning point in how household work was divided that contrasted with previous experiences of relative gender equality within their heterosexual relationships, and represented a shift towards a mothering identity. For the other mothers of young children who were employed, while there were variations in how household work was divided, what was clear was a conflict between making sense of themselves as autonomous individuals, downplaying the relevance of gender, and as competent and caring mothers, in relation to their children, their male partners and their own mothers.

7.3   Gender and Heterosexuality Across Generations: Mothers and Daughters

By analysing the pairs of transcripts together, I identified how mothers and daughters spoke about doing gender and heterosexuality in different ways from other pairs, particularly in relation to a cultural construction of 'emphasized femininity' (Connell, 1987), which I outlined in Chapter 2. However, as I will discuss in section 7.3.3, there were also differences between mothers and daughters from the same family.

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[44] Although the focus on 'surprising' gendered behaviour relates to cooking, research has identified how men can do 'foodie masculinities' (Cairns et al., 2010, p.608; see also Hollows, 2003), although this is still 'noticeable', rather than expected. Nevertheless, some of the comments about male perfectionism, and Irene's tone in mentioning the 'best cleaner' she had ever paid was a man, demonstrates that this sense of surprise is not exclusively related to cooking.

7.3.1 Defined Roles

Laura (32) repeats the word 'traditional' in describing how she and her husband divide housework (as she does more of the cooking and cleaning), and considers this as similar to her parents in that there are defined roles within both couples:

> 'In fact it's probably quite similar in a sense that thinking about it it's very similar to David and I. … I would say they're very similar in their roles and my dad does the maintenance of the house and the DIY and the electronics and [um] gardening. They've got a, they've got a big garden as well and so my dad will spend quite a, will spend hours in the garage just like David does… fiddle around with whatever they're doing in the garage [um] and they're both, they're both engineers they're both quite practical so I think they both enjoy the work that they do [um] yes and so my mum does more of the cooking and cleaning.'

By making comparisons between two heterosexual couples, Laura is constructing relational gendered identities, both in terms of the relationships between the generations, and within each couple. Connell suggests that 'emphasized femininity' includes 'sociability rather than technical competence' (1987, p.187) and in making connections between her husband and father as practical and engaging in the same types of household work, compared to Laura and her mother who do not have these technical skills, arguably Laura is constructing identities in relation to an understanding of emphasised femininity.

When talking about herself and her husband, Mary (64) described their division of household work as 'basically we stick to *fairly* traditional roles in that we do what we can do best' (original emphasis). She talked about cooking, comparing their skills (and drawing on a biographical explanation):

> 'Interestingly he had a period when he was [um] not working and I was so he tried [laugh] tried to take over [um] he can't [.] he doesn't really like cooking, he's not into cooking. He tends to always have scrambled egg and beans and I wouldn't like that kind of, or tinned, and I would rather just rather make something and also then I can decide whether it's healthier, healthy or not which has always been quite important to me...so just simply because I'm, I can cook [um] I learned to cook at school and I mean I like cooking [um] and I'm quick, because I'm quick at it it's easy, it's easier.'

However, like other women she talked about her husband Tom doing the 'heavy stuff' (see section 7.6 for more discussion of this across the sample). As with Laura, in emphasising her acceptance of different skills that relate to gendered patterns in how she and Tom were brought up, and in implicitly suggesting her relative lack of strength, Mary's account can be understood to be framed in terms of emphasised femininity. Nevertheless, Mary also includes memories of disagreeing with what she described as examples of traditional heterosexual relationships (such as a wife fetching her husband's slippers), and while both she and Laura demonstrate their differences from their husbands in relation to broader understandings of femininity, this does not involve fully accepting separate responsibilities in terms of household work.

7.3.2 Equal and Interchangeable

In talking about how she and her current partner organise things, Claire (42) emphasised equality, saying, for example 'We don't have a lot of very segregated duties really, we both just crack on with it'. She emphasises this point:

> 'Yeah, no we didn't decide to have specific roles, we just [um] we, I think we're both quite accommodating people so we would just try and help the other one out if, you know, if I had more time than he did I would do it, if he had more time than me he, he would do it so.'

Tracing the voices through her transcript showed a lot of 'we' when talking about her current relationship, in contrast to other interviews where 'I' is more prominent.

Her mother Rita (68) noted 'I think we were always conscious of showing them what we believed a good family life would, would be'. For her this included sharing what she describes as 'the womanly role', including tasks around cooking, cleaning, laundry, food shopping and childcare, and this meant that whoever was 'around' or 'near for that' would do this job. She expands on this:

> 'And I think because Bert and I, you know with the bringing up of the children, the girls wouldn't have said "Oh I want to be with mummy, rather than daddy" because mummy and daddy were interchangeable, do you know what I mean? So Bert would do the nappies, he would read them a bedtime story, he'd go and play with them equally with myself, so you know we'd got that sort of relationship and that sort of family.'

When Claire talks about her parents, she seems to have recognised this, for example she mentions that 'cooking has always been between Mum and Dad, whoever was home' and describes her father as 'hands on'.

In downplaying gendered differences within their heterosexual relationships (while acknowledging, as Rita does, that the concept of 'the womanly role' is recognisable), both women appear to be constructing their own gendered identities in a way that challenges an understanding of emphasised femininity in terms of the acceptance of responsibility for housework and childcare. By emphasising equality within their relationships in this regard, both Claire and Rita are arguably doing gender differently. However, at other times in their interviews, both women construct themselves in relation to more traditional understandings of masculine identities (for example, in terms of DIY competence), supporting my point that positioning oneself in relation to ideas of emphasised femininity is complex and contradictory.

7.3.3 Different Understandings: Hannah's Story

Hannah (43) was a single parent working in a professional job, while her mother left work when she had children. In her interview, she set out the differences in their understandings of motherhood:

> 'And my, I'm a single parent family, my mum had my dad, and she's still with my dad, and she's got my brother and she didn't work, well she didn't work outside the home, well she did Tupperware or something. You know her whole understanding of what it is to be a wife and particularly a mother is, she just can't apply to my situation at all [Jennifer: mm]. And in her view my job, which I work as a lecturer, and I've got a lot of responsibility and it's [.] you know it's, at times it's very hard, it's very demanding. But in her view if a woman with a child works it's because she does two mornings a week at the local school for some pin money, and every week she will say to me "so what are you doing on Monday?" "Well I'm going to work". But she wouldn't ask my brother the same way, she wouldn't ask a *man* the same question [um]. She just does not seem able…not able to reconfigure her brain, at all, around that.'

Hannah's account of these different understandings of motherhood, and how these fit into her broader personal narrative, points to ways in which more generally she makes sense of herself in terms of rejecting a notion of emphasised femininity in terms of subordination to men (Connell, 1987). Nevertheless, she acknowledges the influence

of this understanding of femininity in relation to her new partner, who she met when he did some work on her house. Talking about him seeing the 'state of this house' as 'embarrassing', she recalls 'it was weird to me that when we did get together I did start to think, I must do this, I must do that, I must do the other. And it did cause a lot of tens, caused me a lot of stress'. Although she is comfortable talking about her decision to consciously reject what she presents as normative prevailing femininities, this tension points to the ongoing influence of these in making sense of one's self and one's practices; as Connell states 'whatever ideology prevails in the gender order, children grow up under its shadow' (2002, p.84).

While she describes how 'everything was always done' by her mother when she was living at home, Hannah also emphasises that her mother '*hated*' cleaning and cooking (original emphasis), commenting that 'she doesn't do it because she likes it'. Hannah makes a case for not doing various tasks: 'if you haven't got time or it makes you miserable, as long as you, as long as things are functioning that's fine'. While she is willing to have a 'messy' house (her description), she felt that her mother 'put a lot of pressure on me, was quite judgemental about my attitude towards housework and you know [um] and would be very critical about coming round to the house'. As I discussed in Chapter 6, Hannah talked about the conflicts with her mother around the contradictions in the messages she received, described as 'you can do anything' and 'you can do anything as long as you still clean up' (which reflect the contradictions in other participants' stories, and in the way some older generation participants spoke about their daughters as mothers of young children, as with Jean in section 7.2). In Hannah's account, her choices to do gender and heterosexuality in a different way (which she characterises as being viewed by others as 'you're a bad housewife, and you're a bad mother, and a bad woman') has led to 'a lot of tension around domestic stuff' with her mother.

7.4   Gender Outside of Heterosexual Partnerships

In this section I will consider how gender was discussed by participants in contexts outside of heterosexual partnerships to pick apart the (hetero)gendered understanding of the division of housework outlined in section 7.2. As I mentioned in the previous chapter, most participants had lived with adults other than parents/grandparents or a male partner at some point prior to the study, for example at university, during nurse

or teacher training, or as a living arrangement before moving in with a partner. While some participants spoke generally about untidiness at this stage, in terms of housework there were comparisons made with other students or housemates, both of the same and a different gender, which were not framed in terms of heterosexuality.

As I mentioned in Chapter 4, Sally (32) and Karen (55) both described variations in the housework of girls they had lived with, while also highlighting broader gender differences. Other participants who had lived with housemates or friends (as opposed to parents, siblings, children, other family members or husbands or partners), also described similar experiences:

> 'I lived with five girls, well there was me and four girls [Jennifer: yeah] one of whom, she came from quite a privileged background so they'd always had a cook and they'd always had a cleaner… The other thing was washing up, was always the negotiation about well who washes up [Jennifer: mm], whose plates and, and things and Georgina, this girl from a privileged background, she never did any washing up. So we, it's amazing how you end up at this but we used to have little parties for her washing up.' (Jo, 32)

> 'There were eight of us, eight girls in this huge terrace house [um..]…and we tried to kind of make things equal and we, I think we actually sat down and wrote a plan but it didn't really ever *work*. And I know that cer, that some of us did a lot more than others, myself included, because we couldn't *stand* the mess and then other people weren't so bothered so it certainly wasn't *equal*.' (Laura, 32)

The importance of achieving gendered equality (according to one's own definition) within heterosexual relationships has been highlighted in previous research (Nordenmark and Nyman, 2003) however, the acknowledgement of differences between girls, and the result that the division of cleaning and washing up was not '*equal*' suggests that fairness and equality are relevant in other contexts.

Nevertheless, Laura followed this point by comparing the 'girls' house' to the 'lads' house' and commenting:

> 'Honestly they got to the stage where they had like creatures crawling in their cupboards, I mean it *really* was dis, it was just, you wouldn't want to eat there. And they had stuff all over the fl, really bad stuff all over the floor [um]. So ours was nowhere *near* that.'

Thus while Laura identifies differences between women she has known, she also implies that there are more inherent gender differences. Similarly, having discussed a woman who did not contribute much to the household, Jo also makes a generalised comparison, in relation to washing clothes together and buying shared things for the house: 'I suppose girls you do just compromise much more than blokes, blokes kind of just kind of go a bit mad I think. But as girls we just negotiate'. Amy (33) also felt that there was a limit to how 'disgusting' any girls were, commenting that 'among kind of friends there were only really ever clashes on standards of hygiene when it was like girls living with boys'.

Jo talks about the housemate from a 'privileged' background, as well as another girl (who happened to have the same name) who 'had a similar upbringing to me and she was quite clean and tidy so I think the two of us generally kept on track the ones that were a little bit more unruly'. As I discussed in Chapter 5, this sort of biographical understanding was common across the sample, and is used to account for differences between individuals (while at other points participants talked in terms of gendered characteristics and tendencies). Laura also talks about the backgrounds of specific friends: a male friend who 'had a mum who'd made, even when he was doing his A-levels had kind of monitored his homework' and who went 'completely berserk' when he went to university in terms of drinking and a female friend who 'wasn't able to manage her own finances, or her parents wouldn't allow her to' and who 'just wanted to spend masses of money' when she was at university. Speaking more generally, she says:

> 'Yeah I did meet quite a few people who university who just didn't know how to look after themselves, cos they hadn't had a chance, they'd not, you know the way they'd been brought up they just [..] maybe their personalities to a certain extent as well but, they didn't know how to look after themselves.'

In contrast, Laura explains her own ability to look after herself in relation to working part-time to save up for a gap year, and the experience of living away from her parents in another country before university.

Amy also went to university, and remembers 'being very practical in my first university house', including being able to fix things around the house. She also

describes cooking Christmas dinner in her university house, and clearly mentioned this to her mother, who recounts that 'she said "Mum I'm the only one who can cook a Christmas dinner" out of her and her flatmates'. In terms of being aware of these differences between her and the other girls she lived with, she constructs a narrative around realising that 'I did kind of know more than some people about very practical things', and a sense of pride in this ability. Nevertheless, this is linked to how she was brought up and a continuation of practices from childhood to going to university. Talking about learning from her mother, she said:

> 'In terms of life skills and things around the house, I think I'd probably learnt it as I went along. It never really got to "right you're about to go to university now, I'm about to teach you how to live on your own", it was more "well, just keep on doing what you've always been doing".'

In contrast, Eleanor spoke about the difficulties that arose from not having learnt to cook at home (whereas a female housemate she lived with had), and a desire for having been brought up by a working mother so she would have developed these skills (see Chapter 8 for further discussion of this).

Arguably, in making comparisons *between* women, the understandings of these women (and others I interviewed) emphasise the importance of particular and individual experiences, rather than gender (as I discussed in Chapter 5, participants described the housework practices of specific people in relation to how they had been brought up). Nevertheless, those examples included a specific focus on the role of their mother in how they had 'turned out' (Davies, 2011) and this responsibility was also discussed by mothers of sons (see below). Furthermore, the tendency to then compare 'girls' and 'boys' or 'lads', suggests that an understanding of differences between women was framed within an understanding of more inherent gender differences in terms of standards of cleanliness. As Risman suggests, internalising male and female identities in a way that makes sense of women and men as 'different kinds of people', limits the extent to which men and women can then compare themselves as 'similarly situated' (2004, p.432). Therefore, while some of the women talked about particular characteristics that they were proud of, or individual achievements, it is helpful to reflect on these through the lens of gender to shine a spotlight on how these are discursively constructed.

7.5   Gender in Families

In the previous chapter, I considered how women in my sample talked about the importance of fostering independence and self-sufficiency in their children. It was also something mothers of sons talked about specifically in terms of their responsibilities:

> 'And I'm *very* conscious of it with my son [um.] I think it's my role as a mother to make sure that, you know if he gets married or has a long term female partner that, you know I've, I've done my job with him that he doesn't expect a woman to look after him, so I'm quite conscious of that.' (Sophie, 41, original emphasis)

> 'I still sort of did, did look after them but the whole time I did *try* to get them to be independent. Because I wanted my sons to be good husbands [laugh]. I wanted them to be able to, you know to do things.' (Mary, 64, original emphasis)

Both Sophie and Mary appear to be aware of the way in which mothers can be blamed for not preparing their children, particularly sons, to be able to look after themselves (Charles and Kerr, 1988). As I showed in Chapter 5, several women made sense of men's behaviour in relation to their mothers not having taught them how to do certain things, or not having expected them to help with housework. By positioning themselves as at least in some way responsible for how their sons turn out as husbands, Sophie and Mary are making sense of this process as relational and showing that sexist attitudes or an inability to do housework are not in any way 'natural'. However, in focusing particularly on their sons, they are also contributing to an understanding of inherent gender differences, even if they are then trying to challenge these in their sons' imagined futures, in that their daughters are not expected to need preparing in the same way.

What is also noticeable with the examples of preparing sons to do housework is the heteronormative ways in which these women imagine their sons' futures.[45] Similarly, Nicola (32) talked about how, when she thought about passing on her recipe book, her

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[45] Mary's interview was conducted at a time before the Marriage (Same Sex Couples) Act 2013 (legislation.gov.uk, 2013) so legally 'husband' could only be the partner of a woman.

initial thought was to pass it on to her son's female partner, and she questioned whether she was treating him differently as a boy:

> 'I wonder if he'd been a girl [Jennifer: mm] what sort of things I'd have passed on to him. [.] And I think is there, should there really be a difference between what I pass on to him or if I'd had a girl, I don't know. Like I was doing my little recipe book last night, right and I thought '"I can give that to his, if he ever settles down" and I thought "why can't I just give it to him?", rather than giving it to his wife or whatever.'

Sally (32) also spoke about hoping her daughter Leah gets one of the 'men who are very very clean and tidy and do lots of housework' (see Chapter 4). Although most of the younger generation mothers did not talk explicitly about future partners of their children (who were often very young), Hannah was the only one to suggest her daughter might be gay.

As I mentioned in Chapter 5, several participants explained the behaviour of other characters in their stories in terms of their biographies, including several that explained someone not knowing how to do particular tasks because their mother did everything for them as a child. This idea of maternal responsibility (and subsequent guilt) is also evident in Jean's reflections:

> 'I am very very guilty; my son can't do any of those things either and he's 37. Because, I suppose being at home all day that was the job, that was what I did…none of them did a lot at home because I just found it easier to do it myself.' (Jean, 66)

The idea that 'I found it easier to do it myself' echoes the work of Beagan et al. (2008). Looking specifically at foodwork, they found that women in their study did most or all of the foodwork partly as a way of avoiding conflicts, a finding reflected among some of my participants:

> 'Whoever you asked to do anything there was arguments [Jennifer: yeah]. So in the finish it was just easier to do it myself [Jennifer: yeah] rather than argue and then end up taking more time than me doing it so.' (June, 59)

> 'I think, it's hard because I'd like the kids to do a little bit more but at the same time you think actually it's just easier if I do it myself [Jennifer: mm].' (Sophie, 41)

One of June's sons was living with her at the time of the interview, and she mentions that despite him cooking when he moved out, he does not cook while living at her house ('he's come back home now and he's still not doing any, he's gone back to normal [Jennifer: yeah]. He won't do himself a sandwich or anything because I'm there'). The idea of 'going back' was also raised by Sally (32), in relation to her brothers who 'tend to just fall back into the pattern of like being looked after and being kids' (while she, who has also moved back home at various times, 'takes responsibility'; see Chapter 4 for a discussion of how this can be understood in terms of Sally's relational narrated self).[46]

As well as the vertical relationships between parents and children, relationships between siblings also provide a context in which gender plays a part in the interpretive practices reported by participants. Women with both sisters and brothers commented on similarities and differences in terms of household work when they were younger, and in some cases noted how this had carried on into adulthood (or how this had changed). Some of the older generation participants felt that they were treated differently from their brothers:

> 'As we got older it was more I did it [um]. The boys always tended to get away with it easier [Jennifer: mm]. You know they'd got football or they were doing something…around a Saturday I used to have to hoover through and make sure the table was laid for lunch when she came in. She cooked the lunch but I used to have to make sure the table was all laid and, so. But the boys just used to sit down and eat their meals and then clear off [Jennifer: yeah].' (June, 59)

> 'They worked on the farm [Jennifer: yeah]. So it was very, very, I suppose you would call it sexist now [Um] Very sexist because yeah we stayed in and helped and they went out and they eventually took over the farm so they had, they learned on the job as well. And at the time we didn't question it.' (Margaret, 60)

Margaret's account reflects her awareness of how things have changed, applying a label of sexism retrospectively, and potentially assuming how I would make sense of it (the fact I had asked about how what her brothers did at home compared to her and

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[46] While I am reflecting on a very small sub-sample, this should not be understood as purely an issue with sons. For example, Kate's daughter Natalie (20) has continued to live with her (and Natalie's boyfriend also lives with them 'on and off'), and their lack of tidiness also causes conflicts.

her sister may have indicated my research interest in gender). Nevertheless, she maintains 'that's the way it was and for us it wasn't a problem'.

Hannah (43) remembers that while her parents expected both her and her brother to help, her grandmother had a different attitude:

> 'I remember my parents went away with my dad's business once and my brother was at work and it was when I was doing my A-levels because there's only a year between us and I remember my nan, her mum coming to look after us, and [um] she'd not, my brother was coming back from work and I was revising or something and she just went mad because I hadn't made him his tea. And I just looked at her like, "he can make his own tea, it's there". And she said "he's been at work all day", sort of, and I just couldn't, "what do you think I've been doing? I'm no more in the mind-set of making him his tea than I would have of making my own tea. I've been busy and I'm not hungry" [um] but [er] yeah that was really amusing.'

As I have demonstrated elsewhere (see Chapter 5), Hannah's self-narrative was framed in terms of a 'rebellious' nature, and this memory can be seen as contributing to that. By not conforming to the gendered behaviour expected of her, Hannah emphasises herself as different from her grandmother (who she described as having a strong conformist streak) and constructs a strong feminist identity that is presented as who she has always been (or at least does not narrate an account that includes a clear turning point in terms of this realisation).

Other participants with brothers spoke about both/all being encouraged to do things, and mothers talked in terms of doing things with the children or getting everyone to do something:

> 'We were both, my brother and I encouraged to join and in to do stuff.' (Amy, 33)

> 'I had an older brother as well. Don't remember there being much difference' (Mary, 64)

Given the varied nature of the sample in terms of number, age and gender of siblings, it was difficult to highlight any gendered patterns in terms of how household work was divided in childhood. However, by focusing on relational narrative selves in process, it is possible to make links between descriptions of, for example, siblings and partners, and to analyse differences. While some participants spoke about being treated in a

similar way to their brothers, comparing this to the way they divided housework with their husbands points to a different understanding of gender within a heterosexual context. For example, as mentioned above, Mary discusses how her husband is less competent at particular housework tasks which he has not been taught to do, while in the next section, I describe how Amy talks about the process of selectively deciding what to ask her husband to do in a way that will not 'annoy' him, thereby taking responsibility for housework overall. While both women grew up with boys who were expected to help, their construction of their husbands highlights their individuality by drawing on biographical understandings to explain their attitudes and behaviour (and thus a time before their marriages which implicitly limits their responsibility for achieving a more equal division of housework with their husbands).

Kim (40) grew up with two brothers, and remembering helping out at home (for example by polishing or cleaning the bathroom), commented 'I wasn't encouraged more to do it than the boys [Jennifer: mm], definitely not, no'. Her mother (June) talks about asking all the children to do things (although she then notes that they used to argue between themselves). As a mother, Kim spoke explicitly about gender equality:

> 'So I think [um] I am conscious of Molly thinking she's got to do the housework cos she hasn't [Jennifer: mm]. [Um] Being a girl I don't want her to think that's what girls do so I think, I do try to be fair with the two of them. So if Joe's not doing it, I don't expect Molly to do it either [Jennifer: yeah]. But that's from a gender thing I think, because just because you're a girl doesn't mean you have to do the cleaning so.'

While she talks about gender equality between her children as siblings, she also reflects on doing household work as a wife and mother, highlighting the importance of doing things for her children and providing proper meals. Although she emphasises trying to treat the children equally, it is important to recognise how being embedded in relationships may shape how they make sense of their gendered identities. While Kim wants to make it clear to her daughter that she does not have to do the cleaning, the fact that Kim does most cleaning in their house may influence Molly's understanding of what it is to be an adult woman, and specifically a wife and mother. Thus while Kim's imagined and idealised sense of both her children as adults is as 'happy, content and well-balanced people' who are free, and indeed encouraged, to make individual choices in order to achieve this, this does not recognise how gender

inequality can be reproduced across different social dimensions (Risman, 2004). According to Kim, Molly does more housework because 'she's like me, she likes doing it'; this focus on enjoyment, while framed in terms of the importance of happiness and her children's choices to do what makes them happy, undermines this aim of gender equality.

Some participants grew up with only sisters, and talked about differences in various ways, including personalities and natural differences, skills and interests, and being at a different stage in the life course. For example Claire (42) describes her sister as much more practical and someone who will 'crack on' and do cooking or sewing jobs, while Jo (32) talks about her and her sister having inherited different 'tidying things' from their parents. Leanne (24) notes that both her older and younger sister are not as clean as she is, although in various ways she links this to not being 'grown up'; while her older sister works as a teacher, 'she always says like "if I had a child then obviously", you know like obviously she'd be like me she said and do all the cleaning more'. Her younger sister is 'still pretty messy', but for Leanne this is age-related, and potentially part of a process of growing up; while she does a lot of cleaning now, 'I think I was still messy at that age'. Leanne also talked about doing more than her sisters as a teenager: 'I always felt like I did more because [um] I think I was the quietest one, so I put up less fuss, I'd be like "it needs doing, we might as well do it"'. Davies (2015) has argued that siblings construct themselves in relation to each other, and that this can involve presenting a group of siblings as a 'well-balanced whole' (p.685).

While Kate's account of her daughters differs from Leanne's (see Chapter 5), Leanne suggests that her parents were out at work when the cleaning and other jobs were happening, and that they 'wouldn't know who'd done what when they came back', so to avoid all of them being grounded, 'I'd just do it for everyone'. This example of different identifications reflects the potential contradictions in how we self-identity and how we are identified by others (see also Karen talking about her children in Chapter 4). In other cases, mothers and daughters broadly agreed on the characterisation of different siblings, and this identification contributes to shared family stories (see the discussion about Jo and Abby in Chapter 5). The differences between sisters discussed in the interviews contribute to individualistic narratives in that gender cannot explain their differences relative to each other. However,

considering these identifications in the context of broader narratives of 'growing up' (or not having done so 'properly') highlights gendered expectations on girls to become wives and mothers who are tidy and take responsibility for household work.

7.6   Masculinities and Relational Feminine Identities

Within families, men can be seen to embody various identities (such as husband, father, brother and son) through which they 'do' masculinity (Robinson and Hockey, 2011). As I set out in Chapter 4, conceiving identification as a dialectical process involves considering how other people understand us, as well as how we understand ourselves in relation to others. While this study included only female participants, much of what they talked about included both specific men and more generalised understandings of masculinity in the context of heterosexual relationships and families. From a social constructionist perspective, the various masculinities of these men can be seen as constituted in the relations between themselves and others rather than merely an individual attribute. Nevertheless, as I have shown throughout this thesis, the influence of a dominant discourse of individualism, in which choice and self-determination are emphasised, is evident in the way in which masculinities are constructed.

Specifically women's stories of men also contribute to the construction of masculinities (Heward, 1996) although this can be downplayed in research that focuses exclusively on men (Talbot and Quayle, 2010). While it would be wrong to claim to understand how the men themselves would make sense of their own practices on the basis of accounts of their partners, daughters or mothers, the construction of specific and general masculinities can be seen to function as a generalised other in the context of women's personal narratives (see Chapter 2). As Talbot and Quayle (2010) show in their study of young South African women talking about masculinities, women can construct ideal masculinities that support their own identity work that differs according to context. In this section, I will explore how women's constructions of masculinities can contribute to their own self-narratives in relation to household work.

In a similar way to previous research outlined in Chapter 2, the women I interviewed discussed how they managed household work within their couple relationships. This included strategies for allocating household work, as Leanne (24) talks about here when she explains what she defines as 'boy jobs':

> '[Er.] It's just like the rubbish, cleaning out the cat's litter [er] cleaning the guinea pigs out, if any boxes needed going in the attic or like stuff like that like the heavy jobs [Jennifer: yeah]. [Um] I don't know just, just not a lot. It used to be cleaning the toilet but now I do that as well [laughs]. So just yeah, the jobs I don't want to do [laughs] [Jennifer: yeah].'

In terms of understanding this in relation to Leanne's own self-narrative, it is noticeable that she minimises what is included in 'boy jobs' as 'just not a lot', which fits with the rest of the interview in which she talks about how much she does. Nevertheless, she also describes these as 'the jobs I don't want to do' which highlights how she is able to emphasise her agency to avoid doing particular tasks. Nicola (32) also used this phrase when I asked about 'fixing stuff around the house, those sort of maintenance things', and talks about telling her partner, Ben, that certain things around the house 'needs fixing' or 'needs doing'. Again this suggests she has the agency to avoid particular jobs, as well as having a male partner capable of doing these tasks. However, having called these jobs 'boy jobs', when I asked 'who tends to do that sort of thing?' she replied, after pausing, 'It depends. Quite often I'll do them, just because he's not here', before going on to talk about how 'quite often' she says to him that something needs fixing and describing him as 'quite handy' and 'good with the cars'. This contradiction of doing 'boy jobs' herself arguably undermines a more traditionally feminine identity, and later in the interview, she constructs the narrative of her 'journey' to becoming a mother as she understands the term, which is also shaped by her sense of conventional adult heterosexual femininity (see Chapter 6).

Participants also drew on an idea of natural differences between men and women when talking about the physical requirements of various tasks, in particular the idea that men did 'heavy' jobs (as with Leanne above):

> 'I mean things like hoovering, some things I just don't really like doing, hoovering's one of them because our Hoover's really heavy, I don't really like lifting it around. So I might ask him if he was going to do something like that.' (Fiona, 48)

'He's very good at doing sort of heavy stuff.' (Mary, 64)

'He would do the manual, he would do the cutting of the grass, he would do the heavy digging until my brothers got old enough and then that was their punishment…But yeah he would do the heavy.' (Lynne, 58)

However, no man was described as 'strong', and thus the ability to do 'heavy' tasks was not presented as something exceptional, more as something inherently male. And I say inherently as few participants explicitly talked about tasks as 'manly' or 'masculine' (although Amy described taking the bins out as an example of the more 'manly, masculine' things her husband would do). Reading back over the transcripts highlighted how I did not question the use of the word 'heavy', even when used in a non-specific way, which suggests how I, similarly positioned by dominant gender discourses, take for granted particular understandings of gender differences.

Participants also talked about other reasons for not doing things, including not knowing how to do something (particularly DIY):

'But he's always been very practical, so, he does the DIY as well [laughs] [Jennifer: yeah]. [Um..] And because he always would do, you know if anything needed doing I'd say "Oh Bert the so-and-so's come off" or [inaudible] and he'd mend it or do whatever needed doing. So whilst we shared the womanly role, he certainly had the man's role of doing men's jobs.' (Rita, 68)

'Because he was busy building [Jennifer: yeah]. Because he's quite handy [um] then there was a lot of stuff that I couldn't help with that Neil could do …and then it was like "well I'll just keep it tidy and then everyone knows where everything is and it's safe"… But yeah I think it's just because I couldn't do the technical things which he could so then I would kind of do the other stuff that I could do.' (Kim, 40)

Describing an inability to do tasks that their husbands can do downplays the skill involved in tidying and cleaning, while valuing aspects of household work that boys are more likely to be expected to do within families (see section 7.5).

As well as male partners, for some participants fathers were also constructed in terms of their competence at particular tasks, such as Nicola's 'DIY dad' who was compared favourably to a generalised other, as not being someone who 'thinks he knows what

he's doing and then something'll break, a week later or [laughs] something'. Participants also spoke about asking their fathers for help with DIY (while they might call their mothers for help with sewing or cookery questions). Some participants also spoke about sons doing jobs that they saw as men's jobs, such as Jean (66) talking about her son, who lives with her and does do not contribute to the cooking or cleaning, but when her husband became too ill to do the gardening 'Andy's very practical so Andy took over, just like he cuts the grass and the hedges and things like that'. This included Nicola's young son Alfie (18 months):

> 'Getting rid of spiders, that's Ben's job, there was one last night crawling up the wall and he was away and I was like "Oh my God, Alfie!" [Jennifer laughs] "Come and eat a spider" [laughs].'

In making these connections between the expectations of sons and husbands, these women are potentially constructing their son's identities according to heteronormative understandings of masculinities, and male responsibilities.

In other cases, participants described not really thinking about particular tasks, as Amy does in relation to the car:

> 'There's other things that he does really well, you know he would, the pride he takes in looking after the car and keeping the car clean I just kind of have that as my equivalent to the house, like I would never really look at the car and think "oh it definitely needs a clean" so in my head I have that as my equivalent. He would never walk into a filthy kitchen and go "it looks like it needs a clean".' (Amy, 33)

As with Laura, discussed in section 7.3.1, and Nicola above, Amy is emphasising her own lack of interest in something stereotypically masculine, and pointing to the gendered differences between herself and her husband in a way that supports her self-construction in terms of traditional femininity. Although Amy speaks about the importance of gender equality throughout her interview (for example in comparing how her brother and her husband were brought up, see Chapter 5), this quote shows how in terms of doing (hetero)gender, there is a conflict between a need to demonstrate how one has achieved fairness in one's relationship, and the influence of a culturally valued emphasised femininity, in terms of interests and abilities. Nordenmark and Nyman found that when gender equality was mentioned 'all of the couples defined

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themselves as equal regardless of how household work was shared', and talked about the importance of bigger, more visible, infrequent tasks, which are also more stereotypically masculine (2003, p.203), which allows for a positive presentation of a couple relationship in line with normative (hetero)gender. I argue that this conflict plays out in the co-construction of 'acceptable femininity', in the sense of presenting oneself as a normal heterosexual woman.

This is not to suggest that participants did not challenge more traditional understandings of gender. Hannah (43) was unusual among the participants in talking about actively trying to challenge what she saw as traditional gender roles, both in her own behaviour and how she raised her daughter:

> 'I just think, boys grow up learning that stuff and watching that stuff and being told that stuff but girls don't. So she sits in the front seat and I explain how the gears work. I've took her to the [um], I took her to the garage the other night to put air in the car tyres and showed her how to do it because it's not *hard.'*

However, as I discussed above, she also described being aware of being judged for these choices as a woman, and more specifically as a mother. Similarly, her boyfriend's assumptions about her lack of knowledge in relation to the car (she describes him checking that she knew how to put air in the tyres, which as she said, she has been doing since she passed her driving test) can be seen in terms of expectations of women's limited technical competence (Connell, 1987). This appeared to influence how women constructed themselves in relation to traditional understandings of femininity; for example Amy, and other participants, either did not discuss car maintenance, or spoke about it as their partner's responsibility. However, there was a limit to this: Jean recalled how her 55 year-old friend, until her husband died, had never put fuel in their car, and this is presented as both shocking at her age and as extreme example of a gendered division of labour that is problematic. I would argue that *accounting* for one's practices and those of others can be seen as a way of doing gender, and women's accounts of assigning different responsibilities can be seen in this light. In Hannah's case then, while she can do gender and heterosexuality differently, she cannot escape the risk of being held accountable as a woman according to an understanding of whether she is doing 'acceptable femininity' in the context of normative heterosexuality.

Another theme is that of men not noticing that something needed doing:

'It's me that goes "it needs hoovering" or [Jennifer: yeah] Neil won't notice cos he doesn't think, he's quite happy.' (Kim, 40)

'He will do it but I'm the one who remembers it needs doing.' (Sophie, 41)

'He would do it if I asked [Jennifer: yeah] but maybe classic thing is, he would do it if he was asked to do it but he would never think to do it himself [Jennifer: yeah] and I'm sure I'm not the only woman ever to say that.' (Amy, 33)

Several of the women made links between their own experience and a more general understanding of men, as Amy does here. By suggesting this is a recognisable aspect of women's experiences in heterosexual relationships, Amy arguably normalises this 'classic thing' as something women in heterosexual relationships might expect to have to deal with (and as I discussed in Chapter 4, Sally repeats the idea of 'having to ask' as part of both her own and her mother's heterosexual relationships). In this way, accounts of men 'not noticing' both reflect discourses of normative heterosexuality, (illustrated, for example, in a recent newspaper headline 'Sexism or ignorance? Men who fail to do housework often don't see the need' (Telegraph, 2013)), but also reproduces it. This recognises how such culturally available discourses play a part in how women construct their own narrative identities as wives and female partners (Jackson, 1998). My own affirmative contribution to what Amy says also supports her presentation of this behaviour as normative.

An apparently contradictory theme that emerged was that of men taking *more* care over particular cleaning tasks or having higher standards of tidiness:

'He's more of a perfectionist than I, he's a bit more a perfectionist so, for instance I'd just do like a quick clean of somewhere and then he'll come along and be like "oh no" and do it again and so he's, he's really bothered about cleanliness and it being perfect.' (Laura, 32)

'He'll do all the stairs or he'll do things more thoroughly and he'll [laughs] spend twice as long, ten times as long as I would. You know, I could have done the entire house while he'll be you know doing something more painstakingly.' (Mary, 64)

'But I think he was a little bit too far the other way, he was a little bit OCD about his cleaning [Jennifer: mm].' (Nicola, 32)

The descriptions of this as perfectionism or 'a little bit OCD' are made in relation to the woman being interviewed who presents herself as having a normal or reasonable approach to cleanliness. As Mary suggests, this comparison can be in terms of how much it is possible to do within a given time, and I will explore this in more detail using the example of Fiona.

During her interview, Fiona (48) discusses a problem in her relationship regarding how much time her partner spends on particular tasks

> 'I used to say things like "look, I'll do upstairs and you do downstairs and lets have an hour, just do an hour, on Saturday morning"… And for me, the way I work that means you know, dusting things down, hoovering the bedroom, maybe changing the bed, cleaning the bathroom, I can do that in an hour easily. But what would happen is I would come downstairs and he'd be like that an hour later, still cleaning the top of the cooker. So nothing else would have been touched at all and I'd sort of say "[makes sighing noise] Oh God [laughing] that wasn't what I was expecting" so then what would happen is I'd come down and I'd have to do things down here.'

Like other women in my research, she then talks about how she has developed a strategy for coping with this by giving him the 'horrible' tasks to do ('if I'm aware of something really horrible that needs doing like cleaning the cooker or something, I'll just say to him 'you do that'') and while she does 'everything else'. This seems to position routine tasks as her responsibility, while the 'horrible' tasks seem by their nature infrequent. As I mentioned in Chapter 2, some research has suggested male participants used strategies to avoid doing particular tasks, including deliberate incompetence (for example, Charles and Kerr, 1988) and that is one way of reading what's going on here.

Fiona does talk about splitting routine tasks in the evening, but the theme of not noticing recurs as she feels a need to take responsibility for cooking:

> 'He can cook, there's no problem with that but I think he's not as organised in doing it in time for Isaac to eat and then go to bed. So I know that if it's a Monday night or something and Nabil was cooking, by the time he gets started and gets on with it, you know it's about nine o'clock before we're eating so I just think "oh I'll do that, get that out the way".'

As I described in Chapter 2, the idea that 'it's just easier if I do it' has been recognised as part of women's explanations for an unequal division of foodwork (Beagan et al., 2008), and here Fiona is implying the same thing. Beagan et al. ask the question 'Easier than *what*?' (original emphasis), suggesting that women may take on more of these tasks as an easier option than dealing with 'the conflicts that may arise from trying to get others to participate, or to meet particular standards' (ibid, p.665). While Fiona does not explicitly talk about avoiding conflicts, I would suggest there is an implication that the challenge of getting Nabil to change his behaviour would be the difficult task that Fiona wants to avoid. As with his approach to cleaning, she presents an individual strategy that facilitates her own well-being (in terms of stress levels) and avoids conflicts. By accepting that Nabil as a *person* is 'not as organised in doing it in time' (rather than seeing this as something he does that can be changed), Fiona is presenting this as part of who he is. She links this to a broader understanding of gender as a way of making sense of 'perfectionism': 'I think like a lot of men, men in my life anyway, it, when they take the time to do things they do it really well but they don't do it very often' (again, this use of a generalised other helps to frame an understanding of the behaviour of a specific man).

Talking about strategies for allocating household work draws on an understanding of men as not interested in doing housework, as some of the women talk about having to be aware of their partners' thought processes and developing strategies to make partners willing to do tasks; as Leanne (24) explains in terms of her reasoning:

> 'But I think I do like so much that's like [um] my way of separating them and saying "oh it's a boy job, it's your job" [Jennifer: yeah], cos then he's more inclined to do it I think.'

Amy (33) describes a similar process of being 'selective' about what she asks her partner to do:

> 'I probably pick and choose what I ask him to do because I don't want to just moan at him all the time so I'm quite selective and say "why don't you do this?", and it's either something I know he'll be less annoyed at being asked to do or something that's just the most useful thing to do at the time, I will be selective in what I ask him to do.'

Amy's desire to avoid continuously moaning at her partner, and thus to stop him being too annoyed, suggests that she is trying to avoid falling into the stereotype of a 'nagging wife', as well as engaging in the emotion work of managing his feelings that is often expected of women (Hochschild, 1983; Erickson, 2005). The mental work of 'separating' or 'picking and choosing' tasks, in a way that takes account of the thoughts and feelings of their male partner, illustrates how participants talk in terms of acute individual strategies to avoid conflicts over the division of labour (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2002). Beck and Beck-Gernsheim argue that negotiations over the division of household work are part of ongoing identity struggles, in which having an equal relationship is internalised as part of women's self-image, but this is contradicted by experiences of inequality. However, I would also suggest that the women in my study were also constructing themselves in terms of their understanding of 'acceptable femininity', and wider discourses in which the experience of an unequal division of household work and having to manage a male partner unwilling to participate equally is perceived as normal for women in heterosexual relationships (see section 7.2).

Sally talks about trying to 'push the balance' between herself and her partner by asking him to do jobs including DIY, putting things in the cellar and putting the rubbish bins out on the street for collection. While she recognises that she could do these jobs, she notes that 'I just think "but I do everything", I don't do everything but I do lots of stuff so I think "you could do that"'. Like Leanne, she is focusing on desire rather than ability in the sense that she wants to achieve a 'fair' relationship, and demonstrating her autonomy in a way that contributes to a self-narrative of learning from both her own previous experiences, and those of her mother (see Chapter 4). Nevertheless, she is also doing (hetero)gender in emphasising that she does 'lots of stuff', and thus constructing herself as a 'normal' woman in a heterosexual relationship.

While some of the participants spoke about trying to get their male partners to help more with housework, this was generally in the context of a positive framing of the relationship (for example, see Chapter 4 on Sally's comparison between her husband that she is discussing above, and her ex-boyfriend, in which the behaviour of the former is framed much more positively). More generally, several women described themselves as 'lucky', often because there partners were 'good':

'So he's pretty good really, he doesn't expect me to do everything.' (Nicola, 32)

'Neil is very good. He wouldn't volunteer to do it but if I said "Oh that needs doing" he would go "well leave it and I'll do it tomorrow" and he would do it.' (Kim, 40)

'I must be quite lucky really cos I, both my current partner and my ex-husband were both very [um] good around the house which didn't seem to be [um] the way it was for most people.' (Claire, 44)

'I've been quite lucky really because Tom's quite domesticated.' (Mary, 64)

'And he was fairly good because he'd set to and do the ironing if it needed doing, which a lot of men then didn't.' (Hilary, 71)

This was sometimes in relation to other men they knew (for example, friends' partners) or a more generalised understanding of men, which could be linked to a generational understanding (as Hilary does here, and as Mary does, see Chapter 6). Where this is specifically framed in terms of the woman herself being 'lucky', this can be seen as displaying a relationship that works and part of constructing a successful identity as a girlfriend or wife (or widow). Dryden (1999) writes about how participants in her study worked to present their relationships in a socially acceptable way. With an increasing sense that this means equality (however this is defined by the couple (Nordenmark and Nyman, 2003)), it is therefore important that participants demonstrate how household work is shared.

Some women talk about comparing relationships with those of friends, for example, Sophie comments:

'There's a group of friends I do get together with and yeah there would be constant discussions of how useless each particular husband is [um] and it's, it almost feels like a bit of a rite of passage, you know they're not really that bad but you do sit and moan about them. And they have the same things about them that irritate us.'

In Chapter 4, I noted how Sally compared specific men (such as her husband and her father) to other men who did less as a way to highlight that they were not the 'worst', and that such intra-gender comparisons have been found in other research to be associated with higher satisfaction with the division of household work (Thompson, 1991; Nordenmark and Nyman, 2003). In her study on the division of household work,

Hochschild (1989) found that women compare their partners to other men, and believe that husbands who help to some extent with household work are relatively scarce, and thus wives feel grateful to them (or 'lucky', as with my participants). However, she also suggested arguments with 'wives pointing to husband who did more, husbands pointing to men who did less' as part of a normalised marital struggle over what could be reasonably be expected (1989, p.51). In terms of the couples used by men and women to justify their behaviour, they can be seen as part of the imaginary in the sense that what is seen as 'normal' within a personal account 'connects with the social and cultural level' (Smart, 2007, p.49), where thoughts around relationships are formed in social and historical contexts. Therefore, an implied or explicit generalised other, who is not willing to do anything to help with housework, is normalised in the examples above and this idea of what is 'normal' shapes the participants' understandings of what it means for a man to be 'good' or 'domesticated'. In terms of the construction of masculine identities then, these are inherently relational, as are the feminine identities of the participants in my study and the other women they portray in their personal narratives.

In this section I have explored how women's constructions of masculinities contribute to their own identity work, for example in relation to ideas of emphasised femininity or constructing themselves as 'lucky' in terms of their partner, which contributes to displaying a relationship that 'works' (following Finch, 2007 on how family can be displayed) particularly when constructed in relation to a generalised other of husbands or male partners who do not 'help' with housework. While I would again emphasise that these are specifically the identifications of my female participants, which may have been challenged by their partners (and fathers, sons and brothers), I would suggest that the ways in which women construct masculinities, and their own femininities, are useful for understanding women's narrated selves as relational.

7.7 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have considered how gender was discussed both within heterosexual relationships, and in other contexts, including generalisations, discourses and both the acknowledgement of, and the downplaying of the importance of gender to explaining the division of household work in particular situations. By using an idea of relational

narrated selves in process, as part of a multi-dimensional framework in which gender and heterosexuality intersect in different ways, I have explored how participants were doing gender (and indeed doing (hetero)gender) in the way that they accounted for the division of household work in particular situations, and the way in which this encompassed discourses of gender and heterosexuality in circulation in contemporary British society (while at the same time, reflecting discursive shifts in the way they spoke about changing ideas of gender and heterosexuality over time). In this chapter I also discussed how participants constructed themselves as both autonomous individuals in a way that downplayed the relevance of gender, but also as mothers in relation to their children. In the next chapter, I will further explore how participants made sense of themselves engaging in family practices, and how this contributed to constructing relational (hetero)gendered family selves.

Although my research was with exclusively female participants, these women, as wives and partners (and widows, or ex-wives and partners), mothers, daughters, sisters, grandmothers, friends, colleagues and in any other way acquaintances of men contribute to the construction of masculinities. In terms of developing my argument that, in talking about household work, women constructed relational narrative selves in process over the life course, it is important to consider how such identities were constructed in relation to both specific and generalised masculinities. As I have shown, in various ways the majority of participants constructed themselves in terms of traditional ideas of femininity in relation to their male partners, and to a generalised understanding of men, for example in terms of strength, technical competence and being better at, and more aware of, the requirements of housework. In doing so, they could be seen to be 'doing femininity' in a way that was socially acceptable, and what this meant was constructed relationally. I have argued that, while this can be seen as doing (hetero)gender in terms of 'cultural gendered interactional expectations' (Risman, 2004, p.442) of being a woman in a heterosexual relationship, that reinforcing a sense of inherent gender differences and holding men to a different standard of competence perpetuates gender inequality in terms of the division of household work. While some participants, notably Hannah, did work to challenge this understanding, her account of feeling judged as a 'bad woman' points to the emotional difficulties in doing so.

Chapter 8: Doing and Displaying Family Through Personal Narratives of Household Work

8.1 Introduction

In this chapter I will consider how the women in my study do and display family, and how these theoretical ideas are important to studies of household work. Returning to the concepts of personal life outlined in Chapter 5, it is clear that as well as producing biographical accounts in which they construct a sense of relational narrated selves in process embodying different gendered and familial identities, my participants also tell family stories that constitute family as 'we', in relation to other families (Finch, 2007), included those that are remembered and imagined. Such stories about family relationships provide a way for participants to communicate a sense of the multiple families within which they are positioned (including potentially a family they grew up in, a family formed through meeting a partner and having children, a family they married into, and a broader sense of extended family). As in the case of other narratives (see Chapter 2), these family stories draw on broader cultural understandings of family in the way they attempt to make sense of their own experiences. Elsewhere, Finch and Mason argue that 'generalising narratives' about the negative behaviour of other families is a way of showing one's own family to be different (2000, p.165).

In *The Second Shift,* Hochschild suggests that 'couples sometimes develop "family myths" – versions of reality that obscure a core truth in order to manage a family tension' (1989, p.19). While I would question the use of 'truth' in this context, Hochschild's study does demonstrate that family stories do not simply reflect an objective reality of family life. Thompson discusses how research participants use a range of family stories when constructing their own narratives in the context of interviews, noting the way in which they are told, the stories and images which are chosen and put together, and the matters on which silence is kept provide part of the 'mental map of family members' (1993, p.36). As I discussed in Chapter 3, family researchers have recognised the limitations of basing an understanding of family on the account of one person. By considering multiple perspectives, multi-generational

studies of families challenge the idea of a single 'true' understanding of any particular family grouping (Jamieson et al, 2011), and thus we can analyse how an account of the sort of family 'we' are can be reinforced or undermined across generations. [47]

The importance of recognising different experiences of persons within a family takes us back to the ideas of social selves and personal life outlined in Chapter 2. By recognising a reflexive self that 'I' make sense of as part of different family configurations, we can consider the ways in which, as Morgan suggests, 'family practices are reflective practices' (2011a, p.163). While Morgan follows this by stating family practices simultaneously reproduce family relationships and reconstruct understandings of family (as I have outlined in Chapter 2), I would also argue that the self is shaped through the processes of engaging in family practices and interpreting these as part of various narrative identities the self embodies (for example as a daughter, mother, sister, wife).

In his later work on family practices, Morgan (2011a) considers overlaps between his ideas and those of Smart concerning personal life, including around a relational understanding of, respectively, family and the personal, a sense of motion through time rather than fixity, and fluidity in terms of transcending particular spaces. While he recognises the importance of the concepts Smart discusses, and the benefits of exploring the personal more broadly, he also asserts the continuing importance ascribed to family as something distinctive by the people we strive to understand as a reason for continuing to develop a family practices approach. As I will set out below, in my research I found that family was still a meaningful concept to the women I interviewed, and that reflecting on how they constructed a sense of family provides a useful conceptual lens for exploring practices of household work.

Following the multi-dimensional understanding of gender, heterosexuality and family outlined in Chapter 2, this chapter will begin by considering the themes of continuity and change in previous research, and then discussing how they were reflected in the family practices described. I will then set out how a notion of family display can make sense of the identity work and narratives constructed within an interview context, and

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[47] As, of course, do studies with multiple family members of the same generation.

discuss how family was displayed during my interviews with participants. In particular, I will focus on the temporal context of family display, discussing how participants can display family in the past, present and future, and consider the relevance of participants being multiply positioned within different families, for example, as a mother and daughter. I will also reflect on less positive examples of displaying family by considering how the longer-term implications of family practices that are displayed as 'doing family things properly', can simultaneously point to the problems of such practices in relation to discursive shifts, such as changing maternal responsibilities.

I would argue that it is difficult to separate the concepts of family practices and family display, particularly in relation to interview-based accounts of family which are inherently produced for an audience. Nevertheless, my point in separating the two sections is to explore firstly, how both changing and continued practices were described, and then to consider how an understanding of family display, and a recognition of the temporal context in which multiple families are displayed as part of personal biographies, offers a useful analytical tool for understanding women's stories of household work.

8.2   Change and Continuity in Families

Within sociology, our understanding of family has increasingly recognised that families are dynamic (in the sense of who is recognised as part of a person's family can be seen to change over time) and complex, as we acknowledge diverse forms of family (Silva and Smart, 1999; McKie and Cunningham-Burley, 2005; Williams, 2004). In this context, in which there is 'blurring' of various forms of relationships, such as kin, ex-kin, friendships and sexual relationships (Williams, 2004), McKie et al. argue that:

> 'What constitutes a family, my family, and personal relationships and friendships is not fixed by predetermined boundaries but constructed through boundary maintenance, whether through controlling knowledge, defining spaces, negotiating roles, practices of inclusion and exclusion and negotiating relationships between families and wider social institutions.' (2005, p.7)

Various studies have explored how this works, recognising that boundaries are not fixed and the practices of boundary maintenance are context-specific (McKie and Cunningham-Burley, 2005). The construction of family through boundary maintenance marks out these relationships as in some way distinct, and the notions of doing and displaying family (Morgan, 1996; 2011a; Finch, 2007) offer conceptual tools for exploring how people construct family, both for those inside and outside any sort of boundary.

Nevertheless, it is important not to overstate how families have changed at the expense of considering continuity (Gillies, 2003). Despite widespread nostalgia for traditional family values, often framed in terms of separate spheres for men and women, Coontz has argued that ideas of a 'traditional family' is 'an ahistorical amalgam of structures, values, and behaviours that never co-existed in the same time and place' (2000, p.9). Similarly, the functionalist narrative of how the family adapted to meet the needs of society, from an extended family focused on economic production within the home, to a post-industrial nuclear family in which parents' goal was the socialisation of their own children (Parsons and Bales, 1956), contradicts historical accounts of family forms. In the U.K., studies across class groups in the 1950s and 1960s highlighted the importance of extended kinship networks (for example, Young and Willmott, 1957; Firth et al., 1969), while Laslett (1972) argues for the continuation of nuclear families since the sixteenth century. Thus rather than a straightforward shift from one type of family to another, these studies suggest there have always been plural family forms. Across the data, I identified broad themes of continuity and change in relation to family; particularly ideas of doing family continuing in patterned ways, and discussions about consciously doing family differently. In this section, I will explore these ideas and how a multi-dimensional understanding is helpful for illustrating how they were presented by participants.

8.2.1 Continued Family Practices

In Chapter 7, I considered how for some of the younger generation participants, the doing of gender within their heterosexual partnerships was similar to the practices described by their mothers. Similarly, in some cases women's discussions of family

practices were framed in relation to their own experiences growing up in ways which allowed for a sense of continuation across the generations. Thus as well as presenting themselves as embedded in relationships, I would argue that it was also possible to see a sense of family as embedded in their accounts. While there are examples across the sample of participants drawing on dominant discourses, the different ways of doing and displaying family reinforces the argument for thinking about 'families' not 'the family', as there is clearly more than one idealised way of doing family. However, given these continuities in family practices were reported rather than observed, it might be more helpful to think about continuities in *displaying* family.

8.2.1.1 A Nice Way to be Brought Up

Kim (40) talks about what she describes as 'a nice way to be brought up', involving 'lovely clean beds, tidy bedrooms, everything was always cleaned, everything was always washed, dried and ironed for us' and wanting her children to live in the same environment. In constructing a narrative identity, this upbringing was used to explain Kim's housework practices:

> 'I didn't leave home till I was twenty seven and my mum did everything for me. So likewise I do everything for Joe and Molly [laughs]... I think that's kind of where I've kind of become the way I've become because it's kind of, it was always done for me so I expect it to be done for my children, for me to do it' (Kim)

Kim also links food-related family practices in her family with those she remembers from her own childhood, including taking her children to the allotments so they can learn about growing vegetables and think about the food they eat, which was 'pretty much really how I was brought up, I've kind of just rolled it down cos we did the same thing'. The idea of Kim 'rolling down' practices both acknowledges her choice to do this, while also implying a certain naturalness in that this 'just' happened without resistance.

8.2.1.2 Not Really Money Orientated

Laura (32) emphasises the active nature of 'my' family as 'outdoor types' who have 'done a lot of things'. She expands on this near the end of the interview in talking about how her family are different from others and describing this in terms of values:

'For instance with David's income level like most of his peers, his colleagues live in much like, they live in much, in nice houses or things and we're *perfectly* happy and content where we live, we wouldn't want it to be more than this [um]…we like to have experiences perhaps more than, and just go out and do things and being active and, yeah. So perhaps different to some, a lot of people we know. Diff, different [er] values I guess [Jennifer: mm]. [Umm] So sometimes we feel a bit isolated cos we, we look at things in a slightly different way, we haven't, we live slightly alternatively and a little bit less, you know, away from the mainstream.' (original emphasis)

Throughout this answer, Laura constructs a sense of how 'we' do family in terms of both behaviour and attitudes, displaying a strong sense of a united family in which she and her husband see things in the same way.

Like Laura, her mother Mary (64) displays how 'we' do family in a similar way:

'I'm not really, not really money orientated in life, I'm not, as long as, you know everything is ok. When the children were growing up we, we were always [um] short of money [um] but we were just happy really'

Similarly, when talking about having young children, she emphasised spending time together and that they would rather spend money on 'going out as a family' rather than on other things, and this theme of not spending money on objects and prioritising relationships and time spent together recurred (for example, earlier in the interview she mentioned keeping old stuff and viewed this as something that made people feel comfortable and welcome). In this case, these family practices reflect particular meanings that can be ascribed to family, while also constituting a sense of family as being about spending time together.

8.2.2 Learning, Teaching and 'Picking Up' Household Work Practices

Mothers also suggest ways in which household work practices can *become* embedded. In Chapter 6, I discussed how several of the participants talk about their very young

children or grandchildren 'pseudo-helping' by wanting to join in with housework tasks, and here Leanne (24) reflects on how her young daughter imitates her behaviour:

'Well I bought her a sweeping brush for Christmas [laugh] cos she watches me sweep up the floor in the kitchen so [um] yeah, she was like wanting to take it off me so I let her help sweep up in the kitchen with me. [Um] If she spills something she goes "baby wipe, baby wipe" [laughs], do you know to like clean it up [Jennifer: yeah]. So I think like I didn't even realise till she started like, do you know, talking more and stuff that like actually she's picking up like loads, like about my cleaning and stuff like that.' (Leanne)

In this extract, Leanne emphasises how her daughter watches what she does, and wants to copy her, and describes this as 'picking up'. In other cases, participants spoke about what they wanted their children to learn and how they facilitated this, for example Fiona's account of talking to her son about food and showing him what she does, and Kim's description of making burgers where her children 'try' different adding ingredients to learn what they like (see Chapter 6).

Participants also reflected on learning various household work practices from their mothers themselves, such as sewing, cooking and ironing, and teaching these to their children. However, some of the older generation participants explicitly rejected my reference to their mothers (or grandmothers) 'teaching' them things, as for example with Rita (68) and Lynne (58):

'Jennifer: Was there any, sort of trying to teach you recipes [um] like trying to teach you particular cooking techniques or...

Rita: No, definitely not with my grandma. [Um] I can't remember anything.'

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'Jennifer: So did you get taught things about growing veg and growing fruit and?

Lynne: We didn't get taught it as such, you just did it [Jennifer: yeah] you just did it.'

In terms of reflecting on how she made sense of learning about housework, June (59) usefully distinguished between being 'taught like "you'll do it this way"' and learning 'by looking and watching'. Expanding on the second of these, she said

'I think you learn off your mum, to a certain degree [..] You know with like housework and this that and the other you see what your mum does and as you grow up you tend to do the same so it's like your mum's your... I'm trying to think what it's called now [.] like your mentor, like you watch her and you do what she does.'

This second way of learning seems similar to what Leanne is already recognising in her young daughter; 'picking up' how things are done by watching.

Both ways of learning seemed to be relevant for several of the participants. For example, Laura (32) spoke about both:

'For instance cooking [er] learning to make scones or [er[baking I, I was, it was, I was kind of taught to do that but a lot of things it was just kind of watching for instance like setting the table which I did from when I was quite young, I just kind of picked it up and, sort of, it, so a lot of things it was just sort of learning through watching and imitating [um] but there were those specific skills such as baking which I had sort of more supervision and [um] support with. [Um] *Cleaning* I guess I just I don't remember even being shown how to clean I think again that was sort of just came with watching [..] yeah.' (original emphasis)

This distinction between learning how to cook and bake, and 'picking up' how to set the table and clean by watching is an interesting one, which arguably reflects a different understanding of the 'skills' involved. Baking emerged as a practice that mothers often engaged in with their daughters, and several mothers and grandmothers spoke with pride about girls who could bake cakes on their own. However, cleaning was not spoken about in these terms; as Fiona (48) said, 'I don't remember my mum ever [.] particularly saying "this is how you should clean a bath out" or anything like that [laughs].'

Potentially there is a sense that children *should* learn by 'picking up', rather than being shown exactly how to do a particular task. Jo (32) recalls,

'I was once hoovering up and Mum was saying, cos I was doing it a bit of a scatter gun, and she was like "oh how do you know where you've been?" and she did say "you might find it easier to systematically work round a room hoovering [Jennifer: yeah] rather than just wriggle your own way". But I don't really remember that that was told to me beforehand, it was clearly left for me

to find my own way and then interjecting if, if they spotted something that could potentially help [Jennifer: yeah].'

Similarly, the discussions about children's learning in Chapter 6 emphasised that what was being taught was an approach of *thinking for oneself*, rather than a specific method for doing something (for example, Eleanor emphasising what her son knows about who uses what crockery and cutlery when setting the table). Thus as part of mothering informed by an individualistic discourse, the language of 'picking up' emphasises how children can learn to be self-sufficient and independent.

The question then becomes, how conscious is this process for daughters? Both Amy (33) and Jo (32) talked about being taught specific things, but also learning in a way that they described in more naturalistic terms:

> 'Like school holidays my brother and I were taught how to cook and bake quite early on so school holidays would be me and my brother and my mum baking and filling up all the biscuit tins and filling up the freezer full of food and things like that.' (Amy)

> 'You know different people would do things in a certain way in a certain order, whereas you only know the way that you do it and I think you just naturally pick up the way that you do it from your experience growing up so, so yeah.' (Amy)

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> 'I mean there was definite things in the garden, you know I remember being told you don't touch this, you do touch that, you can only eat the things Grandma says you can eat or you can only touch things that Mum, cos Mum and Dad grew a lot of vegetables and I'm a big vegetable grower, so I remember being taught things specifically about, you know "oh sweetcorn's only really available in this time of year" and this is how you go about doing shopping and this is how you make shopping lists.' (Jo)

> 'But a lot of it was almost like osmosis because it happened in the house [Jennifer: yeah] and because we were asked to do it.' (Jo)

Jo's use of 'osmosis' implies a 'natural' and unconscious process, as with Bourdieu's work on habitus (1977). However, while both Amy and Jo talk about processes that they were not consciously aware of at the time, they are able to reflect on them in hindsight. James argues that by focusing on how children learn about the social world, we can explore the socialising process in terms of habitus as a 'taken-for-granted way of thinking about and engaging with the world that children learn as they grow up'

(2013, p.56). In this understanding, 'familial habitus' is a way of conceptualising the different taken-for-granted ideas of family that are incorporated into narratives of the self in process.

DeVault quotes a participant talking about 'picking up' as a process linked to 'maturation', which she then analyses as women learning from watching other women that "If I don't do it, then no one else will", so they pay attention and '"pick up on" the knowledge that supports their work' (1991, p.117). She links this particularly to mothering (drawing on Ruddick's (1990) work on the kind of learning required as part of mothering), highlighting a 'heightened awareness' of mothers to the importance of feeding (although she recognises this is not unique to women with children) and describes a process of paying attention:

> 'Attention does not come naturally to mothers; it develops from both loving concern and the very strong societal prescription that mothers are responsible for their children's well-being.' (ibid, p.116)

However, this kind of 'picking up' through watching is discussed in relation to women as mothers, while participants in my study reflected on this as part of growing up. Davies talks more generally about how young people make sense of a particular parental skill "rubbing off" on them, or "pick[ing] it up" as 'a form of transmission that takes place through being with somebody over a prolonged period' (2011, p.205). She uses one example of a teenager who talks about not being born with artistic skills, but how things like trips to art galleries and being around somebody doing art, and the associated 'stuff' in the house while she was "growing up" meant that it "rubbed off on me" (ibid, p.205).

Davies suggests that 'rubbing off' appears to be 'largely unagentic' (2011, p.208), and as I noted above, participants referred to 'picking up' as natural, and unconscious. However, while women may learn from watching their mothers and 'paying attention', there is space to consider their agency in terms of adopting particular practices. Jo gives an example of a system that her mother instigated that she has also put into place in her own home:

> 'Anything that belongs upstairs, if she was walking around and she saw it she would just put it on the steps, and the expectation was if you went upstairs you would take your items up to your bedroom with you.'

She does not suggest she was *taught* to do this, but instead has continued this particular family practice which she was aware of when she was living with her parents. Although several participants talked about 'picking up' ways of doing things as natural, they also hint at various ways in which they interpreted their mothers' behaviour as children. For example, as I discussed previously (see Chapters 6 and 7), Hannah spoke about the contradictory messages she received from her mother in terms of what she said and how she acted, and as an adult, how she interpreted this disjuncture and built it into her own narrative of household work.

Oakley describes women helping with various household work tasks as a 'direct rehearsal' for being responsible for this work themselves, as well as a more 'general imitation', for example in terms of how they described overall 'standards' (1974b, p.115). She argues that housework standards and routines 'lie in the lessons of childhood, when girls learn to equate their femaleness with domesticity' (ibid, p.113). While there is room in her account for the agency of daughters (for example, by aiming for higher or lower standards than their mothers), this is limited in terms of an account that emphasises socialisation, and the internalising of norms. James' (2013) more recent work on socialisation argues for viewing this process from a child-centred perspective in which children's personal lives (as conceptualised by Smart, 2007) become the focus (and thus an interview with a teenage Hannah might have been able to analyse how she made sense of her biography at that point, and how she relationally conceptualised herself). However, my research concentrates on the accounts of adult women remembering their childhoods and constructing these memories in the context of personal narratives around household work, and therefore cannot claim to understand how as children they would have made sense of this process at that stage in the life course. Nevertheless, employing a narrative perspective allows us to consider how memories of childhood are emplotted into personal narratives of household work, and how these can be retrospectively understood as problematic, as I will discuss in the next section.

Reflecting on my own preconceptions as part of my analytical approach, I recognise that I have been influenced by cultural shifts in an understanding of parenting, which is increasingly viewed as something that does not happen 'naturally', and which requires the intervention of experts (Lee et al., 2014). The idea that parents are now expected to engage in activities with their children that are in some way goal-orientated (Ramaekers and Suissa, 2011) is evident in contemporary discourses of parenting, and in the way I framed my interview questions. By asking about *preparing* children for leaving home, I drew on both assumptions about adulthood (as discussed in Chapter 6) and about the nature of parenting. Nevertheless, in recognising how my understanding was challenged by some, but not all, participants, I have been able to reflect more critically on this question.

8.2.3 Doing Family Differently

As well as carrying on a particular way of doing family, I also found some participants constructed conscious accounts of trying to do family differently from how they had been brought up. In Chapter 5, I discussed how biographical understandings were used to account for the household work practices of a participant, or someone else they knew (for example a family member, partner or friend). Connections were also made between personal biographies, and idealised family practices, through particular narratives. As I have previously argued (Kettle, 2014b), the narratives produced by Eleanor (34) and Fiona (48) were constructed in very similar ways (see also the discussion about Sophie (41) in Hilary's case study in Chapter 6). Both women described a childhood in which they did not contribute much to the household work:

> 'I think my mum and dad divided the housework pretty well between them and the help that they had so we were never given duties or things as kids…we never had anything set.' (Fiona)

> 'My mum put a lot of emphasis on us doing a lot of schoolwork…And she'd rather that we focused on that than helping her do jobs, so she never asked us to do jobs and if we offered then she'd be really like grateful of the help but she never expected it and we never had certain tasks we had to do.' (Eleanor)

While Fiona's family had paid cleaners, Eleanor's mother 'always said her title was a housewife, so that was to keep the house tidy, pay all the bills, look after the children, make all the food'. For Eleanor, this was reinforced by her father, who she

remembered as being quite fussy and only liking food the way his wife cooked it. She gives an example of him rejecting the breakfast in bed which she and her siblings had prepared, and uses this lack of a positive response as a reason for not cooking more.

However, for both Eleanor and Fiona, this childhood in which they did not do much household work was followed by difficulties later on, once they had left home. In both cases, this can be seen as not being prepared for looking after oneself and one's house as an adult. In Chapter 5, I outlined the key points of the individualisation thesis, and considered how these ideas were reflected in the accounts of my participants. The narratives constructed by Eleanor and Fiona were framed in terms of this, in the sense that they described deficiencies in being able to function as independent, self-sufficient adults. Fiona's overall story of her own development and how she has grown up includes learning about the importance of routine for getting housework done, a theme that recurs throughout her interview:

> 'It was when I got my own place and [um] had a partner and kept on top of things more or less but doing the kind of more, unglamorous tasks like, I don't know, hoovering, cleaning the bath, that kind of thing. I remember not having a very structured routine around it and [um..] never really feeling I was doing it very well.'

Eleanor mentions that her friend had had to do a lot of cooking at home and relates this, in comparison to her own lack of experience, to her friend's ability to cook at university.

> 'And I can remember thinking in my first house like I didn't know how to cook so I was like "I don't know how to cook, I don't know what to make, I don't know, you know, what food to have". And I remember one of my friends who her mum, I think, had had some health issues so I think my friend, she was the older sister so she'd ended up doing a lot of the like making food for her family at home. So she sort of taught me how to boil pasta cos I didn't even know how long to boil pasta, anything like that.'

Again, Eleanor is drawing on a biographical understanding to explain the different abilities of her and her friend, and one which highlights their experiences in relation to their respective mothers and thus draws on a discourse of maternal responsibility (as discussed in Chapter 7). Both Eleanor and Fiona reflect on the behaviour of their

mothers, and draw on imagined understandings, whether presenting an alternative reality or imagining behavioural motivations:

> 'So when I was round about a teenager I think I would, I definitely thought "I wish she worked" because then we would have done more for ourselves because [um] you know, she would have been at work so then we would have had to prepare meals and things.' (Eleanor)

> 'Maybe the opposite of that, maybe she feels she doesn't want to say things and sometimes I look back…she never offered advice then about getting in a routine with cleaning or anything.'
> 'Maybe I would even go so far as to say perhaps she should have done it more [laughing]…yeah with things I think "why didn't you tell me that?" or you know, "why didn't you realise when things were going wrong, you should just have said it", instead of saying afterwards "oh I knew that wasn't good".'(Fiona)

As I discussed in the previous chapter, imaginations of family are shaped by broader cultural understandings, and one's past can be reframed from the perspective of one's current situation. Using an understanding of memory as an active process in context, Eleanor's construction of her memory as a teenager supports her narrative of being unprepared, and suggesting she recognised this at the time, that is, prior to being at university and having the experience of not knowing how to cook and having to ask for help, which may be a result of constructing a story that leads up to who she is at this point.

Looking forward, both Fiona and Eleanor are trying to encourage their children to develop practical skills which are framed in terms of shared responsibilities and a particular way of doing family.

> 'I'm hoping to go back to work when Katie starts school so more just that it's shared, that everybody's responsible for the meal and, you know we're all responsible for the clothes and we're all responsible for doing a bit of tidying and cleaning, you know so it's not all on one person. But I think because it was my mum's job because she didn't work, I think she just did it all.' (Eleanor)

> 'We were never expected to do any formal tasks apart from maybe tidy our bedrooms… I'm hoping with Isaac, you know I want to give him tasks and I think from quite an early age I want him to, like now he's helping me wash the pots and things…I want him to feel that helping in the house is an important duty, that he just needs to be involved.'
> 'I think there are ways of everybody chipping in to make things better and it makes [er] the tasks seem easier because you don't have to do all of them and

I think it works better for everybody, and I definitely want Isaac to grow up with that mentality.' (Fiona)

Again these imagined families are linked to how they have both constructed their own biographies. Less explicitly, these ways of doing family can also be looked at through the overlapping lens of gender and heterosexuality, in that neither woman wants to see housework as solely her responsibility (although both distance themselves from this in the voices they use, Eleanor referring to 'one person' not being responsible for everything and Fiona explaining 'it makes [er] the tasks seem easier because you don't have to do all of them'). By framing this in terms of familial shared responsibility, these women are also suggesting different ways of doing gender (for Eleanor particularly, this is specifically different from how Jean embodied identities as a wife and mother).

Jean (66) also reflects in changes in doing family, in relation to intergenerational caring practices. Earlier in the interview she had talked about looking after her parents when they were living in sheltered accommodation, a time when 'I used to do their housework and do their washing and ironing and things like that so they got paid back for all the things they'd done for me' (which included doing washing and ironing for Jean and George when they were first married, and coming to stay and help when their son was born, and when Jean was ill and needed to rest). She links this to other examples of how members of her extended family have helped each other:

'My dad used to go and watch out for them [Jean's grandmother and aunt] all the time. And when my grandma died and my auntie moved into a flat, my auntie went to my mum and dad's every week for the weekend, and my mum and her sister-in-law would go on a Wednesday to my aunties and clean and things like that, so again it's something that's always, as I say you learn by example, it's something that my family's done for one another through the generations.'

As Finch and Mason (1993) argue, the ways in which people help family members is negotiated rather than determined by particular relationships. Thus there is a need to display this as a way of showing 'this is my family and it works' (Finch, 2007, p.70), as Jean does by describing the practices of helping out family members as something '*my* family's done for one another' (my emphasis).

However, Jean comments that 'I can't see that it would happen to me with my children cos they're all, well they live away, two live away, so that's out of the question.' While her other two children live nearer, her youngest daughter has 'four children, a pub, about ten bulldogs that they breed…so I can't see that Jess would have time to come and do anything for me' while her son who is currently living with her 'hasn't got a clue' about doing things around the home. Eleanor discussed the distance between family members as something that had changed over time, and similarly Jean suggests 'I think it's just the way things happen isn't it nowadays'. She concludes that 'I'm quite prepared for the fact I won't be looked after the way I looked after my parents', and has started to consider options for the future (such as moving somewhere smaller). While for Jean doing family involves helping out relatives, she is also explaining why this will have to change in a way that links her experiences to broader social change ('it's just the way things happen isn't it nowadays'), rather than any problems within her family.

As well as discussions of doing family differently across generations, participants also discussed changes they wanted to implement within their own families. Jo (32) talked in a lot of detail about the systems that she has put in place for making housework easier, and discussed the process of thinking about these:

> 'I suppose, if something isn't working, if something's annoying me, rather than just constantly get annoyed about it I think about different ways that might be. So the bathroom is a big thing because I, I always forget to clean it because it's not a job I particularly enjoy, it's such a big cleaning job that you can't just tag it onto the end of anything [Jennifer: mm] so that, that bothers me. So I've tried two or three different things like can I clean things while I'm in the shower or can I give myself five minutes more in the morning to clean things, I've still not cracked it so that's one of my bugbears, so at the moment I'm kind of, and I don't mean this, this is going to sound really geeky, but you know thinking about it, I don't mean like I'm like permanently thinking about it but it's one of those things that I think, maybe I could try that or specifically looking if I'm online about cleaning tips for bathrooms is there anything I can do that makes it easier.'

For Jo, the practice of thinking about different options shows she is both imagining different ways of doing household work, and taking account of the family she lives with in these imaginings:

> 'I take a step back from where I am, look at what needs doing, work out the best ways of doing it and work out the best ways of doing it that works for us as a family, not as a, what's the *best* way of achieving this but actually what's going to work for us.'

Claire (42) talked about reading an article with her partner about expectations of what children should be able to do at different ages, and drawing on the memory of another family where the children used to plan and cook the evening meal one day a week, spoke about how she imagined her children could be more involved in foodwork:

> 'I always thought that was a really, *really* good idea that they felt part of the family in terms of not just having things given to them all the time but actually them providing a meal for the parents and for the. And so we said we'd give that a go of, of trying to do that, trying to get the children to help a little bit more in taking ownership and enjoy, you know the idea being that they would enjoy it a little bit more [Jennifer: yeah]. [Um] As I say, it's yet to happen.'

In these cases, both Jo and Claire are demonstrating some of the complex interplay between family discourse and family practice, between the families they live by and the families they live with, and how these are related to their own senses of self. For example, tracing the voice of I through Jo's interview highlights that the various systems and processes she discusses are very much something she views as her personal responsibility, albeit a responsibility which must take into account 'us as a family'. Thus while these imaginings can be seen as part of Jo's personal life, it is clear that family plays an important role in that. Claire draws on a popular discourse of family (as portrayed in a Sunday newspaper) that she would like to incorporate into their family practices. However, her final comment (and the implied reference to lack of time at the beginning of her answer), reflects some of the constraints on changing family practices in this way.

8.3   Displaying Family: Considering the Temporal Context

Finch's (2007) notion of 'displaying' family builds on the ideas of family practices. She stresses the:

> 'Fundamentally social nature of family practices, where the meaning of one's actions has to be both conveyed to and understood by relevant others if those actions are to be effective as constituting 'family' practices.' (Finch, 2007, p.66)

Finch argues that while there are degrees of intensity with which family is displayed, it is not only 'non-conventional' families who need to display the 'family-like' qualities of their relationships (ibid, pp.71, 80). She uses the example of a mother/daughter relationship, in which, as the daughter gets older, the mother interacts with her in different ways, while still wanting these different practices to be understood as 'family'. Thus when thinking about the concept of display, it is important to recognise that family is displayed both to those with whom a person is interacting (in this case the daughter) and also to others, such as wider kin, strangers in public settings and professionals (including sociological researchers).

Building on this, James and Curtis highlight the influence of idealised understandings of family, and argue that the practices of family display involve demonstrating, and having this recognised by others, that one is "doing family things *properly*" (2010, p.1166, original emphasis). Drawing on a study of family food practices, the authors show that what was particularly important were 'the ideas that parents held about the nature of childhood and what it means to be a child' (James and Curtis, 2010, p.1167). These ideas were presented to researchers through the stories participants told about their families, and these stories were shaped by wider cultural discourses (for example around healthy eating and obesity). This shows again how the realm of the imaginary and the families we live by can shape how family is displayed to others (Gillis, 1997; Smart, 2007). Again, a multi-dimensional understanding of family display, drawing on structure, meaning, practice and self, can help us to recognise 'how people's sense of family is built up in and through the everydayness of their personal lives, lives that are located within the wider historical, social, cultural and political milieu' (James and Curtis, 2010, p.1175). In this section I will elaborate on how this was relevant to understanding some of the ways in which women spoke about household work practices. Drawing on ideas of relational narrative identities in process, I will focus particular on how the women displayed themselves as mothers, in relation to both other women and to discourses of 'good' motherhood.

In her original article, Finch describes the core message of displaying family as 'these are my family relationships, and they work' (2007, p.73). Both Finch, and James and Curtis, suggest that to display family is to display a 'good' family. However, authors

in a recent edited collection exploring this concept consider whether this is necessarily the only sense in which family can be displayed (Dermott and Seymour, 2011). For example, Seymour's (2011) work on single location home/workplaces (hotels, public houses and boarding houses) suggests that family is not always displayed in a positive way. James and Curtis (2010) show how a 'good' family can be displayed through comparisons with other families. However, as I will explore in this thesis, recognising the simultaneous displaying of different families in which one is *multiply positioned* (for example as wife and mother, a daughter, and a daughter-in-law) suggests that such comparisons can involve both the positive, and more problematic, displaying of one's own families. What is key to these comparisons is that family can be displayed in the past, present and future. Therefore I will argue for the importance of considering the temporal context in which family is displayed, and making a case for how we can consider the display of family practices in the past.

I will argue for three ways in which focusing on the temporal context in which family was displayed by participants, and recognising the way in which one can display multiple families in relation to different identities, can be viewed as relevant for further developing this concept. Firstly, an emphasis on continued family practices between one's current family and the family one grew up in as doing family things properly, suggests that how one grew up allows one to do family 'properly' in the present. These narratives often drew on comparisons with other families, such as the family a woman's partner grew up in or had previously been a part of with an ex-partner, and the importance of showing *him* how to do family in order to display a better version of the family going forward into the future. Secondly, several participants emphasised how much their mothers (or the mothers of other characters in their stories) did in terms of household work, discursively constructing their mothers in idealised terms. In these narratives, there was evidence of self-criticism, according to the tenets of idealised motherhood, in which the past is displayed more positively than the present. However, this was sometimes combined with ambivalence and even criticism of these practices when considered from a longer-term perspective. Therefore, the third way in which the temporal context should be considered in family display is to draw attention to accounts which were still establishing the family-like qualities of particular relationships and practices in the past, while reflecting on them in the context of a

shifting understanding of family; to alter Finch's phrasing: 'that was my family and it didn't always work'.

8.3.1 My Family versus His Family: Displaying Continued Family Practices in Relation to One's Partner

As well as what is cooked, doing family at mealtimes can involve sitting at a table and interacting with other family members. Claire (42) spoke about how she and her parents and sister '*always* ate together' (original emphasis), unlike 'a lot of people nowadays' and that 'mealtimes were always a very big thing about sitting down at the table together', where they would eat the 'fab meals' her mother had cooked. Moving on from this to her own experiences as a mother, she said:

> 'Dad's very strict on table manners, as am I [um] and, and same here, sitting down at the table when we're all together is a, is a big thing. And it's actually, that's one of the things that's drawn the two families of putting Greg and my family together of, of mealtimes is we always play games round the table [um, um] whereas [um] previously [um] Greg's children wouldn't eat at a, wouldn't eat with parents and wouldn't eat at a table, would sort of eat off their knees or something like that [um]. But we always do that now, it's a, it's a quite, it's an us thing you know, it's quite nice, it's quite a bonding thing us all together and we all play games that involve us all asking questions and all going round the table and what have you.' (Claire)

Discussions of 'proper meals' can function as a way of displaying family in relation to others, as James and Curtis (2010) found in their research. For example, in the previous extract, Claire distinguishes between the family of her partner, Greg, and his ex-wife and children, and the family she and Greg are forming with his children, and her son and daughter from her previous marriage in describing mealtimes. In talking about an 'us' thing, she is displaying how their family specifically engage in these practices that bring them closer together, and distancing herself (and her partner) from his previous family relationships.

Similarly, Amy (33) talks about how her family was different from those of her friends:

> 'We always had a roast dinner on a Sunday [Jennifer: yeah], it was a bit of a family thing that we would all sit down, and the dining room rather than the

kitchen and have a roast dinner on a Sunday at lunchtime, and that was just kind of what we did. And as well I always saw that as quite traditional [Jennifer: mm] because when you kind of got a bit older and saw what other friends did I think you then realised that not everybody, I think when you're younger you assume everybody's the same and everybody has what you have at home, but then when you're older and you see other people do things you maybe realise that well my mum just wouldn't buy ready meals from the supermarket and she wouldn't just let us eat a sandwich on our knee in the living room, it was more everybody sitting down together at the table in the kitchen having a meal and then on a Sunday everyone would sit together in the posh dining room and have a Sunday dinner.' (Amy)

When she compares herself and her husband Chris (see also Chapter 5), she also compares the families they grew up in, telling the story of how the first time she had cooked Christmas dinner for his parents, while she was still serving food, his father finished his meal and had left the table to watch television. Her husband explained this as 'that's what my dad's always like' and Amy reflects on this:

'I was like "that's so *rude*, my family would never dream of starting a meal without everybody there", you know a meal to us would be sitting round and chatting and eating and drinking and chatting more, whereas that to him was totally normal because that's how it was when he grew up. Whereas I wouldn't ever, to me that's kind of not acceptable, that's more sitting down together as a family and having a conversation as an important thing and drives me crackers when he's on his phone at the dinner table, I'm like "put it down and speak to your children, you know, have a conversation about what we've all done today". But I would equate that as, that's just what he was used to, he was used to his dad just doing what he wanted and not spending time with the children and having a meal together.' (original emphasis)

She then concludes by noting that her husband is 'better than he was', and talks about how as a couple, they have talked about taking aspects from each of their childhoods, and starting new family traditions that fit with 'what you think is the best for your children'. Both Amy and Claire have hinted that they have had a positive influence on their partners in encouraging them to do family in a different way. Finch (2007) suggests that the narratives people construct about their family relationships allow them to connect their own experiences to 'a more generalized pattern of social meanings', and distinguish 'my family' from 'the negative behaviour of other people' (p.78). Both Claire and Amy provide narratives of having grown up in 'good' families, and taking on the practices of these families, but we can take this further, and considering how these feed into their narrative identities as mothers (which are framed

in relation to both their own 'good' mothers, and others, such as Greg's ex-wife and Chris's mother, who have been less successful according to dominant discursive ideas).

Amy's framing of 'sitting down together as a family and having a conversation as an important thing', in contrast to not using the word family to describe 'his dad just doing what he wanted and not spending time with the children and having a meal together', shows how particular practices constitute a sense of family (Morgan, 1996). Amy also uses 'my family' to describe the family she grew up in, and again, in this sense family means 'sitting round and chatting', enjoying spending time in each other's company. Similarly, while Claire talks about bringing two 'families' together, she also contrasts 'Greg and my family together' talking and playing games round the table with 'previously [um] Greg's children wouldn't eat at a, wouldn't eat with parents and wouldn't eat at a table'. Thus in order to form a new family, either through first marriage or remarriage (or cohabiting as a step-family, as in Claire's case), it is important to do things like eating meals in a way that can be understood as being about family in a way these women recognise from their childhoods.

8.3.2 Displaying 'Good' Mothers

As I outlined in Chapter 2, various studies of mothers found that they discussed their own motherhood in relation to discourses of 'good' motherhood. Similarly, the way that women in this study spoke about their mothers could also be understood in this way. While this was not always entirely positive, there was a lot of praise from daughters for their mothers' abilities to do particular household work tasks, for the amount of household work mothers did (which was often presented as being more than the daughter being interviewed at the time) and for the way in which their mothers approached this work. One example was an ability to cope with large family gatherings:

> 'She'd often have big sort of family parties at the house but she'd organise all that and do food and get the house ready. Occasionally my dad might run round with a hoover before everyone arrived and bring some extra chairs down [um] for people but she would have it all organised and she would have started two weeks before

preparing things and putting it in the freezer. And, you know she'd still do her routine jobs and everything would just be really under control and ready and organised and she'd feed sort of thirty people but it wouldn't be a difficult task for her. She'd just sort of take it all in her stride, and a lot of the food would have been homemade [um] and yeah. And cos she kept on top of the house regularly it wasn't ever a big issue to kind of get the house ready [Jennifer: yeah] because it was always at a level that it was presentable [Jennifer: yeah].' (Eleanor, 34)

'Mum and Dad have got a big house so they've always hosted for a lot of people so they've always done a lot of, the house always needs to be cleaned and prepared and all the rooms cos it's a big house, rooms prepared and all the baking you know coming up to Christmas I remember them doing a lot, my mum will do this year [..] so very, yes always really really busy doing work at home and yeah…my mum, I mean she'll already be planning and prepar, preparing like baking and stuff and freezing she does a lot of that in preparation [..] yeah.' (Laura, 32)

Laura reflects on spending a day preparing food for Christmas ('I was so exhausted I could hardly stand') and compares herself to her mother, wondering how she managed with 3 children under the age of 5, while Laura 'struggled with just one and being pregnant'. This demonstrates how Laura's narrated self is constructed in relation to perceptions of her mother, and indeed her father as well, as she describes her parents as seeming to 'be able to cope with a lot more'. She reflects on the potential ways in which her generation differs from that of her parents, commenting on lives now as 'complicated and busy', but also the potential that 'we just think more about it instead of simply just getting on', and that people may be more 'soft' due to a rise in living standards. Thus as well as specific praise for mothers, this could also be tied into broader understandings of the previous generation and of generational differences (see also Chapter 6).

As I have previously discussed (Kettle, 2013), practices of mothers are incorporated into daughter's narratives around the term 'cooking from scratch':

'And probably because we were on more of a budget when we growing up so it was kind of [um] we didn't really have ready meals or anything like that. We were, it was always cooked from scratch. It was vegetables and fresh meat and things like that so [um].' (Kim, 40)

'And so a lot of things were cooked from scratch but then I guess latterly things were there for convenience as well, so she would buy things like a jar of bolognaise sauce to add to meat, so not everything was cooked totally from scratch, some things were kind of convenience but never like a ready meal or anything like that,

it was mainly, I guess what I would call like home cooking [Jennifer: yeah].'
(Amy, 33)

'But I remember my mum's done a, always done a lot of baking and homemade cooking so I've been sort of brought up to *cook* quite a lot [um]...I think because I'm, I've been brought up to sort of cook from scratch I still try to do that and when I can't I feel a bit guilty cos that's just the way I've been brought up.' (Laura, 32, original emphasis)

Similarly in other studies, women use the phrase 'cooking from scratch' or 'home-cooked' to describe their mothers' cooking, and as an ideal they are not always able to live up to, resorting to 'ready meals' or 'convenience food', terms which are used in a way that assumes shared understanding (for example, James et al., 2009). This contrast between cooking from scratch and ready meals occurred in several of my interviews as well, with little explanation of why they tried to do this (although one of my participants, Kate (54), was more explicit in comparing trying to do things from scratch with 'rubbish meals'). Likewise, in their study of how young Norwegian mothers represent their domestic food practices, Bugge and Almås (2006) found that the use of convenience food was always justified by participants, as a deviation from often implicit social norms that required explanation.

While these descriptions of memories and practices, and those of the participants quoted in other studies, are individual, the shared language used of 'cooking from scratch' can be seen to be part of a collective memory. Meah and Watson analyse the discourse of a loss of everyday cooking skills, which they argue relies on an implicit assumption that 'at some point in the past, our mothers and grandmothers *did* know how to cook' (2011, 1.9). Interestingly, the phrase 'cooking from scratch' occurred mainly in the accounts of younger women; apart from Jean, who was 66 and described cooking from scratch herself, the others were all early fifties or younger. Arguably then, this is a phrase which represents how cooking practices have changed, that is, as pre-prepared meals that are heated in the microwave or oven have become more widely available, it becomes necessary to make a distinction between cooking using fresh ingredients and 'cooking' ready meals. Nevertheless, as Glucksmann (2000) found, women weavers in Manchester in the 1930s bought ready-made meals from the local 'chippy' as a way of managing their households, so it is important not to assume that at some ill-defined point in the past, all meals were 'cooked from scratch'.

As I argued in Chapter 5, remembering can be understood as an active process of construction, rather than simply recall. Thus I would suggest memories can be selectively used to inform a biographical account in line with contemporary portrayals of idealised motherhood. Again, the interviews with mothers do provide some overlap, but also contradictions; Laura's mother remembers providing fish fingers and other pre-prepared foods. There may be a question of how 'from scratch' is interpreted, and indeed Short (2006) has highlighted how in the cooking diaries she elicited, while the processes involved in creating certain dishes were elaborated on, others were taken as self-evidently food one wouldn't cook from scratch, such as individual chocolate mousse puddings for children. Nevertheless, given the positive connotations of 'cooking from scratch', demonstrating that this was part of the family they grew up in could be seen as part of a narrative identifying one's mother as 'good' and responsible.

Laura's description of feeling 'guilty' if she does not cook from scratch implies a standard of motherhood she aims to obtain. Smyth (2012) outlines a more general sense of maternal guilt that reflects a sense of having violated a perceived contemporary 'norm' of maternal behaviour, and in terms of feeding the family, several authors have found that participants reported feeling guilty when they were not able to do this 'properly', and their understanding of what this meant often drew on their mothers' practices (DeVault, 1991; Counihan, 1992; Bisogni et al., 2002; Jabs et al., 2007; Johnson et al., 2011). However, this admiration was not just a way in which younger generation participants talked about their mothers. For example, a variation on the idea of mothers' cooking from scratch was a mother suggesting that her daughter makes things from scratch that she herself did not: 'Sophie does, she amazes me that she found time to bake and make bread and go to work, that's why I say I admire them because I'm sure I didn't make bread.' (Hilary).

Interestingly, examples of praising particular skills were sometimes evident across pairs of mothers and daughters:

> 'My mum seemed to be good at everything she did; she was very good at sewing.' (Margaret, 60)

'I can sew, I mean wouldn't ever say that I'm as good as her [Margaret] cos a lot of the time, even now she'll come round and say "do you want me to take those curtains up for you?" and she would do it, cos she's really good at it and it would take her two minutes and she'd do things like that so.' (Amy, 33)

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'My mum always baked and at the time it was quite, what you'd call fancy things, she'd make cream horns and vanilla slices and Victoria sponges, meringues and she, yeah she could do anything.' (Jean, 66)

'I'd say my cooking skills are still quite basic…I just chop the vegetables up and put them in a pan or put the pasta on or put something in the oven and then they're ready. So it never takes a lot of preparation time or. I never spent hours like my mum used to preparing really extravagant meals. And my mum would always do a pudding as well, every evening. I never do puddings.' (Eleanor, 34)

As well as praising their mothers, both of the younger women in these pairs also suggest their own relative lack of skill. This would seem to run counter to the idea of display as being about the positive aspects of these relationships (Finch, 2007). However, both of these women (and other younger generation participants) do display 'doing family things *properly*' (James and Curtis, 2010, p.1166) at other points in their interviews. This therefore raises the question of how we can understand women comparing themselves to their mothers in this way.

8.3.3 'That Was My Family and It Didn't Always Work': Displaying Family in the Past and Longer Term Implications

In section 8.2.3 I discussed how Eleanor and Fiona constructed narratives in which they were not expected to do much as children, and that this led to them feeling unprepared as adults, particularly in relation to cooking and cleaning respectively. In Eleanor's case particularly, it is useful to recognise that her discussion about her mother's skills in the previous section is in the context of a story about feeling unprepared for living away from home, and wanting to do family differently, including more sharing of household work tasks. Thus while Eleanor is praising her mother's skills, both here and in terms of being able to cope with large family gatherings (as well as with day-to-day organisation), and I would suggest displaying how her mother was 'doing family things *properly*' in the way she looked after her children, she also

reflects on the problems of this approach with the benefit of hindsight, and thus *also* displays family in the way she talks about encouraging *her* children to take on responsibilities and think for themselves (see also Chapter 6).

One way to make sense of this disconnect is to consider the temporal context in which family display can take place. While Finch (2007) recognises that, following from a family practices approach, how a person understands 'my family' is likely to change over time, and uses this as part of an explanation as to why family needs to be displayed, in framing display in the present tense ('this is my family and it works'), there is limited consideration of how *past* experiences might be displayed. In Eleanor's case, I would suggest that in discussing family over time, she is able to draw on multiple meanings of family, and a mother's role within that. Thus while she is conveying the way that her mother looked after her and her siblings as doing family, in including this as part of a more extensive narrative, she is also able to reflect critically on these practices, while not completely dismissing them as being about family. I would suggest that this aspect of family display can be understood by altering Finch's phrasing slightly: 'that was my family and it didn't always work'. While I am not claiming that every instance of displaying family in the past is presented negatively, and indeed I have demonstrated some of the positive ways people talked about continuing family practices, by considering the temporality of family display, it is possible to open up a conceptual space for accounts which both display family and reflect on the longer-term implications of doing family in a particular way.

In considering the temporal context of displaying family, I have focused on the ways in which this was relevant to understanding the narratives of younger generation participants. However, it is also important to consider the relevance of displaying family to older generation participants and the way they talked about family, again reflecting on the temporal context in which they made sense of their remembered practices as mothers of young children in relation to the practices of their daughters in the present. By considering intergenerational comparisons, we can recognise the tensions in displaying a family that works as both a grandmother and a mother (Mason et al., 2007). Among the older generation participants, their daughters' practices were compared to their own as mothers of young children, and some grandmothers talked about the different rules they had from their daughters:

'But Nicola likes to, I mean Alfie doesn't get packet food or, never had jars and tins. Kirsty was happy with jars and tins and so was I [Jennifer: yeah], you know the Heinz jars. But Nicola's always insisted Alfie has fresh food and that's fine, you know [Jennifer: mm]. But I mean we've got three fairly healthy boys who were brought up on Heinz jars [laughs].' (Brenda, 67)

'Grace has only drunk water, she's only had a cup of tea in the last month, no it's less than a month [um] I know Jo doesn't want her to have juice but I mean we used to give them juice and it was, you know it was sort of orange juice and it was the colour of this tablecloth you know you could just see it had juice in it. But she hasn't had any so that's fine.' (Lynne, 58)

The older generation mothers quoted here are reflecting on daughters who have stricter rules about what their children are allowed. While Brenda and Lynne see it as 'fine' that their grandchildren eat according to particular rules, they also justify the decisions they made that might not be in keeping with more recent understandings of healthy eating guidelines. By demonstrating that their children, and in Brenda's case, other grandchildren, grew up well as a result of these practices, these participants are demonstrating their own competence as mothers and grandmothers. Grandparents are under pressure to 'not interfere' in the parenting of their grandchildren (Cunningham-Burley, 1985), while also being positioned as responsible for how *their* children turned out (Mason et al., 2007) and in this example, both Brenda and Lynne are trying to achieve a balance between not interfering (by portraying their daughter's rules as 'fine' and making it clear that they would follow these if they have responsibility for their grandchildren), and showing that their household work practices resulted in children who grew up to be healthy in order to successfully display family, in this case in the past.

8.4   Conclusion

In this chapter, I have considered how the concepts of family practices and family display provide a useful lens for exploring how women tell stories about household work as daughters, mothers and grandmothers. I have shown how a multi-dimensional understanding of family can help to illuminate the complexities of family in relation to household work, and allow for the exploration of the various ways in which family, gender and heterosexuality intersect. As I suggested in Chapter 2, an understanding of women as multiply positioned by different discourses (Baxter, 2003) allows us to

recognise the relevance of competing discourses in terms of individualism (equality of the division of housework in the service of self-image) and relationality (emphasised femininity and maternal responsibility). Similarly household work practices can be seen to produce gender, heterosexuality and family in the accounts of participants.

I have used the notion of family display to reflect on how the participants in this study spoke about family and, in various ways, constructed their families as 'working' in Finch's sense of the word. Returning to the key themes of this thesis, I have considered how family is displayed both relationally and in a temporal context, and argued for how taking account of these dimensions can contribute to the development of the displaying family concept. By analysing some of the ways in which family was displayed in the past, present and future, I have highlighted the importance of considering the temporal context of family display. I have shown how participants drew on memories of family practices from the family one grew up in to construct narratives of needing to show one's partner how to do family things properly, which allowed them to both display family in the past, and how they imagined doing family in the future through continuing particular practices. Constructing accounts of idealised motherhood and comparing oneself unfavourably to these can be understood in terms of highlighting how changing circumstances can affect family practices, but displaying family in the past can display an understanding of what the participants want their family to be, recognising the distinction between families we live with and families we live by. However, reflecting on how what were idealised practices have problematic longer term implications can allow for a narrative of how this has shaped a different way of doing family, which is subsequently displayed.

Writing both this chapter and the previous one has highlighted the practical differences in drawing a neat dividing line between family and gender/heterosexuality. While much of the above discussion was framed in terms of family, looking at these accounts through different lenses accentuates themes that are recognisable from previous feminist work in this area, for example seeing women taking personal responsibility for various aspects of household work in terms of continued inequalities within heterosexual relationships. In terms of a Listening Guide perspective, it is important to recognise how participants appear to make sense of their experiences, and the ways

in which I bring particular theoretical understandings to their accounts, and to be as open as possible in acknowledging this. Therefore, by using the metaphor of different lenses, in the final chapter which concludes this thesis, I draw attention to my role in looking through these lenses and subsequently interpreting these accounts in different ways.

Chapter 9: Conclusion

9.1   Introduction

In this thesis, I have argued for using a concept of relational narrated selves in process as a useful and innovative way to explore the topic of household work. I have demonstrated how women's personal narratives of household work over the life course are shaped relationally (drawing on the concept of personal life), and reflect a gendered sense of self in process over the life course, embodying different identities such as mother, daughter and wife or girlfriend. While the practices of household work are often spoken about as mundane, repetitive and frustrating (even if some aspects are described in terms of enjoyment), I would argue that by shining a spotlight on household work as part of women's personal narratives, and by focusing on the role that thinking about, feeling about and doing these tasks play within our personal lives, we can see household work as a lens through which to view various aspects of social life.

9.2   Contribution

This thesis contributes to literature on relationality, adulthood, gender, heterosexuality and family, as well as the household work literature, by considering the interconnected ways in which these key themes are relevant to understanding how women construct personal narratives around the topic of household work. By drawing on a range of pertinent theoretical approaches, I would argue that this thesis reenergises the feminist literature on household work by bringing recent theoretical work to bear on this 'familiar' topic, and contributes a strong theoretical argument for looking again at household work in a different way. I have argued that the personal narratives discussed in this thesis have been shaped by an individualistic understanding of adulthood, but also by various concepts of connectedness. By considering how participants construct narratives of growing up in relation to household work, I have highlighted conflicts between constructions of autonomous selves who make choices to achieve gender equality and personal happiness, and constructions of relational gendered selves displaying acceptable femininity and doing family things 'properly'. I have discussed specifically how these narrated selves are relational, and how a multi-generational

study of household work over the life course allows for a consideration of how change and continuity shape narratives of household work practices, and the relevance of this for making sense of how families are displayed. I have also shown how the topic of household work itself helps us to make important theoretical connections and, in particular, I have focused on three ways in which my research on household work can offer potentially productive insights into aspects of social life.

9.2.1 Individualistic Discourses of Adulthood and Relational Narrated Selves

As I showed in both Chapter 5 and Chapter 6, a key theme that emerged from the data was the influence of an individualistic discourse of adulthood, involving 'autonomy, self-determination and choice' (Hockey and James, 1993, p.3). In particular, the values of independence, responsibility and self-sufficiency were highlighted in various ways across accounts, which influenced how the women talked about their relationships with their mothers and their children. However, a lens of connectedness focuses our attention on the various ways in which women's household work narratives could be understood as relational, following Smart (2007). This recognises that participants are embedded in webs of ongoing relationships, and that they made sense of their household work practices and those of others by framing these biographically, particularly in relation to mothers (for example, mothers who 'did everything' for their children). In contrast to this, a good mother is portrayed as one who encourages independence and self-sufficiency, but also one who provides ongoing help and advice in terms of household work (insofar as this meets the needs of her adult children). By thinking in terms of relationality and temporality, I suggest we can recognise how an adult who makes sense of themselves as independent and self-sufficient, while drawing on an individualistic discourse, does so by constructing a relational narrated self in process.

9.2.2 Relational Acceptable Femininities

The second contribution of this thesis is to draw attention to the importance of emphasised femininity and normative heterosexuality in women's narratives of household work, and to show how women's relational narrative identities were shaped

by these discourses. By exploring the way in which gender was constructed in different living situations in Chapter 7, I demonstrated how participants' narratives were influenced by an individualistic discourse (according to which gender was downplayed in explanations that focused on choice and individual difference). Nevertheless, accounts also reflected the idea of a normative (hetero)gendered division of household work, in which women generally do more of the housework and childcare and take responsibility for the organisation of tasks.

In drawing on what is 'normal' for women in heterosexual relationships, I argue that the women in my study constructed themselves as 'acceptably feminine'. Connell's (1987) idea of 'emphasized femininity' is 'oriented to accommodating the interests and desires of men' (p.183), and participants rejected this in various ways, for example in accounts that highlighted how partners were 'equal and interchangeable'. However, as I demonstrated in Chapter 7, the women in my study constructed their narrative identities in relation to understandings of masculinity, in terms of both specific men they knew and a generalised sense of what men as a group are like. In doing so many demonstrated a concern to be seen as 'acceptably feminine', in terms of relative lack of strength and technical skills, but also through housework competence and an understanding of what 'needs doing'. I suggest that constructing relational acceptable femininities in order to account for household work practices (re)produces gender and normative heterosexuality.

I would also suggest that thinking about relational acceptable femininity is an important consideration for doing research. As a woman interviewing women about a topic stereotypically associated with women, I recognise upon reflection that I was 'doing gender' within the interview context through my use of affirmative words, sounds and gestures and by not questioning various terms used, and implicit gendered assumptions. For example, several participants used the terms 'tidy' and 'clean', and in some instances suggested they were more concerned about one than the other (for example, Hannah commented that 'everything is clean, it's just messy', while Lynne emphasised 'I have to have mine [her house] tidy' but also felt 'it doesn't have to be dust-free'). While other researchers have questioned participants further on their understanding of cleanliness, for example by probing on how dust is perceived (Pink, 2004), I did not do this. I recognise that in accepting these terms without further

definition, I was aware that in the context of these gendered interactions, I felt expected to understand what was meant in order to present myself as a competent adult woman who was 'acceptably feminine'. While, with hindsight, I recognise that I could have asked more awkward questions (such as asking participants to expand on what they meant by 'clean'), I suggest that to have done so would have altered the situational context in which most of the participants appeared comfortable talking to me. To fail to 'do gender' by showing a lack of understanding of what household work entailed and to suggest a lack of awareness of cleanliness may have encouraged participants to reflect more deeply on what was taken for granted, but may have also made the interviews more uncomfortable and the interviewees less forthcoming with stories they thought I would understand.

However, when participants themselves could be seen as not doing gender in accordance with stereotypes of feminine competence, I felt more comfortable also admitting to a lack of knowledge. For instance, Nicola (32) spoke about never having cleaned an oven and not knowing that she could take the knobs off her cooker (until her mother asked her if she cleaned them, and told her that "you just take them off and you soak them in water"). I responded: 'I'll have to go and see if mine do [laughs]', which worked to normalise this lack of knowledge for an adult woman of our cohort, and I suggest, encourage Nicola to speak to me about her lack of tidiness and involvement in household work in certain situations (as in the narrative of growing up I discussed in Chapter 6). In this sense then, I would argue that while participants do reflect on normative, idealised and stereotypical ideas of gender, in the interview context what it means to do 'acceptably femininity' is co-constructed and can thus be understood as relational and in process.

9.2.3 Temporality of Displaying Family

The concept of displaying family is:

> 'The process by which individuals, and groups of individuals, convey to each other and to relevant audiences that certain of their actions do constitute "doing family things"' (Finch, 2007, p.67).

Finch argues that given the fluidity of families, 'the emphasis is on the present', and a need to demonstrate that "my current family relationships" work, while recognising that these have changed and will change again (ibid, p.70). However, while Finch's use of 'family relationships' acknowledges that 'an individual's understanding of 'my family' is subject to change over time' (ibid, p.66), I would suggest it is useful to recognise how a person can be *multiply positioned* as part of different families, and therefore can display these families in different ways through the narratives they construct.

Drawing on the literature on the dimensions of temporality discussed in Chapter 2 and Chapter 6, I would argue that the notion of personal timescapes is particularly useful here. As a woman goes through the life course, she is positioned by different discourses of age, gender, heterosexuality and family that to some extent are shifting over (historical) time, and the relationships in which she is embedded are themselves changing. As a child, she might have experienced not being expected to do housework tasks (possibly by a parent influenced by the idea of childhood as a time of freedom from responsibility) in a positive way. However, as an adult, and specifically a woman, she might have felt unprepared for managing the tasks which she is now positioned as responsible for, and reassessed her understanding of her childhood experiences from the perspective of the present. As a mother then, she might look to the future and imagine preparing *her* daughter to take responsibility for a range of household work tasks, and display this as a way of doing family that works, while simultaneously displaying the way she was brought up as enjoyable but as not necessarily working, at least in this regard, in the longer term.

Similarly, if a woman is displaying family practices as part of a narrative of continuity this involves displaying a family in the past that worked. If there are conflicts with her partner who has been brought up differently about how to 'do family', then she may also display family in the present in a more problematic way, but imagine (and display) a future where his practices have changed as a result of her efforts. While these examples draw on findings from my research, I suggest that paying attention to the displaying of family in the past, present and future may be a useful way to explore how people negotiate being multiply positioned within different families. Looking at these personal narratives through the lens of family highlights how the women in my

study constructed relational narrated selves that embodied different identities as daughters, mothers, wives/partners and daughters-in-law, which are constructed in terms of different discourses but linked as part of the experiences of a coherent sense of self in process.

9.3 Limitations

This thesis is based on a small-scale piece of research, and the lack of diversity in terms of education, class and ethnicity, and the use of convenience sampling, make it problematic to generalise to a wider population of mothers. I also recognise that I could have designed the study to focus more specifically on particular areas of the UK, and the relevance of growing up in that socio-geographic context. While the pairs of women in my study spoke about their relationship to each other, they also spoke about other interpersonal relationships which contributed to their narratives. Although I would suggest that the relational narrative identities of my participants are sociologically interesting in their own right, my approach limits what I can conclude about the experiences of, for example, the children of my younger generation participants, or the siblings or partners of any of my participants.

The original aim of this research was to explore how two generations of women with children construct their heterosexual/gendered identities in relation to discussions about and practices of household work. However, during the course of the fieldwork and analysis, drawing on reading and critical thinking that I carried out, the research became more focused on personal narratives, as a way of making sense of women's (hetero)gendered and familial relational identities in process (although I have continued to consider the role that mother/daughter relationships play in these narratives). Throughout this process, I have developed my understanding of the ways in which women's personal narratives of household work provide a lens through which to make sense of the interrelationship of gender, heterosexual and family over the life course. As I have set out above, I would argue that in doing so, this thesis makes an original contribution to knowledge by looking at household work in a new way and drawing out useful theoretical connections. Nevertheless, I recognise the importance of further empirical research in order to critically evaluate and develop the theoretical ideas outlined in this thesis.

9.4   Future Research

As I have emphasised throughout, this thesis is an exploratory piece of work that aims to further develop some potentially useful theoretical ideas, using household work as a lens. However, empirically, while I have generated some interesting data in the form of relational personal narratives, there are several ways in which further data could be generated to explore the key themes discussed in this thesis, for example, research with two generations of women from a different ethnic background, or through asking more questions focused on the classed nature of women's experiences. Future research could also build on the contributions of this thesis in various ways, including considering how men construct personal narratives around the theme of household work; the use of object elicitation interviews to evoke memories; exploring other relationships and including the perspectives of children; and looking at household work in other situations, such as adults who are living together as housemates or adults who have returned to live with their parents.

9.5   Final Thoughts

In conclusion, this thesis has argued for the relevance of using personal narratives around the theme of household work as a lens through which to make sense of how mothers construct relational identities and selves, and how these are shaped by gender, heterosexuality, family and understandings of the life course and generations. Simultaneously, this thesis has also contributed to the household work literature by shining a spotlight on mother/daughter relationships, and exploring these using recent theoretical concepts such as personal life and displaying family. By recognising how participants in this study constructed narratives of 'growing up' in their discussions of household work, I have argued for understanding these stories in relation to individualistic discourses of independence and choice in the service of self-fulfilment, and relational discourses of emphasised femininity and good motherhood in which competence at household work tasks and a moral responsibility to meet the needs of one's children are valued. I have also considered the tensions involved in constructing oneself in relation to these conflicting ideas. For the women in this research, personal narratives of 'growing up' and becoming mothers are shaped by a sense of increasing responsibility for household work, both as 'acceptably feminine' women and good

mothers meeting their children's needs, which is difficult to challenge in order to achieve individual self-fulfilment.

Appendix 1: Participants

Pair 1: Laura and Mary

Laura is 32, married to Rob, with one son, Oliver (2), and pregnant with her second child. She is at home-full time (although she does some paid tutoring).

Mary is 64, married to Tom, with four adult children (three sons and one daughter). She worked as a teacher, although she was at home full-time for 10 years when her children were young, and is now retired.

Pair 2: Kim and June

Kim is 40, married to Neil, with two children, Joe (9) and Molly (6). She works part-time in accountancy.

June is 59, widowed, with three adult children. She was mainly at home full-time.

Pair 3: Claire and Rita

Claire is 42, living with Greg and divorced from Simon with whom she has two children, Lucas (10) and Chloe (8). She works full-time in business services.

Rita is 68, married to Bert, with two adult daughters. She worked as a teacher and is now retired.

Pair 4: Hannah and Maureen

Hannah is 43, divorced and living apart together with a boyfriend, with one daughter from her marriage, Megan (6). She works full-time as a lecturer.

Maureen is 67, married to Howard with two adult children (one son and one daughter). She worked in laboratories and stopped when she had children, before going back part-time. She is now retired.

Pair 5: Sally and Karen

Sally is 32, married to Liam, with one daughter, Leah (2). She works part-time as a social worker.

Karen is 55, divorced from John, with three adult children (two sons and one daughter). She works part-time as a nurse.

Pair 6: Eleanor and Jean

Eleanor is 34, married to Rob with two children, Daniel (5) and Katie (3). She works as a teacher but is currently on maternity leave.

Jean is 66, widowed from George, with four adult children (three daughters and one son). She was at home full-time and did some voluntary work.

Pair 7: Nicola and Brenda

Nicola is 32, living with Ben, with one son, Alfie (eighteen months). She works part-time as an administrator.

Brenda is 67, married to Shane, with one adult daughter from a previous marriage, and one (Nicola) from her current marriage. She worked as a personnel manager and is now retired.

Pair 8: Fiona and Irene

Fiona is 48, married to Nabil, with one son, Isaac (6). She works part-time as a lecturer.

Irene is 75, married to Frank, with three adult children (two sons and one daughter). She worked as a teacher and is now retired.

Pair 9: Leanne and Kate

Leanne is 24, living with Toby, with one daughter, Lily (2). She is at home full-time.

Kate is 54, separated from Rory and living apart together with her partner Craig, with three adult daughters. She worked as a childminder when her children were young, and now works part-time as a secretary.

Pair 10: Amy and Margaret

Amy is 33, married to Chris, with two children, Joseph (5) and Charlotte (3). She works part-time as lecturer.

Margaret is 60, married to Ted, with two adult children (one son and one daughter). She worked as a teacher and is now retired.

Pair 11: Sophie and Hilary

Sophie is 41, married to Mark, with two children, Rachel (13) and William (11). She works part-time as a manager in a university.

Hilary is 71, widowed from Dick, with two adult daughters. She worked in various part-time jobs and is now retired.

Pair 12: Jo and Lynne

Jo is 32, married to Russell, with one daughter, Grace (eighteen months). She works part-time as a manager in a university.

Lynne is 58, married to Peter, with two adult daughters. She worked as a nurse and is now retired.

Appendix 2: Research Advert

Looking for Mothers

If you are the mother of a young child or children (aged 0-11), I would like to interview you and your mother as part of my research project at the University of Sheffield. I am interested in women's experiences as both a mother and a daughter across generations, particularly regarding housework and other tasks involved in caring for your family.

I am looking for pairs of mothers and daughters to take part in separate interviews (about $1 - 1$ ½ hours). These interviews would take place at your home (or another convenient location) at a time to suit you, and I can travel outside of Sheffield for interviews.

If you would like more information, please call Jennifer Kettle on **07969 811350** or email j.kettle@sheffield.ac.uk. As a thank you for taking part, interviewees will receive a £10 M&S voucher.

Appendix 3: Information Sheet

Research Project Information Sheet

Exploring 'Women's Work':

Mothers' and Daughters' Experiences of Housework and Family Care

You are being invited to take part in a research project. Before you decide, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully, and discuss it with others if you wish. Feel free to contact the researcher if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information.

Aims of the Research

The aim of this research is to find out more about women's experiences as both a mother and a daughter across generations, particularly regarding housework and other tasks involved in caring for your family. This includes considering changes for individual women across time, and between generations. The researcher is also interested in understanding how mother/daughter relationships influence these experiences. This research will contribute to the areas of housework and care, family and gender within sociology.

What the Research Involves

This research will involve pairs of mothers and daughters, and will be based on interviews. If you take part, it will involve both women taking part in an individual interview about your memories, thoughts, and experiences of household work. The interview will last around one to one and a half hours. This can take place at your home or another convenient location, at a time that suits you. The interview will not have set questions, but will be based around a list of topics. If you give permission, the interview will be audio recorded. If not, the researcher will make notes of the interview.

It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you do decide to take part, you will be given this information sheet to keep (and be asked to sign a consent form) and you can withdraw from part of the project, or the entire project at any time. You do not have to give a reason.

Risks and Benefits of Being Involved

There are no foreseeable risks from taking part, but the interviews may touch on topics you find upsetting. You are free to stop the interview at any time. You do not have to give a reason. If you have any complaints about the research, you can contact the researcher via the details below. You can also contact the Registrar and Secretary at the University of Sheffield if you have any complaints about the conduct of the researcher. As a thank you for

taking part, you will receive a £10 Marks and Spencer voucher. It is also hoped that you will find the project an interesting chance to think about and share your experiences.

Data Security

If you give permission for the interview to be recorded, this will be stored securely as an electronic file. The recording will only be used by the researcher. The recording will be transcribed by the researcher, and the transcript of the interview will also be stored securely. The consent form will be stored securely at the university. These will only be seen by the researcher, and the research supervisor (a senior academic who advises the researcher). Your name will not be used on any of the research documents, and a participant number will be used instead. Your involvement in the research will also be kept confidential. If you wish to withdraw consent for your data to be held, you may contact the researcher and electronic and paper copies will be destroyed. You do not have to give a reason.

Use of Your Data

Your interview transcript will be compared to other interviews by the researcher in order to explore how women of different generations think about and experience household work. This will then form the basis of a PhD thesis (which will be available publicly in an electronic format) and may also be used in conference presentations (to PhD students and academics), academic journal articles and sociology text books. No names or other identifying information will be included. These documents will mainly be based on themes found across several interviews. However, they may also include summaries of individual situations or quotes to illustrate a point. If you give permission for quotes to be used, a short extract from your interview may be used. You may be given an alternative name to make the account easier to read. Any other identifying information in the quote (other names, places etc.) will be removed or changed. You are welcome to request copies of any of these documents from the researcher or information about how to access them.

Ethical Approval

This project is a PhD project within the Sociological Studies department at the University of Sheffield. It has been ethically approved via the Sociology department's ethics review procedure.

Contact Details

If you want more information or to discuss anything about this research project, please contact Jennifer Kettle on 07969 811350 or email j.kettle@sheffield.ac.uk. You may also contact the research supervisor, Vicki Robinson by email (vicki.robinson@sheffield.ac.uk).

Appendix 4: Consent Form

Consent Form

Title of Research Project: 'Women's Work': Explorations of Household Work with Two Generations of Mothers

Name of Researcher: Jennifer Kettle

Participant Identification Number: Please initial

box

1. I confirm that I have read and understood the information sheet explaining the above research project and I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the project.

☐

2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason and without there being any negative consequences. In addition, should I not wish to answer any particular question or questions, I am free to decline.

☐

3. I understand that my data (the recording of my interview, transcript and background information) will be kept strictly confidential. I understand that my name will not be linked with the research materials, and I will not be identified in any reports or presentations that result from the research.

☐
☐

4. I agree to take part in this research project.

☐

5. I agree for my interviews to be audio recorded and transcribed by the researcher.

☐

6. I give permission for the researcher to use my data for this research project.

☐

7. I give permission for quotes from the data collected from me to be used in published materials and presentations made by the researcher. I understand that my name will not be linked with any quotes used.

8. I confirm that I have received a £10 Marks & Spencer voucher as a thank you for taking part.

_____   _____   _____

Name of Participant   Date   Signature

_____   _____
_____
Researcher   Date   Signature

To be signed and dated in presence of the participant

Appendix 5: Original Interview Guide

Interview Guide

These are themes to cover, examples of how I might ask about these

General, open questions are woman and her family

- E.g. Tell me a bit about yourself (occupation, who lives in household, ages of children etc. (follow up on what she says))
- What made you want to take part in this interview?

Household work (current)

- How understand household work? – context of research advert (possibly talk in terms of housework and childcare as more familiar terms – but try to cover what she thinks about kin work, emotional work etc. – also non-routine work)
- How do you tend to arrange housework and childcare?
    - o Maybe ask specifically about what household work done the day before, who did what
    - o Differences at other times (weekends)
- What about organising housework? (e.g. meal planning, deciding when things need doing, monitoring supplies)
    - o Has it always been like that?
    - o How did that arrangement come about?
    - o How did things change when you had [child]?
    - o Did you talk about it with [partner?]
    - o Have things happened you didn't expect?

Children

- How do children contribute? How did that develop?
    - o Reasons
    - o Have you thought about how you're going to manage this in the future?
- Ideally what do you want [child] to leave home knowing how to do?
- Something about gender?

Family of origin

- Could you tell me a bit about growing up?- (parents' occupations, numbers in household etc)
- What memories do you have of the sort of household work we were talking about? (possibly break down – e.g. what memories of housework, what memories of childcare)
    - o Depending on what they say – questions about division between parents, responsibilities
- Did anyone else contribute? (e.g. paid help)
- How did you contribute as a child? (again depends on what they've already said, differences between siblings) – How did that come about?

Learning about housework

- How did you learn to do [household work tasks]? – possibly mention separately
    o E.g. What's your first memory of cooking?
- Have you noticed other people who do things differently? (possibly ask about partner)
- What would you do if you wanted to learn something new now (specific task, cooking questions possibly different)

Other situations

- How lived when left home – what happened then
- Ever shared with other adults not in relationship?

Expectations about housework/childcare

- Did you think about how you wanted to manage things with [partner]?
    o Is it something you talked about?

Other people

- Current relationship with mother
    o How often see her
    o Advice
    o Help with childcare
- Do you ever talk to anyone else about household work?
    o Other mothers/childcare
- Have you ever come across someone who does things significantly differently?
    o Housework related to personality?

General

- Media representations
- Adverts

Appendix 6: Revised Interview Guide for Younger Generation Participants

New Interview Guide: Younger generation

Opening questions

- Could you start by telling me a bit about you and your family

Example of introduction to chronological questions

As I said in my research advert, I'm interested in your experiences of being a mother and a daughter, particularly relating to housework, childcare and other tasks involved in caring for your family. What I'd like to do is start with your memories of being a child.

- Could you tell me a bit about the family you grew up in?
- How was housework organised?
- Any particular memories?
- Learning how to do housework tasks
- What did you do to help around the house? – comparisons to siblings
- Did that change as your got older?

I'm also interested in mother daughter relationships

- Could you tell me a bit about the relationship with your mother when you were younger? – changes into teenage years?
- What did your mother teach you?
- What did you learn from her (watching life, not just what she taught you)?

Leaving home

- Could you tell me about when you left home? (e.g. for university, living with friends, living with partner, living on own – how old)
- In that situation how did you arrange housework?
- Did your relationship with your mother change when you left home?
- Did your role as a daughter change?

Marrying/first living with partner

- How did you arrange things when you were first together?
- Was that a conscious decision? – e.g. discussion

Becoming a mother

- Could you tell me a bit about when you became a mother?
- How did it affect things in terms of housework?
- Did it affect the relationship with your mother?
- Did your mother help with things?

Present

- How do you currently arrange housework? – other tasks
- How did this arrangement come about?
- What do you children do? (depending on age)
- Talking to other people/comparisons with other people
- Current experiences of being a mother
- Current experiences of being a daughter – what relationship currently like?
    - E.g. how often do you see mother, does she help you with anything, do you help her with anything?

Thinking about the future

- Preparing children for future
- Are their roles around the house going to change?
- How do you think being a mother might change?
- Mother/daughter relationship

Appendix 7: Themes from Mother/Daughter Pair

<u>Laura</u>

Changes since having Oliver/owning a house

Connections between her and her mother, and her father and David

Continuing advice and support from her mother

Differences between her and David about cleanliness, his perfectionism

Different values to friends, others more generally

Division of labour as 'traditional'

Enjoyment of household work, way she talks about other people

Equality of parents

Finding it hard when her mother wasn't around as much

Importance of being active, outdoors

Necessity of household work

Not doing as much as her mother

Own independence compared to others at university

Parents as 'committed' to children and grandchildren

Positivity about being a stay-at-home mother and links to family

Strong sense of values (which she is trying to teach Oliver)

Work limiting David's time

<u>Mary</u>

Certain standards of cleanliness/tidiness

Contrast between own family and other predominant ideas

Different types of people (in terms of maternity)

Equality of parents

Expectations and unhappiness

Good environment for family, 'comfortable' (rather than 'immaculate')

Housework division with husband linked to skills and preferences

Housework not being permanent

Normality of people helping when she was younger

Pride in teaching children to do things (rather than doing everything for them)

Satisfaction and pride for self

Sense of values (not being material)

Shifts across generations (cohorts) in terms of standards, types of tasks done

Shifts within her family over generations

Appendix 8: Example of Reading for My Reflections

Laura:	I would als yeah, I'd also say also the gardening and mainten, general maintenance of the house so I'd s [sigh] it's all the jobs that you do to look after your, your house and the work you need to do within it which [...] isn't paid but it's [er] extremely valuable work that's necessary, you know [Jennifer: Mmm]. Can be quite tiring and [...] relentless but yeah [laughs] [Jennifer: yeah], it's it needs to be done, you know, yeah [getting quieter].	I think it's interesting that she emphasises that it's valuable and necessary, and uses 'you know' a bit here, I think she is constructing me as someone who will understand this in the same way

Done for necessity despite being tiring, lack of choice about needing to look after house |
Jennifer:	So thinking of all those sort of things [Laura: Mmm] how would you say you tend to arrange that in, in this house?	
Laura:	[Er], you, between myself and my husband you mean?	
Jennifer:	Yeah	
Laura:	Yeah. Actually it is quite traditional, as in the traditional roles [um] that's just the way it, and I would do more because I'm home much more as well [Jennifer: Mmm] but he does more of the maintenance and the, I don't know the electronics or the [um] changing lightbulbs and he does the garden mainly [ummm] and the garage and sort of, more of the DIY but I, I do more of the, he very rarely cooks, not because he can't but just because he's either not here because he's away in the week or he's just busy doing something else [um] or he's working so I do all the cooking.[..] *Cleaning* he does a reasonable amount of the cleaning so actually I suppose that's not a [..] tradition, you know a traditionally you'd perceive that as being quite a woman's work but he will like clean the bathroom, he hoovers, [um] mops the floors, things like that but mainly because he's a bit more [...] bothered about cleaning than I am so he, he will actually do a reasonable amount of it *but I do* [...] quite a lot of cleaning as well we probably share that more than perhaps some people [umm] so yeah I do most of the traditional things and though as mum pointed out I don't do the things that she does like what	Interesting term ('traditional'), again implies something I'd recognise
This fits with my experience (partner doing more of the maintenance, DIY)

My partner cooks quite a lot
Not about ability
Recognising this in relation to other work I've read – justifications, time availability etc.
Generalised you, idea of what people would 'normally' think about men and women in heterosexual relationships
My partner does some cleaning of the bathroom, doesn't hoover, neither of us do much mopping
I wouldn't say my partner's that bothered about cleaning
Interesting that 'most of the traditional things' is used just to refer to cooking and cleaning, given she talked about cleaning as shared – contradiction
Different tasks included by mother |

Appendix 9: I-Poems (Daughter)

Poem 1: I do most of the traditional things

I would do more
I'm home much more as well
I do more of the, he very rarely cooks
I do all the cooking
I suppose that's not a [..] tradition
He's a bit more [...] bothered about cleaning than I am
I do [...] quite a lot of cleaning as well
I do most of the traditional things

I don't do the things that she [mother] does
Ironing I very very rarely do
I just, I don't really have time
I don't see it as being *that* important

I do, it's quite traditional
Apart from I'd say the cleaning
I don't do anything like maintenance to the car

Poem 2: Finances and things like that

I [...] *miss* that

It's something I did before
When David and I were kind of together
I certainly did do quite a lot of that

I've said to him quite a few times
I'd like to actually do
I don't feel like I've any idea about finances
I don't even have access necessarily to all the, to it all
I would *like* to
I actually kind of have to ask him about finances and stuff
I wouldn't
That's not the way I'd like it to be
That is something I'd like to change
So I have a bit more awareness
I have to kind of ask him

I've just been so busy with him [Oliver]

Poem 3: Things have changed since I've had Oliver

I think it did

I just qualified
I trained to be a teacher
I just qualified and then got married and then had Oliver

My mum was a stay at home mum
I know was much more normal
I just *really* felt that was what I wanted to do
I couldn't imagine

I didn't have a *job* anyway
When I had Oliver
It wasn't like I'd be going back or making a decision

I just carried on being at home
That's what really suited me
I think with my upbringing
Everyone's very maternal in my family

I mean career is important to me
I definitely want to pursue that

At the moment it's what I'm very happy doing

I was doing full-time studying
Still I did the majority

Now I do nearly all of the cooking
Now it's always me
I do a lot *more* housework than I used to
A *lot* more housework than I used to
When I was in my 20s

Appendix 10: I-Poems (Mother)

Poem 1: I've been quite lucky really

I've been quite lucky really because Tom's quite domesticated

He'll spend twice as long, ten times as long as I would
I could have done the entire house

Because I don't like it [he tends to do the stairs]
He would do anything I asked him to
Like I said
'I need you do this'

He wasn't working and I was [he tried to take over]
I wouldn't like that kind of
I would just rather make something
I can decide whether it's healthier
Quite important to me

I thought it was going to take him forever
I said
I'll do the ironing
I just couldn't
I don't know
I just thought 'well he'll take forever to do it'
And I just do it quickly
I've been doing it all this time

I learned to cook
I mean
I like cooking
I'm quick
Because I'm quick at it it's easy

I used to come
I had a job ten minutes away
I was here
I cooked

Occasionally I say "you could make lunch"
I tend to do most of the cooking

Poem 2: I just don't like that sort of thing

I haven't really got a lot of skills

I always intended to learn to do
I always intended to be better at paperwork
I saw my mum was not good at paperwork
I thought
'Oh no I don't like this'

But I find
I'm just not interested
I've got money in the bank
I've not sorted it out
I ought to
Don't know why I haven't
Because it's in my name nobody else can do it
I think
I'll have to get a financial adviser
I just don't like that sort of thing

Poem 3: Patterns and Expectations

I would say we did pretty much get into those patterns
I think
I always thought that it's important, you know, to share things
I do think
I do expect

I grew up in the era [magazines where women brought their husbands' slippers]
I was well aware of that and just thought it was ridiculous
I didn't
I could see where it was coming from that somebody could be tired
But I didn't like the idea
I had a friend
I thought 'well fair enough'
That wasn't for me

I didn't have that role model
My mum wasn't particularly like that
My dad was very good
I saw my dad dragging a washing machine into the middle of the room
I've always had sort of fairly high expectations of men
I've always thought it was a normal thing

In my time
I do remember if men were seen pushing a pram [it wasn't usual]

I've always thought that both people should be involved

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