

**Coming of Age:
Youth in England,
c.1400-1600**

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Abstract

This thesis draws upon three main ideas about adolescence from modern social-scientific research and determines how far thoughts about a concept of adolescence, youth culture and generational conflict can be usefully applied to gain a better understanding of youth and the process of becoming adult in fifteenth- and sixteenth-century England. The focus of this study is principally urban. It is built upon evidence drawn from conduct literature, church court records, urban court records, civic records, verdicts from coroners' inquests, churchwardens' accounts, wills and private correspondence. This research offers a new perspective on existing debates within historical scholarship on youth in the pre-modern era. It challenges the artificial boundary between the late medieval and early modern periods that historians of childhood and youth have thus far tended to impose on the past. It also considers how far differences in gender, age and social status affected youthful experiences and assesses the extent of change and continuity over the two centuries in question.

Contents

Abstract	2
Contents	3
Acknowledgments	4
Author's Declaration	5
Introduction	6
Chapter One 'Life at Home'	59
Chapter Two 'Life Away from Home'	110
Chapter Three 'Achieving Adulthood'	144
Chapter Four 'Youth Culture'	171
Chapter Five 'Generational Conflict'	201
Conclusion	235
Abbreviations	254
Bibliography	255

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Author's Declaration

I, Sarah Elizabeth Mawhinney, declare that this thesis is a presentation of original work and I am the sole author. This work has not previously been presented for an award at this, or any other, University. All sources are acknowledged as References.

Introduction

The concept of 'adolescence' connects and contrasts both etymologically and socially to the concept of 'adulthood'. The past participle of the Latin verb 'adolescere' – 'to grow [up]' – is 'adultum'. Whereas 'adolescere' represents a process, 'adultum' – 'having grown up' – represents the end point. Terms such as 'adolescence', 'youth' and 'teenager' are used routinely in modern parlance. Whilst these terms are embedded with ideas about growth, transition, and incompleteness, the term 'adult' is indicative of both completion and completeness. Consequently, studies of adolescence within the social sciences tend to frame young people primarily as not-yet finished human beings. They focus on adolescence as a universal stage in biological and psychological development involving a process that shapes minds and bodies for adult futures.¹ The main concern of this thesis is to ascertain how useful modern ideas about adolescence are in an historical context. James Schultz begins his 1991 study of medieval adolescence in Middle High German texts published between 1050 and 1350 by highlighting some thoughts of contemporary developmental psychologists about the features of adolescence. These include the prevalence of generational conflict, struggles with parents and identity crises. Schultz uncovers no evidence of these features in the Middle High German texts that he looks at, so he comes to the radical conclusion that medieval German writers did not recognise a period of life corresponding in any meaningful way to modern adolescence.² This polemical article prompts my own investigation. I want to explore how far modern social-scientific thoughts about adolescence can make sense of past lives and experiences. More specifically, I want to examine the extent to which an understanding of adolescence is apparent within fifteenth- and sixteenth-century England.

Modern Social-Scientific Understandings of Adolescence

The first expression of adolescence as a psychological concept appeared in the work of Hall in the late nineteenth century. In an article published in the *Princeton*

¹ M. Bucholtz, 'Youth and cultural practice', *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 31 (2002), pp. 529, 532.

² J.A. Schultz, 'Medieval adolescence: the claims of history and the silence of German narrative', *Speculum*, 66:3 (1991), pp. 519-39.

Review in 1882, he characterised adolescence as a period of severe crisis. He claimed that it featured a 'lack of emotional steadiness, enthusiasm and sympathy' alongside negative tendencies such as 'violent impulses, unreasonable conduct, and a particular susceptibility to external influences'.³ Hall's subsequent encyclopaedic work entitled *Adolescence: Its Psychology, and its relations to Physiology, Anthropology, Sociology, Sex, Crime, Religion and Education*, published in 1904, marked the foundation of adolescent psychology as a discipline. In this text, he depicted adolescence as a difficult phase of the lifecycle characterised by almost continuous 'storm and stress' from the ages of fourteen to twenty-four.⁴ He also argued that young males and young females had very different adolescent experiences. Hall provided the first comprehensive theory of adolescence in modern history and his work has had a lasting influence.⁵

Hall's interpretation of adolescence was challenged by Mead in a foundational anthropological study entitled *Coming of Age in Samoa*, published in 1928. She explicitly referred to his characterisation of youth in the introduction to her text. She claimed that young people in Samoa became successfully integrated into adult society without displaying any of the negative effects of 'storm and stress' and generational conflict that Hall believed to be common features of this stage of the lifecycle. Mead argued that the characteristics he identified were the product of particular cultural developments and were not universally experienced.⁶ Her study established adolescence as a crucial topic of anthropological investigation.⁷ Most significantly, her anthropological ethnography revealed that every culture views adolescence differently and experiences are not therefore uniformly applicable. This emphasised how the modern adolescent cannot be deemed the modal adolescent.⁸ Only a handful of similar studies appeared over the next fifty years and it was not until the late 1970s that a firmer anthropological interest in

³ G.S. Hall, 'The moral and religious training of children', *Princeton Review* (1882), pp. 26-48.

⁴ G.S. Hall, *Adolescence: its psychology, and its relations to physiology, anthropology, sociology, sex, crime, religion and education*, 1 (New York, 1904), p. xix.

⁵ See A. France, *Understanding youth in late modernity* (Buckingham, 2007), pp. 25-7.

⁶ M. Mead, *Coming of age in Samoa* (New York, 1928), p. 2; C. Wallace and S. Kovatcheva, *Youth in society: the construction and deconstruction of youth in east and west Europe* (New York, 1999), pp. 30-2.

⁷ Bucholtz, 'Youth and cultural practice', p. 525.

⁸ A. Schlegel and B.L. Hewlett, 'Contributions of anthropology to the study of adolescence', *Journal of Research on Adolescence*, 21:1 (2011), p. 287. See also J.J. Arnett, 'The neglected 95%: why American psychology needs to become less American', *American Psychologist*, 63:7 (2008), pp. 602-14.

adolescence emerged.⁹ At this time the *Harvard Adolescence Project* commenced. It resulted a decade later in the publication of four major anthropological ethnographies which focus on adolescent life in a variety of cultures that only comparatively recently began the transition from traditional to modern ways of life.¹⁰ These studies approach adolescence from the perspective of adulthood. They downplay youth-centered interactions and youth as a cultural category in favour of an emphasis on the transition to adulthood and on adolescence as a biological and psychological stage of human development.¹¹

The identification of four sequential developmental stages spanning from birth to adolescence by Piaget and Inhelder provides a rationale from developmental psychology for the identification of particular adolescent traits.¹² They argue that at the age of eleven a new mode of formal operations commences which involves hypothetical-deductive reasoning – that is, the ability to explore propositions that are hypothetical or false and to develop powers of reflection and criticism.¹³ The idea of developing formal reasoning enables them to explain more specifically why certain experiences become typical features of adolescence. Piaget and Inhelder claim that a new-found capacity for combinatorial logic and the ability to construct both ideals and contrary-to-fact situations are accountable for the adolescent formulating alternatives to parental directives, acting more rebelliously, having problems making decisions and becoming more dependent on peers for advice and assistance in this respect. They also maintain that individuals come to be markedly more private and secretive about their lives during their adolescence because an

⁹ Schlegel and Hewlett, 'Contributions of anthropology', p. 281. Cf. V. Elwin, *The Muria and their ghotul* (Oxford, 1947) which studies adolescence in the Gond tribal group in central India; M. Wilson, *Good company: a study of Nyakusa age villages* (Boston, 1951) which focuses on the Nyakyusa adolescent boys and youths of Tanzania; A. Schlegel, 'The adolescent socialization of the Hopi girl', *Ethnology*, 12 (1973), pp. 449-62; K.O. Kendis and R. Kendis, 'The street boy identity: an alternate strategy of Boston's Chinese-Americans', *Urban Anthropology*, 5:1 (1976), pp. 1-17 which looks at adolescent boys in American Chinatowns.

¹⁰ Schlegel and Hewlett, 'Contributions of anthropology', p. 283. Cf. R.G. Condon, *Inuit youth: growth and change in the Canadian Arctic* (New Jersey, 1987); V.K. Burbank, *Aboriginal adolescence: maidenhood in an Australian community* (New Jersey, 1988); M. Hollos and P. Leis, *Becoming Nigerian in Ijo society* (New Jersey, 1989); S.S. Davis and D.A. Davis, *Adolescence in a Moroccan town: making social sense* (New Jersey, 1989).

¹¹ Bucholtz, 'Youth and cultural practice', p. 525.

¹² See B. Inhelder and J. Piaget, *The growth of logical thinking from childhood to adolescence* (London, 1958); D. Moshman, 'Adolescence', in U. Müller, J.I.M. Carpendale and L. Smith (eds), *The Cambridge companion to Piaget* (Cambridge, 2009), pp. 264, 268-9.

¹³ Moshman, 'Adolescence', pp. 256, 259; D. Elkind, *Children and adolescents: interpretive essays on Jean Piaget* (2nd edn, London, 1974), ch. 5.

increase in self-consciousness and introspection is experienced during this phase of the lifecycle.¹⁴

Erikson is the main proponent of the idea that identity formation is an inevitable feature of adolescence. He describes it as an intermediary period, viz. a socially sanctioned time during which young people can search for an identity in a context that permits the postponement of adult commitments and gives individuals leeway to experiment before they have to assume the responsibilities of their future adult lives.¹⁵ More specifically, he explains the adolescent mind in terms of a 'psychosocial moratorium'. This concept refers simultaneously to a period of cognitive and sexual maturation and a sanctioned postponement of definitive commitment that provides relative freedom for role experimentation.¹⁶ Erikson's main argument in relation to adolescence is that this phase is characterised by an 'identity crisis' – namely a conflict between how the adolescent perceives themselves and how they think others perceive them.¹⁷ His 'crisis' essentially describes a critical turning point after which life moves on to take a new directional course.¹⁸ Erikson believes adolescence is marked by a conflict between identity and role confusion.¹⁹ He claims that a specific identity crisis occurs because a conflict arises between the past and future as adolescents are on the brink of separating off as independent persons.²⁰ According to his theory it is at this time that an individual's positive ego identity becomes established, the foundations of which are formed from independent decision-making, the adoption of various age-distinctive ideological values and a developing sense of sexual identity.²¹ Erikson applied his idea of a crisis of identity in an historical context in his psychobiography of Martin Luther in order to explain how Luther was able to break with the existing religious establishment in the sixteenth century.²²

¹⁴ Elkind, *Children and adolescents*, pp. 101-4.

¹⁵ P. Roazen, *Erik H. Erikson: the power and limits of a vision* (New York, 1976), pp. 86-7.

¹⁶ E.H. Erikson, *The lifecycle completed* (London, 1982), pp. 74-5.

¹⁷ Roazen, *Erikson*, p. 88.

¹⁸ J. Koger, 'Identity development during adolescence', in G.R. Adams and M.D. Berzonsky (eds), *Blackwell handbook of adolescence* (Oxford, 2003), p. 204.

¹⁹ Roazen, *Erikson*, p. 115.

²⁰ Roazen, *Erikson*, pp. 92, 102.

²¹ Koger, 'Identity development', p. 204.

²² E.H. Erikson, *Young man Luther: a study in psychoanalysis and history* (New York, 1958).

More modern social-scientific research has emerged from these foundational ideas to make three main claims about adolescence. Firstly, researchers into adolescent development who take a 'functionalist' approach to their subject highlight the importance of adolescence as a social institution with a distinct role and purpose for socialisation, identity and preparation for adult roles.²³ They have a clear understanding about the concept of adolescence as a process that strives towards the attainment of autonomy. Developmental and social theorists posit various interpretations of autonomy. It is typically connected to ideas of self-regulation, agency, freedom, capacity, independent identity, emancipation from parents and the ability to distinguish individually held principles.²⁴ Zimmer-Gembeck and Collins argue that endeavouring to achieve autonomy from the influence of others is one of the key normative psychosocial developmental issues that defines the adolescent phase.²⁵ Kohlberg explains the development from childhood to adulthood in terms of a four-phase shift from anomy (when an individual has no concept of rules) to heteronomy (when others impose rules) to socionomy (when society imposes rules) to autonomy (when rules are self-imposed).²⁶ On the basis of this model, rules appear to be absolute for children but relative to both other individuals and society for adolescents. Holmes maintains that this leads to all adolescents testing the limits of heteronomy and socionomy in various ways – sometimes by being openly defiant and sometimes by being secretive. He believes that adolescents need to have rules and limits imposed on their behaviour by authority figures to enable them to develop integrity and self-respect.²⁷ Smetana and Turiel argue that when conflicts between parents and their children arise, the adolescent's appeal to their own personal jurisdiction is significant. They think that it increases the young person's sense of agency and enlarges their sphere of personal action, which reflects their developing autonomy and promotes a sense of their individuation and distinctiveness from others.²⁸ Similarly, Maccoby explains adolescence as a three-stage development involving a transition from parental

²³ France, *Understanding youth*, pp. 34-6.

²⁴ J.C. Coleman and L.B. Hendry, *The nature of adolescence* (3rd edn, London, 1999), pp. 83-6; M.D. Zimmer-Gembeck and W.A. Collins, 'Autonomy development during adolescence', in G.R. Adams and M.D. Berzonsky (eds), *Blackwell handbook of adolescence* (Oxford, 2003), pp. 188, 192.

²⁵ Zimmer-Gembeck and Collins, 'Autonomy development', pp. 176-7.

²⁶ P. Sutherland, *Cognitive development today: Piaget and his critics* (London, 1992), pp. 176-82.

²⁷ G.R. Holmes, *Helping teenagers into adulthood: a guide for the next generation* (Westport, 1995), p. 52.

²⁸ J.G. Smetana and E. Turiel, 'Moral development during adolescence', in G.R. Adams and M.D. Berzonsky (eds), *Blackwell handbook of adolescence* (Oxford, 2003), pp. 257-9.

regulation to co-regulation to self-regulation – which is equated with autonomy.²⁹ Noller and Callan argue that adolescence involves a series of milestones that ultimately result in young people achieving emancipation from their parents, gaining the skills necessary to achieve economic independence and their own career, and developing a realistic, stable and positive identity. According to their study, these milestones include leaving home, coping with the emergence of sexuality and possessing the agency to make career choices.³⁰

The culmination of adolescence in adulthood has also been the subject of much scholarly attention. Researchers in the field of anthropology place emphasis on the significance of marriage as the ultimate rite of passage. In Schlegel and Barry's anthropological study of adolescence, for example, a systematic compilation of data from 186 societies outside of the industrial West demonstrates how in most traditional cultures the focus of the transition to adulthood is on marriage.³¹ As Arnett shows, anthropologists tend to view marriage as the 'crowning event' that marks the attainment of adult status. They argue that the process of preparing for marriage during the latter stages of the adolescent phase involves cultivating capacities that equip individuals to fulfil a variety of gender-specific family responsibilities. For young males, preparation for the transition to adulthood involves developing capabilities such as providing economically for a family and protecting and keeping a family physically safe. Conversely, young females are required to develop skills for running a household and caring for children. In most traditional cultures, both sexes need to demonstrate these abilities before they are considered to be ready for marriage, viz. adult status.³² Although Schlegel and Barry identify many similarities between the male and female experience, they find that the adolescence of boys worldwide is different from, and usually longer than, that of girls. However, they argue that in some cultures, if a girl marries before puberty a kind of adolescence actually follows marriage. In other cultures where girls marry upon or shortly after puberty they are not deemed to have

²⁹ Zimmer-Gembeck and Collins, 'Autonomy development', p. 192; E.E. Maccoby, 'Socialisation and developmental change', *Child Development*, 55:2 (1984), pp. 317-28.

³⁰ P. Noller and V. Callan, *The adolescent in the family* (London, 1991), pp. 4-16.

³¹ See A. Schlegel and H. Barry III, *Adolescence: an anthropological inquiry* (New York, 1991).

³² See J.J. Arnett, 'Conceptions of the transition to adulthood: perspectives from adolescence through midlife', *Journal of Adult Development*, 8:2 (2001), pp. 133-4.

achieved adult status until they become mothers, usually a few years later.³³

Although sociological research has also highlighted the importance of marriage as an indicator of adulthood, sociologists more readily attribute significance to other factors such as finishing education, commencing full-time employment, entering parenthood and beginning an independent family life. Studies that take more of a psychological focus tend to place most emphasis on the connection between individualism and adulthood. The concept of individualism is akin to autonomy and incorporates developments such as accepting responsibility for oneself, acquiring ethical values, making one's own decisions, achieving financial independence, establishing a relationship with parents as an equal adult and complying with social norms.³⁴

The second main issue concerning adolescence that has been addressed from a variety of disciplinary perspectives within the social sciences is how far the adolescent phase is characterised by a distinctive 'youth culture'. The broad anthropological concept of 'culture' can be defined to include 'a people's learned and shared values, behaviour patterns, beliefs, emotions, creativity and practices' and embraces 'ways of living, habits and ideas'.³⁵ Whereas 'culture' is associated with 'everyday social practice', the term 'subculture' has slightly different connotations – it essentially refers to 'a group within a group', displaying its own, distinct and separate cultural characteristics.³⁶ Despite having an anthropological foundation, it is Western sociologists who have explored youth cultures and practices most widely in their studies of adolescence from the 1940s onwards. In 1942, Parsons introduced the term 'youth culture' to argue that the young form part of an anti-adult counter-culture that functions to allow 'the release of tensions caused by the demands of contemporary society'.³⁷ Eisenstadt built upon this idea in the following decade. His study presents youth as a transitional, troublesome

³³ See Schlegel and Barry, *Adolescence*; K.M. Phillips, *Medieval maidens: young women and gender in England, 1270-1540* (Manchester, 2003), p. 19, note 13.

³⁴ Arnett, 'Conceptions of the transition to adulthood', p. 134.

³⁵ Schlegel and Hewlett, 'Contributions of anthropology', pp. 281-9 (p. 281). See also J. Fornäs, 'Youth, culture and modernity', in J. Fornäs and G. Bolin (eds), *Youth culture in late modernity* (London, 1995), pp. 1-11.

³⁶ M.J. Kehily, 'A cultural perspective', in M.J. Kehily (ed.), *Understanding youth: perspectives, identities, practices* (London, 2007), pp. 12, 21.

³⁷ S.F. Niles, 'The youth culture controversy: an evaluation', *The Journal of Early Adolescence*, 1:3 (1981), p. 265; T. Parsons, 'Age and sex in the social structure of the United States', *American Sociological Review*, 7:5 (1942), pp. 604-16. See also T. Parsons, *Social structure and personality* (London, 1964).

and problematic body, whose distinctive culture is characterised by irresponsibility, anti-adult attitudes and delinquency. Accordingly, adolescence is described as a liminal period and a pivotal point of tension.³⁸

In the mid-twentieth century, the sociological study of youth culture emerged in the United States as a branch of criminology and delinquency studies. At this time, conservative ideology prevailed in America as post-World War II society sought to find work for returning troops, re-orientate industry towards consumerism and deal with the ramifications of the Cold War. The social sciences felt the effects. As a consequence, the Chicago School of Sociology became preoccupied with the issue of deviant subcultures. Its affiliates, including Cohen (1955) and Becker (1963) examined how far youth subcultures constitute alternative systems of shared symbolic meaning for their members and the extent to which they are shaped by being labelled deviant by the dominant culture.³⁹ Havighurst (1972) questioned how far 'adolescent culture' represents a uniform or homogenous body of norms, values, attitudes and practices recognised and shared by adolescents that are unique and different from the adult world.⁴⁰

During the 1970s and 1980s British sociologists, influenced by the American tradition, also studied youth subcultures. Scholars at the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) at the University of Birmingham used Marxist theories to examine working-class youth identities and youth cultural practices in late industrial urban British society. In 1985, Brake applied the concept of 'subculture' as an analytical tool within this context to clarify that subcultures share elements of larger class cultures but are also quite distinct from them. He argues that whilst subcultures are not necessarily oppositional, they possess certain elements that can be deemed rebellious. He maintains that it is essential to examine the extent to which the subculture under investigation is a cohesive force with distinctive elements.⁴¹ Studies by the CCCS question how far young people belong to groups

³⁸ Wallace and Kovatcheva, *Youth in society*, pp. 30-2, 154; France, *Understanding youth*, p. 35; S.N. Eisenstadt, *From generation to generation* (New York, 1956).

³⁹ Bucholtz, 'Youth and cultural practice', p. 536. See A. Cohen, *Delinquent boys* (Chicago, 1955); H. Becker, *The outsiders: studies in the sociology of deviance* (Chicago, 1963).

⁴⁰ R.J. Havighurst, *Developmental tasks and education* (New York, 1972). See also F.P. Rice, *The adolescent: developments, relationships and culture* (Boston, 1975), ch. 9.

⁴¹ M. Brake, *Comparative youth culture: the sociology of youth cultures and youth subcultures in America, Britain and Canada* (London, 1985), p. 6.

with their own norms, values, rituals, sanctions and dress codes that are antagonistic to mainstream culture. More specifically, they link the development of working-class youth cultures to the decline of working-class inner-city communities. CCCS researchers argue that working-class youth cultures emerge from a desire to emulate traditional features of the working-class community through particular forms of dress, style and behaviour. These cultures have been interpreted as being representative of working-class ideological and cultural resistance to ruling-class hegemony and cultural dominance.⁴²

Although some British and American sociologists considered the issue of class in relation to youth subcultures in the 1950s, 60s and 70s, they did not address the issue of gender. The majority of these sociologists were male and the exclusive focus of their research was the male experience. Scholars from both sides of the Atlantic defined youth culture as a male preserve. Girls were largely ignored and rendered invisible as female cultural styles were not acknowledged as legitimate.⁴³ From the mid-1970s an increased interest in the study of women emerged, a development attributable to the rise of the feminist movement at this time. Second-wave feminism encouraged researchers to investigate women's social lives and to draw comparisons with the experiences of their male counterparts.⁴⁴ It was in this context that a notable exploration of female youth culture by McRobbie and Garber was published in 1975. In this study, they accuse their male counterparts of being gender-blind by solely researching sexist and macho male subcultures that marginalise young women. They criticise work done by the CCCS, contesting that teenage girls do have a female subculture of their own which is just less visible and rebellious than that of males. They describe young females' distinctive gender-based interactions as a 'bedroom culture'. Whereas boys congregate in gangs on the street, they claim that girls tend to spend time in pairs in their bedrooms listening to music, experimenting with make-up and discussing the latest gossip.⁴⁵

⁴² Bucholtz, 'Youth and cultural practice', p. 536. See also J. Clarke, S. Hall, T. Jefferson and B. Roberts, 'Subcultures, cultures and class', in S. Hall and T. Jefferson (eds), *Resistance through rituals: youth subcultures in post-war Britain* (2nd edn, London, 1993), pp. 9-74; G. Mungham and G. Pearson (eds), *Working class youth culture* (London, 1976).

⁴³ Bucholtz, 'Youth and cultural practice', p. 537.

⁴⁴ See France, *Understanding youth*, pp. 21-3.

⁴⁵ See A. McRobbie and J. Garber, 'Girls and subcultures', in S. Hall and T. Jefferson (eds), *Resistance through rituals: youth subcultures in post-war Britain* (London, 1975), pp. 209-22.

Investigating differences in adolescent attitudes according to gender subsequently proved popular. Some scholars explain observed differences between the sexes in respect of criminality with reference to gender-based socialisation during childhood and adolescence. In a study of male and female delinquency from 1976, Smart argues that girls are more strictly socialised and supervised by their parents than boys and have less time and fewer opportunities to engage in juvenile delinquency as a consequence.⁴⁶ The respective studies of Smith and of Murray and Thompson, which appeared in the mid-1980s, claim that whilst parents are afforded a great degree of deference by their daughters and have a strong influence on their social lives, sons are more likely to break their parents' rules and hold them with less regard.⁴⁷ Noller and Callan explore gender differences in communication, suggesting that adolescents of both sexes are more defensive and guarded with their fathers and more open and honest with their mothers.⁴⁸ They also record a distinct difference between an adolescent male preoccupation with status and achievement and an adolescent female interest in people and relationships.⁴⁹ In 1993, Griffin reiterated the need to confront the issue of gender, warning that it must not be assumed that the transition from childhood through adolescence to adulthood is experienced in the same way by girls as by boys.⁵⁰ More recent research has assessed the effects of gender on identity exploration during adolescence. Sharp *et al.* (2007) claim that gender norms and sanctions and conformity expectations shape the types of activities which males and females choose to perform. Whilst boys gravitate towards sports, girls seem to prefer music, dancing, art and creative experiences.⁵¹ Perry and Pauletti (2011) develop this theme further. They argue that a combination of sex-based biological and cognitive differences and gender-based social differences affect male and female

⁴⁶ C. Smart, *Women, crime and criminology: a feminist critique* (London, 1976). Cf. F. Heidensohn, *Women and crime* (London, 1985). Heidensohn also records significantly lower offending rates for women than for men. She believes this is because females are socialised to be more home-centred and to more readily conform to social norms imposed by patriarchal society.

⁴⁷ D.M. Smith, 'Perceived peer and parental influences of youth's social world', *Youth & Society*, 17:2 (1985), p. 151; C. Murray and F. Thompson, 'The representation of authority: an adolescent viewpoint', *Journal of Adolescence*, 8:3 (1985), pp. 217-29 (p. 217).

⁴⁸ Noller and Callan, *The adolescent in the family*, pp. 42-5.

⁴⁹ Noller and Callan, *The adolescent in the family*, pp. 52-3.

⁵⁰ See C. Griffin, *Representations of youth: the study of youth and adolescence in Britain and America* (Cambridge, 1993), ch. 4.

⁵¹ E.H. Sharp, J.D. Coatsworth, N. Darling, P. Cumsille and S. Ranieri, 'Gender differences in the self-defining activities and identity experiences of adolescents and emerging adults', *Journal of Adolescence*, 30:2 (2007), pp. 251-69 (pp. 252-5).

abilities and interests, conceptions of self, social relationships, and propensities for both aggression and depression.⁵²

Other sociological studies that revolve around youth culture have been influenced by the concept of the 'adolescent voice', drawn from the sub-discipline of psychological anthropology. Adherents to this approach challenge deprecatory views of youth cultures. They do not accept that youth cultures emerge solely as the product of lower-class adolescent resistance against an oppressive society or as a response to a power struggle against adult control. Instead, these sociologists argue that young people are not just acted upon, but rather exercise agency over the construction of their own cultures in order to meet their own expressive needs and contribute to the cultural life of their communities.⁵³ Arnett (1991) takes a positive interpretation of youth culture, stressing its benefits as 'a binding element of collective consciousness which regulates aggression and negative mood' that has 'a significant effect on sociological and collective consciousness'.⁵⁴ Janssen *et al.* (2011) also have a positive understanding of youth culture. They view it as part of a larger cultural system belonging to the society in question. They suggest that a youth culture has an important anxiety-buffering and self-esteem boosting function that helps young people to deal with the problems of vulnerability and finiteness which they experience during their adolescent years.⁵⁵

The third main issue that has been considered in social-scientific literature questions the extent to which generational conflict is intrinsically linked to the adolescent phase. This has generated debate amongst scholars. Sociological studies have been dominated by three main arguments, based on the contention that adolescents typically display anti-adult attitudes and a tendency towards antisocial behaviour. One sociological approach interprets youth as a deviant element of society that possesses different norms and values. It is based on the assumption that freedom from parental restraint and achieving control over one's own life are the main goals of every adolescent. Connected to this is the idea that peers replace

⁵² D.G. Perry and R.E. Pauletti, 'Gender and adolescent development', *Journal of Research on Adolescence*, 21:1 (2011), pp. 61-74.

⁵³ Schlegel and Hewlett, 'Contributions of anthropology', pp. 284, 286-7.

⁵⁴ J. Janssen, M. Deschesne and A. Knippenberg, 'The psychological importance of youth culture: a terror management approach', *Youth & Society*, 31:2 (1999), p. 154; J.J. Arnett, 'Adolescents and heavy metal music: from the mouths of metalheads', *Youth & Society*, 23:1 (1991), pp. 76-98.

⁵⁵ Janssen *et al.*, 'The psychological importance of youth culture', pp. 155, 164.

the role and influence of parents in an adolescent's life.⁵⁶ Peer influence is a mutual phenomenon – it conceptualises a situation whereby the young person influences and is simultaneously influenced by their peers.⁵⁷ Relationships with peers are deemed horizontal and are therefore acknowledged to be more equal and less hierarchical than vertical parental relationships. Whilst peer relationships are not unique to adolescence, some believe they have a special role during this period as the issues of peer acceptance, conformity and popularity become increasingly significant.⁵⁸

Manheim (1923) was the first to emphasise the significance of generations in shaping historical consciousness.⁵⁹ In 1940, Davis made the claim that contemporary Western civilization manifests an extraordinary amount of parent/adolescent conflict because of the rapid rate of social change. His study presents generational conflict as a universal characteristic of the adolescent experience because each generation is raised in a different social milieu, which he believes leads to clashes over issues such as energy levels, pragmatism and emancipation. Davis argues that conflict with parents is necessary for resolving childish dependency and that it is both healthy and natural to allow disagreements between the generations to distance parents and their children.⁶⁰ Eisenstadt (1956) developed this notion by arguing that youth cultures help smooth the transition between childhood because they facilitate a shift from familial to peer socialisation.⁶¹ Kenniston (1962) maintains that youth culture – which he defines as an 'institutionalised adolescence', viz. a 'special way of life characteristic of large groups of young people of approximately the same age' whose pattern is 'not always or explicitly anti-adult but is belligerently non-adult' – is the product of tensions caused by a 'generation gap'. He argues that its formation is facilitated by discontinuity between the generations that promotes chronic intra-familial conflict

⁵⁶ Smith, 'Perceived peer and parental influences', p. 131.

⁵⁷ B.B. Brown and C. Klute, 'Friendship, cliques and crowds', in G.R. Adams and M.D. Berzonsky (eds), *Blackwell handbook of adolescence* (Oxford, 2003), p. 331.

⁵⁸ See Coleman and Hendry, *The nature of adolescence*, pp. 175-92.

⁵⁹ K. Manheim, 'The problem of generations', in P. Kecskemeti (ed.), *Karl Manheim: essays on the sociology of knowledge* (London, 1952), pp. 276-322. This is a reprint of an article first published in 1923.

⁶⁰ See T.P. Gullotta, G.R. Adams and C.A. Markstrom, *The adolescent experience* (4th edn, Burlington, 1999), pp. 29-30; K. Davis, 'The sociology of parent-youth conflict', *American Sociological Review*, 5:4 (1940), pp. 523-35.

⁶¹ I.K. Ben-Amos, 'Adolescence as a cultural invention: Philippe Ariès and the sociology of youth', *History of the Human Sciences*, 8:2 (1995), p. 78.

and a clear sense of separation between parents and children. Within this framework, Kenniston also claims that collective peer group associations function to provide adolescents with an important developmental platform, offering them a sense of security and a clear-cut, ready-made temporary identity.⁶² Other scholars, including Bettelheim, make comparable arguments about generational conflicts and a tendency to gravitate towards peer associations being fundamental characteristics of adolescence.⁶³ Erikson maintains that finding a peer group with which to affiliate oneself is a key developmental task.⁶⁴ Bronfenbrenner (1979) and Ornstein (1981) both argue that the peer group replaces the family as the prime influence in adolescence, acting as an important bridge between home and adult society.⁶⁵

More recent research has supported these ideas. Newer adherents to this approach share the view that a transitional and transformative shift from an adult-focused to a youth-focused world occurs during adolescence. They also argue that young people imitate and interact with each other to form a socially reinforced group-identity based on reciprocity and intimacy, which is deemed vital for allowing them to develop a sense of independence and a reduction in parental authority. These sociological studies enhance the notion that a 'generation gap' is at the centre of conflicts between adolescents, their parents and the authorities.⁶⁶ Noller and Callan (1991) claim that since the match in parental and adolescent attitudes is only low to moderate, concordance levels are not sufficient enough to suggest that parents are the main socialising influence on their teenage children.⁶⁷ Wallace and Kovatcheva (1999) maintain that young people's pursuit of increasingly

⁶² J. Demos, and V. Demos, 'Adolescence in historical perspective', *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 31:4 (1969), pp. 637-8; K. Kenniston, 'Social change and youth in America', *Daedalus*, 91 (1962), pp. 145-71 (p. 161).

⁶³ B. Bettelheim, 'The problem of generations', in E.H. Erikson (ed.), *Youth: change and challenge* (London, 1963), pp. 65, 89.

⁶⁴ E.H. Erikson, *Childhood and society* (2nd edn, London, 1963), pp. 234-5.

⁶⁵ Gullotta *et al.*, *The adolescent experience*, p. 166; U. Bronfenbrenner, *Two worlds of childhood: US and USSR* (New York, 1970); A.C. Ornstein, 'Adolescent and youth culture: from tranquillity to activity', *The Urban Review*, 13:1 (1981), p. 2.

⁶⁶ See Noller and Callan, *The adolescent in the family*, ch. 2. See also Holmes, *Helping teenagers into adulthood*, chs. 5, 6; B. Reimer, 'Youth and modern lifestyles', in J. Fornäs and G. Bolin (eds), *Youth culture in late modernity* (London, 1995), pp. 120-44; Brown and Klute, 'Friendship, cliques and crowds', p. 330; N. Darling, S.F. Hamilton and K.H. Shaver, 'Relationships with unrelated adults', in G.R. Adams and M.D. Berzonsky (eds), *Blackwell handbook of adolescence* (Oxford, 2003), p. 350; L. Mayeux and A.H.N. Cillessen, 'Peer influence and the development of antisocial behaviour', in R.C.M.E. Engels, M. Kerr and H. Stattin (eds), *Friends, lovers and groups* (Chichester, 2007), pp. 33-46; Gullotta *et al.*, *The adolescent experience*, chs. 7, 8.

⁶⁷ Noller and Callan, *The adolescent in the family*, pp. 37-40.

independent lifestyles causes notable generational tensions because there is a conflict between their search for social and cultural autonomy and the requirements made of them by older family members.⁶⁸ The most recent sociological research has been influenced by contemporaneous developments within developmental psychology. Some scholars within the latter discipline link the phenomenon of risk-taking in adolescents in Western cultures to structural and hormonal changes in the developing brain.⁶⁹ Steinberg, for example, believes that adolescent risk-taking is grounded in developmental neuroscience. He explains that adolescence is a time of heightened vulnerability for risky behaviour because a temporal gap occurs between puberty – which impels young people towards thrill-seeking – and the slow maturation of the cognitive control-system which regulates these impulses.⁷⁰ The impact of these ideas is particularly prevalent in those sociological studies that focus more specifically on the connections between peer associations and antisocial behaviour. The conclusions of Pardini *et al.* (2005) are based on a reflexive theory in this respect. They argue that increased familial conflict influences boys' delinquent peer group associations, leads to an escalation of antisocial and aggressive behaviour, negatively affects social relationships and in turn increases parental conflict.⁷¹

The second main sociological approach to the issues of generational conflict and parent/peer relationships directly contrasts with these views. From the 1950s onwards, other sociologists have disputed the very existence of negative, oppositional characteristics, implying that they are merely a series of myths that have mistakenly led to differences between the generations being exaggerated. They argue that adolescents do not experience a complete separation from their parents but in fact maintain a close working relationship, with inter-generational differences remaining only minor and relatively insignificant.⁷² Elkin and Westley (1955) suggest that adolescents actually reflect and share a great majority of their

⁶⁸ Wallace and Kovatcheva, *Youth in society*, p. 125.

⁶⁹ Schlegel and Hewlett, 'Contributions of anthropology', p. 286.

⁷⁰ See L. Steinberg, 'Risk taking in adolescence: new perspectives from brain and behavioural science', *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 16:2 (2007), pp. 55-9.

⁷¹ D.A. Pardini, R. Loeber and M. Stouthamer-Loeber, 'Developmental shifts in parent and peer influences on boys' beliefs about delinquent behavior', *Journal of Research on Adolescence*, 15:3 (2005), pp. 299-323 (pp. 300, 317).

⁷² Noller and Callan, *The adolescent in the family*, p. 31.

parents' attitudes, values, beliefs and practices.⁷³ A study published by Greenberg, Siegel and Leitch in 1983 claims that parental relationships have the most powerful effect on self-esteem and levels of life satisfaction during the teenage years.⁷⁴ In 1996, *The Independent* reported the findings of a large survey of twelve- to nineteen-year-olds commissioned by the charitable organisation Barnardo's, under the headline 'Sober teens shun rebellion'. This article states that 'rather than rebelling against their parents, teenagers respect adults' points of view' and suggests that young people are as committed to family life, work, education and anti-crime attitudes as their parents.⁷⁵ These sorts of ideas led some, such as Wyn and White (1997) to question the very existence of a generation gap and to claim instead that 'most young people tend to be fairly conventional in outlook and lifestyle'.⁷⁶ A study published in 2011 by Brown and Bakken also reaches a positive conclusion. In their investigation into how parenting practices and relationships affect adolescent peer interactions and adolescent adjustment, they maintain that both parent and peer interactions have moderating effects, with both sets of social relationships enjoying a dynamic reciprocity.⁷⁷

A third sociological approach – essentially a synthesis of the first two arguments – takes the most balanced view. Proponents argue that whilst some aspects of adolescent life are firmly reflective of adult life, others are clearly distinguishable and involve a degree of rebellion and rejection. This is the stance taken by Remmers and Radler (1957), Turner (1964) and Rice (1975).⁷⁸ Research published by Niles in 1981 claims that parents and peers do not necessarily find themselves in opposition but rather they are often just influential in different areas at different stages of the adolescent's life. Niles suggests that since areas of

⁷³ S.F. Niles, 'The youth culture controversy: an evaluation', *The Journal of Early Adolescence*, 1:3 (1981), p. 266; F. Elkin and W.A. Westley, 'The protective environment and adolescent socialisation', *Social Forces*, 35:3 (1957), pp. 243-9.

⁷⁴ M. Greenberg, J.M. Siegel and C.J. Leitch 'The nature and importance of attachment relationships to parents and peers during adolescence', *Journal of Adolescence and Youth*, 12:5 (1983), pp. 373-86.

⁷⁵ G. Cooper, 'Sober teens shun rebellion', *The Independent*, 9 March 1996, available online at: <<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/sober-teens-shun-rebellion-1340985.html>> [accessed March 2014].

⁷⁶ J. Wyn and R. White, *Rethinking youth* (London, 1997), ch. 4 (p. 84).

⁷⁷ B.B. Brown and J.P. Bakken, 'Parenting and peer relationships: re-invigorating relationships on family-peer linkages in adolescence', *Journal of Research on Adolescence*, 21:1 (2011), pp. 159-61.

⁷⁸ Niles, 'Youth culture controversy', p. 265; H.H. Remmers and D.H. Radler, *The American teenager* (New York, 1957); R.H. Turner, *The social context of ambition: a study of high school seniors in Los Angeles* (San Francisco, 1974); Rice, *The adolescent*, pp. 155-9.

parental and peer influence do not overlap, there is no reason for any overt conflict, competition, defiance, rebellion, a distinct value system or expressly anti-adult activities to develop.⁷⁹ Jurkovic and Ulrici (1985) also found adolescents moving comfortably between the two generational groups and uncover no evidence to imply that the peer group usurps parental significance.⁸⁰ Smith (1985) reaches a similar conclusion based on a case-study of Scottish teenagers. Whilst he identifies an increase in peer influence, he notes that this is limited to particular spheres of activity and that parents continue to be highly influential elsewhere. Smith also records remarkable deference in adolescent attitudes towards adults, particularly amongst girls.⁸¹ Noller and Callan criticise studies that present a power struggle between the influence of parents and of peers on the basis of a clear polarisation of the themes of rebellion and submission for reflecting a false dichotomy.⁸² They take the moderate view that most parent-adolescent relationships are equitable but acknowledge that some tensions inevitably feature as young people strive to achieve their own identities.⁸³ Lansford (2003) identifies both positive and negative aspects of parent and peer relationships in the context of his study of antisocial behaviour. On the one hand, he acknowledges that under some circumstances parent and peer relationships can beneficially buffer each other's influences. On the other hand, he believes that risky, low quality peer relationships can act as 'trainers in deviancy and aggressive antisocial behaviour' which reinforce and exacerbate negative familial relationships rather than help to improve them.⁸⁴ Whilst explorations of the concept of adolescence, youth culture and generational conflict are three main themes that keep recurring in modern social-scientific research, to date no consensus has been reached amongst scholars about the precise characteristics and features of the adolescent experience.

⁷⁹ Niles, 'Youth culture controversy', p. 266.

⁸⁰ Noller and Callan, *The adolescent in the family*, p. 45; G.T. Jurkovic and D. Ulrici, 'Empirical perspectives on adolescents and their families', in L. L'Abate (ed.), *The handbook of family psychology and therapy*, 1 (Homewood, 1985), pp. 215-57.

⁸¹ Smith, 'Perceived peer and parental influences', pp. 132, 151. Cf. Murray and Thompson, 'The representation of authority', pp. 217-29 (p. 217). Murray and Thompson also identify that adolescent females display pro-authority attitudes towards parents, teachers and the police.

⁸² Noller and Callan, *The adolescent in the family*, pp. 48, 51.

⁸³ Noller and Callan, *The adolescent in the family*, pp. 62, 140.

⁸⁴ J.E. Lansford, 'Friendship quality, peer group affiliation, and peer antisocial behavior as moderators of the link between negative parenting and adolescent externalizing behavior', *Journal of Research on Adolescence*, 13:2 (2003), pp. 161-84 (pp. 163-4, 180).

Overview of Historiography on Pre-Modern Youth

The study of childhood and youth in the past was revolutionised by the publication of *L'Enfant et La Vie Familiale sous l'Ancien Régime* by Philippe Ariès in France in 1960 and its appearance in English translation as *Centuries of Childhood* in 1962.⁸⁵ Ariès planted the idea that childhood and adolescence are not natural or universal phenomena, but rather that understanding and experience of them varies according to period and place. Crucially, he was the first to demonstrate that a historicisation of these life-stages is possible. There are three strands to the Ariès thesis. In part one of the text he considers '*Le Sentiment de l'Enfance*', which has been translated as 'The Idea of Childhood'. Based on writings on age and development, on portraits, and on games and pastimes from medieval France, he finds no clear distinction between the representations of children and adults. He comes to a rather extreme conclusion about medieval society that has been translated into English as 'the idea of childhood did not exist'.⁸⁶ Ever since, Anglo-Saxon scholars have criticised Ariès for suggesting that people in the Middle Ages thought children and adults were one and the same. This assumption has largely resulted from a difficulty translating the French notion of '*sentiment*'. Despite the problem of interpretation, there is no escaping his claim that an understanding of childhood, as a period recognisably distinct from adulthood, did not appear until the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. He argues that it was at this point that parents began to 'coddle' their children and churchmen and moralists realised the importance of encouraging the development of disciplined and rational manners amongst the young.⁸⁷

Ariès refers to adolescence in the central section of his book, devoted to 'Scholastic Life'. He argues that children, on reaching the age of seven, became fully integrated

⁸⁵ P. Ariès, *L'enfant et la vie familiale sous l'ancien régime* (Paris, 1960); P. Ariès, *Centuries of childhood*, trans. R. Baldick (London, 1962). Only a small number of texts about children in past societies were published before 1960. These include: A. Strickland, *Historical tales of illustrious British children* (London, 1883); A.M. Earle, *Child life in colonial days* (London, 1899); E. Godfrey, *English children in olden time* (London, 1907); R.D. Denman, *English apprenticeship and child labour* (London, 1912); G.F. Still, *The history of paediatrics: the progress of the study of diseases of children up to the end of the XVIIIth century* (Oxford, 1931); F. Sandford, *Children and Puritanism* (London, 1933); R. Bayden-Powell, *The English child in the eighteenth century* (London, 1939); S. Lynd, *English children* (London, 1942); M. Hopkirk, *Nobody wanted Sam: the story of an unclaimed child, 1530-1948* (London, 1949).

⁸⁶ Ariès, *Centuries of childhood*, p. 125.

⁸⁷ Ariès, *Centuries of childhood*, p. 127.

into the adult world. He believes they were absorbed directly into the 'great community of men', and shared in the work and play of their companions, young and old alike. As such, there was also no place for a transitional, or adolescent, phase.⁸⁸ He maintains that there was an absence of specific vocabulary for the period which we term adolescence, and notes that it was not until the eighteenth century that such a concept appeared.⁸⁹ Ariès's notions about the discovery of childhood and adolescence fit into a wider discourse about the transition of the family over time. He locates his narrative about the changing perceptions of children and young people within a context of chronological difference in familial relations and structures.⁹⁰ In the third and final part of his text, he charts a shift from the 'medieval' to the 'modern' family. He claims that by the eighteenth century, the 'modern family' had emerged, characterised by an increasingly private nuclear institution that held kin and society at a distance, displayed a new desire for conjugal isolation and placed greater emphasis on the centrality of parents and their children.⁹¹

Over the past fifty years, Ariès's views have proven both influential and controversial. The debate that has ensued amongst historians of the pre-modern era is based on the contention that adolescence is either a universal constant or else it is subject to change over time. Whilst some argue that the whole concept of adolescence is essentially modern and has no foundational basis before the late eighteenth or early nineteenth centuries, others claim that it can be identified in earlier periods. Accordingly, no agreement has been reached amongst historians about the existence of a youth culture, nor the prevalence of generational conflict as fundamental features of youth in pre-modern society. The themes that medieval and early modern historians address reflect the three main ideas that modern

⁸⁸ Ariès, *Centuries of childhood*, p. 316.

⁸⁹ Ariès, *Centuries of childhood*, pp. 23, 27, 273.

⁹⁰ This tradition dates back to the work of the nineteenth-century French sociologist Frédéric Le Play, who argued that a notable shift occurred between medieval and modern times whereby nuclear families became more prevalent than extended families. See F. Le Play, *Les ouvriers Européens: études sur les travaux, la vie domestique et la condition morale des populations ouvrières de l'Europe, précédées d'un exposé de la méthode d'observation* (Paris, 1855).

⁹¹ Ariès, *Centuries of childhood*, p. 397. See also I. Pinchbeck and M. Hewitt, *Children in English society, I: from Tudor times to the eighteenth century* (London, 1969). Pinchbeck and Hewitt uphold Ariès's arguments about the onset of a new family consciousness and an increase in sentimentalism between parents and children in the seventeenth century even though they make only one minor reference to his work in their text (p. 26).

social-scientific scholarship debates in relation to adolescence that I have discussed above.

The first main theme of interest to modern social-scientific scholars that has also been explored by some medievalists and early modernists is the existence of a concept of adolescence. English-speaking medievalists have tended to concentrate on dispelling the Ariès thesis about an absence of adolescence during their period. Their studies focus on identifying the presence of adolescence and its features and on examining the ideologies, beliefs and images that surrounded young people at this time. Donald Weinstein and Rudolph Bell (1982) use evidence from hagiography to offer the 'controversial suggestion' that medieval society recognised a period of adolescence as a period with a unique set of social and emotional characteristics.⁹² They claim that adolescence was not merely a transitional phase between childhood and adulthood, or a period of sexual limbo between puberty and marriage, but was understood to be a time of self-discovery, commitment, internal conflict and family contest.⁹³ Barbara Hanawalt also analyses the concept of adolescence in the medieval era. She challenges Ariès's belief that medieval children entered into the 'community of men' at the age of seven. She uses evidence from the 'Ages of Man', medical literature, apprenticeship and squirehood to argue that adolescence was a clearly recognised medieval social construct. Hanawalt believes that the boundaries and characteristics of this threshold period were defined in relation to binary oppositions to both childhood and adulthood. She also argues that the entrance to and exit from adolescence was controlled by adults because of their influence over the schooling, training, apprenticeship, inheritances and marriages of young people.⁹⁴

Medievalists have also shown a specific interest in the features of youthful femininity and masculinity. Felicity Riddy's analysis of the late medieval didactic poem *How the Good Wife Taught Her Daughter* highlights how its advice to girls about domesticity, marriage, governing households and disciplining children represents clerical ideologies about young women. She believes that the poem aimed to socialise females, reduce their self-assertiveness and independence and

⁹² D. Weinstein and R.M. Bell, *Saints and society, 1000-1700* (London 1982), p. 58.

⁹³ Weinstein and Bell, *Saints and society*, p. 67.

⁹⁴ B.A. Hanawalt, 'Historical descriptions and prescriptions for adolescence', *Journal of Family History*, 17:4 (1992), pp. 341-51.

make them conform to a particular model of femininity which emphasised the key themes of morality, respectability and chastity. Riddy tentatively suggests that if we read against the text of the *Good Wife* then there are hints that a youth subculture featuring spirited and daring girls – which clerics, city fathers, respectable wives and other elders were all desperately keen to suppress – was in existence. Her work has been influential for demonstrating how conduct literature should be read in a more critical way.⁹⁵ Kim Phillips also explores constructions of youthful femininity in the medieval era. Her gender-specific monograph examines the position of ‘maidens’ – unmarried women from well-off social groups who were past childhood but were not yet fully adult. She argues that during their maidenhood, young medieval women from middling and aristocratic backgrounds had distinct attributes connected to their bodily, mental and spiritual development. Phillips maintains that their sexuality was subject to widespread control and they were trained in the roles of adult women as they were socialised to become wives and mothers. She shows how the lives of these young women in late medieval society were strongly shaped by gender- and status-based expectations.⁹⁶

Rosalynn Voaden and Stephanie Volf analyse fourteenth-century male and female saints’ visions to highlight differences in the adolescent experience caused by gender. They note that male visionaries rarely mention their adolescence, but when they do it is described as a separate, misspent youth characterised by secular and materialistic pursuits, foolishness and immature spirituality. In contrast, they discuss how female visionaries present their youth as being inherently pious, characterised from infancy onwards by domestic scenes, childhood games, a predisposition to purity and the experience of their first visions. Voaden and Volf argue that since female saints – unlike their male counterparts – do not record any sense of dramatic separation between their youth and adulthood, the implication is that these women never left a state of childish innocence.⁹⁷ Ruth Karras focuses more specifically on the formation of masculinity in late medieval Western Europe. She reiterates the notion that adolescence was both recognised and conceptualised

⁹⁵ F. Riddy, ‘Mother knows best: reading social change in a courtesy text’, *Speculum*, 71:1 (1996), pp. 66-86.

⁹⁶ See Phillips, *Medieval maidens*.

⁹⁷ R. Voaden and S. Volf, ‘Visions of my youth: representations of the childhood of medieval visionaries’, *Gender & History*, 12:3 (2000), pp. 665-84 (pp. 672, 678-9).

in the medieval era. She argues that the period of youth for young males of a middling status – incorporating both a term of apprenticeship in craft workshops and participation in a distinct youth culture – helped gradually to integrate these individuals into adulthood and was a time of both preparation and tension.⁹⁸ Fiona Dunlop’s work on dramatic perceptions of youthful masculinity identifies continuity between the late medieval and Tudor periods. She claims that male youth remained a constant symbol of instability and transience in an otherwise changing world.⁹⁹

One aspect of the adolescent experience that has received significant scholarly attention from historians of the pre-modern era from the late 1970s onwards is the institution of service and its implications for the lives of young people. A debate has ensued over the role and function of service in society. Some scholars maintain that a period of lifecycle service represented a semi-autonomous transitional period which marked departure from the natal home and acted as a period of necessary preparation for adult life. In 1983, Richard Smith introduced the notion that later medieval England may have been characterised by the institution of lifecycle service.¹⁰⁰ Jeremy Goldberg was influenced by Smith’s work. Goldberg’s research into fourteenth- and fifteenth-century Yorkshire suggests that such service was largely associated with teenagers and young adults, who were invariably unmarried and living with their employers.¹⁰¹ Larry Poos was another scholar inspired by Smith. In Poos’s study of fourteenth- and fifteenth-century Essex, he also argues that service contained a distinct demographic of young, post-pubescent, unmarried and mobile males and females who typically left home in their early to mid-teens.¹⁰² Subsequent research undertaken by Goldberg on the basis of evidence from poll tax records, wills and cases from the York Consistory Court identifies service as being particularly prominent in the urban localities of fourteenth- and fifteenth-century Yorkshire. He maintains that in the decades after the Black Death and at other times of economic buoyancy, young people in towns

⁹⁸ R. Karras, *From boys to men: formations of masculinity in late medieval Europe* (Philadelphia, 2002), chs. 1, 4.

⁹⁹ F.S. Dunlop, *The late medieval interlude: the drama of youth and aristocratic masculinity* (Woodbridge, 2007).

¹⁰⁰ See R.M. Smith, ‘Hypothèses sur la nuptialité en Angleterre au XIIIe-XIVe siècles’, *Annales: ESC*, 38 (1983), pp. 107-36.

¹⁰¹ P.J.P. Goldberg, ‘Marriage, migration, servanthood and life-cycle in Yorkshire towns of the later Middle Ages: some York cause paper evidence’, *Continuity and Change*, 1:2 (1986), pp. 141-69.

¹⁰² L. Poos, *A rural society after the Black Death: Essex 1350-1525* (Cambridge, 1991), ch. 9.

were encouraged to leave their natal homes and work prior to marriage. Although such opportunities fluctuated in accordance with the economy, he argues that when it was viable, service enhanced the degrees of choice open to young women. He believes that service allowed them to become occupationally engaged, provided them with economic opportunities, gave them a degree of independence from their parents, enabled them to exercise more choice over who to marry and presented them with the means to postpone their marriages into their mid-twenties, or even to decide not to marry at all if they so wished.¹⁰³ The conclusion of Goldberg's separate study of male apprenticeship in the late medieval era is based on the premise that this type of service facilitated the shift to social adulthood for young men and prepared them to achieve their ultimate aims of owning a workshop, becoming a master and getting married.¹⁰⁴

Some early modernists have made comparable claims about the function of service. Anne Yarborough argues that the primary purpose of apprenticeship in sixteenth-century Bristol was as an intense period of socialisation that prepared adolescent males to assume their identity as urban adults.¹⁰⁵ Likewise, Marjorie McIntosh maintains that service bridged the gap in the lifecycle between childhood and adulthood and had important implications for life experiences as a result. In her study of Havering, Essex between 1560 and 1620, she describes service as a vital period of transition. She believes that during this time the young of both sexes from the ages of about ten to twenty escaped parental supervision and had independence, money, job prospects, friends, the chance to find a suitable spouse and to be introduced to sexual activity.¹⁰⁶ Whilst Michael Mitterauer warns that service was not universally experienced by the young in Europe in the early modern era, he believes that being in service allowed young people to cultivate an

¹⁰³ See P.J.P. Goldberg, *Women, work, and life cycle in a medieval economy: women in York and Yorkshire c.1300-1520* (Oxford, 1992). For an exploration of similar themes, see also P.J.P. Goldberg, 'What was a servant?', in A. Curry and E. Matthew (eds), *Concepts and patterns of service in the later Middle Ages* (Woodbridge, 2000), pp. 1-20 and M.K. McIntosh, *Working women in English society 1300-1620* (Cambridge, 2005).

¹⁰⁴ P.J.P. Goldberg, 'Masters and men in later medieval England', in D. Hadley (ed.), *Masculinity in medieval Europe* (New York, 1998), pp. 56-70. For an identification of similar features, see F.H. Stoertz, 'Sex and the medieval adolescent', in K. Eisenbichler (ed.), *The premodern teenager: youth in society 1150-1650* (Toronto, 2002), pp. 225-43.

¹⁰⁵ A. Yarborough, 'Apprentices as adolescents in sixteenth-century Bristol', *Journal of Social History*, 13:1 (1979), pp. 67-81.

¹⁰⁶ M.K. McIntosh, 'Servants and the household unit in an Elizabethan English community', *Journal of Family History*, 9:1 (1984), pp. 3-23.

autonomous personality and develop their self-identity.¹⁰⁷ Grant McCracken describes service as a rite of passage that trained and educated the young and helped them to develop both mature social skills and adult status.¹⁰⁸ Ilana Ben-Amos believes that the 'spatial mobility' of service helped the young to become independent because it allowed them to express a degree of freedom from parental authority and simultaneously encouraged them to assume adult responsibilities of their own accord. She describes service as a formative process of social maturation that taught young people how to act in an adult-like manner, encouraged them to make independent decisions about their futures and gave them time to make essential preparations for adulthood.¹⁰⁹ Eric Carlson maintains that the mobility of youth and the tendency for young people to complete their periods of service and training away from their natal villages provided them with 'enormous freedom', particularly in relation to courtship, as well as time to accumulate the resources and competencies required for adulthood.¹¹⁰

Other scholars have argued that service was devised to act as an effective control mechanism that led to the subordination of young males and young females. Those medievalists and early modernists who ascribe to this interpretation frame their research around the themes of control and dependency. Rather than seeing service as a progressive step in the lifecycle towards independence, they believe that service can be characterised by the negative connotations of adult domination, paternalistic power, strict rules and the suppression of youthful activities. Karras claims that medieval masters were placed firmly in control of the education, material welfare and social networks of the apprentices under their care, and were deemed responsible for gradually integrating these individuals into adulthood.¹¹¹ Since Hanawalt identifies a trend towards longer apprenticeships in London in the first half of the fifteenth century, it is implicit that the period of dependency was extended for many young men.¹¹² The idea of dependency is central to Stephanie

¹⁰⁷ M. Mitterauer, *A history of youth*, trans G. Dunphy (Oxford, 1992), pp. 19-34.

¹⁰⁸ G. McCracken, 'The exchange of children in Tudor England: an anthropological phenomenon in historical context', *Journal of Family History*, 8:4 (1983), pp. 303-13.

¹⁰⁹ I.K. Ben-Amos, 'Service and the coming of age of young men in seventeenth-century England', *Continuity and Change*, 3:1 (1988), pp. 41-64; I.K. Ben-Amos, *Adolescence and youth in early modern England* (London, 1994), p. 205.

¹¹⁰ E.J. Carlson, *Marriage and the English Reformation* (Oxford, 1994), pp. 107-10, 116, 140.

¹¹¹ Karras, *From boys to men*, ch. 4.

¹¹² See B.A. Hanawalt, *Growing up in medieval London: the experience of childhood in history* (Oxford, 1996), ch. 8 (p. 136).

Hovland's study of apprenticeship in the Goldsmiths' Company of London in the fifteenth century. She shows that an apprentice's chances of success were often completely reliant upon the status and rank which his master enjoyed within the Company.¹¹³ Caroline Barron uses evidence from apprenticeship indentures to support the idea that medieval apprenticeship extended adolescence for young men by subjecting them to quasi-parental control for the entire duration of their terms.¹¹⁴ Eric Spindler furthers this notion by arguing that apprenticeship in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries was a transitional and destabilising time. He maintains that it was characterised by urban mobility, distance from both the natal home and from parents, slow and painful adjustments, adult control and very limited independence.¹¹⁵ Service is also acknowledged to have had a restrictive effect on young women. Judith Bennett, for example, maintains that in the late medieval period, service acted as a check on the pre-marital sexual activity of young females because it kept them in a submissive role.¹¹⁶

Early modernists have explored similar ideas. Keith Thomas sees sixteenth-century apprenticeship as the mechanism through which older people prolonged the social and legal infancy of young men whilst controlling and restricting their activities.¹¹⁷ John Gillis takes a more moderate position. He claims that in the early modern era, service marked a liminal phase during which masters had a vested interest in keeping their charges from the full rites of adulthood. He describes service as an extraordinary long 'stage of becoming' that was characterised by inferior status. Gillis argues that young people were placed in a position of dependency on their employers in the households in which they lived, were rarely paid money wages and were made to wait to establish households and businesses of their own. His view accords with the notion that adolescence is a lengthy and gradual process of transition.¹¹⁸ Christopher Brooks highlights the restrictive and

¹¹³ S.R. Hovland, 'Apprentices in the records of the Goldsmiths' Company of London, 1444-1500', *Medieval Prosopography: History and Collective Biography*, 22 (2001), pp. 89-114.

¹¹⁴ C.M. Barron, 'The child in medieval London: the legal evidence', in J.T. Rosenthal (ed.), *Essays on medieval childhood: responses to recent debates* (Donnington, 2007), pp. 49-53.

¹¹⁵ E.D. Spindler, 'Youth and old age in late medieval London', *The London Journal*, 36:1 (2011), pp. 1-10, 18-19.

¹¹⁶ J.M. Bennett, 'Compulsory service in late medieval England', *Past and Present*, 209:1 (2010), pp. 28-47.

¹¹⁷ K.V. Thomas, 'Age and authority in early modern England', *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 62 (1976), pp. 214-20.

¹¹⁸ J.R. Gillis, *Youth and history: transition and change in European age relations, 1770 to present* (London, 1981), p. 8.

controlling nature of apprenticeship guilds. He explores various ordinances from the mid-sixteenth century that aimed to regulate the apparel and behaviour of apprentices and urged masters to exercise stricter discipline.¹¹⁹ Given the extent of the controls and restrictions imposed on the young by masters and guilds, Paul Griffiths labels the institution of service as 'a vital agency of social discipline'. He argues that service was routinely used by adults as an effective means to manage young people's time and keep their lives under control. Griffiths was the first to explore the societal position of 'masterless young people', described as those perceived to have stepped outside the boundaries of the normative socialising process. He links the experiences of this social group to the context of the heightened concern surrounding vagrancy in the sixteenth century and notes the increased frequency with which these individuals were punished in towns over this period.¹²⁰ Will Coster reiterates the idea that the system of service and apprenticeship was a mechanism for adults to deal with 'the problem of youth'. He claims that service reflected the mixture of subordination, abuse and paternalism that characterised early modern family life and wider society in general.¹²¹ The notion that service was restraining is also reflected by Amy Froide's argument that it was a means through which single women were controlled in the early modern era.¹²² The potentially damaging effects of life with a repressive master or mistress are apparent from Peter Rushton's study of domestic violence in service and Terence Murphy's examination of suicides amongst servants and apprentices in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.¹²³

¹¹⁹ C. Brooks, 'Apprenticeship, social mobility and the middling sort, 1550-1800', in J. Barry and C. Brooks (eds), *The middling sort of people: culture, society and politics in England, 1550-1800* (Basingstoke, 1994), pp. 52-83.

¹²⁰ P. Griffiths, *Youth and authority: formative experiences in England, 1560-1640* (Oxford, 1996), ch. 2 (p. 76). James Sharpe also considers connections between the themes of age and authority by examining the particular challenges posed to social order by demonically-possessed adolescents in the early modern period. See J.A. Sharpe, 'Disruption in the well-ordered household: age, authority and possessed young people', in P. Griffiths, A. Fox and S. Hindle (eds), *The experience of authority in early modern England* (Basingstoke, 1996), pp. 187-212. See also P. Griffiths, 'Tudor troubles: problems of youth in Elizabethan England', in S. Doran and N.L. Jones (eds), *The Elizabethan world* (Abingdon, 2011), pp. 316-34.

¹²¹ W. Coster, *Family and kinship in England 1400-1750* (Harlow, 2001), pp. 54-6.

¹²² A.M. Froide, 'Marital status as a category of difference: singlewomen and widows in early modern England', in J.M. Bennett and A.M. Froide (eds), *Singlewomen in the European past, 1250-1800* (Philadelphia, 1999), pp. 248-50.

¹²³ P. Rushton, 'The matter in variance: adolescents and domestic conflict in the pre-industrial economy of northeast England, 1600-1800', *Journal of Social History*, 25:1 (1991), pp. 89-107; T.R. Murphy, 'Woful childe of parents rage': suicide of children and adolescents in early modern England, 1507-1710', *Sixteenth Century Journal*, 17:3 (1986), pp. 259-70 (pp. 267-8).

Steve Rappaport's study of sixteenth-century London emphasises the significance of a young man completing his apprenticeship. He argues that apprentices were kept firmly under control and were relegated to child-like status when they lived and worked for their master and contributed to his household economy. However, he believes that reaching the milestone of completion gave them economic independence that in turn allowed them to enjoy a fundamentally different adult status within society.¹²⁴ Patrick Wallis reinforces the idea that early modern apprenticeship was a long and slow period of restriction, regulation, training and instruction.¹²⁵ Wallis, Cliff Webb and Chris Minns emphasise the dislocating effects of service by arguing that the process of leaving home and commencing independent employment marked an important transition, or 'profound break', which brought with it significant changes in a young man's geographical, legal, social and economic position.¹²⁶

Another prominent theme connected to the concept of adolescence in the social sciences that some historians have explored is its conclusion in the achievement of adulthood. Both medievalists and early modernists have focused on rites of passage and coming of age. In a study of growing up in late medieval London, Hanawalt claims that marriage marked the step over the threshold from adolescence into the adult world for young men from families of standing. She believes that the transition to adult status for these 'fortunate' individuals was characterised by the attainment of legal rights, inheritance rights and guild membership, and ultimately the ability to marry, establish an independent household and enter into one's own business.¹²⁷ Karras makes a comparable argument in relation to young men from similar backgrounds in Western Europe. She maintains that marriage, with its ultimate aim of the fathering of legitimate children, marked the end of their transition from youth into adulthood. Karras also argues that the maturity of full manhood resulted in the assumption of a particular

¹²⁴ S. Rappaport, *Worlds within worlds: structures of life in sixteenth-century London* (Cambridge, 2002), pp. 322-9.

¹²⁵ P. Wallis, 'Apprenticeship and training in pre-modern England', *Journal of Economic History*, 68:3 (2008), pp. 832-61 (p. 846).

¹²⁶ P. Wallis, C. Webb and C. Minns, 'Leaving home and entering service: the age of apprenticeship in early modern London', *Continuity and Change*, 15:3 (2010), pp. 377-404 (pp. 377-8).

¹²⁷ Hanawalt, *Growing up in medieval London*, pp. 206-16.

position in society that was determined by the social milieu into which the male had been born.¹²⁸

Schultz's work on the concept of adolescence in Middle High German literature emphasises an important distinction based on sexual experience. He suggests that young people of aristocratic birth became adult following gendered rites of passage such as marriage and sexual relations (for girls) and knighting and inheritance (for boys).¹²⁹ Stanley Chojnacki's study of Venetian patrician adolescence also examines gender variations. He argues that for males, marriage – which typically occurred in their twenties or thirties – completed the process of adulthood. It marked a final rite of passage following the attainment of their majority, the completion of their apprenticeship and the achievement of their political adulthood. However, Chojnacki highlights an important difference between the male and female experience. He maintains that the prevalence of a Mediterranean marriage pattern – viz. late marriage ages for men and early marriage ages for women – meant that, in contrast to their male counterparts, many young women were denied a full pre-nuptial adolescence. Since most high status Venetian girls married in their teens, Chojnacki warns that marriage did not represent the final stage of the shift from childhood to adulthood for all young people. Instead, it was the onset of motherhood that marked the social adulthood of elite Venetian women.¹³⁰

Other studies, such as those by Phillips and Goldberg, also draw attention to polarity between the experiences of the sexes in the medieval era. Phillips maintains that whilst medieval male youth was predominantly marked by a period of transition, immaturity and incomplete masculinity, maidenhood had a less formalised identity as a period of passage owing to a lack of female apprenticeships, schooling and university attendance. Rather, she describes the maidenhood experienced by young women of status in England as a stage characterised primarily by a tension between the asexuality and innocence of childhood and the sexual and psychological maturity of adult womanhood.¹³¹

¹²⁸ Karras, *From boys to men*, ch. 5.

¹²⁹ Schultz, 'Medieval adolescence', pp. 519-39.

¹³⁰ S. Chojnacki, 'Measuring adulthood: adolescence and gender in Renaissance Venice', *Journal of Family History*, 17:4 (1992) pp. 371-95 (p. 384).

¹³¹ Phillips, *Medieval maidens*, pp. 6-7.

Goldberg also identifies gender variations. He argues that for most men with access to land, training or capital, marriage, householding and settlement constituted their coming of age and social adulthood. Those males who neither married nor became householders occupied a liminal position because the attainment of household status was such a central issue in medieval society and represented a key source of social stability.¹³² Goldberg believes that whilst women also became settled upon marriage, they did so in the context of extending their earlier status of dependence on their father or master by becoming legally dependent on their husband and subject to his governance.¹³³ He argues that marriage represented social adulthood for males by giving them authority as heads of households, but it held a different significance for women because it enabled them to legitimately reproduce and rear children and to become mothers with the responsibility of socialising the next generation. Accordingly, Goldberg maintains that the transitional process to adulthood varied considerably according to both gender and social rank.¹³⁴

Early modernists have addressed similar issues. In their respective studies, Mitterauer and Gillis both view marriage as the ultimate initiation into adulthood for young males in early modern Europe.¹³⁵ Gillis maintains that entry and exit from the semi-independent period of youth was marked by confirmation at one end and marriage at the other. He also believes that youth was characterised by a subordinate position until marriage and inheritance were achieved.¹³⁶ Ben-Amos reiterates the idea that marriage was the single most important event marking the entry into adult life for most young men in the early modern era. She claims that the transition was a lengthy process, composed of many steps. These include the ability to bargain and negotiate with their masters, achieve social advancement, set up in a craft or business and assume responsibility for others.¹³⁷ Ben-Amos maintains that full integration to adult status came only with marriage and the

¹³² P.J.P. Goldberg, 'Migration, youth and gender in later medieval England', in P.J.P. Goldberg and F. Riddy (eds), *Youth in the Middle Ages* (Woodbridge, 2004), pp. 98-9.

¹³³ Goldberg, 'Migration, youth and gender', pp. 95-6.

¹³⁴ Goldberg, 'Migration, youth and gender', p. 99; P.J.P. Goldberg, 'Life and death: the ages of man', in R. Horrox and M. Ormrod (eds), *A social history of England, 1200-1500* (Cambridge, 2006), pp. 421-2.

¹³⁵ Mitterauer, *A history of youth*, ch. 1; Gillis, *Youth and history*, p. 2.

¹³⁶ Gillis, *Youth and history*, p. 4.

¹³⁷ See Ben-Amos, *Adolescence and youth*, ch. 9.

setting up of a new, independent dwelling group.¹³⁸ The centrality of marriage as a signifier of adulthood is affirmed by Carlson, who argues that there was a cultural expectation in the sixteenth century that young people should possess the necessary economic resources to maintain a family before they married.¹³⁹ Rappaport also argues that marriage and the establishment of a household formed the basis of the contemporary conception of male adulthood in the sixteenth century. In his opinion, the main rite of passage was the ability to establish a household – essentially an independent centre of production.¹⁴⁰

Griffiths explores the problems that faced some young men who were incapable of coming of age in Elizabethan England. He charts the negative effects of a demographic rise and economic recession that resulted in high levels of unemployment. He argues that in turn, this prevented many young men from achieving the ultimate aims of their socialisation, namely a job, a wife and an independent household. It also led to an increase in the number of unmarried journeymen in society. Griffiths describes journeymen as waged workers who found themselves with an intermediate status, or at a 'halfway house', wedged between youth and adulthood. He maintains that many of these men experienced incomplete adulthoods in the late sixteenth century because they ended up in a 'life-course limbo', as adults in age alone, unable to assume the roles ascribed to them by patriarchal codes.¹⁴¹

The second main issue that has been a concern for social-scientific researchers interested in adolescence and is also a topic addressed in some pre-modern scholarship on youth is the existence of a distinctive youth culture. Natalie Zemon Davis began this trend in 1975 when she investigated the function of 'abbeys of misrule' and assessed levels of deviancy in male youth subcultures in early modern France. It is apparent that her research was influenced by contemporary sociological interests. Davis claims that 'youth abbeys' functioned to provide a platform for young men to serve the wider, implicitly adult, interests of their village communities. She charts chronological change and identifies that a shift occurred between the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries whereby these youth

¹³⁸ Ben-Amos, 'Service and the coming of age of young men', pp. 59-60.

¹³⁹ Carlson, *Marriage and the English Reformation*, pp. 106, 116.

¹⁴⁰ Rappaport, *Worlds within worlds*, pp. 327-9.

¹⁴¹ Griffiths, 'Tudor troubles', pp. 318-19, 329.

groups became increasingly adult-dominated. Davis argues that by the sixteenth century, any distinctive cultural role that young men may have enjoyed during the medieval era had been largely extinguished.¹⁴² Historians of the pre-modern era have never uncovered evidence to suggest that youthful 'abbeys of misrule' were a feature of English society.¹⁴³ Consequently, they have concentrated on examining the 'culture' surrounding servants and apprentices instead.

Some medievalists and early modernists argue that there was no distinctive youth culture in England during their period. Hanawalt maintains that there was no 'fully-fledged youth subculture' in later medieval London. Although she observes a shift in the types of games and activities in which children and older adolescents participated in preparation for adult sports and notes that adolescents had the most interest in appearance, dress and sex, she argues that there was 'no youth culture as opposed to a broader societal culture' and 'no juvenile delinquency as opposed to adult criminal behaviour'.¹⁴⁴ In a study of apprenticeship in sixteenth-century Bristol, Yarborough maintains that apprentices were as frequently in the company of adults as their peers so there was no opportunity for a distinct youth culture to develop.¹⁴⁵ Ben-Amos bases her research into early modern youth on a very narrow interpretation of 'youth subculture'. She defines it to mean that youngsters had attitudes, values and lifestyles so different from adults that they assumed a distinctive identity and possessed an entirely separate culture. Since Ben-Amos identifies a lack of segregation between youth and age in a variety of contexts, she argues that young men in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century England seldom monopolised cultural activities. Whilst she uncovers some evidence of friendship and peer interaction that offered companionship, practical aid and emotional support, she does not equate this with the existence of a cohesive youth subculture.¹⁴⁶ Coster uses evidence from the ritual calendar and

¹⁴² N.Z. Davis, *Society and culture in early modern France* (London, 1975), pp. 107, 111. Roger Muchembled reaches comparable conclusions. See also R. Muchembled, *Popular culture and elite culture in France 1400-1750*, trans L. Cochrane (London, 1985), pp. 95-6, 165, 170.

¹⁴³ See D. Underdown, *Revel, riot, and rebellion* (Oxford, 1985); M. Ingram, 'Ridings, rough music and mocking rhymes in early modern England', in B. Reay (ed.), *Popular culture in seventeenth-century England* (London, 1985), pp. 166-97.

¹⁴⁴ Hanawalt, *Growing up in medieval London*, pp. 11-12, 127.

¹⁴⁵ Yarborough, 'Apprentices as adolescents', pp. 67-81 (p. 70).

¹⁴⁶ Ben-Amos, *Adolescence and youth*, ch. 8 (p. 205).

cheap literature to concur that there was no separate culture to facilitate a sense of shared identity amongst young people in early modern England.¹⁴⁷

Other historians disagree and have uncovered evidence of youth cultures in the pre-modern period. Karras identifies a distinctive youth culture across later medieval Europe that involved gangs of male apprentices drinking, gambling and using prostitutes.¹⁴⁸ Bernard Capp claims that the London apprentices formed a subculture within early modern English society.¹⁴⁹ Studies that promote the idea of a notable shift between the late medieval and early modern eras are based around the notion that the Reformation had a significant effect on youthful experiences. Susan Brigden argues that in the Reformation era there was a revolution in youth culture whereby young men became more likely to attend sermons together, rally and riot.¹⁵⁰ Other early modernists believe that the Reformation had a destructive effect on youth culture. Lawrence Stone maintains that the dissolution of the priesthood led to an intensification of patriarchal authority, greater emphasis on the duties of parents and masters, stricter levels of youthful subordination and more severe discipline.¹⁵¹ Ronald Hutton argues that whilst late medieval and early modern English culture had a particular festive role for youth which was independent of adult supervision and enjoyed community co-operation, this role largely ceased following the Reformation.¹⁵² Similarly, Alexandra Walsham contests that the 'reformation of manners' during the second generation of Protestantism repressed a 'vigorous adolescent subculture' that 'fiercely resented the interference of parents and other busy controllers in its activities' and gradually became a mechanism for the enforcement of patriarchal authority in society.¹⁵³

¹⁴⁷ Coster, *Family and kinship*, p. 53.

¹⁴⁸ Karras, *From boys to men*, ch. 4.

¹⁴⁹ B. Capp, 'English youth groups and the Pinder of Wakefield', *Past and Present*, 76:1 (1977), pp. 127-33. In a study of apprentices in seventeenth-century London, Steven Smith argues that a sense of fraternity was facilitated between young men through informal gatherings and attendance at Sunday sermons. See also S.R. Smith, 'The London apprentices as seventeenth-century adolescents', *Past and Present*, 61:1 (1973), pp. 149-61.

¹⁵⁰ S. Brigden, 'Youth and the English Reformation', *Past and Present*, 95:1 (1982), pp. 37-67.

¹⁵¹ See L. Stone, *The family, sex and marriage in England 1500-1800* (London, 1977), pp. 119-26. See also A. Fletcher, 'Men's dilemma: the future of patriarchy in England, 1560-1660', in *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 4 (1994), pp. 61-81; S.C. Karant-Nunn, 'Reformation society, women and the family', in A. Pettegree (ed.), *The Reformation world* (London, 2000), pp. 443-59.

¹⁵² R. Hutton, *Stations of the sun: a history of the ritual year in Britain* (Oxford, 1996), pp. 414-15.

¹⁵³ A. Walsham, 'The reformation of the generations: youth, age and religious change in England, c.1500-1700', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 21 (2011), pp. 93-121 (p. 110).

Griffiths's work on young people in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century England is based on a broad interpretation of youth culture. As such, he directly challenges the narrow definition of subculture forwarded by Ben-Amos. Griffiths argues that in early modern society, youth was a common point of reference with shared cultural and social experiences. He suggests that even if games and activities were shared between young and old, there was still the potential for a counter-culture to develop because these activities may have assumed different meanings for the different groups involved.¹⁵⁴ Probing the rigid definition of a subculture in such a way is an interesting and innovative contribution to the historical scholarship on youth and the wider study of youth culture. More recently, Griffiths analysed court presentments containing references to alehouses, drinking, dancing, plays, group activities and active nightlives to argue that a distinctive apprentice culture existed in Elizabethan England. He believes that this culture was responsible for shaping youthful identities across the land.¹⁵⁵

The issue of generational conflict as a key feature of adolescence is the third main issue that social-scientific research has explored and that some medievalists and early modernists have also examined. No consensus has been reached amongst these historians. On one side of the debate, scholarship across both periods tends to polarise youth and age, questioning the amount of autonomy which the young of both sexes were afforded by their parents, and by society more generally, and examining how far this led to conflict between the generations. Antonia Gransden introduced the notion of polarity between youth and age in the medieval period. She cites evidence of generational tension between boys and men within monasteries to represent the disputes that she believes commonly arose between younger and older members of society.¹⁵⁶ Weinstein and Bell use evidence from hagiographical narratives to characterise medieval adolescence with a propensity for generational conflict, a battle of wills and power struggles with parents.¹⁵⁷ Hanawalt maintains that the ability of adults to control the wages and living arrangements of young people and to deny them a youth culture were sources of

¹⁵⁴ See Griffiths, *Youth and authority*, ch. 3 (pp. 115-17).

¹⁵⁵ Griffiths, 'Tudor troubles', pp. 316-34 (p. 325).

¹⁵⁶ A. Gransden, 'Childhood and youth in medieval England', *Nottingham Mediaeval Studies*, 16 (1972), pp. 3-19.

¹⁵⁷ Weinstein and Bell, *Saints and society*, p. 52.

generational tension in the medieval era.¹⁵⁸ More recently, Sari Katajalla-Peltomaa and Ville Vuoltanto have employed an analytical framework that involves socialisation theory – an approach that assesses levels of passivity and agency from birth to death – to explore the themes of culture and community. Their research is informed by the trend that emerged within psychology anthropology in the 1990s which places emphasis on the significance of the ‘adolescent voice’ and on the importance of exploring the links between culture and agency. In their comparative study of late Antiquity and the late medieval West, they argue that generational conflict whilst growing up was inevitable because young people acted as active agents in their own socialising process to ‘push the boundaries of permissible behaviour’.¹⁵⁹

Early modernists have also investigated the polarisation of youth and age. This polarisation is apparent in Thomas’s claim that sixteenth-century English society was gerontocratic and promoted age division. Thomas was a pioneer of English social history and his work, published in the mid-1970s, was influenced by the contemporaneous interest of British sociologists in the delinquency of class-based youth subcultures. He argues that generational conflict was a feature of youthful life in early modern England because there was a clear association between adolescence and rebelliousness. He maintains that the views and activities of younger and older people were antagonistic and that there was a distinct separation between them. Thomas also claims that there was over-arching pressure from the social elite to subordinate the young throughout the Tudor and Stuart periods.¹⁶⁰ Gillis agrees that generational tension was a feature of the adolescent experience in the sixteenth century. He argues that young and old operated at variance with each other as young men often resisted their elders’ attempts to impose patriarchal authority, tighten social discipline and prevent them from accessing the full rites of adult life. He maintains that generational tensions heightened over the course of the century as social discipline became more intense in the context of population expansion and increased youthful migration.¹⁶¹ John Springhall believes that the very concept of lifecycle service

¹⁵⁸ Hanawalt, ‘Historical descriptions and prescriptions for adolescence’, pp. 344-5.

¹⁵⁹ S. Katajalla-Peltomaa and V. Vuoltanto, ‘Children and agency: religion as socialisation in late Antiquity and the late medieval West’, *Childhood in the Past*, 4:1 (2011), p. 93.

¹⁶⁰ Thomas, ‘Age and authority in early modern England’, pp. 205-33.

¹⁶¹ Gillis, *Youth and history*, pp. 14-25.

resulted from the friction that arose between adolescents and their parents and that it was devised as a means of keeping them apart.¹⁶² That generational conflict was also a feature of lifecycle service in early modern England is highlighted by Rushton's study of domestic violence between masters and their servants and apprentices.¹⁶³

Some early modern studies not only assess the extent to which adults controlled the lives of the young but also examine how far the Reformation led to an increase in repressive and moralistic attitudes towards them and in turn how this affected levels of generational conflict. Bridgen's analysis of the effect of the Reformation on young men in sixteenth-century England reinforces the idea that male youth and rebelliousness were synonymous. She claims that the main appeal of Protestantism for young men was that it was a revolutionary movement which provided them with new opportunities and excuses for collective discord and disobedience. She believes that this led to the young becoming the subject of great social concern amongst older people.¹⁶⁴ A similar line of argument is also reflected in the respective studies of Philippa Tudor and Walsham, who maintain that the onset of the Reformation intensified patriarchal control over young people both within households and society more generally.¹⁶⁵

On the other side of the debate, not all medievalists and early modernists agree that generational conflict is an inevitable feature of adolescence. Schultz criticises his fellow medievalists for trying to impose on the past popular conceptions about modern adolescence. On the basis of his claim that contemporary developmental psychologists do not all regard conflict between parents and children as a universal characteristic of this stage in the lifecycle, he dismisses the value of historians equating generational conflict with the concept of adolescence. He uncovers no evidence of generational conflict in his study of Middle High German texts. Schultz's advice is that if historians want to learn how life was understood in times past, they must try to suspend the categories through which life is

¹⁶² J. Springhall, *Coming of age: adolescence in Britain 1860-1960* (Dublin, 1986), p. 21.

¹⁶³ Rushton, 'The matter in variance: adolescents and domestic conflict', pp. 89-107.

¹⁶⁴ Bridgen, 'Youth and the English Reformation', pp. 47-9, 67.

¹⁶⁵ P. Tudor, 'Religious instruction for children and adolescents in the early English Reformation', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 35:3 (1984), pp. 391-413; Walsham, 'The reformation of the generations', pp. 93-121.

understood in the present.¹⁶⁶ Yarborough makes comparable claims about adolescence in early modern England. She does not reveal any overt conflicts between young men and those in authority and concludes that sixteenth-century adolescence varied greatly from modern conceptions of this stage of life.¹⁶⁷

Research Agenda

This thesis derives its agenda from modern social-scientific thoughts about adolescence. As I have discussed above, three recurring themes have been explored but no consensus has been reached within the social sciences about the exact experiences that adolescence entails. Some scholars interpret adolescence as a period of life characterised by rebelliousness, anti-authority attitudes and antisocial behaviour that facilitates the development of a youth culture which polarises parents and peers and promotes conflict between younger and older people. Others either dismiss these claims outright – arguing that the notion of divergence between the generations is a myth and that no such conflict prevails – or else take the more balanced view that whilst some aspects of adolescence mirror adult life, others are clearly distinguishable. These ideas are rooted in the context of modern Western society and claim a certain universality that has not allowed for historicisation. Sociologists and developmental psychologists in particular imply that the cultural category of adolescence is inherently modern, and as such have ignored the possibility that similar categories existed in a variety of other cultures, including those of past societies.¹⁶⁸

The aim of this thesis is to ascertain how far the three main claims about adolescence offered by modern social-scientific scholarship can be usefully applied to gain a better understanding of fifteenth- and sixteenth-century England. The principal focus of this study is on young people in the context of larger urban towns and cities. It also considers the experiences of some young aristocratic men and women from various localities. The lives of these individuals are well documented and provide a valuable comparative dimension that allows for

¹⁶⁶ Schultz, 'Medieval adolescence', pp. 519-39 (p. 521).

¹⁶⁷ Yarborough, 'Apprentices as adolescents', pp. 67-81 (p. 70).

¹⁶⁸ Bucholtz, 'Youth and cultural practice', p. 528; A. Schlegel, 'Introduction: special issue on adolescence', *Ethos*, 23:1 (1995), pp. 3-14.

similarities and differences in youthful experiences to be identified in accordance with variations in social rank.

Firstly, I assess the extent to which there was an understanding of a concept of adolescence as a lengthy and gradual transitional process from a state of dependence (childhood) to a state of relative independence and autonomy (adulthood) in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. My analysis is organised to distinguish between the experiences of living at home with natal families and living away from home. I discuss some of the common perceptions, ideologies and assumptions that surrounded young people. I determine how much agency young males and females who lived at home with their natal families had by exploring the role and influence that parents (or guardians) exercised over various aspects of their lives. I then compare how levels of agency were altered when young people moved away from home. I want to find out if the commencement of employment in service furthered the socialisation process by affording young people more independence than those who continued to reside with their parents. I consider the role service played in helping young people to prepare for their adult lives and explore the relationship which young males and young females had both with their parents and with those acting *in loco parentis* at this time. I am also interested in examining what marked the attainment of adult status in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries and how far this was subject to variation according to gender, age and social rank.

Secondly, I investigate the extent to which young males and females in fifteenth- and sixteenth-century England had their own distinctive youth culture, distinguishable and different from mainstream adult culture. I am keen to determine how far the concept of a youth culture and its characteristics are, on the one hand, common to this phase of the lifecycle and, on the other hand, culturally and chronologically contingent. In order to do so, I consider how far various recreations promoted a clear separation between younger and older people, how much agency and independence they afforded the young and the extent to which certain activities may have facilitated the development of a cohesive youthful identity.

Thirdly, I question how far generational conflict characterised the relationship between young people and adults and was reflective of a 'generation gap'. I explore the extent to which youthful activities were perceived to be antagonistic and deviant by moralists and magistrates. I also consider an associated issue addressed by sociologists but hitherto largely neglected in the historiography of pre-modern youth – the role of peer influence and interaction in adolescence. I examine how far a prevalence of peer activity amongst the young provoked generational tensions with older people across both the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

In addressing these three issues, I am seeking to develop further some current ideas and debates from historical scholarship and to fill some of the lacunae therein. It is clear that variations in youthful experience caused by gender differences have not been fully explored by either sociologists or historians. An article published by Joan Scott almost thirty years ago demonstrates the importance of gender as a category of historical analysis.¹⁶⁹ Historical studies that revolve around childhood and youth tend to deal with the experiences of either males *or* females rather than to consider the implications of gender on the differences between them. I devote more equal attention to the young of both sexes than studies hitherto by comparing and contrasting their experiences side-by-side and by considering how the social and cultural constructions of masculinity and femininity led to variations in their lives.¹⁷⁰ Doing so allows me to get a clearer perspective on the complexities and discrepancies involved in the transformative adolescent phase.

By exploring both the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, I also challenge the artificial boundary between the late medieval and early modern eras which has been so often imposed on the past. To date, little research has examined pre-adulthood across both the late medieval and early modern periods. Although medievalists and early modernists focus on broadly similar themes, very few publications span the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. This reinforces the notion of a great chasm between medieval and early modern life. Twenty-three years ago, Judith Bennett published an article that is highly critical of the separation between

¹⁶⁹ J.W. Scott, 'Gender: a useful category of historical analysis', *The American Historical Review*, 91:5 (1986), pp. 1053-75.

¹⁷⁰ Ben-Amos, *Adolescence and youth*, p. 84.

the medieval and early modern worlds in the field of women's history. Bennett advocates that the idea of a great divide should be confronted by scholars in order to question rather than buttress the master-narrative of dramatic change between these two eras.¹⁷¹ It is worth noting, however, that this gulf still exists within the historiography on childhood and youth. As Merridee Bailey has recently demonstrated, it is important to contest the out-dated and restrictive paradigm which identifies substantial shifts between late medieval and early modern life and to make more of a concerted effort to look at the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries together.¹⁷² Throughout my analysis, I think about the extent of change and continuity over time. I consider the impact of various socio-economic factors – including economic, demographic, religious and political changes across the two centuries – on the experiences of the young of both sexes within households of different social ranks.

Sources and Methodology

The main purpose of this thesis is to question how far the concept of adolescence was part of pre-modern culture. I have deliberately chosen a chronological frame that spans the Reformation era and what is conventionally understood as the end of the Middle Ages and the early part of the early modern period. Consequently, my concern has been to find a range of sources spanning the years circa 1400 to circa 1600. My focus throughout is on larger urban communities. Within this context, I am particularly interested in gender and how far the experiences of young men and young women differed. I have chosen sources that reflect both normative and magisterial perspectives, viz. conduct literature, parish injunctions, apprenticeship indentures, civic ordinances, records of city council meetings and statutes of the realm. My aim is to set these primarily normative and magisterial sources against sources that allow me to get somewhat closer to the lived lives of young people, viz. jurors' verdicts from coroners' inquests, consistory court depositions, borough court records, wills and letters.

¹⁷¹ See J.M. Bennett, 'Medieval women, modern women: across the great divide', in D. Aers (ed.), *Culture and history, 1350-1600: essays on English communities, identities and writing* (New York, 1992), pp. 147-75 (pp. 150, 165).

¹⁷² See M.L. Bailey, *Socialising the child in late medieval England, c.1400-1600* (Woodbridge, 2012), pp. 1-2. Although Bailey's work spans both the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, her focus is on courtesy literature rather than the lived experiences of children and young people per se.

In order to garner a wide range of differing primary sources I have drawn upon both selective unpublished archival material, for example the records of the York Consistory Court – otherwise referred to as the York Cause Papers – and the records of civic government contained in the *York House Books*. I have also drawn upon a range of published editions and translations, such as the borough court records found in Stevenson's *Nottingham Borough Records* or McSheffrey's online edition of the London Consistory Court deposition books from the late fifteenth century.¹⁷³ I have had access to a large volume of source material. Although some manuscript and published sources may lend themselves to quantitative analysis, I have chosen not to treat them in this way since the questions that I want to ask are essentially qualitative. Therefore, instead of attempting a quantitative analysis of vast bodies of material for each genre of source, I have preferred to take a qualitative approach by employing a close reading technique with select cases. I have adhered to this methodological strategy throughout.

In working through the source material, my choice of select cases has been informed by my decision to study in depth a specific case that I have found to be of particular interest for an issue pertinent to my thesis rather than a concern to highlight examples that are necessarily reflective of wider patterns and trends. As such, I have chosen case studies that I believe can best illuminate through close reading the ways in which ideas about adolescence may have operated. Where it has been possible to do so, I have deliberately selected material from across the period circa 1400 to circa 1600. I have achieved an impression of the more general material from my reading of other cases around those that I have decided to focus on. In taking this approach I have been mindful of the work of Hanawalt – a medievalist working in a similar field, as I have discussed above – who employs the technique of closely analysing specific examples to tease out ideas throughout her work on the experiences of childhood and youth in medieval London.¹⁷⁴

I have been conscious to pick out a large number of case studies from a wide range of different kinds of source material across the two centuries and I have been

¹⁷³ See W.H. Stevenson (ed.), *Records of the borough of Nottingham, 1-4, 1155-1625* (Nottingham, 1882-89); Consistory Database.

¹⁷⁴ See Hanawalt, *Growing up in medieval London*.

aided in this respect by the variety of extant documentation from larger towns. Although I will mention the problems inherent in each genre of source in more detail below and discuss these in fuller depth within the main body of the thesis, it is essential to acknowledge that the lower echelons of urban society are not as well represented as the upper echelons and males are generally much better represented than females. Drawing evidence from a variety of sources is vital because each different type of source acts as a different window that gives a particular perspective on young people. Adopting this strategy allows me to get more of a flavour of the broader picture and therefore to be more confident about the representativeness of my findings. By using this methodology, I hope to achieve the most nuanced understanding of the process of becoming adult in fifteenth- and sixteenth-century England.

As I have explained above, the purpose of this thesis is to identify the perceptions, ideologies and assumptions that related to young men and women to consider how far a concept of adolescence existed and to explore how far such ideas actually impinged upon lived lives in social practice. In order to do so, I begin by looking at conduct literature that was in circulation during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. This usually has an imagined audience of young men or women of high- or middle-rank social status. Texts explicitly aimed towards males include *How the Wise Man Taught His Son*, *Ratis Raving*, *Peter Idley's Instructions to His Son*, and *The Mirror of the Periods of Man's Life*.¹⁷⁵ Texts expressly targeting females are those like *How the Good Wife Taught Her Daughter* and *The Thewis off Gud Women*.¹⁷⁶

¹⁷⁵ See 'How the Wise Man Taught His Son', in G. Shuffelton (ed.), *Codex Ashmole 61: a compilation of popular Middle English verse* (Kalamazoo, 2008) and 'How the Wise Man Taught His Son', in F.J. Furnivall (ed.), *The Babees' Book, Aristotle's ABC, Urbanitatis, Stans Puer ad Mensam, The Lvtill Childrenes Lvtill Boke, The Bokes of Nurture of Hugh Rhodes and John Russell, Wynkyn de Worde's Boke of Keruyng, The Booke of Demeanor, The Boke of Curtasye, Seager's Schoole of Vertue, &c. &c. with some French and Latin poems on like subjects, and some forewords on education in early England*, EETS, OS, 32 (1868), pp. 48-52. See also J.R. Lumby (ed.), *Ratis Raving and other moral and religious pieces in prose and verse*, EETS, 43 (1870); C. D'Evelyn, (ed.), *Peter Idley's instructions to his son* (London, 1935); and 'The Mirror of the Periods of Man's Life', in F.J. Furnivall (ed.), *Hymns to the Virgin and Christ, the Parliament of Devils and other religious poems* (London, 1867), pp. 60-1.

¹⁷⁶ See 'How the Good Wife Taught Her Daughter', in G. Shuffelton (ed.), *Codex Ashmole 61: a compilation of popular Middle English verse* (Kalamazoo, 2008); 'How the Good Wiff Taught Hir Dougtir', in F.J. Furnivall (ed.), *The Babees' Book, Aristotle's ABC, Urbanitatis, Stans Puer ad Mensam, The Lvtill Childrenes Lvtill Boke, The Bokes of Nurture of Hugh Rhodes and John Russell, Wynkyn de Worde's Boke of Keruyng, The Booke of Demeanor, The Boke of Curtasye, Seager's Schoole of Vertue, &c. &c. with some French and Latin poems on like subjects, and some forewords on education in early England*, EETS, OS, 32 (1868), pp. 36-47. See also Lumby (ed.), *Ratis Raving*, pp. 103-110.

Accordingly, I recognise the value of conduct literature for demonstrating the types of gendered ideologies that its authors prescribed for the young in their attempts to create ideals of behaviour within unstable social contexts. Felicity Riddy has suggested that one of the instructional texts for young women, *How the Good Wife Taught Her Daughter*, was written by a male cleric in the mid-fourteenth century. Interestingly, though, the clerical perspective is hidden behind the ostensibly parental perspective of the eponymous Good Wife. The rhetorical strategy of adopting a maternal persona allows the author to claim a sense of parental authority by expounding words of wisdom through the appearance of a mother giving advice to her daughter.¹⁷⁷ We know that this text achieved some popularity because it survives in various forms in five manuscripts over a century and a half.¹⁷⁸ It may also have circulated orally since the extant editions are all in verse form. The social context for such a circulation may be understood in respect of the propensity of both male and female teenagers and young adults, particularly in urban contexts, to leave home to go into service.¹⁷⁹ In doing so, these young people left behind their natal families and therefore also any source of parental guidance. The *Good Wife* text is indicative of the sorts of gendered ideologies that surrounded young women and were learned by some when they were socialised at home by their mothers or away from home by their mistresses.¹⁸⁰

Few texts have been studied in the sort of depth that Riddy offers in her analysis of *How the Good Wife Taught Her Daughter*. Consequently, the circulation and ownership of other comparable texts such as *How the Wise Man Taught His Son*, another bourgeois text, is less certain but probably similar.¹⁸¹ What we do know, however, is that Peter Idley, who wrote a book of *Instructions* for his son Thomas around the mid-fifteenth century, was a member of the gentry of the rank of esquire.¹⁸² My intention in selecting texts written for audiences of different social rank is to examine different understandings of adolescence related to social rank

¹⁷⁷ See Riddy, 'Mother knows best', pp. 66-86. See also 'How the Good Wife Taught Her Daughter', in Shuffelton (ed.), *Codex Ashmole 61*; 'How the Good Wiff Tau3te Hir Dou3tir', in Furnivall (ed.), *The Babees' Book etc.*, pp. 36-47.

¹⁷⁸ Riddy, 'Mother knows best', p. 70.

¹⁷⁹ See Riddy, 'Mother knows best', pp. 66-86. See also P.J.P. Goldberg, *Women, work and life cycle in a medieval economy: women in York and Yorkshire, c.1300-1520* (Oxford, 1992), p. 290.

¹⁸⁰ See Riddy, 'Mother knows best', pp. 66-86.

¹⁸¹ See 'How the Wise Man Taught His Son', in Shuffelton (ed.), *Codex Ashmole 61*; 'How the Wise Man Tau3t His Son', in Furnivall (ed.), *The Babees' Book, etc.*, pp. 48-52.

¹⁸² D'Evelyn (ed.), *Idley's instructions*, pp. 4-5, 81-91.

as well as to gender. Conduct literature is not the only source for normative ideologies of gender and status. A different insight can be gleaned from literary satires that are also about young people. These include the fifteenth-century poems *A Ballade of Jak Hare* and *The Serving Maid's Holiday*, as well as the representation of the apprentice Perkin Reveller in Geoffrey Chaucer's 'Cook's Tale' from his *Canterbury Tales*. Although these texts were created to entertain rather than to instruct, they still reflect contemporary social norms.¹⁸³

By drawing upon normative sources from the sixteenth century, my aim is to explore the extent to which ideologies as well as attitudes towards young men and young women changed over time, particularly in the Reformation era. For example, I use an injunction imposed on the laity by the Archbishop of York in 1574 instructing all ministers and churchwardens not to permit any 'somer lords or laydes', nor any irreverent dancing, 'wanton gestures' or 'rybaulde talke' in 'anye church or chapell or churcheyard' to consider how far a potentially older, male, conservative and patriarchal clerical elite challenged and suppressed customs and traditions in which the younger members of the parish had previously predominated.¹⁸⁴ For further insights, I also study a selection of texts written by moralists in the late sixteenth century that targeted the young of both sexes. These include John Northbrooke's *Treatise*, which aimed to reprove dicing, dancing and other such pastimes that he deemed 'idle', Thomas Lovell's *Dancing and minstrelsie* and Philip Stubbes's *Anatomy of the abuses in England in Shakespeare's youth*, both of which had a similar purpose in attacking those elements of contemporary cultural life that the authors deemed unfavourable and advising the young to abstain from them.¹⁸⁵

¹⁸³ 'A Ballade of Jak Hare', in H.N. MacCracken (ed.), *The minor poems of John Lydgate, part II: secular poems*, EETS, 192 (London, 1934), pp. 445-8; 'The Serving Maid's Holiday', in R.H. Robbins (ed.), *Secular lyrics of the XIVth and XVth centuries* (2nd edn, Oxford, 1955), pp. 24-5; G. Chaucer, 'The Cook's Tale', in L.D. Benson (ed.), *The Riverside Chaucer* (3rd edn, Oxford, 1988), pp. 85-6.

¹⁸⁴ J.S. Purvis (ed.), *Tudor parish documents of the diocese of York* (Cambridge, 1948), pp. 160-1; M. Ingram, 'Who killed Robin Hood? Transformations in popular culture', in S. Doran and N.L. Jones (eds), *The Elizabethan world* (Abingdon, 2011), p. 474; Hutton, *Stations of the sun*, pp. 252-4.

¹⁸⁵ J. Northbrooke, *Spiritus est vicarius Christi in terra. A treatise wherein dicing, dauncing, vaine plaies or enterludes with other idle pastimes, &c. commonly used on the Sabboth day, are reprooved, by the authoritie of the worde of God and ancient writers* (London, 1577); T. Lovell, *Dancing and minstrelsie* (London, 1581), EEBO, images 17, 25; F.J. Furnivall (ed.), *Philip Stubbes's anatomy of the abuses in England in Shakespeare's youth c.1583, part I* (London, 1877).

To gain awareness more specifically of the perceptions, ideologies and assumptions that surrounded young people who went into service and lived away from home, I look at apprenticeship indentures. I have chosen these sources not only as a basis upon which to consider normative ideals but also to ascertain the cultural significance of this change in residential circumstance. I use indentures to help me determine if a period of service accorded with an understanding of adolescence, in so far as it functioned to further a young person's independence within the context of a culturally recognised transitional phase that culminated in a relatively autonomous adult status. It is notable that there are rather fewer extant indentures for women than for men, which is suggestive of how male apprentices were more numerous than female apprentices in fifteenth- and sixteenth-century England. These written records of the terms and conditions under which apprentices contracted service survive through the period in question and are concerned with a variety of issues detailing how their elders expected them to behave. For example, indentures tend to instruct those in service to obey their masters' orders and protect their goods and livelihoods, as well as forbidding them from playing dice, from attending taverns, from having sex and from leaving from their master's household either during the day or at night.¹⁸⁶

I use material drawn from York's civic records to question how far magisterial regulation served to create a youthful identity that was seen as 'other' and in need of discipline, and how far a clear sense of generational conflict can be read out of this evidence. The reason I have chosen this locality is because York has a very rich collection of records of the business of civic government. These include the *York Memorandum Book* that covers the fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries and a series of volumes called *House Books* that cover the later years of the fifteenth century onwards.¹⁸⁷ The *York House Books* hold the records of council meetings in the city that were presided over by the Mayor and Aldermen. I have picked out cases that involve young people from both the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. The published editions of *York Civic Records* helped me to identify where

¹⁸⁶ See, for example, John Harietsham's indenture (1451) in C.M. Clode, *The early history of the guild of merchant taylors of the fraternity of St John the Baptist, London* (London, 1888), p. 344; Nicholas Kynghlay's indenture (1371) in J.W. Percy (ed.), *York Memorandum Book*, 3, Surtees Society, 186 (1973), pp. 4-5; Katherine Nougale's indenture (1392) in LMA, Corporation of London Miscellaneous Manuscript 186.003.

¹⁸⁷ M. Sellers, *York Memorandum Book*, 2 vols, Surtees Society, 120, 125 (1912, 1915); Percy (ed.), *York Memorandum Book*, 3.

references to young men and young women occur, but since Raine's translations and transcriptions are known to be imperfect and to omit material, I decided to make my own transcriptions from the original manuscript volumes.¹⁸⁸ These records show how young people who came to the attention of York magistrates were treated and therefore give an indication not only of the behaviour of young people but more specifically of magisterial perspectives on these youths.

The material contained in the *House Books* is both very extensive and somewhat repetitive. As with the other genres, I have chosen to approach this type of source by selecting a number of illustrative examples to deploy as case studies. Although the *House Books* mention male youth much more frequently than female youth, where possible I have deliberately picked out cases that deal with both young males and young females. I have purposely selected cases that range across the period to enable me to address the issue of change or continuity in magisterial attitudes and young people's actions. For an additional geographical scope on the magisterial outlook, I also explore some civic ordinances issued in other localities such as London and Coventry in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.¹⁸⁹ My case studies of these sources drawn from a civic context allow for close reading so as to look beyond their magisterial agenda in order to interpret what attitudes might have lain behind the actions of the young people that are described and to try to engage with their perspective. In doing so I also consider how far there existed a distinctive youth culture – particularly amongst young men – which separated the younger from their older counterparts and facilitated the development of a cohesive youthful identity. This gives me the opportunity to establish whether or not there was a preference for peer influence and interactions amongst the young and to determine the extent to which this was fuelled by rebelliousness and a desire to provoke tensions and conflicts with older people.

Another magisterial source that I analyse to shed light on the prevalence of a male youth culture and generational conflict amongst servants and apprentices more specifically are statutes of the realm concerned with servants' and apprentices'

¹⁸⁸ A. Raine (ed.), *York civic records*, 8 vols, YASRS, 98, 103, 106, 108, 110, 112, 115, 119 (1939-53).

¹⁸⁹ H.T. Riley (ed.), *Memorials of London and London life in the XIIIth, XIVth and XVth centuries* (London, 1868), pp. 609-12; M.D. Harris (ed.), *The Coventry Leet Book: or Mayor's Register, part 2*, EETS, OS, 135 (1908), pp. 544-5; Griffiths, 'Tudor troubles', p. 319; M.K. McIntosh, *Controlling misbehaviour in England, 1370-1600* (Cambridge, 2002), p. 111.

games and pastimes. Nationally-applicable statutes were issued over the course of the fourteenth, fifteenth and sixteenth centuries to prohibit servants and apprentices from playing games deemed 'unlawful' – including amongst others pastimes such as tennis, football, hand-ball, bowls, dice and quoits – and to prescribe archery for these young men instead.¹⁹⁰ I explore the significance of the repeated re-issuing of these statutes. On the one hand, I consider how far they were founded in negative magisterial perceptions about the young and in turn functioned to promote generational conflict between magistrates and those young men whom they sought to regulate in social practice. On the other hand, I think about the extent to which the young men who persisted with such pastimes may have done so not to be deliberately antagonistic but rather because participating was a means of prioritising their peer interactions and cultivating a distinctive youthful identity.

I have chosen to draw evidence from jurors' verdicts at coroners' inquests in which young people were connected somehow to the events described, because these sources ostensibly offer a window into the lived lives of such individuals. Jurors' verdicts were presented before the coroner at inquests into sudden, violent, accidental or otherwise unnatural deaths. Juries commonly consisted of twelve men, whom R.F. Hunnisett suggests were 'small landowners and tradesmen' and 'men of some importance and influence in their immediate neighbourhood if not in the county at large', selected because of their position as upstanding members of the community.¹⁹¹ Goldberg argues that the jurors' primary concern was not necessarily to describe what did or did not happen between particular individuals – something that could not always have been known, or indeed knowable, to them. Rather, the jurors' task was essentially to generate a narrative that would be deemed credible within their cultural context and most helpful for their community.¹⁹² Closer reading shows that jurors' verdicts are in fact coloured by

¹⁹⁰ 12 Richard II c.6 [1388], in A. Luders, T.E. Tomlins, J. France, W.E. Taunton and J. Raithby (eds), *The statutes of the realm*, 2 (London, 1810-28), p. 57; 11 Henry IV c.4 [1409-10], in Luders *et al.* (eds), *The statutes of the realm*, 2, p. 163; 17 Edward IV c.3 [1477-8], in Luders *et al.* (eds), *The statutes of the realm*, 2, pp. 462-3; 3 Henry VIII c.3 [1511], in A. Luders, T.E. Tomlins, J. France, W.E. Taunton and J. Raithby (eds), *The statutes of the realm*, 3, (London, 1810-28), pp. 25-6; Henry VIII, c.9 [1541-2], in Luders *et al.* (eds), *The statutes of the realm*, 3, pp. 837-8. See also McIntosh, *Controlling misbehaviour*, pp. 98-9 for a summary of this legislation.

¹⁹¹ R.F. Hunnisett (ed.), *Sussex coroners' inquests, 1558-1603* (Kew, 1996), p. xiv.

¹⁹² See P.J.P. Goldberg, 'Childhood and gender', *Viator: Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies*, 39:1 (2008), pp. 257-8.

concerns other than a simple search for the objective truth. Indeed, the narratives of verdicts seem to be shaped as much by normative expectations as they are by the actual actions of the persons noticed. I have chosen to look at verdicts involving young people from the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries because they are reflective of the norms and values of the society and culture in which they were constructed and are revealing of both the social ideologies and social practices that surrounded youth.

I use such cases to examine how far there was a concept of adolescence that applied in social practice. This is exemplified by a Sussex jury's verdict about the death in 1545 of a fifteen-year-old female servant at which the thirteen-year-old son of her master was present.¹⁹³ I have selected this particular verdict for analysis because it is rich in detail which allows me to explore whether there was an awareness of adolescence. I use an understanding of gender, age and status ideologies to consider how its narrative is constructed and hence to try to comprehend better the concerns that lie behind it. Asking questions about the construction of the verdict in this way enables me to assess how far the jurors deploy ideas of childish and youthful behaviour in relation to a young male and young female. In turn this allows me to question the extent to which such ideas are underpinned by a cultural understanding of adolescence as a period clearly distinct from both childhood and adulthood.

Another source I have chosen to look at for further insights into whether there was a cultural recognition of adolescence characterised by the existence of a youth culture, generational conflict and an identifiable end point in social practice is borough court records. These sources are of value because they are at the interface of magisterial concerns and the lived lives of actual young people. Only a few boroughs have a good series of court rolls that cover the majority of my period, the most notable of which are Exeter and Nottingham. The reason that I chose to study material from Nottingham rather than Exeter is because the Exeter rolls are unpublished whereas numbers of cases from the fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Nottingham rolls have been transcribed and translated by W. H. Stevenson.¹⁹⁴

¹⁹³ See R.F. Hunnisett (ed.), *Sussex coroners' inquests, 1485-1558*, Sussex Record Society, 74 (1985), p. 35, case 127.

¹⁹⁴ See Stevenson (ed.), *Records of the borough of Nottingham, 1-4, 1155-1625*.

Sessions in the Borough Court that dealt with a variety of civil actions – which on occasion involved young people – were held on a fortnightly basis in the Guild Hall and were presided over by the Mayor and his bailiffs, who were the leading members of the urban community.¹⁹⁵ Where possible, I have deliberately chosen to study borough court cases involving young people from both the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. I use this material as another window through which to explore how far magistrates imposed certain restrictions on young men because they held negative perceptions of them and the extent to which doing so actually provoked conflict between the generations. I consider if the evidence suggests that the young flouted such restrictions because they had an overarching desire to be rebellious or else because they expressed a preference for socialising with their peers and constructing a youthful male identity in the process. One example from 1483 is a presentment of transgressions by a jury involving servants in Nottingham dicing and playing ‘unlawful’ games; another example from 1537 is a comparable presentment about male servants in Nottingham bowling, drinking and gambling.¹⁹⁶ Moreover, to enable me to raise questions about the onset of parenthood marking a shift from a liminal phase of adolescence to fully-fledged adulthood, I draw upon evidence from maintenance orders for illegitimate children from the borough court. I use these orders as a basis upon which to discuss the magisterial treatment that the parents of such individuals were subjected to and to assess the implications for how adult status was attained.¹⁹⁷

Consistory court depositions from York, London and Durham provide another valuable insight into the lived lives and experiences of the young. Consistory court cases are particularly pertinent to my thesis on adolescence because a significant body of litigation brought before the church courts are disputed marriage cases. These cases allow me to determine how far marriage was positioned as a pivotal event that marked the culmination of a lengthy and gradual process of becoming adult. Teenage and young adult, unmarried males and females are frequently

¹⁹⁵ See W.H. Stevenson (ed.), *Records of the borough of Nottingham, 1, 1155-1399* (Nottingham, 1882), p. ix-xii. See also R. Goddard, ‘Nottingham’s borough court rolls: a user’s guide’, pp. 2-3, available online at: <<https://www.nottingham.ac.uk/ucn/documents/online-sources/nottinghamsboroughcourtrolls-usersguide2.pdf>> [accessed April 2015].

¹⁹⁶ See W.H. Stevenson (ed.), *Records of the borough of Nottingham, 2, 1399-1485* (Nottingham, 1885), pp. 330-1; W.H. Stevenson (ed.), *Records of the borough of Nottingham, 3, 1485-1547* (Nottingham, 1885), p. 374.

¹⁹⁷ W.H. Stevenson (ed.), *Records of the borough of Nottingham, 4, 1547-1625* (Nottingham, 1889), pp. 229-30.

found as deponents who gave evidence before the church courts. Accordingly I have identified the records of the testimonies of young people as one of the rare places where we have access to the perspectives, experiences, and even ostensibly the voices of such persons. I have chosen to analyse court records from the three dioceses of York, London and Durham because they contain litigation from both the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. To illuminate a wide range of issues pertinent to my thesis, I use a selection of early fifteenth-century cases from York that have been translated and published by Goldberg and add to these by transcribing a number of sixteenth-century cases from York. I draw upon McSheffrey's online edition of the two London deposition books to provide some later fifteenth-century material.¹⁹⁸ I also make some use of Raine's published edition of ecclesiastical court records from Durham for some additional sixteenth-century evidence.¹⁹⁹

In dealing with material from the church courts, it has been necessary to engage with the difficulties of reading adversarial court records conducted under canon law. As I discuss further in the main body of the thesis, it is essential to bear in mind that the responses made by witnesses were shaped by the questions asked of them, which in turn were dictated by the requirements of the legal process. In his study of heresy inquisition material from medieval Languedoc, John Arnold argues that the questions posed during interrogations were most instrumental in determining the answers given by respondents. Moreover, Natalie Zemon Davis in her work on letters of petition seeking pardon in sixteenth-century France has shown how narratives were carefully crafted with the aim of persuading the crown to exercise mercy. She argues that though professional clerks were employed, the supplicant's role was the primary one in such letters.²⁰⁰ In considering my approach to church court material, I have drawn most influence from the way in which Goldberg uses depositions from York to shed light on the society and culture of fourteenth-century England. He challenges the idea that depositions were determined solely by the questions asked and that a witness had no other role than

¹⁹⁸ See Consistory Database.

¹⁹⁹ J. Raine (ed.), *Depositions and other ecclesiastical proceedings from the courts of Durham, extending from 1311 to the reign of Elizabeth*, Surtees Society, 21 (1845).

²⁰⁰ N.Z. Davis, *Fiction in the archives: pardon tales and tellers in sixteenth-century France* (Stanford, 1987); J.H. Arnold, *Catharism and the confessing subject in medieval Languedoc* (Philadelphia, 2001). See also P.J.P. Goldberg, *Communal discord, child abduction and rape in the later Middle Ages* (Basingstoke, 2008), ch.2.

to offer the expected responses. Rather, he argues that depositions were the product of a process of negotiation between a range of players that included the witness, the legal counsel and the clerk of the court. Goldberg maintains that the perspectives of individual witnesses are apparent from their testimonies and that we may indeed learn something about them from this evidence as a consequence.²⁰¹

I began by using the online database for York Cause Papers, as the records of the Church court are known locally, to search for cases where there were youthful deponents and then selected cases from this sample which I felt were particularly relevant to my interests. Young people who testified did so in the context of being household dependants either as children living at home or as servants living under the authority of masters and mistresses. Although we must remember that they were answering predetermined questions put to them in the context of a particular legal case, their depositions may reflect and sometimes comment on their positions in ways that are illuminating for an understanding of adolescence as a liminal stage between childhood dependency and adult autonomy. For example, I look at the deposition of sixteen-year-old Katherine Harper, who declared herself to be completely reliant on her father for her livelihood whilst employed in his lodging house in York in the 1550s, to comment on the dependency of a young woman who remained at home during her teens.²⁰² I use a case involving an apprentice named John Warington from 1417 to make suggestions about the role of service and the master/apprentice relationship in promoting independence for young men and women, as well as to probe the connections between marriage, the setting up of an independent household and the transition to adult status.²⁰³ I draw upon the deposition of the sixteen-year-old apprentice Richard Smith – who testified about how he socialised with fellow employees in his household in York in 1555 in celebration of two of them having contracted marriage to one another – to make inferences about the extent to which service may have facilitated courtships and peer interactions that promoted the development of a youthful identity.²⁰⁴ I also look at a suit from 1411 which describes how female dyers' employees could

²⁰¹ See Goldberg, *Communal discord*, ch.2.

²⁰² York, BI, CP.G.599: Robert Parkinson v. Alice Bywell [Validity, 1556].

²⁰³ P.J.P. Goldberg (ed. and trans.), *Women in England c.1275-1525* (Manchester, 1995), pp. 110-14.

²⁰⁴ York, BI, CP.G.3548: Juliana Stoddart v. William Bullock [1555], p. 3; A. Raine (ed.), *York civic records*, 5, YASRS, 110 (1946), p. 124; York, YCA, York House Book 21, f. 93v.

be observed in conversation whilst washing cloth in the River Ouse in York to shed light on a particular aspect of female culture and sociability and to consider the extent to which young women had access to a distinctive youth culture.²⁰⁵

My close analysis of church court cases from both the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries also enables me to question how far young women and young men were dependent on family in their selection of marriage partners and how far they were in fact given a voice and afforded some autonomy in this decision. Cases from McSheffrey's online edition of the two London deposition books for the later fifteenth century such as that of Margaret Heed, who claimed in 1488 that her family had forced her to marry one William Hawkins, allow me to consider both the parental role in their children's courtships and the extent of opportunities for independence in this respect for those young people who continued to live at home.²⁰⁶ Cases from mid-sixteenth-century York involving young women who made comparable claims of being compelled to marry by their families include Maud Carr and Barbara Lutton, as did young men like Richard Waterhouse and Robert West.²⁰⁷ By choosing to look at a selection of examples concerning both young men and young women across the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, I can comment on how the significance of marriage to the onset of adult status may have varied in social practice in accordance with the age, gender and social status of the individuals involved, and how such variations may have been subject to change over time.

To investigate further the extent to which levels of dependency, access to youth culture, and the degree of initiative in choosing marriage partners were influenced by social status as well as by gender, I have decided to use evidence drawn from letters in my thesis. I have chosen to analyse letters by or about young women and young men from across the period to gain insight into these issues. In doing so I have been mindful of Ralph Houlbrooke's opinion that letters can provide us with some of the most direct access to family life in the past.²⁰⁸ As a genre of source

²⁰⁵ Goldberg (ed.), *Women in England*, p. 43.

²⁰⁶ Consistory Database: William Hawkins v. Margaret Heed [17 June 1488].

²⁰⁷ York, BI, CP.G.1116: Edward Burrell v. Matilda Carr [Validity, 1562]; York, BI, CP.G.1341: Barbara Lutton v. Miles Belton [Annulment: minor, 1567, plaintiff wins]; York, BI, CP.G.619: Richard Waterhouse v. Margaret Watmoe [Annulment: minor, 1555, plaintiff wins]; York, BI, CP.G.735: Robert West v. Elizabeth Beaumont [Annulment: minor, 1557, plaintiff wins], pp. 2-8.

²⁰⁸ R.A. Houlbrooke, *The English family, 1450-1700* (London, 1984), p. 2.

material, letters are heavily skewed towards the upper levels of society. Unfortunately this means that there are no extant letters from the element of society I am most interested in, viz. larger urban communities. The correspondence from the Cely brothers is the closest in this respect given that the Celys were a merchant family of staplers from London and were therefore positioned at the very top end of this society.²⁰⁹ However, the sons and daughters of the Plumpton, Stonor and Paston families were all from prominent fifteenth-century gentry backgrounds.²¹⁰ The Bassett children, whose step-father was Lord Lisle, came from a sixteenth-century family with noble lineage, owing to the fact that Lord Lisle was an illegitimate son of King Edward IV.²¹¹ I make use of these gentry and aristocratic letters by comparing them with the other evidence that I have relating to larger urban communities.

Whilst letters concerning young people give particularly interesting perspectives on their social interactions, it is essential to treat them with caution. Sarah Williams discusses in her thesis how letters pose problems for historians because they are in effect petitions, often constructed in accordance with certain formulae and a specific request, strategy or agenda in mind – sometimes even through the medium of an amanuensis – and are therefore much less private and personal than we might first imagine.²¹² Provided these limitations are borne in mind, however, letters can at least hint at some of the words and thoughts of actual young men and young women of high rank living either at home with their parents or away from home whilst in service or education. By picking out correspondence that is particularly illuminating for such individuals, I am able to draw inferences about a range of issues – including how dependent they were on their parents, the nature of the relationships they had with their masters and mistresses, the extent of their interactions with peers, and the way in which their courtships and the making of

²⁰⁹ G. Holmes, 'Cely family (per. c.1450–1500)', *ODNB* (Oxford, 2004), available online at: <<http://www.oxforddnb.com.ezproxy.york.ac.uk/view/article/52163>> [accessed September 2013].

²¹⁰ K. Dockray, 'Plumpton family (per. c.1165-1550)', *ODNB* (Oxford, 2004), available online at: <<http://www.oxforddnb.com.ezproxy.york.ac.uk/view/article/52793>> [accessed September 2013]; C. Carpenter, 'Stonor family (per. c.1315–1500)', *ODNB* (Oxford, 2004), available online at: <<http://www.oxforddnb.com.ezproxy.york.ac.uk/view/article/52796>> [accessed September 2013].

²¹¹ M. St. Clare Byrne (ed.), *The Lisle letters*, 1 (Chicago, 1981), p. 4.

²¹² See S.R. Williams, *English vernacular letters c.1400-c.1600: language, literature and culture* (PhD thesis, University of York, 2001).

their marriages were conducted – and to comment on the significance of each in light of both their gender and social status.

To explore further how dependent on adult oversight young people were in social practice, another source that I draw upon is wills. These frequently record provisions made by parents or adults acting in loco parentis for sons, daughters, servants, apprentices or those under guardianship. There are thousands of extant wills from the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, but most are unpublished. For this reason I have preferred to look at published editions as the most efficient means of accessing a lot of wills relatively quickly.²¹³ My selection criteria has been primarily concerned with finding wills in which young men or young women are mentioned as beneficiaries. I have also deliberately read wills from different localities across both the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries as well as across different social levels where possible. Through the analysis of bequests I can ask questions about dependency by considering how far provisions made for young people differed according to gender, age, social rank and residential circumstances. Moreover, my interest in identifying how far young people enjoyed a distinctive youth culture led me to look at another type of source, namely churchwardens' accounts. These sources sometimes make note of the income that young men's and maidens' guilds in parishes like St Edmund's Salisbury, Croscombe in Somerset and Morebath in Devon raised during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.²¹⁴ I use the details that these documents reveal about some of the activities young people in these localities participated in to think about how much independence from adults they were granted as they did so. By looking at these various parish accounts I am able to ask if gender-specific activities connected to the parish contributed to a distinctive youth culture and a clear sense of youthful identity amongst young men and young women and to assess the extent to which there was change or continuity in this respect in the Reformation era.²¹⁵

²¹³ F.J. Furnivall (ed.), *The fifty earliest English wills in the Court of Probate, London, AD 1387-1439*, EETS, 78 (1882); F.W. Weaver (ed.), *Somerset medieval wills*, Somerset Record Society, 16, 19, 21 (1901, 1903, 1905). See also Goldberg (ed.), *Women in England*.

²¹⁴ K.L. French, *The people of the parish: community life in a late medieval diocese* (Philadelphia, 2001), p. 129; J.E. Binney (ed.), *The accounts of the wardens of the parish of Morebath, Devon, 1520-1573* (Exeter, 1904); C. Peters, *Patterns of piety: women, gender and religion in late medieval and Reformation England* (Cambridge, 2003), ch. 1.

²¹⁵ See J.C. Cox, *Churchwardens' accounts from the fourteenth century to the close of the seventeenth century* (London, 1913); Binney (ed.), *The accounts of the wardens of Morebath*.

Overall, the combination of normative, magisterial and lived lives sources from across the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries that I have chosen to analyse allows me to question how far a cultural understanding of adolescence as a liminal phase between childhood and adulthood was in existence. This includes examining whether the ideologies and assumptions that surrounded young men and young women were underpinned by such an understanding, and how far this was reflected in social practice through the way in which they achieved adult status, their levels of dependency whilst at home and away from home, the access they had to youth culture and the extent to which this was characterised by generational conflict.

The structure of the thesis reflects the three main claims about adolescence which have been made in modern social-scientific scholarship that I want to address. The first three chapters revolve around probing the existence of a concept of adolescence that applied in social practice. Chapter One focuses on contemporary understandings of youth in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries and explores how dependent young males and females who lived at home were. Chapter Two assesses how levels of dependency altered when young people left home. Chapter Three considers the ways in which adult status was achieved. In Chapter Four I explore the existence of a youth culture. In Chapter Five I look at the prevalence of generational conflict and peer interactions in youthful social activities. The Conclusion responds to the driving questions behind the thesis by drawing together the main arguments. It highlights my contribution to historical scholarship and makes suggestions about possible areas for further research.

Chapter One

'Life at Home'

This chapter draws upon modern social-scientific research to consider how far a social and cultural understanding of adolescence – as a lengthy and gradual transitional process from a state of dependence (childhood) to a state of relative independence and autonomy (adulthood) – existed in fifteenth- and sixteenth-century England. Ever since Hall expressed a theory of adolescence as a psychological concept that occupies a particular position between childhood and adulthood, the concept of adolescence has merited further exploration in the social sciences. Erikson views adolescence as a distinctive intermediary period during which individuals have the opportunity to form their identities before assuming the commitments and responsibilities of adulthood.¹ Other scholars with an interest in adolescent development emphasise the importance of the period of adolescence in preparing young people for the autonomy of adulthood.² Zimmer-Gembeck and Collins argue that adolescence is defined by the pursuit of autonomy.³ Kohlberg and Maccoby view adolescence as a developmental process that results in self-regulation.⁴ Noller and Callan also understand adolescence as a process that consists of a series of objectives – such as moving away from the natal home, coping with the emergence of sexuality and possessing the agency to make career choices – that ultimately leads to independent adult status.⁵

Over the fifty years from when Ariès made the claim that there was no social or cultural recognition of adolescence before the eighteenth century, historians of the pre-modern era have debated the existence of a concept of adolescence.⁶ Whilst Schultz finds no recognition of a period of life corresponding in any meaningful way to modern adolescence in his analysis of Middle High German literature, the majority of medievalists and early modernists acknowledge the existence of

¹ P. Roazen, *Erik H. Erikson: the power and limits of a vision* (New York, 1976), pp. 86-7.

² A. France, *Understanding youth in late modernity* (Buckingham, 2007), pp. 34-6.

³ M.D. Zimmer-Gembeck and W.A. Collins, 'Autonomy development during adolescence', in G.R. Adams and M.D. Berzonsky (eds), *Blackwell handbook of adolescence* (Oxford, 2003), pp. 176-7, 192.

⁴ See P. Sutherland, *Cognitive development today: Piaget and his critics* (London, 1992), pp. 176-82; E.E. Maccoby, 'Socialisation and developmental change', *Child Development*, 55:2 (1984), pp. 317-28.

⁵ P. Noller and V. Callan, *The adolescent in the family* (London, 1991), pp. 4-16.

⁶ P. Ariès, *Centuries of childhood*, trans. R. Baldick (London, 1962), p. 316.

adolescence – as a social construct with distinctive features that culminates in the achievement of adulthood – during their periods.⁷ I am seeking to contribute to the existing historical scholarship by exploring further some ideas about the concept of adolescence raised by modern social-scientific research in a specific historical context.

I begin by considering how youth was understood in fifteenth- and sixteenth-century England. I discuss the ‘Ages of Man’ schemas and some of the terminology with which contemporaries referred to young people. I use this alongside analyses of extracts from instructional literature and a case-study of a jurors’ verdict following a coroner’s inquest to reveal some of the common perceptions, ideologies and assumptions that surrounded youth at this time. The second part of the chapter focuses specifically on the lives and experiences of young people who lived at home. It revolves around the central theme of dependency. I use evidence from probate records and depositions made before the Consistory Courts in London and York to assess how dependent on parents young males and females living at home were. To do so, I explore the role that parents (or guardians) played in these young people’s lives. Some sociologists and developmental psychologists argue that the exploration of sexuality and the search for a mate represent significant stages in the development of an autonomous identity and in facilitating emotional detachment from parents.⁸ As I will soon demonstrate, sexual maturity and an interest in sex were also commonly part of the understanding of youth in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Accordingly, I pay particular attention to how far parents influenced their sons’ and daughters’ choices about courtship, pre-marital sexual activity and ultimately marriage. At every stage of analysis, I take into account how attitudes and experiences might have varied according to age, gender and social rank. Considering these factors collectively allows me to determine how much agency young males and young females were able to exercise when they lived at home. This provides the basis for a comparison with how levels

⁷ J.A. Schultz, ‘Medieval adolescence: the claims of history and the silence of German narrative’, *Speculum*, 66:3 (1991), pp. 519-39.

⁸ See F.P. Rice, *The adolescent: developments, relationships and culture* (Boston, 1975), p. 245; A. Schlegel and B.L. Hewlett, ‘Contributions of anthropology to the study of adolescence’, *Journal of Research on Adolescence*, 21:1 (2011), p. 287; J. Koger, ‘Identity development during adolescence’, in G.R. Adams and M.D. Berzonsky (eds), *Blackwell handbook of adolescence* (Oxford, 2003), p. 204

of agency altered when young people lived away from home, which is the subject of Chapter Two.

The Social and Ideological Construction of Youth

'Ages of Man'

In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, an aspect of scholarly literature focused on the 'Ages of Man'. This is a presentation of human development based on the concept that life involves progression through a series of stages, usually ranging in number from three to ten.⁹ It is an idea that is founded in classical thought, initially established to describe and explain the observable physical phenomenon of ageing. The Greek philosopher Aristotle, for example, divides life into three parts: an age of growth, an age of stasis and an age of decline.¹⁰ Although 'Ages of Man' schemas vary in length, the most popular – which identify four, six or seven ages – uniformly refer to a period labelled '*adolescentia*'. In *De Temporum Ratione* (725) the Venerable Bede bases his four-age model on the theory of the 'Physical and Psychological Fours' which has its roots in Galenic medicine. Bede argues that life is four-fold, governed by four humours in the body and harmonised with the macrocosmic order of the seasons and elements through a comprehensive set of tetrads.¹¹ A different model proposed by St Augustine likens the ages of man to the six historical ages of the world. He recognises six distinct elements that include '*infantia*' (aged from birth to 7), '*puertia*' (aged 7 to 14) and '*adolescentia*' (aged 14 to 28), followed by '*juventus*', '*gravitas*' and '*senectus*'.¹² St Augustine's model thus sub-divides non-adulthood into three ages.¹³ This sub-division is also apparent in seven-age schemes, which draw their authority from Hippocrates and Ptolemy to link human life to the seven planets and their seven natures.¹⁴ Hippocrates identifies a 'little boy' (from birth to age 7), 'boy' (7-14), 'lad' (14-21), 'young man'

⁹ For further information see E. Sears, *The ages of man: medieval interpretations of the lifecycle* (New Jersey, 1986) and J.A. Burrow, *The ages of man: a study in medieval writing and thought* (Oxford, 1988).

¹⁰ Burrow, *Ages of man*, pp. 5-6.

¹¹ Burrow, *Ages of man*, p. 12.

¹² Burrow, *Ages of man*, p. 80.

¹³ Burrow, *Ages of man*, pp. 6-7.

¹⁴ Burrow, *Ages of man*, pp. 20, 37-8.

(21-28), 'man' (28-49), 'elderly man' (49-56) and 'old man' (56+).¹⁵ Later medieval astrologers built upon his model to differentiate between infancy, childhood and '*adolescencia*'. The term '*adolescencia*', which in this scheme encompasses the period between the ages of fourteen to twenty-one, is associated with Venus and 'an impulse towards the embrace of love'.¹⁶ A seven-age scheme found in the early medieval encyclopaedia written by Isidore of Seville (d. 636) – which was widely referenced in the later Middle Ages – also makes love and sexual maturity the markers of physical development. Isidore defines '*adolescencia*' as '*adolescencia ad gignendum adulta*' – that is, 'mature enough for generation'. He claims that this period lasts from the ages of fourteen to twenty-eight and that it is succeeded by '*iuventus*', ranging from the ages of twenty-eight to fifty.¹⁷ Given that '*iuventus*', or 'youth', ends during a phase we would more commonly identify with middle-age, however, these schemes appear to have little connection to modern conceptions about the developmental cycle.¹⁸

Goldberg argues that whilst it was commonplace for educated people in the medieval era to think in terms of various 'Ages' frameworks, these abstract conventions were not simple mirrors of social practice.¹⁹ It is clear from the respective works of both Elizabeth Sears and John Burrow that the numbers encountered in these various schemes cannot be equated with either social or biological realities.²⁰ However, it would be inaccurate to suggest that such schemes had purely academic resonances. Rather, they went beyond small scholarly circles and could also be found in art and vernacular literature of the period.²¹ This is evident from the 'Wheel of Life' painting from the fourteenth-century psalter of Robert de Lisle, for example, which depicts life as a culmination of ten ages.²² Moreover, the author of the fifteenth-century Scottish poem, *Ratis Raving*, built upon the seven-age model. This work of parental counsel, intended to instruct

¹⁵ Burrow, *Ages of man*, p. 38

¹⁶ I.K. Ben-Amos, *Adolescence and youth in early modern England* (London, 1994), p. 10.

¹⁷ See W.M. Lindsay (ed.), *Isidori Hispalensis episcopi etymologiarum sive originum libri xx*, 2 (Oxford, 1911), book xi, ii, 1-4. See also Burrow, *Ages of man*, pp. 200-1.

¹⁸ F.S. Dunlop, *The late medieval interlude: the drama of youth and aristocratic masculinity* (Woodbridge, 2007), p. 9; R.M. Karras, *From boys to men: formations of masculinity in late medieval Europe* (Philadelphia, 2002), p. 13; Burrow, *Ages of man*, pp. 200-1.

¹⁹ P.J.P. Goldberg, 'Life and death: the ages of man', in R. Horrox and M. Ormrod (eds), *A social history of England, 1200-1500* (Cambridge, 2006), p. 413.

²⁰ Schultz, 'Medieval adolescence', pp. 530-2.

²¹ Dunlop, *Late medieval interlude*, p. 9; Karras, *From boys to men*, p. 13.

²² Burrow, *Ages of man*, pp. 45, 73.

young readers in virtuous and gentle discipline, declares that 'the first age' of childhood is up to three years old, 'the second age' from three to seven and the 'third age' from seven to fifteen.²³ A sermon preached by a Boy Bishop during the annual festival at St Paul's Cathedral in London (circa 1490) discusses 'thre ages' of 'childehode, younghte and manhode', differentiating between the 'infant age' and 'the second stage', which was presented as occurring from 'xiiij yeres unto xviiij yeres'.²⁴ These ideas continued to prevail in the sixteenth century. Comparable sentiments are evident in William Shakespeare's play *As You Like It*, first performed in 1599.²⁵ In a famous speech about the 'seven ages' of man in Act II scene 7, the character Jacques invectively discusses infants vomiting, small boys whining, young men sighing and rushing to their deaths, mature men smug, elderly men stingy, and old men 'sans teeth, sans eyes, sans taste, sans everything'.²⁶

The 'Ages' had a degree of influence on the way people thought about themselves and each other.²⁷ Whilst the definition of youth in the various schemas may not be particularly precise, the fact that youth is named as a concept is significant because it means it was identified as a distinctive period of life. This is reflected by other social practices and traditions that operated in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Under canon law, young males and young females reached the age of discretion once they were deemed sufficiently mentally and emotionally mature. Children were acknowledged to have established capacity to reason by the age of seven, which is highlighted by their ability to make non-binding verbal contracts of marriage at this age. However, since the age of consent was set at twelve for girls and fourteen for boys, such contracts became valid only if ratified at this point. It is implicit that a marriage ought not to have been consummated before these ages were reached.²⁸ Distinctions in the ages of inheritance according to both gender and social rank are apparent in the thirteenth-century legal treatise associated with Henry Bracton, but now believed to be a composite work compiled over a

²³ J.R. Lumby (ed.), *Ratis Raving and other moral and religious pieces in prose and verse*, EETS, 43 (1870), pp. 57-8.

²⁴ E.F. Rimbault (ed.), *Two sermons preached by the boy bishop at St Paul's and at Gloucester* (London, 1875), pp. 9-10. For evidence of similar sentiments in popular literature, see 'The Mirror of the Periods of Man's Life', in F.J. Furnivall (ed.), *Hymns to the Virgin and Christ, the Parliament of Devils and other religious poems* (London, 1867), pp. 60-1.

²⁵ N. Orme, *Medieval children* (London, 2001), p. 6.

²⁶ Ben-Amos, *Adolescence and youth*, p. 10. See W. Shakespeare, *As You Like It*, rev. J.P. Kemble (London, 1810), pp. 34-5.

²⁷ Goldberg, 'Life and death: the ages of man', p. 413.

²⁸ R.H. Helmholz, *Marriage litigation in medieval England* (Cambridge, 1974), p. 98.

period of time, hereafter referred to as 'Bracton'. In a discussion about the laws and customs of England, 'Bracton' explains that aristocratic sons reached majority for this purpose at twenty-one, sokemen at fifteen and burgesses once they could count money, measure cloth and perform other tasks necessary for their fathers' businesses. The reason sons of knights inherited later was because they required a greater capacity for judgement and strength. According to 'Bracton', a daughter in socage could inherit around the same age as sons – once she could order and manage a house, around the age of fourteen or fifteen. Like their brothers, there was no set numerical age for the daughters of burgesses to come of age in this respect. It happened once they were considered capable of performing the tasks of a woman of their station. 'Bracton' shows that there were two views about women in military fees – one was that they could inherit at twenty-one like their male counterparts, the other was that they could inherit at fifteen or once they were married.²⁹ The age of criminal responsibility also varied. As Phillips explains, once an individual was over the age of seven – the point at which they were believed to be able to differentiate between good and evil – a court's judgement depended upon whether or not they could be considered '*doli capax*', capable of deceit. Although this was usually deemed to occur at the age of twelve for girls and fourteen for boys, judges could use their discretion to assess the criminal capacity of any young accused between the age of seven and fourteen.³⁰ Each of these examples suggests that young people were associated with a lack of reason and understanding that they were believed gradually to develop as they grew older. Overall though, it is apparent that medieval authorities held no single theory about youth. Indeed, throughout the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, a series of ideas and images surrounded the young.³¹ It is firstly towards an exploration of the language used to describe young people and secondly towards the particular values and characteristics that they were attributed with that the focus of this section will now turn.

²⁹*Bracton Online*, vol.2, pp. 250-1, available online at: <<http://bracton.law.harvard.edu>> [accessed November 2016].

³⁰ This discussion owes much to issues raised by Kim Phillips. See K.M. Phillips, *Medieval maidens: young women and gender in England, 1270-1540* (Manchester, 2003), pp. 32-3, 35. See also *Bracton Online*, vol. 2, pp. 250-1, available online at: <<http://bracton.law.harvard.edu>> [accessed November 2016]; W. Holdsworth, *A history of English law*, 3 (London, 1942), pp. 372, 511.

³¹ Ben-Amos, *Adolescence and youth*, p. 11.

Terminology

In *Centuries of Childhood*, Ariès argues that the concept of adolescence and an awareness of youth only became general phenomena as recently as the twentieth century, more specifically in the aftermath of the First World War.³² He claims that in the centuries before the prevalence of formal schooling – by implication the medieval era – children were absorbed into the world of adults at the age of seven.³³ A significant aspect of his argument for an absence of adolescence in the Middle Ages relies on his belief that there was no distinctive language used to describe non-adults and a lack of words available to distinguish little children from bigger ones.³⁴ Since terms like ‘boy’, ‘girl’ and ‘child’ could refer to persons of any age, Ariès reasons that without a specific vocabulary, childhood and adolescence could not have been recognised concepts.³⁵

In the intervening years since *Centuries of Childhood* was published, some historians have upheld the Ariès thesis. Gillis agrees with his argument about terminology and contends that ‘the language of age in pre-industrial England is hopelessly vague’.³⁶ Schultz also concurs on the basis of an exploration of language. He argues that there was no specific vocabulary to describe children or to distinguish between boy and girl, child and teenager in Middle High German literature.³⁷ In an article about the historicisation of adolescence, he is fiercely critical of fellow medievalists such as Jean-Louis Flandrin, Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie, Nicholas Orme, and Andre Vauchez for using the term ‘adolescence’ in their historical studies without further explanation. He accuses them of mistakenly understanding adolescence to be a universally experienced physiological period of life between puberty and maturity or adulthood, that is implicitly present in the Middle Ages and in every other culture and period. Schultz also criticises Shulamith Shahar’s and Le Roy Ladurie’s respective tendencies to conflate the presence of the Latin word ‘*adolescencia*’ in discussions of age with the existence of

³² Ariès, *Centuries of childhood*, pp. 27-8.

³³ Ariès, *Centuries of childhood*, p. 316.

³⁴ Ariès, *Centuries of childhood*, p. 26.

³⁵ Ariès, *Centuries of childhood*, p. 125.

³⁶ J.R. Gillis, *Youth and history: transition and change in European age relations, 1770 to present* (London, 1981), pp. 1-2.

³⁷ P.J.P. Goldberg, ‘Childhood and gender in later medieval England’, *Viator: Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies*, 39:1 (2008), p. 251; J.A. Schultz, *The knowledge of childhood in the German Middle Ages, 1100-1350* (Pennsylvania, 1995), pp. 21-42.

a concept of 'adolescence' in the medieval period.³⁸ He does not uncover a Middle High German word to approximate the modern 'adolescent' and argues that neither the learned Latin tradition nor the vernacular German tradition deemed it necessary to designate a term to this particular stage of life that we identify.³⁹

Other historians have challenged the ideas of Ariès, Gillis and Schultz. Goldberg and Dunlop maintain that even if there was no consensus about the precise ages the terminology in various 'Ages of Man' schemas used to designate youth referred to – which effectively renders the terms '*puertia*', '*adolescentia*' and '*iuventus*' meaningless outside of this particular philosophical framework – its existence still indicates how medieval Latin inherited a fairly stable set of terms with which to describe the period of early life.⁴⁰ According to the *Middle English Dictionary* (*MED*), the term 'youth' denotes 'the time of life between childhood and adulthood, adolescence' and also 'the entire period before the attainment of maturity'.⁴¹ The term 'adolescence' is defined concisely by the *MED* as 'the age following childhood'.⁴² A more elaborate definition of this term appears in the *Oxford English Dictionary* (*OED*), which takes a biological interpretation of adolescence as 'the period following the onset of puberty during which a young person develops from a child into an adult'. Examples of 'adolescence' being used in the fifteenth century are cited in relation to this definition. This includes a quotation from a manuscript edition of John Lydgate's *Fall of Princes* (circa 1439) which, in a discussion about the instruction of children, states 'Afftirward in ther adolescence, Vertuousli to teche hem'.⁴³ However, the use of the term 'adolescence' in this text cannot simply be equated with the concept of adolescence that we recognise today. Dunlop warns that the boundaries for the terminology surrounding youth in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries were rather fuzzy. Whilst she acknowledges that the terms 'youth' and 'yong' were more readily applied than Latin terms during this period, she shows that there was no uniformity associated with these words either. Whereas the *Promptorium Parvum* (circa 1440) defined 'yung' as '*Iuvenis*' but 'young man' as '*adolescens*', the *Catholicon Anglicum* (circa 1483) defined a

³⁸ Schultz, 'Medieval adolescence', pp. 519-20, 526.

³⁹ Schultz, 'Medieval adolescence', p. 533.

⁴⁰ Goldberg, 'Life and death: the ages of man', p. 413; Burrow, *Ages of man*, pp. 20, 52; Dunlop, *Late medieval interlude*, p. 12.

⁴¹ See *MED*: youth (n.).

⁴² See *MED*: **adolescence** (n.).

⁴³ See *OED*: adolescence (n.).

'younge' as both '*adolescens*' and '*iuvenis*'. To compound the confusion, Dunlop notes that in the sixteenth century, Thomas Elyot's *Dictionary* (1538) equated a 'young man' with '*iuvenis*' and 'youth' with '*iuventus*'.⁴⁴

Goldberg's analysis of Middle English words used to describe children and young people confirms that people had a distinct terminology for these individuals and routinely distinguished them by both age and sex. His study emphasises the importance of considering the context in which particular words were used. He identifies that young males were commonly described by terms including 'boy', 'knav', 'lad' and 'son'.⁴⁵ In doing so he challenges Dobson's claim that 'boy' had resonances of low birth and was used solely as a term of contempt or abuse in the Middle Ages.⁴⁶ Goldberg also shows that young women could be addressed by a wider variety of words such as 'mai', 'maid', 'maiden', 'maide child', 'maidekin', 'maiden-kin', 'lasse', 'damsel' and 'ancille'. He not only uncovers an extant terminology signifying youth in the medieval era but also concludes that this terminology was gender-specific. He maintains that whilst words used to describe boys tended to either have pejorative connotations or were indicative of low status, or both, those used to describe girls tended to imply virginity, beauty or high birth. Vocabulary presented the sexes in opposition as it depicted girls as pretty, chaste and aristocratic and boys lacking in both virtue and social status.⁴⁷

Griffiths has undertaken a comparable study of vocabulary in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. His study confirms that whilst in literary schemes contemporaries nearly always distinguished a stage of life between childhood and adulthood, which they usually called 'youth', they reached no agreement about its numerical definition. As such, he believes that the majority of early modern observers used the age-title 'youth' to refer indiscriminately to individuals in their teens and twenties. He advises that it is essential to turn from literary sources to judicial records to discover which specific age-titles were in use at this time.⁴⁸ The trends that emerge from Griffiths's study of records from Christ's Hospital London

⁴⁴ Dunlop, *Late medieval interlude*, p. 14.

⁴⁵ Goldberg, 'Childhood and gender', p. 252.

⁴⁶ See E.J. Dobson, 'The etymology and meaning of boy', *Medium Aevum*, 9 (1940), pp. 121-54 (p. 133).

⁴⁷ Goldberg, 'Childhood and gender', pp. 252-3.

⁴⁸ P. Griffiths, *Youth and authority: formative experiences in England, 1560-1640* (Oxford, 1996), pp. 20-2.

(1556-80) and the Norwich Courts of Admiralty (1565-1646) suggest that a 'vocabulary of age' was uniformly employed. Age-titles distinguished between different phases of development and indicated particular points in the progressive transition from youth to adulthood. The discovery that governors allocated certain titles almost exclusively to people in their teens gives little indication of the imprecise and irregular use of terminology which prompted Ariès and Gillis to doubt the reality of childhood and adolescence in the pre-industrial world. Griffiths finds that the word 'boy', for example, only applied to males aged between six and eighteen, with ninety percent of its usage referring to those aged between ten and eighteen. Every 'girl and maid' that Griffiths identifies was aged between ten and twenty-four. The 'lads' were all aged between eleven and nineteen and five of the six 'wenches' were aged between eleven and thirteen. The one 'youth' who appears in his survey was thirteen years old. On the basis of this evidence, he concludes that clerks and magistrates had a conception of age that placed people in particular age groups and helped to construct age-borders between them.⁴⁹ Overall, Griffiths maintains that the existence of age-specific vocabulary helped to anchor a firm conception of youth in early modern minds.⁵⁰

Images of Youth

People in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries often contrasted youth with childhood. Rob Meens explains that the prevailing image of the baptised child in the early Middle Ages was one of purity, innocence, weakness, helplessness and lack of reason. This led theologians and authors of didactic works to believe that children under the age of seven were incapable of sin.⁵¹ As such, a common notion – highlighted by the speech delivered by the Boy Bishop at St Paul's Cathedral around 1490 – was that the 'infant age of a childe' was 'neither dysposed to vertue neyther to vyce' and that children were 'pure'.⁵² This idea is reinforced by another sermon, preached by a Boy Bishop named John Stubbes in Gloucester Cathedral in 1558, which discusses the ideal characteristics of 'innocent childer' and their 'quiet' affections, including patience, simplicity, purity, obedience and humility'.⁵³

⁴⁹ Griffiths, *Youth and authority*, p. 24.

⁵⁰ Griffiths, *Youth and authority*, p. 33.

⁵¹ R. Meens, 'Children and confession in the early Middle Ages', in D. Wood (ed.), *The church and childhood: studies in church history*, 31 (Oxford, 1994), p. 55; S. Shahar, *Childhood in the Middle Ages* (London, 1991), pp. 24-5.

⁵² Rimbault (ed.), *Two sermons preached by the boy bishop*, pp. 2-3.

⁵³ Rimbault (ed.), *Two sermons preached by the boy bishop*, pp. 21-2.

We know that the sermon pronounced by Stubbes was written by Richard Ramsey, a Prebendary at Gloucester, and the earlier oration of the Boy Bishop at St Paul's would also have been crafted by an older cleric. The speech given to the fifteenth-century Boy Bishop presents the period of youth rather differently from childhood. It describes how 'adolescencia ... hath two lynes, a ryght and a crokyd, sygnefyenge the dysposycion that he hath thenne to vyce and thenne to vertue'. It continues, 'in the which age is the breaking of every childe to goodnesse or to lewdnesse'.⁵⁴ This encapsulates the polarity of fifteenth- and sixteenth-century attitudes towards young people. On the one hand, youth was depicted as a time of great hope and promise, during which the growth of knowledge and virtue occurred. On the other, it was seen as a dark and licentious age that threatened to bury good prospects under layers of pessimism, despair and outright sinfulness.⁵⁵

The basis for a favourable portrayal of young men was the Aristotelian notion that man reached his 'perfect' age in his middle life – more specifically at the age of thirty-three, the age that Christ had reached when he was crucified – and in old age became decadent and degraded.⁵⁶ As Ben-Amos argues, youth represented the contrast to old age, an antidote to inevitable death and the hope for a long and healthy life.⁵⁷ Numerous writers saw youth as a promising time and this is typified by their use of positive analogies. A popular image likens young people to trees and branches. The anonymous author of the long-prose treatise *Dives and Pauper* (circa 1405) reasons: 'Whil a tre is a smal sprynge it may ben bowyd as men wil han it, but when it is ful woxsyn it wil nout ben bowyd'.⁵⁸ Youth was associated with malleability and flexibility. As such, medieval moralists were adamant that character and behaviour needed to be shaped without delay during youth. Leaving it too late had consequences that could be potentially disastrous for the rest of their lives. Like the branches of a tree, if a youth became knarled and twisted in attitude or behaviour, it was feared that nothing could be done for him. This notion is emphasised by the anonymous author of the fifteenth-century poem 'Youth and Honour', who writes:

⁵⁴ Rimbault (ed.), *Two sermons preached by the boy bishop*, pp. 2-3.

⁵⁵ Griffiths, *Youth and authority*, p. 34.

⁵⁶ Phillips, *Medieval maidens*, pp. 43-51.

⁵⁷ Ben-Amos, *Adolescence and youth*, p. 20.

⁵⁸ P.H. Barnum (ed.), *Dives and Pauper*, EETS, 275 (1976), p. 326.

'He that in youthe no vertue wyll yowes
In aege all honor shall hym refuse'.⁵⁹

Contemporaries seem to have had an over-arching fear that the young had a stronger inclination towards vice rather than virtue. They assumed that if young people were open to influence, their malleability could be easily taken advantage of by Satan. If the strength and vigour of youth was not guided in the right direction, they would be vulnerable and face dire consequences. These fears were fuelled by Augustinian theology which is based on the premise that human predilection to sin becomes marked in children once they reach the age of seven and that their tendency to sin and indulge in bodily pleasures increases as they get older.⁶⁰ The treatise of *Dives and Pauper* draws upon biblical references to Solomon in the Book of Proverbs to claim that the sins of youth include 'pride, lecherie, lusty fare, glotonye, sluathe, rekeleshede in Godis seruyse and in Godis lawe'.⁶¹ Poems and ballads reflect the idea that youth is intrinsically sinful and prone to vice. In *The Mirror of the Period of Man's Life* (circa 1430) there is a debate over a man of 'xx zeer', tempted by pride, gluttony, lechery, wrath, envy, sloth, covetousness, and avarice but ultimately protected by the virtues of meekness, patience and charity. A battle for the young man ensues between conscience and reason on one side and lust on the other.⁶² The fifteenth-century *Ballade of Jak Hare* typifies a youth with the worst qualities that could have been imagined at this time. Hare is presented as the son of 'dame Idylnesse' and brother of 'reklesnesse' and is described as a greedy, vain, drunk, lousy, thieving and unthrifty young knave.⁶³

Writers of instructional literature consciously tried to counteract these perceived tendencies by dictating idealistic traits that they felt needed to be cultivated in males and females during their youth. In the MS Lambeth 853 version of the instructional poem *How the Wise Man Taught His Son* – perhaps dating to the early fifteenth century – a father attempts to persuade his son to shun the deadly sin,

⁵⁹ 'Youth and honour', in R.H. Robbins (ed.), *Secular lyrics of the XIVth and XVth centuries* (2nd edn, Oxford, 1955), p. 81.

⁶⁰ Ben-Amos, *Adolescence and youth*, p. 12.

⁶¹ Barnum (ed.), *Dives and Pauper*, p. 324.

⁶² 'The Mirror of the Periods of Man's Life', in Furnivall (ed.), *Hymns to the Virgin and Christ*, pp. 60-1.

⁶³ 'A Ballade of Jak Hare', in H.N. MacCracken (ed.), *The minor poems of John Lydgate, part II: secular poems*, EETS, 192 (1934), pp. 445-8.

idleness, sloth, lechery and materialistic aspirations that he feared he would gravitate towards.⁶⁴ In *Peter Idley's Instructions to His Son* (circa 1445) a father also warns his son against becoming 'lewde' and 'lusty' and advises him to 'put aside all wantonnes and rageis' during youth.⁶⁵ Such ideology was explicitly linked to the Galenic theory that associates youth with the season 'summer', the element 'fire', the humour 'red choler' and qualities 'hot and dry'. It places emphasis on the hot tempers and rashness of young men and characterises them according to their energy and power and propensity for disobedience, insubordination and riotousness.⁶⁶

Young women were believed to be on a fundamentally different developmental path. They were associated with qualities such as inactivity and inconstancy, arising from the cold, moist phlegm believed to be present in their bodies.⁶⁷ Indeed the differences are so extreme that Phillips offers an alternative model for the 'ages of woman' that locates their 'perfect' age in the second rather than fourth decade. She maintains that unlike their male counterparts who were supposed to emulate Christ, young women in the late medieval period were expected to aspire to the role model of Mary – who was believed to have become a mother at fourteen – and numerous virgin martyrs who were put to death in their mid- to late teens.⁶⁸ A gender difference is also evident from hagiographic texts that depict the childhood of male saints as a misspent youth characterised by secular and materialistic pursuits, foolishness and immature spirituality but present the childhood of female saints as inherently pious and pure.⁶⁹ A particular concern to promote female piety and the preservation of virginity until marriage appears to have been the reason why a Middle English sermon encourages young women to 'love God after the

⁶⁴ 'How the Wise Man Taught His Son', in G. Shuffelton (ed.), *Codex Ashmole 61: a compilation of popular Middle English verse* (Kalamazoo, 2008). See also 'How the Wise Man Tauzt His Son', in F.J. Furnivall (ed.), *The Babees' Book, Aristotle's ABC, Urbanitatis, Stans Puer ad Mensam, The Lvtill Childrenes Lvtill Boke, The Bokes of Nurture of Hugh Rhodes and John Russell, Wynkyn de Worde's Boke of Keruyng, The Booke of Demeanor, The Boke of Curtasye, Seager's Schoole of Vertue, &c. &c. with some French and Latin poems on like subjects, and some forewords on education in early England*, EETS, OS, 32 (1868), pp. 48-52. The author of *Ratis Raving* made similar cautions towards a young son. See Lumby (ed.), *Ratis Raving*, pp. 51, 60.

⁶⁵ C. D'Evelyn (ed.), *Peter Idley's instructions to his son* (London, 1935), pp. 81, 92.

⁶⁶ Burrow, *Ages of man*, p. 12.

⁶⁷ Dunlop, *Late medieval interlude*, p. 18. An explanation of this four-stage model was developed more fully in *Tracatus de Quaternario* (c.1150). See Burrow, *Ages of man*, p. 20.

⁶⁸ See Phillips, *Medieval maidens*, pp. 43-51.

⁶⁹ See R. Voaden and S. Volf, 'Visions of my youth: representations of the childhood of medieval visionaries', *Gender & History*, 12:3 (2000), pp. 665-84 (pp. 672, 678-9).

ensampell of [a] holy mayden' who defied her father's wish for her to marry well because she decided that she would take no spouse but Christ.⁷⁰

The negative satanic imagery employed in the speech given to the Boy Bishop to deliver at St Paul's in the late fifteenth century suggests that there was a perception amongst clerics that young people indulged sins and vices on a regular basis. '*Juventus, youthe*' is described as a stage of the lifecycle featuring negative elements such as 'undevocon', forgetting to worship God or the saints and a general preoccupation with 'worldly vanytees', fairs, markets and purchasing 'marchaundyse of the devyll'.⁷¹ People at the time may have acknowledged that young males had the *potential* to display strong and virtuous characteristics, but some evidently felt that in practice the young were more likely to exhibit negative traits. With the doctrine of Original Sin prevailing in the Reformation era, concerns about youthful sins intensified. Zealous Protestants believed that young people needed to be repressed, controlled and placed in a subordinate position by their elders to guarantee their ultimate salvation.⁷² These notions are reflected in the sermon written for the Gloucester Boy Bishop in 1558. This speech urges 'both boys and wenches' in the audience to hold on to the innocence of childhood and the other virtues of this tender age rather than become corrupted and 'lewd' like older youths.⁷³ Overall, young males were presented by moralistic authors in the late medieval and early modern eras as a distinctive entity, different from both adults and children. Young men were not yet fully grown up and were recognised to be strong, malleable, quick-tempered, rowdy and sinful as a result.

In numerous pieces of instructional literature the ideal advocated for parents and their children to emulate was for fathers and mothers to exercise control over obedient and compliant young males and females. In the MS Lambeth 853 edition of the poem *How the Wise Man Taught His Son* a father stresses the need for his son to adhere to a routine pattern of devotion and piety and advises the young man to go to bed early instead of sitting drinking with others. It is apparent that patriarchal authority was to be continually exerted over all aspects of a son's life,

⁷⁰ See W.O. Ross (ed.), *Middle English sermons* (London, 1940), pp. 79-81.

⁷¹ Rimbault (ed.), *Two sermons preached by the boy bishop*, pp. 10-11.

⁷² L. Stone, *The family, sex and marriage in England 1500-1800* (London, 1977), p. 255.

⁷³ Rimbault (ed.), *Two sermons preached by the boy bishop*, pp. 22-4.

both devotional and mundane.⁷⁴ The remarkable extent to which a father was expected to influence his son's life is evident in the contemporaneous Scottish poem, *Ratis Raving*. Here youth is identified as a time of strength, beauty and innocence. It is a period deemed essential for the inculcation of particular values – to be reinforced by chastisement – that enables youngsters to flourish and grow up great 'like a tre'.⁷⁵ Accordingly, the son is urged by his father to seek good company, pursue meekness, patience and honesty and avoid sloth.⁷⁶ Like the Wise Man, the father in the *Ratis* text also commands that his son 'here goddis seruice quhen [th]ou may', 'tak not delyt in morne slepinge, wyntymous eting na drynkyng' and 'fauore na dyse, na drunkynnes'. Securing and maintaining a good reputation in youth is identified as a significant task of this phase of the lifecycle. This is highlighted by the more specific command: 'wyne gud nam quhil [tho] art [y]onge'.⁷⁷ For this reason the son is entreated to avoid raising strife with his community or fellow churchmen. He is also told not to love possessions above God and honour or to be downcast in misfortune, or proud in prosperity.⁷⁸

The narrative technique upon which this instructional literature is based presents a direct contrast between the authority of age and the misbehaviour of youth. Whilst the parent is depicted as a font of wisdom, the text implies that young men are foolish and would be drawn towards activities and preoccupations deemed unsuitable if not kept under close supervision. This was specifically the responsibility of a father or male guardian. Fathers were expected to instruct and impose certain rules on their sons and strive to prevent them from deviating. It was also the duty of a son to act in an obedient and compliant manner. Virtually identical sentiments are reiterated in *Peter Idley's Instructions*. Idley's advice to his son is also based on the principle that learning is an essential part of the age of youth. He states how fundamental it is for the young man to guard his tongue in public, dress cleanly and moderately and spend money wisely. Idley also entreats him to choose the counsel of elders rather than young people, telling him not to act foolishly by placing his trust in fortune. The command to 'flee Tauernes and felawshippe of women' is connected to his father's fear that it would make his son

⁷⁴ See 'How the Wise Man Tau3t His Son', in F.J. Furnivall (ed.), *The Babees' Book etc.*, pp. 48-52.

⁷⁵ Lumby (ed.), *Ratis Raving*, p. 27. For advice about chastisement in youth, see also p. 102.

⁷⁶ Lumby (ed.), *Ratis Raving*, pp. 57-103.

⁷⁷ Lumby (ed.), *Ratis Raving*, p. 93.

⁷⁸ Lumby (ed.), *Ratis Raving*, p. 98.

'light in [th]e purse' and lead him to an end of 'miserie and myshcheif'. Idley is explicit in his emphasis on the difference between the good sense of older people versus the folly of the young.⁷⁹

Similar normative ideals existed in relation to young females. Bailey notes that conduct texts for girls tend to be more moral, complex and layered than those intended for males.⁸⁰ This is highlighted by the poem *How the Good Wife Taught Her Daughter*, which is essentially the female equivalent of the *Wise Man* text. The poem, which first appeared in a manuscript edition in the mid-fourteenth century, was found in several fifteenth-century manuscripts and then passed into print culture in the sixteenth century. Riddy suggests that the poem was the work of a male cleric, who adopted the persona of a mother, ostensibly giving advice to her daughter.⁸¹ The poem is primarily preoccupied with domestic concerns and mixes proverbial advice, moral guidance and lessons in courteous behaviour.⁸² Riddy argues this didactic narrative was intended to assist middle-rank urban mistresses with the socialisation of girls under their care.⁸³ The narrative technique that it employs encourages the inculcation of good behaviour by contrasting it with behaviour that a mother deemed unacceptable.

The explicit purpose of the text was to stress the importance of gender-specific parental control as it was intended for a mother to 'mend hyr [daughter's] lyfe and make her better'.⁸⁴ A consistently admonitory tone is directed towards the young woman from the older woman throughout the poem.⁸⁵ Like the *Wise Man*, the *Good Wife* advises her daughter about the necessity of attending church. She also tries to control the young woman's conduct, stating: 'Be fayre of semblant, my der doughter / Change not thi countenans with grete laughter / And wyse of maneres loke thou be gode'. The daughter is also told to avoid hasty physical actions with the command: 'when thou goys in the gate, go not to faste'. The gendered ideal was for the daughter to remain at home managing her household rather than to go out

⁷⁹ D'Evelyn (ed.), *Idley's instructions*, pp. 81-91.

⁸⁰ Bailey, *Socialising the child*, p. 58.

⁸¹ F. Riddy, 'Mother knows best: reading social change in a courtesy text', *Speculum*, 71:1 (1996), p. 73.

⁸² Bailey, *Socialising the child*, pp. 58-9.

⁸³ Riddy, 'Mother knows best', pp. 72, 83.

⁸⁴ 'How the Good Wife Taught Her Daughter', in G. Shuffelton (ed.), *Codex Ashmole 61: a compilation of popular Middle English verse* (Kalamazoo, 2008), line 4.

⁸⁵ Bailey, *Socialising the child*, p. 66.

to attend taverns or to watch competitive sporting matches. There was evidently a particular concern about a young woman maintaining a good reputation. The mother is also determined to influence her daughter's daily routine, advising: 'Syte not to longe uppe at even / For drede with ale thou be oversene / Loke thou go to bede bytyme / Erly to ryse is fysyke fine / And so thou schall be, my dere child / Be welle dysposed, both meke and myld'. Modesty, meekness and mildness of character are highlighted as desirable female characteristics. The poem concludes with the mother urging her daughter to remember her lessons and 'Thinke theron both nyght and dey / Forgette them not if that thou may'. The significance attached to this instruction is encapsulated by the sentiment that 'a chyld unborne were better / Than be untaught', which was predicated on a perception of adult superiority and youthful subordination.⁸⁶

In the comparable Middle Scots poem *The Thewis off Gud Women*, which Bailey believes can be dated to no earlier than 1450, the direct voice of a mother is absent.⁸⁷ Phillips argues that the narrative format of speaking about daughters in the third person indicates that this text was addressed more to parents, especially fathers.⁸⁸ In this poem, young women are instructed to neither keep the company of young men nor to attend taverns or associate with drunkards. Instead, a girl is to adhere to the advice of her family and 'Tyll hir frenis [family] obedient bee...'.⁸⁹ This poem draws a clear distinction between youth and age. Whereas there was a belief that '[y]outhed ay inclynis to wyce', the poem expounds the notion that 'wysdome cum thro wyt or eild'.⁹⁰ Stating that wisdom would come with age highlights the contrast between the negative traits of the young and the positive traits of the old. This is reinforced by the fact that the poem entreats guardians to set an 'ensampill'. Moralists recognised that young women were in danger of being easily led astray. Adults were also reminded of their duty in instruction and of the dangerous consequences of neglecting this: 'Fore falt of aw and of teichinge / Gerris madenis oft tak ill endinge'. The exercise of parental control is once again presented as the ideal and this is emphasised by a subsequent allusion to physical punishment. Fathers are required to 'chaste thaim, quhen thai do mys' – which in

⁸⁶ See 'How the Good Wife Taught Her Daughter', in Shuffelton (ed.), *Codex Ashmole 61*, lines 1-209.

⁸⁷ Bailey, *Socialising the child*, p. 59.

⁸⁸ Phillips, *Medieval maidens*, p. 92.

⁸⁹ Lumby (ed.), *Ratis Raving*, pp. 103-4, 107.

⁹⁰ Lumby (ed.), *Ratis Raving*, p. 109.

turn implies that daughters had a tendency to misbehave – to ensure that young women become chaste and charitable rather than ‘wantone thowle[ss] racle[ss]’ individuals. Overall, in order to prevent them coming to an ‘ill-end’, moralists in the medieval and early modern periods understood that young women needed to be taught in youth and punished when they stepped out of line to guarantee that they would make amends in sufficient time.⁹¹

A case that provides a window into how the concept of adolescence was engaged with and reflected in social practice is a jurors’ verdict following a coroner’s inquest in Sussex in 1545. The verdict offers an account of how Alice Bennett, a fifteen-year-old female servant, met her death whilst in the presence of John Onley, the thirteen-year-old son of her master, Thomas Onley of Pulborough, esquire, at his home in February 1545.⁹² The verdict states that John and Alice were both in the kitchen with no malice between them. Whilst he was poking a ‘byrde spytt’ into the fire and thrusting it into a post at the end of the chimney and making a hole in the post, she was sitting on a stool sewing. Alice scolded John for his destructive activity, bidding him to ‘rest and leffe worcke orells she wolde tell his father thereof’. He defiantly challenged her for doing so, asking: ‘What folle ... what hast thou to doo therewit?’, before taking ‘the seid spytt’ and putting it ‘into the fyr ageyn, intending to make the holle depper.’ This prompted Alice to get up and she ‘rane towards him hasteley, wylyng to take the seid spit from hym’. He then turned himself ‘soddenly towards the seid post with the spytt’, so that she ‘by her mysfortunat chawnce rane her lefte thye upon the seid spytt and therewith incontinent bled’. The verdict claims that ‘when she sawe her owne blood she fell downe ded, the wond being hallfe an inche depe and somewhat more and estemid to be a peney bredthe’. Accordingly the jury, ‘by theyr othe’, reached the decision that ‘the seid spytt, pryce iiij d., by the necligent and misfortunate sodeyn ronnyng of the seid Alice was the cawse of her deathe, and non otherwise’. This verdict, which records the death as an unfortunate accident, was formed on the basis of ‘the evydence of John Worley, curate of Pulborough, Richard Smith, constable of the West Easewrithe hundred, Harry Kennett, John Kennett, Thomas Wappham, John Burges and others’.

⁹¹ Lumby (ed.), *Ratis Raving*, pp. 109-10.

⁹² R.F. Hunnisett (ed.), *Sussex coroners’ inquests, 1485-1558*, Sussex Record Society, 74 (1985), p. 35, case 127.

Throughout the narrative, a polarisation between the sexes is emphasised. John is depicted entertaining himself by poking a spit into the fire and damaging the chimney post, whilst Alice is shown to be sewing. There is a clear gender division as the teenage boy appears physical and destructive, whereas the teenage girl appears diligent and productive. A status contrast is also clear. On the one hand, Alice is presented carrying out her job. She is a servant and is actively employed. On the other hand, John appears to be exempt from the obligation to work because of his social rank as the son of a gentleman. Whereas she is shown with domestic responsibilities, he has a superior status and can indulge in leisure. The implication from the pair being alone together in the kitchen is that Alice was not only supposed to complete her own domestic tasks but was also expected to look after her master's son. Whereas the boy is presented behaving in a very immature manner, the girl is shown to aspire to a more adult role effectively supervising and assuming – or attempting to assume – a degree of authority over him. Although she was only two years older, the connotations of this age gap gain more significance given that in the sixteenth century there was a long-established cultural understanding that females would mature more rapidly than their male counterparts. This was both reflected and reinforced by the distinct gender differences in the ages of majority that I have discussed above. At the age of fifteen, Alice would have been deemed capable of ordering and managing a household.

Alice is presented trying to halt John's destructiveness, effectively acting in place of her master. She is even depicted evoking her master's superior authority by verbally warning the boy to stop 'orells she wolde tell his father thereof'. The power dynamic between the master's servant and his son is shown to have been very finely balanced. Alice may have been a girl and she may have been of a lower social status than John, but her scolding of him suggests that as his father's representative, she could have reasonably anticipated that he would defer to her deputed authority and obey her commands. Over the past forty years there has been a broad consensus in scholarship revolving around the notion that in the Reformation era patriarchy intensified and fathers punished misbehaviour more harshly than they had done previously. Older studies by Ariès and Stone and more recent work by Katherine Sather, Hugh Cunningham, Ben-Amos, Alexandra

Shepherd and Walsham all support the notion that the advent of Protestantism – and its associated drive for the home to become the primary site for the education and discipline of the young and the effective suppression of youthful sinfulness – intensified patriarchal control.⁹³ Alice’s threat is a manifestation of the contemporary cultural expectation that a father should occupy an authoritarian position within his household. By suggesting that the prospect of John’s father being told would induce enough fear to make him stop his destructiveness, the jurors both affirmed the father’s authority over his son and reflected the contemporary notion that a son’s duty was to be obedient. This ideal is underpinned by the Ten Commandments, the fifth of which orders children of all ages to ‘honour thy father and thy mother’.⁹⁴

As a child in the household of a gentleman, upon reaching the age of seven it would have been usual for John’s main source of care and instruction to have shifted from being female-dominated to male-dominated.⁹⁵ Thus by the time he had reached the age of thirteen, he would have passed far beyond the age to be socialised by women. We can presume that he would also have had a clear notion of his status as the son of a gentleman and of Alice as his father’s servant and social inferior. These factors may explain why the jurors presented John ignoring her threats and defiantly resisting her deputed authority. As the narrative unfolds, it relates that he challenged her directly by resolutely refusing to heed her and asking: ‘What folle ... What hast thou to doo therewit?’ John is also shown wilfully making the hole in the chimney post deeper just to spite Alice. In doing so he is depicted as purposely wanting to assert *his* authority over *her*.

John’s defiance is also potentially reflective of the attitude of a boy increasingly keen to establish a non-childish identity. He is shown to be intentionally disobedient, determined and resolute. The jurors’ portrayal of him as such

⁹³ See Ariès, *Centuries of childhood*, ch. 15 and pp. 395-9; Stone, *Family, sex and marriage*, p. 141; K. Sather, ‘Sixteenth and seventeenth century child-rearing: a matter of discipline’, *Journal of Social History*, 22:4 (1989), pp. 735-43; H. Cunningham, *Children and childhood in western society since 1500* (Harlow, 1995), pp. 45-7; A. Walsham, ‘The reformation of the generations: youth, age and religious change in England, c.1500–1700’, *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 21 (2011), pp. 93-121; A. Shepard, ‘Family and household’, in S. Doran and N.L. Jones (eds), *The Elizabethan world* (Abingdon, 2011), pp. 352-71; I.K. Ben-Amos, ‘Reciprocal bonding: parents and their offspring in early modern England’, *Journal of Family History*, 25:3 (2000), pp. 291-312.

⁹⁴ The Ten Commandments are found in Exodus 20:1-17 and Deuteronomy 5:4-21.

⁹⁵ R.A. Houlbrooke, *The English family, 1450-1700* (London, 1984), p. 150. See also W. Coster, *Family and kinship in England 1450-1800* (Harlow, 2001), pp. 74-5.

emerged from the contemporary cultural understanding about the common characteristics of young males. As I discussed above, the associations between male youth, fieriness, hot-headedness, strength and power are evident in *Peter Idley's Instructions* and this text was still in circulation in the mid-sixteenth century.⁹⁶ John is presented as a 'typical' thirteen-year-old male, determinedly defending his physical prowess against Alice's verbal threats. She is depicted being provoked by his persistent disobedience and approaching him 'hasteley, wyllyng to take the seid spit from hym'. Since her verbal threat proved ineffective, she is shown resorting to physical force. In the mid-sixteenth century, such a hasty, physical response would have been deemed more characteristic of a young man than of a young woman. This is apparent in the instructional text *How the Good Wife Taught Her Daughter*, which lasted into the sixteenth century in terms of its popularity, and could well have been used to socialise daughters and servants in well-to-do households, just like Alice.⁹⁷ As I have already noted, this poem presents meekness and mildness in mind and mood, fair countenance and speech, and honesty as the types of characteristics that needed to be inculcated in young women.⁹⁸ Whereas young males were believed to exhibit much greater physical strength than their female counterparts, there was a cultural expectation that young women had greater strength of mind. This gender-based ideology is encapsulated in the narrative given that Alice's strength of mind manifests itself though her scolding of John but is eventually overcome by his physical power. In choosing to respond physically, the suggestion is that she recklessly ignored the prevailing gender models.

Ultimately, the jurors attributed Alice's death to her physical reaction to John's provocation. Whilst his actions seem to be excused by his portrayal as a typically naughty young lad who did not intend to cause any harm to his father's servant, the inference from the verdict is that she can be viewed as at least partly responsible for her own demise because of her contravention of prescribed feminine behaviour. The decision to explain the death as the result of the 'negligent and misfortunate sodeyn ronnyng of the seid Alice' and her own 'mysfortunat chawnce' reflects contemporary perceptions about gendered norms and the innate

⁹⁶ See D'Evelyn (ed.), *Idley's instructions*, pp. 81, 92.

⁹⁷ See Riddy, 'Mother knows best', pp. 83-6.

⁹⁸ 'How the Good Wife Taught Her Daughter', in Shuffelton (ed.), *Codex Ashmole 61*, lines 41-60.

rashness and folly of youth, which both parties are shown to display when Alice attempts to snatch the poker from the wilful and disobedient John. The verdict implies that youth caused her to act precipitously rather than wisely. The jury explained Alice's death in terms of a teenage girl who lacked discretion, was provoked into taking foolish actions and as an unfortunate consequence lost her life.

This case is unique because fifteenth- and sixteenth-century coroners' inquest verdicts do not usually record the evidential basis upon which the jury formed their eventual decision. It provides explicit information about the verdict being reached as a result of testimonies from certain men, including the curate of the parish and the constable, who both held positions of significant social standing within the local community. Jurors were usually chosen to make the point that they were not witnesses and so had no privileged knowledge as to what had happened, but in this case the names of Harry Kennett and John Kennett appear under both the list of eighteen jurors and the list of those who gave evidence. John Onley was the only other party present when Alice's death occurred. Given that he was the son of a local gentleman, the agenda of the jurors' verdict may have been driven by a desire to protect him from suspicion of culpability over the death. As such, the verdict may have been created in order to exonerate him.

Goldberg argues that when juries constructed their verdicts, their intention was to offer a coherent and plausible account of the circumstances which led to a death, not an exact description of what did or did not happen as they could never have known this for sure. They aimed to produce a narrative that would be credible within the context of the society in which it was created.⁹⁹ Since Harry and John Kennett had a dual role, it is possible that these two men were empanelled to oversee the construction of the narrative and to ensure that it adhered to a version of events that prominent members of the community approved. In this instance, the jurors may have intentionally set up their verdict to record an accidental death. Reaching this verdict allowed both the gentleman and his son to be safeguarded. The jurors' determination to reinforce the acceptability of this verdict is apparent from the fact that the number of jurors involved in this case is unusually high.

⁹⁹ See Goldberg, 'Childhood and gender', pp. 257-8.

Verdicts following coroners' inquests commonly record the names of twelve men, rather than the eighteen that are included in this one. Extra jurors may have been incorporated to make the verdict appear even more believable than it would if fewer jurors had been listed. The inclusion of dialogue between John Onley and Alice also serves the purpose of making the narrative seem more realistic and therefore may have been an additional element that was integrated to distance the boy further from blame.

Given this context, it is impossible to make conclusions about the actual interaction that may or may not have occurred between John and Alice in social practice. Nonetheless, the case is useful for revealing some of the ideologies of age and gender that surrounded young people in the mid-sixteenth century. Even if the verdict was deliberately set up to deflect blame from the gentleman's son, it was still modelled on contemporary notions about how young males and young females were expected to behave. The events the jurors portrayed are underpinned by – and therefore indicative of – social and ideological assumptions about youth. In constructing their verdict, the jurors built upon a variety of cultural norms to establish a narrative that would command credence. They showed how a triad of power dynamics involving gender, age and status were contested between the two teenagers. These overlapping hierarchies shaped relationships, expectations and life experiences in fifteenth- and sixteenth-century society. The verdict reflects how as young people were growing up, they were socialised to regard prevailing ideologies about gender, age and status as the norm and had to learn to negotiate their complex interactions in every aspect of their daily lives.¹⁰⁰

The implication from the collective analysis of evidence about the 'Ages of Man' framework, the existence of distinctive terminology, and the corresponding images, ideologies and assumptions that surrounded youth is that there was a social and cultural understanding that young people possessed characteristics which distinguished them both from older people and from each other on the basis of their gender. Youth appears to have marked a separate and special time of the lifecycle, during which the young were deemed to require guidance from their

¹⁰⁰ See K. Wrightson, *Earthly necessities: economic lives in early modern Britain, 1470-1750* (London, 2002), pp. 27-8; P.J.P. Goldberg, *Medieval England: a social history, 1250-1550* (London, 2004), ch. 1; K.V. Thomas, 'Age and authority in early modern England', *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 62 (1976), p. 207.

adult counterparts. The remainder of this chapter will be devoted to exploring the experiences in social practice of young people who lived at home.

Dependency at Home

Probate evidence offers insight into how dependent some children who lived at home with their parents or guardians were. A will drawn up in 1434 by Roger Elmesley made extensive provision for a boy named Robert Sharpe.¹⁰¹ Whilst, as Richard Helmholz explains, there was no single custom of legitim in operation throughout the realm in the medieval period, the most common division of a testator's estate was one third to his wife, one third to his issue and one third for the benefit of his soul.¹⁰² At the time he made his will Elmesley mentioned neither a wife nor children but since he bequeathed his 'wyffes forcet and staff', he was most probably a childless widower. In the absence of a wife or issue, all of his movables were available to be disposed of to protect and benefit his soul. This was a key consideration for the testator. He prioritised piety, charity and the performance of good works and fulfilled this aspect through the provision he made for Robert Sharpe 'goddis-child', various financial contributions to his parish church and the gifts of fuel he left to 'poor householders' in his neighbourhood.

The part of the will that I am most interested in is the detailed provision made for Robert Sharp. The testator does not give any further information about the nature of his relationship with Robert. Whilst Furnivall's editorial assumption that 'goddis-child' means 'a god child' has been followed uncritically by other scholars including Hanawalt and Peter Ackroyd, I do not necessarily agree with this interpretation because it is only one possible explanation for their affiliation with one another.¹⁰³ Although the *MED* also cites a quotation from this will to define the term 'goddis-child' as 'a godson or goddaughter', when the term 'goddis' reappears again in the will, it assumes a slightly different meaning. The context of its second

¹⁰¹ See F.J. Furnivall (ed.), *The fifty earliest English wills in the Court of Probate, London, AD 1387-1439*, EETS, 78 (1882), pp. 100-3.

¹⁰² R.H. Helmholz, 'Legitim in English legal history', *University of Illinois Law Review*, 3 (1984), pp. 659-74.

¹⁰³ Furnivall (ed.), *The fifty earliest English wills*, p. 100. See B.A. Hanawalt, *Growing up in medieval London: the experience of childhood in history* (Oxford, 1996), p. 50; P. Ackroyd, *London* (2nd edn, London, 2012), p. 78.

usage – ‘I bequeath the same Robard ... to goddis worshup’ – suggests that the term may have signified ‘god’s’, that is, something possessed by and connected to God.¹⁰⁴ It is also worth noting that at this time the term ‘maison dieu’ – the English version of which is ‘goddishouse’ – was a word commonly used for an alms-house. This was an institution that provided for those who could not provide for themselves and had no kin who could, or were willing, to provide for them. This, combined with Elmesley’s will being so strongly focused on piety and charity, suggests that his use of the term ‘goddis-child’ simply referred to Robert being a child of God whom he deemed a needy individual that required his care, assistance and protection. The tendency for people to take in needy children is explicit in the will of another fifteenth-century testator, Thomas Curtas. He made provision for a youngster named Thomas Crouce, described as ‘a poor boy whom I support in my home out of charity’, giving him eight marks to support him through school.¹⁰⁵

Irrespective of whether or not Robert was Elmesley’s godson, I would like to suggest that he was probably an orphan boy for whom he acted as guardian. A study of orphans in medieval England by Elaine Clark shows how family and community concerns surrounded those who had lost a father.¹⁰⁶ In London in 1420, for example, it was proclaimed an ‘immemorial custom’ that the Mayor, Alderman, Chamberlain, Citizens and Commonalty would be granted for their own use the guardianship and marriage of underage heirs of Freemen of the city until they came of age.¹⁰⁷ However, arrangements were different for the children of non-Citizens, who were identified as being especially vulnerable and powerless. Hanawalt argues that in the fifteenth century, destitute infants and foundlings were often just taken in and fostered out of pity by caring and sympathetic neighbours who recognised their particular need for protection.¹⁰⁸ The orphan-guardian relationship is likely in this case because by making substantial provision for an orphan, Elmesley was adding a further dimension to the pious and

¹⁰⁴ Furnivall (ed.), *The fifty earliest English wills*, p. 102.

¹⁰⁵ P.H. Cullum and P.J.P. Goldberg, ‘Charitable provision in late medieval York: to the praise of God and the use of the poor’, *Northern History*, 29:1 (1993), p. 33.

¹⁰⁶ See E. Clark, ‘City orphans and custody laws in medieval England’, *American Journal of Legal History*, 34 (1990), pp. 168-87.

¹⁰⁷ See C. Barron, ‘The child in medieval London: the legal evidence’, in J.T. Rosenthal, *Essays on medieval childhood* (Donnington, 2007), p. 45.

¹⁰⁸ See B.A. Hanawalt, ‘Narratives of a nurturing culture: parents and neighbours in medieval England’, *Essays in Medieval Studies: Proceedings of the Illinois Medieval Association*, 12 (1996), pp. 1-21.

charitable nature of his will. The legal framework of legitim, which was the custom in the diocese of London, not only encouraged him to use his will to benefit his soul but more specifically to do so by benefitting an individual who was not his heir. By taking responsibility for an orphan, he actively fulfilled a role which, according to the Christian doctrine of the Seven Corporal Works of Mercy, all 'good' Christians should.

The extent of Elmesley's provision is elaborate. Most of the items Robert was set to receive were domestic and were implicitly from the house in which they resided together. The fact that he was left 'a litell fetherbed' strengthens this idea because this may well have been a reference to the boy's own bed which he occupied nightly. In the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, only the richer households could have afforded a soft featherbed and the luxurious accessories described. Indeed, the bed was to be fully furnished and Robert was also to inherit 'ij peire smale shetes, & a peyre of large shetes goode, & a peire of blankettes, & ij goode pelewes [pillows] & a whit couerlit & a red couerlit' [bedspread]. He was also left decorative dining-ware, including 'a good bordcloth [tablecloth] with crosse werk ... I towell of parys werk [a type of fabric or embroidery made in Paris], viij yerdes of lenkethe, also too the beste sanapes' [either a cloth runner placed over a tablecloth to protect it; or a napkin or towel].¹⁰⁹ Each of these items is rather refined and suggests a sort of formal dining that is indicative of the status to which Elmesley socialised little Robert. Another fashionable item which he had bestowed upon him – namely 'a white coverkell with roses and flourdeleces' – seems to support this notion. The *OED* defines a 'coverkell' as 'a cover (of a vessel), a lid'.¹¹⁰ The decorative detail on this one is particularly interesting because the fleur-de-lis pattern was recognisably heraldic. Adrian Ailes explains that in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, heraldry symbolised both politics and propaganda.¹¹¹ Emblems were used increasingly at this time to foster a sense of national identity, which was particularly relevant given the context of the Hundred Years' War with France. The combination of the fleur-de-lis and rose pattern on this item may well have

¹⁰⁹ Furnivall (ed.), *The fifty earliest English wills*, p. 101. See *MED*: pilwe (n.); cöverlīte (n.); börd-clōth(e) (n.); Paris (n.) ~werk; sāve-nāpe (n.).

¹¹⁰ See *OED*: covercle (n.). According to the *OED*, 'coverkell' is a Middle English form of the noun 'covercle'.

¹¹¹ A. Ailes, 'Heraldry in medieval England: symbols of politics and propaganda', in P. Coss and M. Keen (eds), *Heraldry, pageantry and social display in medieval England* (Woodbridge, 2002), pp. 83-104 (pp. 89-92).

resonated with royalty and as such would have appealed to both a sense of national and civic pride and monarchical authority. It was an aspirational piece that perhaps represented Elmesley's desire to inspire his young charge. It is implicit that he knew Robert was dependent on him and was keen to encourage and enable him to maintain the standard of living to which he had become accustomed.

The very number of items Robert was bequeathed indicates how dependent he was. Of the various pewter plates and dishes he was left, the most personalised were 'ij sauseres of peautre & ymarked with R. and S.' that were stamped with the boy's initials. This is further evidence that he was living with and under the care of Elmesley. These were items the boy may have used at mealtimes on a daily basis and his guardian was essentially using his will as a means to ensure that they would remain in his possession. Given that the term 'litell' reappears repeatedly in the description of items bequeathed to Robert, the suggestion is that he had many movables in the household that were solely for his own use. These include: 'a litil maser coppe ... a litell basyn knopped... a litill panne of brasse y-ered [with handles] and a chaufur of bras, & a lytil posnet of bras', a 'litil tabel peynted trestelwise' and 'a litel cofur to putte in his smale thynges'. The constant repetition of the adjective 'litell' suggests that each of these items were smaller versions of normal adult-sized items, more apt for a child. This is emphasised by the direct contrast between the 'litil loyned stoll [stool] for a child' and 'a nother loyned stoll, large for to sitte on, whanne he cometh to mannes state', both of which Robert was to inherit.¹¹² He seems to have had everything made small, which implies that he was very young.

The extent of Robert's apparent dependency can be attributed to his young age. Elmesley's concern to provide for the boy may have been further magnified because of his probable status as a vulnerable orphan. He was evidently anxious about the possible repercussions following his death if he did not take action to try and secure the items for Robert in a legally binding way. A study of a sample of fifteenth-century Worcester wills by Christine Peters shows that the practice of charitable bequests like this was often shaped by gender. Whereas gifts of

¹¹² Furnivall (ed.), *The fifty earliest English wills*, pp. 101-2.

household linen and bedding were fairly commonplace for female testators, they were rare for men, who Peters maintains tended to focus instead on leaving legacies in the form of cash and corn.¹¹³ Given that Elmesley's detailed bequests are primarily household-based, Peters's findings would suggest that his will displays qualities that are more typically feminine than masculine. He assumed a sort of quasi-maternal care for his small charge by acting *in loco parentis* and lavishing him with parental affection. I would argue that this is further evidence of Robert's young age. His affection is also apparent through the devotional items that were to be passed on. Such a provision was not only an act of piety intended to benefit his soul but was also intended to aid the boy's spiritual welfare. Since Peters claims that piety was seen as a particularly female attribute throughout the later medieval period, this reinforces the feminised aspect of the will.¹¹⁴ Robert was bequeathed rosaries described as 'a peyre of bedes of siluer with a crucifix of siluer and y-gilt; also a payre bedes of blak gaudys of siluer & gilt, & a ryng ther-on with clippynge of ij handes, siluir & gilt' and a devotional text, namely 'a prymer for to serve god with'.¹¹⁵ Women often kept their wedding rings on sets of beads that acted as rosaries, so it is possible that the penultimate item was one with a particularly high sentimental value for the testator that had originally belonged to his wife.¹¹⁶

Robert himself was subsequently 'bequeathed' to Symkyng Browning, clerk of the parish, who was also appointed one of the will's two executors, alongside the chantry priest of the church. By choosing these two individuals as the executors, Elmesley's entire estate, which included his young charge, was explicitly linked to his parish church. By making this connection he attempted to ensure that Robert would continue to be raised in a Christian household, as befitted a 'goddis-child'. Robert seems to have been identified as a very vulnerable individual. He was a minor and seems to have had no family of his own. This is emphasised by the fact that one of the main functions of the will was to guarantee protection for the boy, as official arrangements were made to pass him into trustworthy hands. Elmesley

¹¹³ C. Peters, *Patterns of piety: women, gender and religion in late medieval and reformation England* (Cambridge, 2003), pp. 52-3. See also P.H. Cullum, 'And hir name was Charitie': charitable giving by and for women in late medieval Yorkshire', in P.J.P. Goldberg (ed.), *Woman is a worthy wight: women in English society c.1200-1500* (Stroud, 1992), pp. 182-211.

¹¹⁴ Peters, *Patterns of piety*, p. 45.

¹¹⁵ Furnivall (ed.), *The fifty earliest English wills*, p. 102.

¹¹⁶ Peters, *Patterns of piety*, p. 50.

apparently cared for Robert throughout his lifetime and was determined to provide for his continued welfare. The extent of the boy's dependency on him seems to have been his main concern. Like any parent, this fifteenth-century testator was keen to protect a child that he had taken responsibility for. Since Robert's young age and vulnerable status may account for the high level of his dependency, we can speculate that other older and non-orphan children living at home with their parents may not have been placed in quite so dependent a position.

Other probate evidence reveals that some young people living at home may have lacked agency because they had to fulfil conditions imposed upon their inheritances. In 1447, one William Stevenes left to his brother's daughter Joan ten pounds and a covered silver bowl on the condition that she would only receive these gifts if his executors deemed her to be well-governed. He made a similar stipulation in relation to a bequest of one hundred shillings to another young person, Richard Hayker, who was only to benefit if he was 'well governed at the schools at Oxford'. In this instance, the testator's primary concern was for the inculcation of proper etiquette and education in this young male and female.¹¹⁷ As such, Stevenes was influential. If the young people did not behave in a way that he expected them to, they were to be punished by being prevented from receiving financial and material rewards. Another testator left instructions regarding inheritance that had implications for a young man's future choice of career. In 1486, Thomas Mershe left his godson a bed and canopy, a silver cup, six silver spoons, a dozen pewter vessels, a pot, a dish and a spit. He specified that these items were to remain in the custody of the boy's parents until he entered the priesthood. Mershe left an additional ten marks to enable him to attend the schools he was required to in order to become a priest.¹¹⁸ This young person seems to have been financially dependent on his benefactor and was therefore bound to comply with his wishes. A similar level of control was also evident in the will of John Garner. In 1558, he bequeathed five marks each to his two grandsons, Walter and John Whittinall, provided that they would continue to 'serve and dwell' with

¹¹⁷ F.W. Weaver (ed.), *Somerset medieval wills, 1383-1500*, Somerset Record Society, 16 (1901), pp. 157-9.

¹¹⁸ Weaver (ed.), *Somerset medieval wills, 1383-1500*, pp. 262-3.

his wife Agnes until they reached eighteen years of age.¹¹⁹ The implication from this gift is that it was common for boys to have left the natal home by the age of eighteen. In this instance, their grandfather was apparently trying to prevent this from happening by rewarding them financially for staying on. The evidence from this sample of testamentary records suggests that young males and females residing at home were in a dependent position and that the extent of their dependency varied according to age and vulnerability.

In the cultural context of fifteenth- and sixteenth-century England, a nuclear pattern of householding was the norm. This involved people leaving home to establish a new, independent household upon marriage.¹²⁰ Young people who left home prior to marriage usually did so in order to enter a period of service. I will explore this social phenomenon in more detail in Chapter Two. For the moment, I want to discuss how fluctuating opportunities in service affected incidences of young people remaining at home. Goldberg's research into service in fourteenth- and fifteenth-century Yorkshire suggests that higher proportions of young people in the countryside may have continued to reside at home until marriage in comparison to young people from towns and that service was particularly prominent in urban areas.¹²¹ Given that this thesis has an urban focus, I am most interested in Goldberg's findings about potential differences between the experiences of the sexes. He argues that from the decades after the Black Death until the later fifteenth century, male and female servants were roughly equally common in urban society. This means that boys and girls would have been just as likely to leave home before marriage during this period. However, he maintains that from the late fifteenth century onwards, there was a reaction against the employment of female servants in craft workshops caused by economic recession and demographic pressure.¹²² As female service became increasingly associated with unskilled, domestic work, the status of female servants declined. Goldberg suggests that as a consequence, fewer daughters of the social elite or of middling status would have left home prior to marriage. Katherine Harper, aged sixteen,

¹¹⁹ F.W. Weaver (ed.), *Somerset medieval wills, 1531-1558*, Somerset Record Society, 21 (1905), p. 218.

¹²⁰ See Goldberg, *Medieval England*, pp. 18-20; Wrightson, *Earthly necessities*, p. 33.

¹²¹ P.J.P. Goldberg, *Women, work and life cycle in a medieval economy: women in York and Yorkshire, c.1300-1520* (Oxford, 1992), p. 159; Goldberg, *Medieval England*, p. 23.

¹²² Goldberg, *Medieval England*, pp. 206, 215.

may have been one such individual. Katherine lived and worked in a lodging-house owned by her father Robert in York. When she acted as a witness in a matrimonial suit made before the York Consistory in 1556, she claimed that she 'hathe nothings of har owne proper good[es]'. Her subordinate position and dependence on her father was affirmed by a summation of the young woman made by another deponent, Robert Parkinson. He described her in negative terms as 'but a wench at her father's commandment' who had 'nothing but her father doth give her'.¹²³ Constance and Joan Patenson were in a comparable position. According to the Canterbury Census from 1563, these sisters, aged twenty-two and eighteen respectively, lived and worked at the alehouse run by their father, John. They also relied on their father to provide their livelihoods.¹²⁴ Goldberg believes that as opportunities for women to support themselves outside of marriage were reduced, women became more dependent on marriage and there was a reduction in their marriage ages as the sixteenth century progressed.¹²⁵ This accords with Vivian Brodsky Elliot's finding that between 1598 and 1619, seventy-three per cent of higher status London girls, who could afford to marry by licence, were living at home at the time of their marriages.¹²⁶ It also buttresses Richard Wall's finding based on evidence from parish listings between 1599 and 1831 that daughters were more likely to remain at home than sons.¹²⁷

In order to gain greater insight into the extent to which parents controlled the lives of those children that resided with them at home, I am going to explore how far fathers and mothers influenced their sons' and daughters' decisions about courtship and marriage and consider the way in which this may have affected their ability to exercise agency and develop independently. Some historians of the pre-modern era have debated the degree of freedom and initiative that young people

¹²³ York, BI, CP.G.599: Robert Parkinson v. Alice Bywell [Validity, 1556].

¹²⁴ P. Clark and J. Clark, 'The social economy of the Canterbury suburbs: the evidence of the census of 1563', in A. Detsicas and N. Yates (eds), *Studies in modern Kentish history* (Maidstone, 1983), p. 66.

¹²⁵ Goldberg, *Women, work and life cycle*, p. 201. Cf. C. Donahue Jr., 'Female plaintiffs in marriage cases in the court of York in the later Middle Ages: what can we learn from the numbers?', in S. Sheridan Walker (ed.), *Wife and widow in medieval England* (Ann Arbor, 1993), pp. 183-213 (pp. 196, 198, 202-5); F. Pedersen 'Demography in the archives: social and geographical factors in fourteenth-century York cause paper marriage litigation', *Continuity and Change*, 10:3 (1995), p. 420.

¹²⁶ V. Brodsky Elliot, 'Single women in the London marriage market', in R.B. Outhwaite (ed.), *Studies in the social history of marriage* (London, 1981), pp. 81-100 (pp. 90-100).

¹²⁷ R. Wall, 'Leaving home and the process of household formation in pre-industrial England', *Continuity and Change*, 2:1 (1987), pp. 92-7.

had in courtship and in arranging their marriages. Whilst these medievalists and early modernists have all drawn upon evidence from records and patterns of matrimonial litigation from the church courts, they have reached no consensus about its implications. On the basis of evidence from an ecclesiastical register from fourteenth-century Ely, Michael Sheehan argues that there was an 'astonishingly individualistic approach' to marriage formation in the diocese.¹²⁸ Some medievalists identify changes over time. Helmholz attributes the reduction in the volume of matrimonial actions between the thirteenth and sixteenth centuries – particularly the decline in multi-party litigation from the mid-sixteenth century onwards – to a gradual adoption of more settled attitudes and habits in relation to marriage, which meant that fewer marriages became open to challenge.¹²⁹

Goldberg also argues for change over time but believes that different reasons were behind a shift in matrimonial litigation patterns. He analyses evidence from the Consistory Court in York to suggest that in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries the number of women acting as plaintiffs before the church courts is representative of increased female agency at this time. He also identifies a difference in the type of litigation found most frequently in rural and urban localities – namely more marriage enforcements arising from under-age or forced marriages in rural areas and more betrothal disputes in urban areas. He uses this finding to suggest that women in towns had more freedom than women in the countryside who were more heavily influenced by their family and kin.¹³⁰ Goldberg argues that a decline in multi-party litigation (which often represented betrothal disputes) from the mid-fifteenth century onwards is indicative of young people's reduced freedom of initiative in courtship. He maintains that the decrease in the number of disputes and in the amount of litigation resulted from a reduction of instances whereby young people acted on their own initiative without parental consent.¹³¹ He also believes it was due to women becoming more dependent upon marriage from the later fifteenth century onwards because an unfavourable economic climate reduced opportunities for them to support themselves outside of

¹²⁸ M.M. Sheehan, 'The formation and stability of marriage in fourteenth-century England: evidence of an Ely register', *Mediaeval Studies*, 33 (1971), pp. 228-63 (p. 263).

¹²⁹ Helmholz, *Marriage litigation*, pp. 25, 58, 167-8.

¹³⁰ P.J.P Goldberg, 'Gender and matrimonial litigation in the church courts in the later Middle Ages: the evidence of the court of York', *Gender & History*, 19:1 (2007), pp. 43-59 (p. 48).

¹³¹ See P.J.P. Goldberg, 'Debate: fiction in the archives: the York cause papers as a source for later medieval social history', *Continuity and Change*, 12:3 (1997), pp. 425-45.

marriage, which meant that they were increasingly reluctant to challenge marriages before the courts.¹³²

McSheffrey also suggests that there was a tightening of marriage supervision in the later fifteenth century as a result of economic contraction and a reduction in employment opportunities and independence for young women. She believes that a more conservative approach to marital strategies for daughters was facilitated by the development of civic Christianity and a greater concern for disorder and misbehaviour – which increased patriarchal authority – that emerged at this time. Using evidence from the London Consistory Court in the late fifteenth century, McSheffrey maintains that parents and employers played a significant role in young people's marriages.¹³³ She argues that third-party consent from parents or those acting *in loco parentis* was implicit for many, particularly young women. In around eighty percent of the cases heard, she identifies that it was females who claimed to have stipulated this condition before they would agree to contract. She suggests that some young women may have manipulated this to their advantage to get out of unappealing matches. However, she believes that in other instances it simply shows how young women were more reliant on the advice and involvement of others than young men, who were brought up to be comparatively more decisive and independent.¹³⁴ McSheffrey notes that whilst some young people exercised free choice over their marriages, most consulted and obtained permission from their family.¹³⁵ She is also aware of potential differences according to social rank. Below the level of the aristocracy, she argues that marriages were more than just an economic, political and social alliance and took into consideration other factors like sexual attraction and emotional attachment.¹³⁶

Not all medievalists have reached comparable conclusions. Although Charles Donahue Jr.'s quantitative study of fourteenth- and fifteenth-century church court records from York also reveals a smaller number of female plaintiffs trying to

¹³² Goldberg, *Women, work and life cycle*, pp. 339-40.

¹³³ S. McSheffrey, *Marriage, sex and civic culture in late medieval London* (Philadelphia, 2006), pp. 7-9.

¹³⁴ See McSheffrey, *Marriage, sex and civic culture*, pp. 88, 90, 92.

¹³⁵ See McSheffrey, *Marriage, sex and civic culture*, pp. 109-10.

¹³⁶ McSheffrey, *Marriage, sex and civic culture*, p. 19.

enforce marriage contracts in the fifteenth century, his interpretation of this evidence is very different from Goldberg's interpretation. Donahue believes that this reduction reflects how single women had an improved status and became less dependent on marriage in the fifteenth century and were therefore less likely to want or need to enforce marriages before the courts.¹³⁷ His hypothesis about the fourteenth century was followed by Frederik Pedersen. Pedersen explicitly challenges Goldberg's idea of matrimonial freedom for women from the later fourteenth century. Using comparable evidence from the York Consistory Court, he argues that the high number of female plaintiffs visible in fourteenth-century litigation in comparison to men indicates that women were most anxious to preserve or uphold marriage. He believes this was because they lacked economic security and were vulnerable without it.¹³⁸

Those medievalists who have explored the nature of marriage at gentry level have also not reached any agreement about its features and characteristics. In the early 1920s, H.S. Bennett drew upon evidence from the Paston correspondence to argue that gentry marriage in the fifteenth century was primarily a business proposition that made little to no reference to the individuals concerned.¹³⁹ In a study of the Paston women's marriages, Anne Haskell agrees that there was little regard for daughters' personal choice.¹⁴⁰ She suggests that there may have been a double standard based on gender whereby men who exercised more freedom of choice may not have had to fear the same penalties from their families as women who did so.¹⁴¹ Keith Dockray takes a more moderate approach to argue that a 'complexity of motives' led to gentry marriages in the fifteenth century. Whilst he identifies numerous examples of 'blatantly materialistic and impersonal marriages', he also demonstrates how some matches reflected both personal and material considerations.¹⁴² Like Haskell, Dockray highlights the potential for different

¹³⁷ Donahue, 'Female plaintiffs in marriage cases in the court of York', pp. 183-213 (pp. 196, 198, 202-5). For Donahue's more recent position see C. Donahue Jr., *Law, marriage and society in the later Middle Ages: arguments about marriage in five courts* (Cambridge, 2008).

¹³⁸ Pedersen 'Demography in the archives', pp. 419-20. Goldberg responded to Pedersen with an article in the same journal. See Goldberg, 'Debate: fiction in the archives', pp. 425-45.

¹³⁹ H.S. Bennett, *The Pastons and their England* (Cambridge, 1922), p. 28.

¹⁴⁰ A.S. Haskell, 'Marriage in the Middle Ages: the Paston women on marriage in fifteenth-century England', *Viator*, 4 (1973), pp. 459, 466.

¹⁴¹ Haskell, 'Marriage in the Middle Ages', pp. 468-9.

¹⁴² K. Dockray, 'Why did the fifteenth-century English gentry marry? The Pastons, Plumpton and Stonors reconsidered', in M.E. Jones (ed.), *Gentry and nobility in later medieval England* (Gloucester, 1986), pp. 64-7, 76.

parental treatment according to gender, suggesting that the Paston daughters may have faced harsher treatment than the Paston sons.¹⁴³ Although Colin Richmond argues that affection was a common feature of established marriages amongst the fifteenth-century English gentry, he believes that for daughters and younger sons especially, concerns about land and money may have been the most prevalent in courtship.¹⁴⁴ He notes, for example, that marrying two wealthy widows enabled the 'penniless' second youngest Paston son, Edmund, to live like a gentleman.¹⁴⁵ He also maintains that for the Paston brothers, the marriage of their sister Anne to William Ylverton in 1477 was based on financial priorities, given that it was recorded that Ylverton would only have her 'iff she had hyr mony, and ellis nott'.¹⁴⁶ Whilst no overall consensus has been reached about the precise nature of gentry marriage, the collective implication from the historical scholarship is that young people at this social level were restricted in their marriage choices and that the extent of this restriction was further qualified according to their sex and birth order.

Like medievalists, early modernists have also reached no consensus about the degree of freedom or initiative afforded to young people in their courtships and marriages in the sixteenth century. On the basis of matrimonial contract litigation evidence, Ralph Houlbrooke argues that in the mid-Tudor period, middling rank couples had freedom to initiate and arrange marriages themselves and that affection and finances were both important matters.¹⁴⁷ Martin Ingram argues for change over time. He believes that the reduction in marriage contract cases between 1570 and 1640 reflects a social and cultural acceptance of the principle that solemnisation in church was the only satisfactory mode of entry into marriage.¹⁴⁸ Ingram maintains that the church's increasing efforts to punish clandestine marriage ceremonies at this time strengthened the hand of parents who wished to influence their children's choice of marriage partner.¹⁴⁹ However, he identifies variation according to social rank in this respect. Whereas he believes

¹⁴³ Dockray, 'Why did the fifteenth-century English gentry marry?', pp. 73-4.

¹⁴⁴ C. Richmond, *The Paston family in the fifteenth century: endings* (Manchester, 2000), pp. 19, 55.

¹⁴⁵ Richmond, *The Paston family in the fifteenth century*, p. 32.

¹⁴⁶ Richmond, *The Paston family in the fifteenth century*, p. 56.

¹⁴⁷ R.A. Houlbrooke, 'Matrimonial contract litigation', *Journal of Family History*, 10 (1985), pp. 339-52.

¹⁴⁸ M. Ingram, *Church courts, sex and marriage in England, 1570-1640* (Cambridge, 1987), pp. 192-3.

¹⁴⁹ Ingram, *Church courts, sex and marriage*, pp. 211-12.

that a certain tension between individual and family interests in marriage formation prevailed at higher social levels, he suggests that the norm at middling and lower social levels was for young people to take the initiative in finding, or responding to the advances of, a potential marriage partner.¹⁵⁰

Carlson agrees that the church courts became increasingly reluctant to enforce private espousals in the sixteenth century because people came to understand better the canon law requirements of marriage and fewer cases were litigated as a result.¹⁵¹ He uses evidence from church court records and literature to argue that in the sixteenth century, courtship was so monopolised by young people that parents did not take an active role in it and parental meddling was uncommon. He believes that this was particularly applicable to young people who lived away from home in service. Carlson maintains that once they had decided to court, young people of both sexes – at implicitly middling and lower social levels – had ‘enormous freedom’ to meet both publicly and privately.¹⁵² He notes that parental consultation often took place long after courtship had become serious but before hand-fasting occurred. He believes that the minimal extent of parental interference is represented by the fact that parents (or other kin) are only mentioned in about twenty-five percent of court cases. Carlson argues that when children married in their mid- to late twenties in parishes other than those in which their families lived then parents were not a vital part of their decision-making, consent was not deemed particularly relevant and the social effects of marriage were not vast enough to warrant much familial interference.¹⁵³ Richard Adair also identifies variations according to social rank. He argues that even amongst the aristocracy, children had a certain degree of choice with regard to their marriages. Lower down the social scale, he maintains that individual freedom of choice was commonplace and parental consent little more than a formality. Like Carlson, Adair believes that youthful initiative in courtship was facilitated by living away from home in service and being away from direct parental influence. He also draws attention to a gender difference because he believes young women may have been subject to more constraints than young men.¹⁵⁴

¹⁵⁰ Ingram, *Church courts, sex and marriage*, pp. 200-1.

¹⁵¹ E.J. Carlson, *Marriage and the English Reformation* (Oxford, 1994), pp. 121-2.

¹⁵² Carlson, *Marriage and the English Reformation*, pp. 107, 109-10.

¹⁵³ Carlson, *Marriage and the English Reformation*, pp. 119, 121-2.

¹⁵⁴ R. Adair, *Courtship, illegitimacy and marriage* (Manchester, 1996), pp. 134-6.

Other early modernists challenge the notion of freedom of choice for young people. Susan Amussen argues that in the early modern era, marriage was not just the business of the couple and household manuals stressed the ideal that children should heed their parents' advice in decisions. She believes that marriage was deemed too important to be left to the contracting parties because of its implications for wealth, character and position and so parents, friends and neighbours acted either to further or to prevent matches. Amussen maintains that the reason disputes over marriage contracts appear less frequently in the court records of the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries is because controls over courtship were more effectively exercised, meaning that litigation became less necessary.¹⁵⁵ Diana O'Hara uses deposition evidence from the diocese of Canterbury in the mid-sixteenth century to reach similar conclusions. She argues that individuals at the core and lesser ranks of society faced conservative and constraining pressures from extensive parental, kin and community controls and economic considerations.¹⁵⁶ She believes that family and community constraints operated against individual choice at every social level because marriages affected the social and economic standing and reputation of all families. Since these concerns were paramount, she maintains that much, if not all, individual expression was subject to external influences in mid-sixteenth century society. O'Hara illustrates her argument with deposition evidence which emphasises the significance of material considerations at the expense of personal attributes. She suggests that the fundamental concern for most courting couples was to get the economics of their marriage right.¹⁵⁷

This review of existing historical scholarship has highlighted some interesting issues that I intend to explore further. It has been variously suggested that the impact of gender, locality, social rank, birth order, residential circumstances and social and cultural changes over time may have affected the degree of freedom and initiative afforded to young people over their courtships and marriages in fifteenth- and sixteenth-century England. I am going to analyse male and female

¹⁵⁵ S.D. Amussen, *An ordered society* (Oxford, 1988), pp. 105-6, 108-9.

¹⁵⁶ D. O'Hara, "Ruled by my friends': aspects of marriage in the diocese of Canterbury, c.1540-1570", *Continuity and Change*, 6:1 (1991), pp. 9-41 (pp. 9-13).

¹⁵⁷ D. O'Hara, *Courtship and constraint: rethinking the making of marriage in Tudor England* (Manchester, 2000), pp. 13, 37, 41, 49, 220, 239.

experiences in two separate sub-sections to see how attitudes and experiences might have differed in accordance with these factors.

Parental Influence over Sons' Courtships and Marriages

A marriage case between Thomas Wulley and Margaret Isot, heard by the London Consistory in 1488, indicates the extent of parental influence over a son's courtship. Although we must remain aware that the case was shaped by Thomas's desire to prove to the court that he and Margaret were contracted to one another, deponents' statements provide insightful details. The case describes how seventeen years previously, in 1471, he was reported to the constable by his father for fornicating with Margaret. Since witnesses claimed that Margaret was at least thirty years old at the time of the litigation, it is reasonable to suggest that seventeen years earlier she would have been in her teens. Both Thomas's father and the couple's neighbours had suspected that they had been 'adhering to one another very suspiciously' for at least three months before they were reported. When Thomas's father informed the constable, he also told him that they would be found lying together in the house of John Cracow, a public house in the vicinity. According to the deposition of Cracow's wife Joan, the young couple had frequented their house 'many times before for the sake of drinking'. When the constable and other parish officers went in search of the pair, they discovered Thomas in a basement cellar 'wearing his doublet, with his gown around his head and his hose and shoes under his arm' and Margaret 'in the hall of the house untying and unlacing her clothes'. They were arrested and held in custody at the constable's house. There, Thomas was challenged about why he continued to meet Margaret even though it was not her father's will that he should have her as his wife. He supposedly replied curtly, 'For one purpose, to wed her'.¹⁵⁸

This case shows how a father attempted to influence his son's decisions about courtship, pre-marital sexual activity and marriage. Thomas's father appears to have disapproved of Margaret as his marriage partner and resorted to having the pair arrested in order to punish them for their continued interaction. Despite being

¹⁵⁸ Consistory Database: Thomas Wulley v. Margaret Isot, John Heth [18 December 1488; 4, 9 March 1489].

subject to parental regulation, Thomas was defiant. Irrespective of his father's disapproval, he seems to have been determined to continue seeing her and to engage in a pre-marital sexual relationship. Another witness, Margaret Baron, attested that Thomas's actions were also contrary to the approval of his mother. She reported that it was common knowledge amongst their neighbours that his mother had once found the couple lying naked in a bed together in Margaret's house. On making this discovery she allegedly confiscated Thomas's shoes and made him wear Margaret's, presumably in order to humiliate him in public.

A dichotomy is apparent in this case. On the one hand, the narrative implies that the ideal was for a father to control and restrict the pre-marital sexual activity of a young man. In some instances, parents were so keen to control their sons that they threatened them with disinheritance if they courted or tried to choose marriage partners who they did not approve of. This seems to have been the case for John Preston, residing with his parents in York in 1434. His father warned that if he married Joan, daughter of Thomas Lymber, 'he would never have a part of his goods and chattels'.¹⁵⁹ On the other hand, Thomas Wulley's resistance suggests that despite being subject to regulation, at least some young males exercised agency and refused to be controlled. The implication from the narrative is that he pursued interaction with Margaret under his own initiative and challenged both parental and parish authority in doing so. Even when he was openly confronted by the constable and faced with his father's objections, witnesses attested that regardless, he contracted marriage with her using words of future consent.

In another marriage case that came before the London Consistory in 1475, William Rote alleged that he had encountered coercion and had no freedom of choice over his marriage to Agnes Welles. He accused Agnes's father John of threatening him into marrying his daughter. John suspected William had violated Agnes by having a sexual relationship with her. William claimed that John had attempted to stab him with a dagger in order to force him to marry his daughter. The young man reported that it was the fear for his life, alongside the threat of being shamed before the Mayor and Aldermen, that compelled him to contract marriage.¹⁶⁰ The implication

¹⁵⁹ Goldberg, *Women, work and life cycle*, p. 247, note 152.

¹⁶⁰ S. McSheffrey, *Love and marriage in late medieval London* (Kalamazoo, 1995), pp. 81-2, case 19: Agnes Welles v. William Rote [10 March 1475].

is that William was punished for having initiated a pre-marital sexual relationship by ultimately being denied agency over his choice of marriage partner.

Other young men who lived at home appear to have had more freedom from their parents. Richard Egleton was able to have a sexual relationship with a female servant in his father's household in 1489.¹⁶¹ Similarly, in 1505, John Browne made pregnant Katherine Bronyng, a maidservant in his parents' household.¹⁶² Not only did the parents of these young men seem to have afforded their sons the freedom to engage in sexual relationships with their servants but the church courts also 'let off and dismissed' Richard Egleton and allowed John Browne to remain 'unpunished'.¹⁶³ The reason for this seemingly lax attitude from both parents and parish authorities is perhaps because, as I have discussed above, women in service in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries lacked social standing. As a consequence, they may not have been attributed as much significance as women of higher status, which potentially explains why sons living at home had opportunities to exploit them sexually and not face retribution.

At elite social levels, circumstances surrounding marriage negotiations can be used to indicate how much influence was exercised over young men of higher status. A number of examples drawn from the correspondence of fifteenth-century gentry families provide insight. In 1472, when William Stonor was aged about nineteen or twenty, his uncle Thomas Mull was involved in ongoing negotiations about a possible marriage to the widow Margaret Blounte. A priest was also enlisted as an intermediary to relay communications from the Stonor and Blounte households. Dockray argues that the making of a good business match was the priority in this instance.¹⁶⁴ Whilst we may never know how much agency William had in choosing Margaret, the involvement of his uncle and the priest shows that he was certainly subject to and dependent upon external influences.¹⁶⁵

¹⁶¹ E.M. Elvey (ed.), *The courts of the archdeaconry of Buckingham, 1483-1523*, Buckinghamshire Record Society, 19 (1975), p. 81, no. 112.

¹⁶² Elvey (ed.), *The courts of the archdeaconry of Buckingham, 1483-1523*, p. 207, no. 292.

¹⁶³ P.J.P. Goldberg (ed. and trans.), *Women in England c.1275-1525* (Manchester, 1995), pp. 95-6, 123.

¹⁶⁴ Dockray, 'Why did the fifteenth-century English gentry marry?', p. 69.

¹⁶⁵ C.L. Kingsford (ed.), *The Stonor letters and papers, 1290-1483*, 1, Camden Third Series, 29 (1919) pp. 127-8, letter 124: Thomas Mull to Thomas Stonor [1472].

Go-betweens also exercised influence over marriage negotiations in urban mercantile families like the Celys. In June 1481, when George Cely was in his early twenties, his older brother Richard informed him that he had become acquainted with one Ralph Dawlton's sister, whom he believed would be a suitable wife for George. Richard acted as an intermediary and seems to have been keen to procure a match. He reported persuasively: 'Sche ys as goodly a [y]eung whomane: as fayr, as whelbodyd and as sad as I se hony thys vij [y]eyr, and a good haythe. I pray God that hyt may be imprynted in yur mynd to sette yowr harte ther'. Whilst Richard encouraged George to make a decision in favour of the young woman, the implication from the correspondence is that it ultimately had to be his own choice. However, even if he was able to exercise some agency in this respect, it does not negate the possibility that his brother may have pressurised him to agree. That Richard took charge seems to be confirmed by the fact that at the time of writing, he had already commenced negotiations with the young woman's father without George's knowledge. He told him how 'hor father and I comende togydyr in the new orchard on Fryday laste, and [he] askyd me many qwestyonys ... and I toulde hym ... how I lykyd the [y]enge gentyllwhoman, and he commaunded me to whryte to yow and he whowlde gladly that hyt whor brohut abohut and that [y]e labyrde hyt betymys ...'.¹⁶⁶ Like a number of gentry marriages that Bennett and Dockray have identified as materialistically motivated, it would appear that the interests of Richard Cely and the girl's father were also primarily financial, given that no mention was made of love or affection on either side.¹⁶⁷ George seems to have been somewhat detached from the whole process, at least in its early stages.

Another young man with status who apparently was subject to a substantial level of parental influence over his marriage was Thomas Westow. In matrimonial litigation brought before the York Consistory when he was aged nineteen, Thomas alleged that in 1521, when he was twelve years old, his parents arranged for him to marry thirteen-year-old Isabel Parker. We can speculate that the reason they did so was because he was their first-born son and heir. As such, his parents may well have had a financial reason for pursuing the match. He claimed that his father and mother and another intermediary, John Robinson, persistently tried to persuade

¹⁶⁶ A. Hanham (ed.), *The Cely letters 1472-1488*, EETS, OS, 273 (1975), pp. 106-7, letter 117: Richard Cely to George Cely [4 June 1481].

¹⁶⁷ See Bennett, *The Pastons and their England*, p. 28; Dockray, 'Why did the fifteenth-century English gentry marry?', p. 65.

him to consent to a marriage with Isabel. Thomas alleged that his mother threatened that if he did not agree to have her 'she would be put to other service' – implicitly, Isabel would be free to become another man's wife. That he was opposed to his parents' choice of marriage partner is apparent from the testimony of William Ash, a deponent who claimed to have heard him say many times that he would never have Isabel as his wife.¹⁶⁸ Thomas may have tried to exercise agency against the will of his parents but the fact that the case came to court seven years later suggests that he was unsuccessful. Irrespective of his resistance, a marriage must have been contracted between the couple. The implication is that Thomas lacked freedom and initiative in courtship and was subject to the will of his parents.

Robert West occupied a comparable social position and also encountered parental influence. In a marriage case heard at the York Consistory in 1557, Robert alleged that he had been just seven years old when his parents arranged a contract between him and ten-year-old Elizabeth Beaumont. When he reached the age of fourteen, Elizabeth came to reside with him at his father's house. Witnesses for Robert claimed that during this time, they saw no signs that he consented to the match and reported that he and Elizabeth could not bear to be in each other's company. These deponents also stated that they never detected any familiarity, favour or consent between Robert and Elizabeth. Even though the depositions from these witnesses were shaped by the plaintiff's aim to convince the court that both he and Elizabeth were underage when they contracted marriage and did not consent to the union, this does not detract from the credibility of the details that the testimonies incidentally reveal within their particular social and cultural context. It is significant that it was once Robert reached the age of fourteen that he openly refused to have Elizabeth as his wife. This marked the onset of his canonical majority and his attainment of the age of discretion. The implication is that upon reaching this age he was able to make his own decisions about his choice of marriage partner despite the outcome his parents might have wanted. Robert was ultimately successful in his quest to have the marriage annulled on the grounds of the minority of both parties.¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁸ York, BI, CP.G.195: Thomas Westow v. Isabel Parker [Annulment minor, 1528], pp. 2-6.

¹⁶⁹ York, BI, CP.G.735: Robert West v. Elizabeth Beaumont [Annulment minor, 1557, plaintiff wins], pp. 2-8.

Parental Influence over Daughters' Courtships and Marriages

Correspondence from the Paston family provides insight into the experiences of some young women at gentry level. When Elizabeth Paston lived at home with her mother Agnes during the 1450s, Agnes was desperate to 'gette here a gode mariage' so that she could be 'delyueryd of' her daughter from her household.¹⁷⁰ Various letters indicate how mother and daughter had a tense relationship. Elizabeth, who was aged about twenty, reportedly suffered great distress and sorrow because of her mother's attitude and actions over a proposed marriage with Stephen Scrope, a disfigured widower who was aged over fifty and the fairly wealthy stepson of Sir John Falstaff.¹⁷¹ We can assume that the Paston family's desire to encourage the marriage was mercenary. Elizabeth's cousin, Elizabeth Clere, revealed that when she refused to consent, Agnes placed her in insolation and forbade her to speak to anyone in the household. Clere wrote to Elizabeth's brother John to report that 'sche was neuer in so gret sorow as sche is now-a-dayes; for she may not speke wyht no man, ho so euer come, ne may se ne speke wyht my man ne wyth seruantes of hir moderys'. Clere also alleged that Elizabeth routinely suffered physical abuse at the hands of her mother. She noted that since Easter, she had been 'betyn onys in [th]e weke or twyes, and som tyme twyes on o day, and hir hed broken in to or thre places'. This ill-treatment is indicative of a mother asserting control over a daughter who had tried to have a say over decisions that would shape her future. Haskell interprets her refusal to comply as 'a privilege' which she believes shows how 'freedom of choice was available to a determined woman'.¹⁷² I disagree. Given that she ultimately conceded and agreed to the marriage, I would argue that the extent of her agency was negligible. It would appear that she gave in to maternal pressure. This accords with Dockray's belief that Elizabeth finally gave her consent merely because she identified the marriage as the only means through which to escape her callous and unsympathetic mother.¹⁷³

¹⁷⁰ N. Davis (ed.), *The Paston letters and papers of the fifteenth century*, 2 (Oxford, 1976), pp. 253-4, letter 150: Margaret Paston to John Paston I [29 January 1453].

¹⁷¹ P. Hunt, *Fifteenth century England* (Pittsburgh, 1962), p. 131.

¹⁷² Haskell, 'Marriage in the Middle Ages', p. 467.

¹⁷³ Dockray, 'Why did the fifteenth-century English gentry marry?', pp. 70-1.

Other young gentry women may have been able to exercise a greater degree of personal choice over their marriage partner, but even then they were reliant on the involvement of others in the marriage negotiation process. In 1477, Margery Brews was in her mid-twenties and living at home with her parents when negotiations about a marriage with John Paston III took place. Bennett and Richmond both view the relationship between Margery and John as one based on love and affection and my analysis supports this view.¹⁷⁴ Her emotional attachment is apparent from the letters she sent to John on Valentine's Day. In these letters, she admits that she is desperate for an agreement to be reached and voices fears about John leaving her because the negotiations were so prolonged.¹⁷⁵ Irrespective of their emotional attachment, Margery and John depended upon the talks between their families being successful before they could make a formal commitment to one another. The Paston family delayed discussions in their attempt to get more money and ultimately Margery relied on her father agreeing to provide her with a dowry that the Pastons would deem acceptable. The two young people seem to have been detached from this process. Margery's mother wrote to John to lament her daughter's great distress over the situation. She recalled how she 'may neuer hafe rest nyght ner day' because of Margery 'callyng and cryeng vppon to bryng the saide mater to effecte'. That there was a struggle over the negotiations and that Margery's mother was keen for them to be overcome and result in a marriage is encapsulated in her analogy 'it is but a sympill oke that is cut down at the first stroke'.¹⁷⁶ The correspondence may well have been a part of a strategy to persuade the Pastons to accept a smaller dowry and to close the deal more quickly, but it still indicates how Margery lacked power over the actual arrangement of her marriage. At the beginning of the sixteenth century, Eleanor Pole may have been in a similar situation. Even if Eleanor had been able to choose Randolph Manwring of her own accord because of the 'great love and favour' that existed between them, she acknowledged that the whole issue of the marriage

¹⁷⁴ See Bennett, *The Pastons and their England*, pp. 46-8; Richmond, *The Paston family in the fifteenth century*, p. 19.

¹⁷⁵ N. Davis (ed.), *The Paston letters and papers of the fifteenth century*, 1 (Oxford, 1971), pp. 662-3, letters 415 and 416: Margery Brews to John Paston III [February 1477].

¹⁷⁶ Davis (ed.), *Paston letters*, 2, p. 435, letter 791: Dame Elizabeth Brews to John Paston III [February 1477].

rested with her father and 'in noe man els'.¹⁷⁷ Given that she was so dependent on her father in this respect, any freedom that she had potentially been afforded in her choice of partner was somewhat negated.

The young women at gentry level who acted with the most agency were those who contracted their marriages in secret. The best known example is Margery Paston's marriage to Richard Calle in 1469. At this time, she was nineteen years old and still living at home with her mother Margaret. That their relationship was characterised by tension can be inferred from the fact that her mother reported how they were both weary of one another within the household.¹⁷⁸ It was at this very time that Margery contracted a secret marriage with the manager of the Paston family's estate, Richard Calle. Richard was of a lower social status and was therefore deemed unsuitable by the Paston family.¹⁷⁹ Upon discovering the agreement between Margery and Richard, the Pastons organised for the Bishop of Norwich to examine them both. After extensive interrogations, the Bishop affirmed the validity of their marriage. Irrespective of familial opposition and pressure from the Bishop to remember 'how sche was born and wat kyn and frenddys þat sche had', Margery was defiant in voicing her commitment to Richard. She would not recant and was resolute in her belief that her promises to him stood firm despite the threats that she faced. Following the conclusion of the examination, the Paston family had no choice but to admit defeat.¹⁸⁰

Margery was a remarkably autonomous individual. She overcame extreme familial hostility to marry for love – as evidenced by her correspondence with Richard – and in the process conveniently escaped a tense residential situation with her mother.¹⁸¹ However, the effects were certainly not all positive. The Pastons had expected her to 'ful sore repent' and when she did not, they punished her severely for her 'leudnes'. Her mother cast her out of the family home and ordered her

¹⁷⁷ T. Stapleton (ed.), *The Plumpton correspondence*, Camden Society, OS, 4 (1839), pp. 191-3, letter 156: Germain Pole to Sir Robert Plumpton [1504] and letter 157: Germain Pole to Sir Robert Plumpton [10 November 1504].

¹⁷⁸ Davis (ed.), *Paston letters*, 1, pp. 338-9, letter 201: Margaret Paston to John Paston II [3 April 1469].

¹⁷⁹ Davis (ed.), *Paston letters*, 1, pp. 541-3, letter 332: John Paston III to John Paston II [7 April 1469].

¹⁸⁰ See Davis (ed.), *Paston letters*, 1, pp. 341-4, letter 203: Margaret Paston to John Paston II [10/11 September 1469].

¹⁸¹ Davis (ed.), *Paston letters*, 2, pp. 498-500, letter 861: Richard Calle to Margery Calle [close to 10/11 September 1469].

servants not to receive her there again. Whilst Margery faced social ostracisation, Richard retained his employment with the family. Haskell suggests that this double standard may have been because she was blamed for binding herself to a social inferior but Richard was not so condemned for marrying upwards in society. As I noted above, Haskell argues that there was variation according to gender in this respect as men may have had more freedom and did not have to fear the same penalties.¹⁸² Dockray also identifies a difference between the sexes by contrasting Margaret Paston's harsh treatment of her daughter Margery to her indulgent and enthusiastic attitude towards her son John III's pursuit of Margery Brews.¹⁸³ It is perhaps particularly because daughters were subject to extra restrictions and penalties that Margery's independence of action is so noteworthy. She displayed a great degree of freedom in forming her union with Richard without the knowledge and approval of her family.

For women below gentry level in the late fifteenth century, there is evidence to suggest that it was deemed desirable to obtain consent from parents before agreeing to make a marriage, even though this was not a requirement of canon law. A number of disputed marriage cases that came before the London Consistory show how some young women made promises of marriage on the condition of third-party consent. In 1487, Margaret Shepperd told Richard Tymond that she would only take him to be her husband if she could be sure of her father's consent, stating: 'I will do as my fader will have me, I will never have none ayenst my faders will'.¹⁸⁴ Agnes Parker was equally keen to secure the consent of her family before agreeing to marry John Pollyn. She informed her suitor that she would be governed by her parents and her kin and otherwise would not become his wife.¹⁸⁵ Maud Gyll also insisted upon having her parents' blessing before contracting marriage to twenty year-old Laurence Wyberd. The couple and the young woman's parents were together in their home when she declared that it would only be on the condition 'wyth my fadyrs leve and my modyr's' that she would agree to become Laurence's wife.¹⁸⁶

¹⁸² Haskell, 'Marriage in the Middle Ages', pp. 468-9.

¹⁸³ Dockray, 'Why did the fifteenth-century English gentry marry?', pp. 73-4.

¹⁸⁴ Consistory Database: Richard Tymond v. Margery Sheppard [28 May 1487; 27 June 1487; 22, 29 November 1487].

¹⁸⁵ Consistory Database: John Pollyn v. Agnes Parker [12 July 1487; 16, 26 November 1487].

¹⁸⁶ Consistory Database: Laurence Wyberd, John Austen v. Maude Gyll [17 November 1491].

As I discussed earlier, McSheffrey identifies that third-party consent for those young women who desired it could have been representative of two different things. On the one hand, she suggests that some young women may have cunningly used the condition of consent in order to escape potential marriages that were undesirable to them. On the other hand, she believes that the requirement for consent may be indicative of how young women were encouraged to seek the advice of others before making decisions.¹⁸⁷ Since Goldberg does not find such patterns of family or kin involvement and women refusing to act on initiative without parental consent within urban society in Yorkshire before the later fifteenth century, there is a real possibility that this was a significant social change.¹⁸⁸ McSheffrey argues that daughters experienced an increase in patriarchal authority and a tightening of marriage supervision at this time. Like Goldberg, she attributes this reduction in female agency to economic contraction and the consequent decrease in employment opportunities and independence for young women outside of marriage.¹⁸⁹ This accords with Amussen and O'Hara's observations about the extensive nature of parental control over courtship and marriage in the sixteenth century.¹⁹⁰

A number of examples drawn from disputed marriage cases in the late fifteenth and sixteenth centuries present fathers having the monopoly over the arrangement and enforcement of their daughters' marriages. The content of a marriage case between William Hawkins and Margaret Heed that was heard by the Consistory Court in London in 1488 is revealing on a number of levels. It suggests that the ideal was for a young woman to have the 'free libertie' to choose her own husband. According to her mother's deposition, Margaret's father and her uncle – the Prior of Hertford – told her that she should not agree to a match with William unless 'it comn of thyne own stomak'. Another witness claimed to have heard Margaret's father acknowledge that her uncle had asked him not to marry her off against her will. This request exemplifies how fathers were in the position to hold such power. However, it is possible that Margaret's father and uncle just paid lip-service to the notion of her consent. This can be inferred from the admission which

¹⁸⁷ See McSheffrey, *Marriage, sex and civic culture*, pp. 88, 90.

¹⁸⁸ See Goldberg, 'Debate: fiction in the archives', pp. 425-45.

¹⁸⁹ McSheffrey, *Marriage, sex and civic culture*, pp. 7-9.

¹⁹⁰ Amussen, *An ordered society*, p. 109; O'Hara, 'Ruled by my friends', pp. 9-13.

her father made in his deposition about having threatened and coerced his daughter into marriage by informing her: 'It is my will thou have [William], if thou have him not thou wilt never thrive'.

The testimonies of Margaret's mother and grandfather reveal that Margaret decided against William once the banns had been twice issued in the church and many preparations made for the marriage celebrations. Margaret claimed to have been compelled to marry William and ran away from her home to seek sanctuary with her grandfather. On being returned home, she was beaten by her father. Irrespective of this physical chastisement – which her mother claimed to have witnessed – she remained determined not to marry William and reportedly told her father 'I wil nevir have Hawkyngs'.¹⁹¹ Although Margaret exercised some agency in running away from home and trying to defy her father, this was counteracted by the fact that she and William subsequently contracted marriage. This indicates how she was ultimately obedient to her father and subject to his control. McSheffrey notes that both William and Margaret had reasonably elevated social status given that her father was an ironmonger and Citizen of London and William was a Citizen and salter.¹⁹² This may account for the high level of paternal and kin influence that Margaret had to contend with.

In a comparable matrimonial case at the Consistory Court in York in 1562, Maud Carr claimed that her parents forced her into marrying one Edward Burrell. Deponents who testified on her behalf reported that she suffered beatings from her father and only spoke the words of matrimony 'for fear of the displeasure of her father'. On the day the banns for her marriage were read, Maud was seen running into church at Evening Prayer, behaving as though she was out of her mind. She subsequently took to her bed ill and seized the opportunity to run away from home one day when her parents had gone to town. She then resided with her aunt and uncle for a month. According to her uncle's deposition, she wept bitterly about the situation daily during this time and claimed that she would rather drown herself than marry Edward. Maud's mother recalled that once her daughter returned home, even though she and her husband beat her in order to persuade her to love Edward and also threatened her with disinheritance, Maud remained

¹⁹¹ Consistory Database: William Hawkins v. Margaret Heed [17 June 1488].

¹⁹² McSheffrey, *Marriage, sex and civic culture*, p. 77.

defiant and bid her parents to give their goods where they wished. One young servant in the household, fourteen-year-old Christopher Bainbridge, reported how Maud hated Edward and refused to serve him at the table as her parents asked. Instead, he heard her make churlish declarations, telling her mother and father to give Edward the devil rather than food or drink. Despite her attempted defiance, however, she did not have the power to overrule her father and prevent him from inviting Edward into their house or making her keep Edward's company. It is apparent that Maud's protestations ultimately proved unsuccessful since she and Edward contracted marriage.¹⁹³ If she was coerced into this match with Edward then the marriage symbolises the extent to which she was controlled by her parents.

In 1572, Elizabeth Rawson, aged fifteen, claimed before the York Consistory that she was forced into a marriage with Richard Rawson by her mother and step-father. Her mother denied the accusation of compulsion in her deposition and counter-claimed that she had told her daughter to 'take whom she likes as her husband'. This reinforces the notion that freedom of choice was acknowledged to be the ideal. However, Elizabeth was adamant that she had been coerced. She reported that against her will her mother had insisted that she take Richard as her husband and that she only agreed because she feared her mother and her threats. She also alleged that her mother and step-father took her to the parish church unwittingly and whilst there, forced her to give her consent. Other deponents testified that it was common knowledge that the young woman was afraid of her parents and that the 'common voice and fame in the parish' was that Elizabeth married Richard because of fear.¹⁹⁴ Since the court ultimately ruled in favour of the plaintiff and upheld the validity of the marriage, the implication is that she had no say in her choice of husband and was constrained by being forced to live within a marriage entirely orchestrated by her parents.

The father of Elizabeth Craven seems to have been so determined to influence his daughter's choice of marriage partner that when she departed from his house in 1585 in the company of Robert Bower – a suitor he did not approve of – he reported the couple to the constable and had them arrested on suspicion of felony.

¹⁹³ York, BI, CP.G.1116: Edward Burrell v. Matilda Carr [Validity, 1562].

¹⁹⁴ York, BI, CP.G.1672: Richard Rawson v. Elizabeth Rawson [Validity, 1572, plaintiff wins].

Elizabeth may have acted with initiative in choosing Robert and deciding to keep his company but she faced fairly radical punishment as a consequence. Her father retained control, so she did not make much of the initial independence of her actions. He favoured a contract between his daughter and John Baily – perhaps for reasons financial and material – and it was the validity of that union which was eventually upheld by the York Consistory.¹⁹⁵

It was not a universal requirement for young women of non-elite status in the late fifteenth and sixteenth centuries to acquire the advice or consent of others. Some appear to have acted with more independence in making decisions without their parents' knowledge. Katherine Garington contracted marriage to William Yewle in 1493 at his master's house one afternoon without her parents being involved. One witness to the contract, Margaret Kyrkeby, claimed that the couple only explicitly considered the prospect of the girl's father being displeased after they had made their promises to one another. She recalled that after they had exchanged words of present consent, William said to Katherine, 'yff your fader be displesyd her after, I plyzt yow my trouth that ther shall never man mary yow withoute I geve you leve'.¹⁹⁶ The implication is that the girl chose William of her own accord and the couple arranged their marriage without parental interference. Other young women were openly defiant in their attitudes towards their fathers over their courtship and choice of marriage partner. One such individual was Katherine Hamerton. Whilst living with her parents, Katherine courted Matthew Usher in secret. A matrimonial case between Katherine and Matthew was heard in the York Consistory in 1562. One deponent testified that Katherine had claimed she would repel any suitors that her father brought to her because she was determined to have Matthew as her husband, even if her father disapproved. Matthew himself acknowledged that whilst it would have been desirable to have been granted her father's permission, he was prepared to marry her against her father's will.¹⁹⁷ Even though the marriage between them was ultimately rendered invalid by the court, the depositions still indicate how Katherine had been able to exercise agency by

¹⁹⁵ York, BI, CP.G.2173: Robert Bower v. Elizabeth Craven [Validity, 1585, defendant wins].

¹⁹⁶ Consistory Database: William Yewle, Thomas Grey v. Katherine Garington [4, 10, 19 November 1493; 17, 24 January 1494; 8, 13 March 1494; 8 May 1494].

¹⁹⁷ York, BI, CP.G.924: Matthew Usher v. Katherine Hamerton [Validity, 1562, defendant wins], pp. 6-8.

opting not to account for her father's influence in the courtship and marriage process.

This chapter has shown that whilst young people who lived at home in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries were dependent upon their parents, some were more so than others. Most had limited opportunities to exercise agency and to develop independently. This was further qualified according to their gender and social rank, as well as the social context in which they lived. At every social level, daughters were generally subject to a greater degree of parental influence than sons, especially from the later fifteenth century onwards. Individuals of both sexes from high status backgrounds were also under more parental control than those who came from middling and lower status families. I am now going to use my findings about life at home as a foundation upon which to ascertain and compare how dependency levels varied for young people who no longer resided with their parents.

Chapter Two

'Life Away From Home'

The most common reason young people of both sexes left home prior to marriage before the modern age was to take up positions as servants in other people's houses. Having established that there was a social and cultural understanding of adolescence in fifteenth- and sixteenth-century England, I now want to assess how lifecycle service fitted into a social system that recognised this concept. This chapter explores the nature and function of lifecycle service in adolescence and considers the extent to which it furthered the socialisation process. I have already shown how modern social-scientific researchers with an interest in adolescent development concur that the quest for autonomy – effectively becoming free from parental restraint and achieving control over one's own life – is a fundamental characteristic of the adolescent phase.¹ I consider the role service played in helping young people to prepare for their adult lives by exploring how far they were afforded a greater degree of agency as they lived away from their parents.

Service became particularly popular in the aftermath of the Black Death as a means of harnessing cheap and dependent labour when there was a shortage of workers and wages were high.² As I have discussed in Chapter One, Goldberg argues that up until the late fifteenth century, young males and females would have been equally likely to leave home to go into service, but those who were from towns and cities would have been more likely to do so than those from rural areas.³ Goldberg identifies a shift in the late fifteenth century whereby the employment of male servants came to be favoured over female servants in artisanal households. He believes this led to a reduction in the status of female servants which in turn would have meant that fewer girls were permitted to leave home before marriage to enter service.⁴ Houlbrooke's study of the early modern family provides evidence of a further decline in the status of female service in the sixteenth and seventeenth

¹ M.D. Zimmer-Gembeck and W.A. Collins, 'Autonomy development during adolescence', in G.R. Adams and M.D. Berzonsky (eds), *Blackwell handbook of adolescence* (Oxford, 2003), pp. 176-7, 188, 192; J.C. Coleman and L.B. Hendry, *The nature of adolescence* (3rd edn, London, 1999), pp. 74-5; A. France, *Understanding youth in late modernity* (Buckingham, 2007), pp. 34-6; P. Noller and V. Callan, *The adolescent in the family* (London, 1991), pp. 4-16.

² P.J.P. Goldberg, *Medieval England: a social history, 1250-1550* (London, 2004), pp. 166, 170.

³ P.J.P. Goldberg, *Women, work and life cycle in a medieval economy: women in York and Yorkshire, c.1300-1520* (Oxford, 1992), p. 159; Goldberg, *Medieval England*, p. 23.

⁴ Goldberg, *Medieval England*, pp. 206, 215.

centuries.⁵ Since Goldberg maintains that employment in service allowed women to exercise agency and enabled them not to have to be so reliant on marriage, the implication is that these opportunities would also have been significantly reduced once it was no longer deemed a suitable option for unmarried daughters.⁶

During the sixteenth century, demographic growth influenced the attitudes of local and national authorities towards service in relation to poor youngsters. The English population increased from approximately 2.4 million in 1520 to approximately 3.6 million in 1581.⁷ Social concern about the activities and prospects for young people magnified as there was a greater proportion of children and adolescents in society but insufficient employment to support them.⁸ As the sixteenth century progressed, poverty became a significant social problem. Authorities at both local and national level were alarmed by the development of vagrancy and were keen to prevent streets and highways becoming littered by 'wanderers': able-bodied, idle, rootless young people, outside the disciplines of household and community.⁹ Although, as Bennett shows, the concept of 'compulsory service' can be traced back to the Ordinance of Labourers, issued in 1349 as a reaction to the social and economic pressures caused by the Black Death, it only made a reappearance in legislation from the 1530s onwards.¹⁰ According to the 1536 Poor Law Act, authorities in every parish were authorised to take all healthy begging individuals aged five to fourteen and apprentice them to masters so that they would have a living once they came of age. Older children aged twelve to sixteen who refused to go into service were to be whipped at the discretion of the authorities. The 1547 Poor Law Act stipulated that young wandering beggars could be taken away by anyone in the parish and kept until they reached the age of twenty if they were female, or twenty-four if they were male. If they tried to escape they were to be bound in chains and kept as slaves until they came of age.¹¹ The

⁵ R.A. Houlbrooke, *The English family, 1450-1700* (London, 1984), pp. 172-3.

⁶ P.J.P. Goldberg, 'Marriage, migration, servanthood and life-cycle in Yorkshire towns of the later Middle Ages: some York case paper evidence', *Continuity and Change*, 1:2 (1986), pp. 141-69. See also Goldberg, *Women, work and life cycle*, ch. 5 (p. 201).

⁷ K. Wrightson, *Earthly necessities: economic lives in early modern Britain, 1470-1750* (London, 2002), p. 121.

⁸ M.K. McIntosh, *Controlling misbehaviour in England, 1370-1600* (Cambridge, 2002), p. 166.

⁹ Wrightson, *Earthly necessities*, pp. 147-8.

¹⁰ See J.M. Bennett, 'Compulsory service in late medieval England', *Past and Present*, 209:1 (2010), pp. 7-51.

¹¹ I. Pinchbeck, 'The state and the child in sixteenth-century England', *British Journal of Sociology*, 7:4 (1956), p. 277.

Statute of Artificers in 1563 made service compulsory for any unmarried woman over the age of eleven and younger than forty and bound boys and young men to apprenticeships that could not end before they reached the age of twenty-four. The 1576 'Acte for the setting of the Poore on Worke and for the Avoyding of Ydlenes' gave local authorities the express power to bind daughters of the poor in service until the age of eighteen and sons until the age of twenty-four. The Poor Law of 1598 repeated the command for youth to be spent in a controlled period of service or apprenticeship.¹² As McIntosh argues, this meant that from the 1530s onwards, local authorities became increasingly concerned about poor young people who had not taken positions as servants outside their family. They were eager for such individuals to be removed from their parental homes and placed in service.¹³ Magistrates and moralists were determined to maintain the stability of their local communities and emphasised the need to control and manage the upbringing of poor young male and female members.¹⁴

Historians of the pre-modern era who discuss the ages at which young people left home to enter service identify fairly consistent figures across the fourteenth, fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. On the basis of evidence for the ages of servants who acted as witnesses before the Consistory Court in York in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, Goldberg argues that most were aged between twelve and twenty-eight.¹⁵ This supports the idea that children went into service when they were deemed to have reached the age of discretion in accordance with canon-legal conventions – at the age of twelve for girls and fourteen for boys – and left service at the point of marriage.¹⁶ A study of the 1523 Coventry census by Charles Pythian-Adams highlights the ages of fourteen and sixteen as the typical ages at which apprenticeships began and suggests that many female servants were under the age of fifteen.¹⁷ McIntosh draws evidence from the 1562 Romford parish listing to suggest that fifteen was the most common age of entry into service. The prevalence of service in this urban locality is emphasised by her finding that only seventeen

¹² P. Griffiths, 'Tudor troubles: problems of youth in Elizabethan England', in S. Doran and N.L. Jones (eds), *The Elizabethan world* (Abingdon, 2011), pp. 320-1.

¹³ P. Clark and J. Clark, 'The social economy of the Canterbury suburbs: the evidence of the census of 1563', in A. Detsicas and N. Yates (eds), *Studies in modern Kentish history* (Maidstone, 1983), p. 66.

¹⁴ McIntosh, *Controlling misbehaviour*, p. 4.

¹⁵ Goldberg, *Women, work and life cycle*, pp. 168-74.

¹⁶ Goldberg, *Medieval England*, p. 21.

¹⁷ See C. Pythian-Adams, *Desolation of a city: Coventry and the urban crisis of the late Middle Ages* (Cambridge, 1979), pp. 221-37.

percent of the households listed in the register had children of communicant age living at home. She also shows that in Havering, Essex entry into service occurred at any time between the ages of ten and twenty and lasted until the age of twenty-six for women and twenty-seven, -eight or -nine for men.¹⁸ From his analysis of the 1599 Ealing parish register, Wall suggests that offspring left home in such numbers that fewer than half of those aged between fifteen and nineteen were still resident with their parents in comparison to those aged between ten and fourteen.¹⁹ He describes adolescence as being characterised by mass movement from the parental home. His research indicates that more than four in ten females and seven in ten males between the ages of fifteen and twenty-four were servants, just over a quarter of all men aged between twenty-five and twenty-nine headed a household, and only sixteen percent of women aged twenty to twenty-four were married to a household head.²⁰ The implication from this data is that sons were more likely to go into service than daughters and that marriage was more likely to occur after the age of twenty-nine for males and the age of twenty-four for females than it was before. Taken collectively, the figures that these medievalists and early modernists highlight indicate that the youngest servants would have been little more than children and the oldest ready to marry and set up their own independent households.²¹

As I have explained earlier, historians of the pre-modern era have reached no agreement about the specific role and function of service in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. On one side of the debate, medievalists and early modernists like Goldberg, Yarborough, Ben-Amos and Carlson argue that a period of service represented a semi-autonomous transitional time which bridged the gap between childhood and adulthood. They believe that it was significant for marking departure from the natal home, affording young people a degree of freedom from their parents, promoting independence and acting as a formative period of essential preparation for adult life.²²

¹⁸ M.K. McIntosh, 'Servants and the household unit in an Elizabethan English community', *Journal of Family History*, 9:1 (1984), pp. 9, 11.

¹⁹ R. Wall, 'Leaving home and the process of household formation in pre-industrial England', *Continuity and Change*, 2:1 (1987), p. 91.

²⁰ Wall, 'Leaving home and the process of household formation', p. 81.

²¹ Goldberg, *Medieval England*, p. 21.

²² See Goldberg, 'Marriage, migration, servanthood and life-cycle', pp. 141-69. See also Goldberg, *Women, work and life cycle*, ch. 5; P.J.P. Goldberg, 'Masters and men in later medieval England', in D.

Some scholars who support this idea focus more specifically on the degree of freedom and initiative in courtship and marriage that service gave young people. I have already mentioned how Goldberg argues that from the mid-fourteenth to late fifteenth century, employment opportunities in service enhanced the independence of young women, gave them more choice over who they married and when they married, if at all. He believes that the situation changed for young women in the late fifteenth and sixteenth century as employment opportunities were eroded, these benefits were lost and girls became less independent as a consequence.²³ McSheffrey also argues that those who lived away from home in service had comparatively more freedom in their marriage choices than those who married younger and more closely under parental supervision.²⁴ Her finding that parents and employers in late fifteenth-century London were influential in the marriages of the young accords with Goldberg's notion of change over time.²⁵

Some early modernists maintain that service continued to boost freedoms in their period. O'Hara argues that in the sixteenth century, service enhanced young people's opportunities for meeting one another and entering into sexual liaisons and decreased the level of supervision their courtships were subject to.²⁶ Carlson agrees that young people who lived away from home in service had much opportunity to meet both publicly and privately. Moreover, he maintains that whilst they resided at a distance, parents did not play a vital role in their marriage decision-making.²⁷ Adair also attributes young people's ability to assume initiative in courtship to them living away from direct parental influence. He identifies a

Hadley (ed.) *Masculinity in medieval Europe* (New York, 1998), pp. 56-70; A. Yarborough, 'Apprentices as adolescents in sixteenth-century Bristol', *Journal of Social History*, 13:1 (1979), pp. 67-81; McIntosh, 'Servants and the household unit', pp. 3-23; E.J. Carlson, *Marriage and the English Reformation* (Oxford, 1994), pp. 107-10, 116, 140.

²³ See Goldberg, *Women, work and life cycle*, ch. 5; Goldberg, 'Marriage, migration, servanthood and life-cycle', pp. 141-69. Hanawalt also recognises the potential connections between economic opportunity, marriage and parental control. See also B.A. Hanawalt, 'Historical descriptions and prescriptions for adolescence', *Journal of Family History*, 17:4 (1992), p. 346.

²⁴ McSheffrey, *Marriage, sex and civic culture in late medieval London* (Philadelphia, 2006), p. 18.

²⁵ McSheffrey, *Marriage, sex and civic culture*, p. 7.

²⁶ D. O'Hara, 'Ruled by my friends': aspects of marriage in the diocese of Canterbury, c.1540-1570', *Continuity and Change*, 6:1 (1991), p. 17. See also D. O'Hara, *Courtship and constraint: rethinking the making of marriage in Tudor England* (New York, 1999), p. 123.

²⁷ Carlson, *Marriage and the English Reformation*, p. 140.

gender variation in this respect because he believes that young women may have been rather more constrained than young men.²⁸

Scholars on the other side of the debate about the nature and function of service argue that it was devised to act as an effective control mechanism that led to the subordination of young males and young females. Medievalists like Hovland, Barron and Spindler and early modernists like Thomas, Griffiths, Coster, Rappaport and Wallis all subscribe to the notion that service prolonged social infancy. They maintain that service was not characterised by the enhancement of various freedoms for the young but rather by dependency and subjection to adult control, paternalistic power, strict rules and regulations and the suppression of youthful recreations.²⁹

I want to explore how far service perdured during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries because it accorded with a social system that recognised adolescence. I question if service evolved into a social mechanism that trained and socialised the young in preparation for adulthood, or whether it was intended to control and discipline them and prolong the period of time they spent in a dependent, subordinate and child-like status. I am interested in discovering how a period of service affected the amount of agency young people were able to exercise as they lived away from home and the extent to which it thereby enhanced their progress towards the independence of adulthood. In doing so, I engage with the existing historiographical debate. Scholarship has suggested that experiences in service might have differed according to age, gender and social status and because of social and cultural changes over time. Throughout my analysis, I take into account the potential effects of each of these dynamics.

²⁸ R. Adair, *Courtship, illegitimacy and marriage in early modern England* (Manchester, 1996), p. 134.

²⁹ See S.R. Hovland, 'Apprentices in the records of the Goldsmiths' Company of London, 1444-1500', *Medieval Prosopography: History and Collective Biography*, 22 (2001), pp. 89-114; C.M. Barron, 'The child in medieval London: the legal evidence', in J.T. Rosenthal (ed.), *Essays on medieval childhood: responses to recent debates* (Donnington, 2007), pp. 49-53; E.D. Spindler, 'Youth and old age in late medieval London', *The London Journal*, 36:1 (2011), pp. 1-10, 18-19; K.V. Thomas, 'Age and authority in early modern England', *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 62 (1976), pp. 214-20; P. Griffiths, *Youth and authority: formative experiences in England, 1560-1640* (Oxford, 1996), ch. 2; P. Wallis, 'Apprenticeship and training in pre-modern England', *Journal of Economic History*, 68:3 (2008), pp. 832-61; P. Wallis, C. Webb and C. Minns, 'Leaving home and entering service: the age of apprenticeship in early modern London', *Continuity and Change*, 25:3 (2010), pp. 377-404.

I begin by discussing some of the ideas that revolved around servants and apprentices in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. I examine the presentation of young males and young females in service in a selection of apprenticeship indentures, poems and extracts from instructional literature. I then move on to consider the function of service in social practice. I bear in mind the extent to which it appears that the ideologies identified shaped social practice. To determine young people's experiences in service, I explore how far the master/servant relationship was defined by an adult desire to socialise or infantilise the young, by drawing upon evidence from probate records, legal records and depositions made before the Consistory Courts in London and York. I also consider how much influence masters and mistresses, who acted *in loco parentis*, had over the courtships and marriages of those older servants and apprentices under their care. I question if service gave youngsters more opportunities to act with autonomy than those who continued to reside at home with their parents. I use correspondence from gentry families to compare the experiences of young people at elite social levels. These letters provide a window into how far young males and females of elevated social status living away from home were able to achieve emancipation from parental constraints and how far their fathers and mothers continued to exercise influence over their lives even at a distance. Considering each of these issues allows me to assess if a period of service and living away from home functioned to further the socialisation process from childhood to adulthood and to establish how much this was subject to variation.

Ideas about Males in Service

A number of apprenticeship indentures that survive from the fourteenth, fifteenth and sixteenth centuries highlight the conditions under which some young males contracted to a period of service. Accordingly, they offer an indication of the way in which guilds supposed male apprentices should conduct themselves. In 1371, Nicholas Kynghlay was apprenticed to a bower named John de Bradley in York for a period of seven years under various conditions. Nicholas was obliged to perform his master's orders, keep his secrets and counsel and warn him of any potential threats to his livelihood. He was also forbidden from causing his master any loss worth six pence per year or more and from wasting or lending his master's goods.

Limitations were also imposed upon his social life. He was expressly prohibited from playing at dice or frequenting taverns or brothels. Nicholas's freedom of movement was also curtailed. He was commanded not to withdraw from his master's service nor absent himself from his household during the day or night. He was ordered not to commit adultery or fornication with his master's wife or daughter under penalty of doubling the length of his apprenticeship.³⁰ Although John Harietsham contracted to Robert Lacy in London in 1451 for seven years under very similar conditions, he was more widely forbidden from committing fornication either inside or outside of his master's house.³¹ Nicholas was also not permitted to contract matrimony during his seven-year term, except if his master granted consent. Likewise, when John Harbard agreed to become William Tebbe's apprentice in 1531, it was specified that he 'schall nott make no promys of wedloke exsep ytt be for his masters profytt' during the eight years that ensued.³²

These indentures are indicative of an extant guild ideology that demanded patriarchal authority of master over apprentice. They suggest service for young males was characterised by restriction. The indentures specify that apprentices were to be prevented from dicing and drinking in public houses. They also only permitted the head of the household and his wife to engage in sexual relations.³³ This demonstrates how apprentices were to be socialised towards sex within marriage. Indentures also reveal how the master/apprentice relationship was to be reciprocal. In return for Nicholas's obedience, for example, his master was expected to instruct him in 'bowercrafte' [bow-making], teach him how to buy and sell and provide him with food and drink, linen and woollen clothing, a bed, shoes and all of the necessities he required for the entirety of his service.³⁴ The inference from these provisions is that guilds viewed the apprentice as dependent upon his employer and they expected a master to assume a quasi-parental role in socialising his young charge towards the commencement of adulthood. The fifteenth-century poem *The Child of Bristowe* may have worked to socialise young men towards the

³⁰ J.W. Percy (ed.), *York Memorandum Book*, 3, Surtees Society, 186 (1973), pp. 4-5. Similar themes are addressed in indentures made between Robert de Hotoft of Gaytburton in Lyndesey and Robert Christendome of York in 1372; and between apprentice Francis Irwest and London goldsmith Drew Barantyn in 1382. See Hovland, 'Apprenticeship in the records of the Goldsmiths' Company', p. 90.

³¹ C.M. Clode, *The early history of the guild of merchant taylors of the fraternity of St John the Baptist, London* (London, 1888), p. 344.

³² M. Bateson (ed.), *Records of the borough of Leicester*, 3, (Cambridge, 1905), p. 29.

³³ See Goldberg, 'Masters and men', pp. 56-70.

³⁴ Percy (ed.), *York Memorandum Book*, 3, pp. 4-5.

ideal that service would be characterised by quasi-parental care and that it would ultimately conclude with marriage, householding and the assumption of independent status. This narrative portrays a positive relationship between a childless Bristol merchant and his twelve-year-old apprentice. It states that the master 'louyd the child so wele' that he made him his heir so the apprentice is effectively presented occupying the position of a substitute son. After some years, the merchant paternalistically oversees negotiations about a favourable marriage 'to a worthy manis doghter' for the protagonist. After his master's demise, he inherits 'landes, catell, and place' which results in him becoming 'richer then euer' and allows him to establish an independent life.³⁵

Chaucer's comic presentation of victualler's apprentice Perkin Reveller in *The Cook's Tale* represents the antithesis of how guild masters and civic magistrates in the late fourteenth century advised such individuals to behave.³⁶ Indeed, he embodies the type of young man that generated concern amongst guild masters and civic magistrates. He is portrayed as an individual easily distracted from his master's work, who leaves his shop to attend the tavern and participate in 'ridyngs in chepe' [Cheapside] and refuses to return until he has 'daunced wel'.³⁷ He occupies himself with 'dys, riot and paramour' even though he resides with a master who takes 'no part of the mynstralcye'. He also takes from his master – it is no coincidence that after he has 'pleyen at the dys', his master finds his coffer-box 'ful bare'.³⁸ Perkin is a significant problem for his master. It is reasonable to suggest that at least some readers might have sided with him and been entertained by his master's exasperation. As such, the humour of the text derives from Perkin's subversion of the guild and magisterial norms of service.

The fifteenth-century *Ballade of Jak Hare* also derives its humour from parodying adult fears about the behaviour of young men in service. The narrative reveals that Jak Hare, described from the outset as a 'froward knave' – a term that has connotations of an evilly-disposed, naughty and ungovernable individual – was

³⁵ C. Hopper (ed.), *The Childe of Bristow, a poem by John Lydgate*, Camden Society, OS, 73, Miscellany, 4 (1859), pp. 3-28 (p. 27, stanzas 91-3).

³⁶ See G. Chaucer, 'The Cook's Tale', in L.D. Benson (ed.), *The Riverside Chaucer* (3rd edn, Oxford, 1988), pp. 85-6.

³⁷ Chaucer, 'Cook's Tale', in Benson (ed.), *The Riverside Chaucer*, p. 85, lines 4370, 4376-7, 4380.

³⁸ Chaucer, 'Cook's Tale', in Benson (ed.), *The Riverside Chaucer*, p. 85, lines 4384-90.

employed in service as a kitchen-boy.³⁹ Kitchen-boys were the lowliest servants in the medieval household.⁴⁰ Throughout its ten stanzas, the poem consecutively presents Jak as an idle, reckless, greedy, gossiping, drunken thief who cunningly steals from his master and sells his 'hors provendre' in order to generate the funds he required to participate in dice-games and frequent the alehouse.⁴¹ Jak is also depicted as a prolific ale-drinker. The narrator laments 'Ful weel a coupe of good ale canst thou liffte/ And drynk it off & leve the cupped drye' and wishes 'I wold thi chenys had chenyd vp the weye / Be-twen the cuppe, whan thou art lyfftyng'. This text was intended to amuse and to do so it draws upon masters' and magistrates' anxieties about young male servants in the late medieval era being a collection of grasping, lazy, unsociable and unresponsive drunkards. The poem indicates the type of reputation that surrounded males in service. It was exactly this sort of behaviour that young men were to be socialised to resist.

In the late sixteenth century, the idea that young men who resided away from home should be under adult instruction was reinforced by *The Marchants Avizo*. This didactic manual, written by a Bristol merchant named John Browne and first published in 1589, claims to be 'very necessarie for sonnes and seruants' when they are first sent 'beyond the seas...to Spaine and Portigale or other countreyes'. It was intended to act as a 'general remembrance for a servant when he first travelleth' abroad. Young male servants are commanded to 'bee not seduced by any person to play at any kinde of game, especially dice or cards, nor to vse feasting nor banketing, or keeping companie with women, nor to go fine and costelie in apparel'. The narrative makes the assumption that young men living away from home would be particularly susceptible to activities that adults considered unsuitable. Browne was primarily concerned about these issues because he believed that 'all these things are especiallie noted' and 'doo bring any young beginner to vtter discredit and vndoing'.⁴² The text may have helped to create the expectation that adults would judge the young on the basis of their

³⁹ 'A Ballade of Jak Hare', in H.N. MacCracken (ed.), *The minor poems of John Lydgate, part II*, EETS, 192 (1934), pp. 445-8. The *OED* defines 'froward' as 'disposed to go counter to what is demanded or what is reasonable; perverse, difficult to deal with, hard to please; refractory, ungovernable; also, in a wider sense, bad, evilly-disposed, 'naughty'. See *OED*: froward (adj., adv., prep.).

⁴⁰ See N. Orme, *Medieval children* (London, 2001), p. 75. Orme notes that kitchen-boys were provisioned with clothes of the cheapest kind.

⁴¹ See *MED*: hors~ provendre (n.). The *MED* defines 'hors provendre' as 'fodder'. A lowly kitchen-boy would likely have had to prepare this in the household.

⁴² J. Browne, *The marchants avizo, 1589*, ed. P. McGrath (Massachusetts, 1957), pp. 3-4.

reputation. The warnings it issues suggest that young men were socialised to bear adult advice in mind at every possible opportunity, irrespective of the residential circumstances they found themselves in.

Ideas about Females in Service

In comparison to the number of apprenticeship indentures for young males that survive, indentures for young women are rare. One that gives insight into the ideas that surrounded a female apprentice refers to the seven-year contract made between Katherine Nogle and a silkthowster called Avice Wodeford in London in 1392.⁴³ The proscriptions and prescriptions that Katherine was bound to are broadly similar to those which male indentures seem to have routinely contained. Katherine was permitted to frequent a tavern, but only if she was on her mistress's business there. Although this represents a slightly more relaxed attitude than the blanket ban so often imposed on male apprentices, the implication is still that service was intended to socialise girls to avoid peer interactions and social drinking. Katherine's sexual activity was also curtailed. She was forbidden from committing fornication or adultery inside or outside of her mistress's house over the seven years. Phillips argues that indentures indicate that there were different rules about the sexual conduct of male and female apprentices. When the conditions regarding sexual relations that male apprentices in York including William of Lincoln (1364) and Nicholas Kynghlay (1371) were bound to are compared to those of female apprentices in London it becomes apparent that young women were subject to more severe impositions. Whilst both Katherine and another female apprentice called Elizabeth Eland (1454) were ordered not to commit fornication within the house of their masters *or outside*, Eleanor Fincham (1447) was bound not to commit fornication 'in any way at all'.⁴⁴ If female apprentices in particular were socialised to refrain from pre-marital sexual activity then this suggests that a concern to maintain the reputation of young females was most prevalent.

⁴³ LMA, Corporation of London Miscellaneous Manuscript 186.003.

⁴⁴ K.M. Phillips, *Medieval maidens: young women and gender in England, 1270-1540* (Manchester, 2003), p. 83.

During her term Katherine Noughe was also not allowed to contract matrimony. Whilst the male apprentices discussed earlier could not marry during their apprenticeship unless their master permitted them to do so, Katherine's mistress was not expected to influence her decision to marry. Rather, it was her brother John and her uncle Thomas who had to grant their assent before she could take a husband. We can infer that the young woman did not have complete agency over the timing of her marriage. The indenture states explicitly that only if she married would she be permitted to withdraw from service before her term expired. Service appears to have been positioned as a preparatory phase that preceded, but was otherwise incompatible with, married life. Being in service kept young women from getting married, but it socialised them towards doing so. In return for Katherine's obedience to these regulations, Avice had to assume the responsibility for her instruction and discipline. The indenture shows how a mistress was expected to assume a position of authority to socialise the young woman towards adulthood and to control and chastise her as the need to do so arose.

Some of the normative ideals that were applied to young women in service are apparent from the late medieval poem *How the Good Wife Taught Her Daughter*, which Riddy suggests middle-rank urban mistresses would have used to socialise the girls in their households.⁴⁵ From the outset, the narrative positions the Good Wife as a source of wisdom and authority. The poem seems to have been founded on the belief that older women needed to teach, direct and control those under their care. It issues prescriptions that cover a variety of topics, so the implication is that females of the household were supposed to be subject to close supervision. According to the text, young women were expected to have their conduct regulated, be prevented from encountering the vices associated with taverns and drunkenness and be forbidden from attending competitive sporting matches, lest they be mistaken for a woman with loose morals. That the preservation of a young woman's reputation was deemed fundamental is reinforced by the advice the Good Wife issues about exercising restraint in courtship. The young woman is warned: 'Aqueynte thee not with every man/ That inne the strete thou metys than'. Such advice was perhaps most relevant for discouraging female servants from knowingly meeting young men as they ran errands and went about town on the

⁴⁵ F. Riddy, 'Mother knows best: reading social change in a courtesy text', *Speculum*, 71:1 (1996), pp. 72, 83.

business of their masters and mistresses. The poem aimed to socialise young women to pursue the goal of becoming wives who would 'byde at home' and 'werke at nede'.⁴⁶

Since the comparable Middle Scots poem *The Thewis off Gud Women* (circa 1450) lacks the direct voice of a mother, it is reasonable to suggest that its appeal and application as an instructional text would have been particularly resonant for the socialisation of female servants. Both the *Good Wife* and *The Thewis* narratives expound similar moralistic sentiments which means that they might have shared a clerical provenance. In *The Thewis*, girls are commanded not to run around the town with young men and to avoid taverns and the company of drunkards. Maidservants living away from home may have been identified as especially susceptible to being led astray. The poem recommends that maidens 'Be stratly kept...In teaching with a hud maistre[ss]. It is apparent that a mistress was as responsible as parents for instructing and chastising the young women under her care and socialising them to become 'obedient', 'chaist' and 'cheritable'.⁴⁷ This helped to build the cultural expectation that irrespective of where young women resided, parents, or guardians acting *in loco parentis*, should exercise control over their lives.

The presentation of the protagonist in the fifteenth-century poem *The Serving Maid's Holiday* represents the antithesis of the type of young women moralists and magistrates intended mistresses to cultivate in service. This poem details the unfortunate consequences of a maid's day off, which she spends in the company of her young man Jack. The lines: 'leue iakke, lend me a pyn / To [th]redele me [th]is holiday... Now yt drawe[th] to [th]e none / & al my cherrus ben vndone' have overtly sexual connotations. The implication is that the pair seize the opportunity to engage in sexual activity. They are presented continuing their courtship 'a sonday atte [th]e ale-schoth'. That pregnancy is the inevitable outcome for the maid is apparent from the lament in the last stanza: 'sone my wombe began to swelle / as greth as a belle / durst y nat my dame telle / wat me betyde [th]is

⁴⁶ See 'How the Good Wife Taught Her Daughter', in G. Shuffelton (ed.), *Codex Ashmole 61: a compilation of popular Middle English verse* (Kalamazoo, 2008), lines 1-209.

⁴⁷ J.R. Lumby (ed.), *Ratis Raving and other moral and religious pieces in prose and verse*, EETS, OS, 43 (1870), pp. 103-4, 107, 109-10.

holyday'.⁴⁸ The young woman's desire to keep her pregnancy a secret from her employer suggests that there is much to be feared about the mistress's reaction. The humour of the text arises from the maid's predicament of being with child following her contravention of normative ideals. Her behaviour is at variance with the proscriptions against pre-marital sexual activity contained within indentures and instructional literature, which were concerned to preserve young women's reputations. *The Serving Maid* played upon moralist and magistrate fears about what might happen if mistresses did not remain vigilant in the supervision of their maidservants. They deemed mistresses responsible for protecting those under their care, guiding them away from immoral behaviour and socialising them to shun secretive and shameful activities likely to result in the loss of their honour.

Age

Probate evidence offers an opportunity to observe the nature of the master/servant relationship and how it might have affected young people's experiences of service in social practice. When Agnes de Kyreton of York made her will in 1408, she stipulated that 'little Margaret' her maidservant was to receive 'ten silver marks' to be used 'for her sustenance' when she reached her 'years of discretion'.⁴⁹ Since girls in the fifteenth-century were considered to reach the age of discretion at twelve, Margaret must have been a very young charge. Some young male servants were also set to inherit following the death of their employers. In London in 1433, 'Litill Watkyn' was bequeathed ten marks by his master, a cook named Walter Mangedard.⁵⁰ Other bequests were material rather than monetary. Thomas Mershe left 'John of the stable', the bed 'in which he [was] accustomed to lie' and twenty shillings as an additional reward in 1486.⁵¹ Similarly, Bishop Hugh Pavy bequeathed a 'matres with appurtenance' to a number of his stable- and kitchen-boys when he made his will in 1495. Pavy made the specific command that his executors had to make adequate provisions for 'litel John of the kecheyne' and

⁴⁸ 'The Serving Maid's Holiday', in R.H. Robbins (ed.), *Secular lyrics of the XIVth and XVth centuries* (2nd edn, Oxford, 1955), pp. 24-5.

⁴⁹ P.J.P. Goldberg (ed. and trans.), *Women in England c.1275-1525* (Manchester, 1995), p. 88.

⁵⁰ F.J. Furnivall (ed.), *The fifty earliest English wills in the Court of Probate, London, AD 1387-1439*, EETS, 78 (1882), p. 95.

⁵¹ F.W. Weaver (ed.), *Somerset medieval wills, 1383-1500*, Somerset Record Society, 16 (1901), p. 264.

requested that they delivered this unto him 'after their owne willis'.⁵² As I have already discussed in the context of *A Ballade of Jak Hare*, kitchen-boys were the lowliest type of servant in a household. Pavy's concern to provide for 'litel John' is therefore symbolic of his quasi-paternal care for a weak and powerless individual. He was determined to ensure that the boy would continue to be nurtured and protected after his master's demise. Goldberg argues that bequests like these were fairly modest and often dictated by convention.⁵³ In the examples I have highlighted, the testators seem to have aimed to provide for servants they identified as being particularly dependent employees. These individuals would have lost out most in the short term when their employer died. Since all of these servants were described by their masters in diminutives, the suggestion is that they were some of the youngest individuals in the service spectrum. The employers of these servants appear to have been concerned to extend their quasi-parental responsibility towards them beyond the grave. As they were still children – 'little Margaret' at least had not even reached the age of twelve – they were treated by their employers as child-like dependants.⁵⁴

There was an alteration in the master/servant relationship as employees got older. Bequests that are more elaborate seem to have been reserved for older servants and apprentices. This is apparent from the extensive provision which John Toker made for his apprentice Henry Thompson in 1428. Upon his master's death, Henry was set to receive £6 13s. 4d. He was also granted all the 'termes and possession[s]' connected to the 'Mermaid in Bredstreet', Toker's stock of wine and numerous chattels including pieces of silver, pewter pots and kitchen utensils. The master effectively made the apprentice his heir. His concern in doing so seems to have been to make provision sufficient enough to enable Henry to establish himself independently. Toker stipulated that in order to be capable of managing his inheritance, his apprentice would have to demonstrate the qualities necessary and expected of a master and to 'gouverne hym[self] goodly and onestly as he oweth forto do, aftur the rewle and discrecioun' of the executors. The implication from this condition is that during his period of service, Toker socialised Henry to make his own way in the world. The will shows how an apprentice could be assisted to

⁵² Weaver (ed.), *Somerset medieval wills, 1383-1500*, p. 332.

⁵³ See P.J.P. Goldberg, 'What was a servant?', in A. Curry and E. Matthew (eds), *Concepts and patterns of service in the later Middle Ages* (Woodbridge, 2000), p. 18.

⁵⁴ Goldberg (ed.), *Women in England*, p. 88.

establish himself once he had completed his term in service and following his master's demise.⁵⁵ That masters were expected to give apprentices financial assistance and thereby help socialise them towards adulthood at the end of their terms is apparent from the stipulations of some apprenticeship indentures. In the mid-fifteenth century, John Harietsham was to receive the sum of 9s. 4d. at the end of his seven years in service with Robert Lacy. This reflected a recognition that the apprentice would ultimately have to leave the quasi-parental protection of his master – and his dependent position – and when he did so would need some spending money in order to help him to set up on his own.⁵⁶

A comparison of depositions from two marriage cases from the York Consistory in the mid- to late sixteenth century provides further evidence of a shift in the master/servant relationship in accordance with age. In 1562, eighteen-year-old William Parker testified on behalf of his master Matthew Usher in matrimonial litigation against one Katherine Hamerton. The relationship which he described with his master was one characterised by camaraderie. In his deposition, William recalled how one evening he accompanied Usher to Katherine's house. He claimed that when they got there her parents were in bed so he, Usher, Katherine and a maidservant named Margaret Burton all sat talking and drinking in the kitchen until after three o'clock the following morning.⁵⁷ It seems as though William was included in his master's socialising on an equal basis. As such, I would argue that his socialisation would have been furthered as a consequence. The reason the relationship between master and servant was more companionate than quasi-parental was perhaps due to the servant's older age and the fact that he was considered to be more of an adult than a child. This seems to be supported by the very different way in which thirteen-year-old Richard Potter was treated by his master, James Metterick. Richard testified on his behalf in a marriage case against one Jane Parker in 1575. In his deposition Richard recalled how he had accompanied Metterick to Jane's house and minded the horses as he engaged in marriage negotiations with Jane's mother. He revealed that as these discussions took place, his master 'wished him to be gone'. The implication is that he wanted to prevent the boy over hearing the conversation, to keep his distance and to keep his

⁵⁵ Furnivall (ed.), *The fifty earliest English wills*, p. 77.

⁵⁶ Clode, *The early history of the guild of merchant taylors*, p. 344.

⁵⁷ York, BI, CP.G.924: Matthew Usher v. Katherine Hamerton [Validity, 1562, defendant wins], pp. 7-8.

business private.⁵⁸ Richard's young age may account for his master's treatment of him. His status as a 'horseboy' – one of the lowliest positions in service – may also have emphasised the sense of difference between him and his employer. The variation of experience in service corresponding to an increase in age that I have identified accords with a social and cultural recognition of adolescence as a lengthy and gradual transitional process that strives towards the achievement of adulthood.

Status and Parental Influence

There is evidence to suggest that at higher social levels, bonds between younger servants and their masters and mistresses were also quasi-parental. Letters from the aristocratic Lisle family in the sixteenth century are revealing. In 1534, thirteen-year-old Anne Bassett wrote to her mother from service in the well-connected de Riou household at Pont de Remy on the Somme to inform her of the 'goodly entertainment' that her master and mistress had shown her. She also declared, 'Had I been their natural daughter they could not better nor more gently have entreated me'.⁵⁹ The girl might have been aware that her employers would read her letters before they were sent home, but the principle that she perceived her mother and step-father would be reassured to be informed that her master and mistress had assumed a role *in loco parentis* is significant nonetheless. The relationship between Anne's sister Mary and her mistress, the aristocratic Madame du Bours, seems to have been comparable. In 1536, when Mary was about twelve years old, her mistress wrote to her mother, Lady Lisle, to promise that she would 'entreat [Mary] as if she were my daughter'.⁶⁰ That a high level of quasi-maternal affection existed between the pair is apparent from the lamentations of each when Mary finished her period of service. Before she left, she informed her mother that she would suffer much grief and be 'very sorry' to leave her mistress because she had valued her 'friendship' very highly. Once Mary had returned home, Madame du Bours revealed, 'I often wish [Mary] were here with me, and it is marvel how much I miss her'.⁶¹

⁵⁸ York, BI, CP.G.1804: James Metterick v. Jane Parker [Validity, 1575, defendant wins], pp. 12-13.

⁵⁹ M. St. Clare Byrne (ed.), *The Lisle letters*, 3 (Chicago, 1981), pp. 142-3; Phillips, *Medieval maidens*, p. 179.

⁶⁰ St. Clare Byrne (ed.), *Lisle letters*, 3, p. 173.

⁶¹ St. Clare Byrne (ed.), *Lisle letters*, 3, pp. 209-10, 213-14.

That bonds were perhaps defined along gender lines at high social levels can be inferred from the relationship between seventeen-year-old Emote Winnington and her employers, Sir Roland and Lady Ursula Stanley. In 1560, Emote acted as a witness for her mistress in a matrimonial case which Lady Ursula brought against her husband before the York Consistory for an annulment of their marriage on the grounds of adultery and cruelty. In her deposition, Emote recalled how she had refused Sir Roland's request to testify against his wife, even though she was aware that he had dismissed other servants with immediate effect for doing so. As such, Emote defied her master. She asserted that she knew 'nothing but goodness' of her mistress and declared that Sir Roland would not 'have her in support of any evil condition'. Emote risked the consequences of disobedience to her master in order to preserve her loyalty to her mistress. The implication is that it was the relationship between the female servant and her mistress that was the strongest.⁶²

For children at elite social levels who lived away from home, the role of masters and mistresses acting *in loco parentis* was buttressed by the fact that their natural parents continued to be influential in their lives. From correspondence to and from young gentry women, it is apparent that these individuals retained close contact with their parents and remained dependent on them. In 1504, Dorothy Plumpton, who resided in service in the household of her step-mother's mother, Lady Darcy, wrote to her father to ask him to send her 'a fine hatt and some good cloth to make [her] some kevercheffes'.⁶³ As Phillips argues, mistresses were not always prepared to pay for girls' clothing and those in service often had to depend on their parents to provide for them.⁶⁴ This is equally clear from the frequent letters that Anne, Mary and Katherine Bassett sent home to their mother Lady Lisle from service in France and at court in England. All three girls relied upon their mother to meet their material needs. During 1534 and 1535, correspondence between Anne Bassett and her mother revolved almost exclusively around her demands for various textiles or items of clothing, including kirtles, smocks, cloaks, gowns, shoes, mantles and other 'little trifling things' which she believed were essential to allow

⁶² York, BI, CP.G.975A: Ursula Stanley v. Roland Stanley [Annulment: cruelty/adultery, 1560], pp. 23-7.

⁶³ T. Stapleton (ed.), *The Plumpton correspondence*, Camden Society, OS, 4 (1839), pp. 202-3, letter 165: Dorothy Plumpton to her father, Sir Robert Plumpton [undated, possibly circa 18 May 1504].

⁶⁴ Phillips, *Medieval maidens*, p. 119.

her to emulate her peers and 'do as others do'.⁶⁵ Even when she was subsequently employed at court as one of the Queen's maids, she still depended on her mother to supplement her income by financing her new apparel.⁶⁶ When Anne's sister Katherine resided at court, she requested that she be sent money by her mother because she was 'moneyless' and complained that she lacked shoes and would only be able to buy some if she was supplied with money.⁶⁷

Twelve-year-old Mary Bassett also relied on her mother to provide her clothing and pocket money when she resided in service in the du Bours household. On at least one occasion in 1535, Lady Lisle sent Mary 'money to play' to enable her to partake in games that involved gambling alongside her mistress.⁶⁸ When Mary subsequently endured a gambling loss, she also required her mother's assistance. She lamented: 'I owe a pair of shoes to a gentlewoman who seeth to my wants which I lost at play with her. I greatly wish that my lady my mother would send them to her....'.⁶⁹ She evidently depended on her mother to clear her debt which suggests that she would have been fairly powerless without her mother's intervention. Moreover, given that Madame du Bours wrote to Lady Lisle on another occasion to assure her that she had 'admonished' her daughter 'according to [her] commandment', the implication is that during her period of service, Mary's mother also continued to monitor and influence her upbringing.⁷⁰ In return, she continued to display a high level of emotional dependence on her mother. After a series of her letters were left unanswered by Lady Lisle in 1537, she became 'right heavy' and 'very weary' of not having received news of her mother's welfare for a prolonged period of time.⁷¹ For Mary, maintaining regular contact with her parents seems to have been a priority for reasons both financial and emotional. This collective analysis indicates that quasi-parental care from masters and mistresses, coupled with persistent parental interference, infantilised these high status young

⁶⁵ See St. Clare Byrne (ed.), *Lisle letters*, 3, pp. 142-51 (pp. 150-1): Anne Bassett to Lady Lisle [17 August 1535].

⁶⁶ M. St. Clare Byrne (ed.), *The Lisle letters*, 4 (Chicago, 1981), pp. 163, 167-8: John Husee to Lady Lisle [17 September 1537; 2 October 1537].

⁶⁷ M. St. Clare Byrne (ed.), *The Lisle letters*, 5 (Chicago, 1981), p. 95: Thomas Warley to Lady Lisle [7 April 1538].

⁶⁸ St. Clare Byrne (ed.), *Lisle letters*, 3, p. 157: Lady Lisle to Madame du Bours [after 4 November 1535].

⁶⁹ St. Clare Byrne (ed.), *Lisle letters*, 3, p. 165: Mary Bassett to Philippa Bassett [13 March 1536].

⁷⁰ St. Clare Byrne (ed.), *Lisle letters*, 3, p. 173: Madame du Bours to Lady Lisle [17 November 1536].

⁷¹ St. Clare Byrne (ed.), *Lisle letters*, 3, pp. 204-5: Mary Bassett to Lady Lisle [25 April 1537; 14 May 1537]; pp. 207-8: Mary Bassett to Lady Lisle [5 September 1537].

women. They appear to have been socialised in a way that kept them in a state of child-like dependency.

Young males from aristocratic families who lived away from home were subject to similar levels of parental influence. When James Bassett was being educated in Paris, aged ten, his mother, Lady Lisle, maintained a constant interest in her son's life despite being at a distance. In 1537, he wrote to his mother frequently to assure her that he was working hard in order to fulfil her expectations. On one occasion he informed her: 'Ma dame, I am studying ... Latin and Music, in the which my labour shall not lack, that I may thereby honor and satisfy you in your desires'.⁷² Another letter suggests that Lady Lisle had admonished her son urging him to 'apply his understanding to good manners'. In response, James reassured her: 'I shall so do my power that you perceive it is my desire in all things to obey you, and to do whatsoever is pleasing to you'.⁷³ Lady Lisle also continually received reports of his health and progress from his tutors and guardians.⁷⁴ Her desire to be closely involved in her son's life may be attributable to his young age. Whilst James could well have told his mother what he thought she wanted to hear about his diligence and obedience, the letters between them still indicate how his upbringing continued to be overseen and managed by his mother even though he resided away from home. Clement Paston was an older teenager but he seems to have occupied a similar position. When sixteen-year-old Clement lived with a tutor whilst being educated in London, his mother Agnes maintained close contact. In 1458, she requested a full report of his academic progress and general conduct. She promised to reward the tutor with ten marks for his labours if he would bring Clement 'into good rewyll and lernyng' and continually provide her with information so that she could 'verily know he doth hys devere' in his work. She also stipulated that if he did not perform well, the tutor was to 'trewly belassch hym tyl he wyll amend'. Despite being at a distance, Agnes was keen to direct her son's education, to regulate his behaviour and to ensure that he would face chastisement if he stepped out of line.⁷⁵

⁷² St. Clare Byrne (ed.), *Lisle letters*, 4, p. 473: James Bassett to Lady Lisle [18 April 1537].

⁷³ St. Clare Byrne (ed.), *Lisle letters*, 4, p. 474: James Bassett to Lady Lisle [23 June 1537].

⁷⁴ St. Clare Byrne (ed.), *Lisle letters*, 4, p. 492: John Berkynsaw to Lady Lisle [16 January 1538]; pp. 494-5: Pierre du Val [tutor] to Lady Lisle [15, 20 February 1538].

⁷⁵ N. Davis (ed.), *The Paston letters and papers of the fifteenth century*, 1 (Oxford, 1971), p. 41, letter 28: Agnes Paston, memorandum of errands [28 January 1458].

Other young gentlemen who maintained contact with their parents seem to have done so primarily because they continued to be financially dependent. This was the case for William Paston III, aged eighteen, who in 1477 and 1478 lived away from home whilst he attended school at Eton. It is clear from his letters that William needed assistance from his mother and eldest brother – who acted in place of his dead father – to meet his expenses. These included his school and boarding fees and the ‘gownys’ and ‘odyr gere’ which he requested to ‘haue in haste’.⁷⁶ On one occasion William asked his brother for money to pay for his ‘comons’ [sustenance] and various items of clothing including ‘hose clothe ... a stomechere, and ij schyrtys, and a peyer of sclyppers’.⁷⁷ The extent of William’s reliance is further emphasised by his inability to repay a month’s debt to his lodging master of his own accord.⁷⁸

Robert Plumpton appears to have been equally dependent on his parents to provision him when he lived away from home as a student at the Inner Temple in London in 1536. Robert, who was aged about twenty at the time, wrote to his mother to inform her about the financial hardship that he faced and to bemoan how ‘I shal not have money to serve mee to Easter’. Robert and William alike may have shared skill in employing strategies in their letters to try to persuade their parents to comply with their wishes, but this does not hide the fact that if they had to ask for money then they were implicitly not self-reliant and therefore somewhat lacking in agency.⁷⁹ Like their sisters, these elite young males seem to have been socialised to remain dependent whilst living away from home. Continued reliance on their families despite being at a distance suggests that at best opportunities to further their socialisation and to promote and enhance their transition towards the autonomy of adulthood would have been fairly limited.

⁷⁶ Davis (ed.), *Paston letters*, 1, pp. 379-80, letter 227: Margaret Paston to John Paston II [11 August 1477].

⁷⁷ See *MED*: *commūnes* (n.).

⁷⁸ Davis (ed.), *Paston letters*, 1, p. 649, letter 406: William Paston III to John Paston III [7 November 1478].

⁷⁹ Stapleton (ed.), *Plumpton correspondence*, pp. 231-2, letter 10: Robert Plumpton to his mother [circa 12 January 1536].

Chastisement, Consent and Constraint

The quasi-parental role of masters and mistresses at lower social levels encompassed the verbal and physical chastisement of their young charges. This is apparent from some legal disputes which arose between servants and their employers. In 1404, John Lorymer, the master of Joan Potter, was accused before the Borough Court in Nottingham of having 'assaulted ... beaten ... wounded ... ill-treated ... and [caused] other injuries to her serious damage' one Sunday afternoon. Lorymer admitted doing so. He defended his actions by explaining that when Joan had given him a 'contrary reply', he had taken an 'elenwand' and struck her on the head and elsewhere with it. He believed this was a 'just' and reasonable response.⁸⁰ In having this punishment issued upon her, Joan was placed in a subordinate position by her master. As such, it is reasonable to assume that the master's actions infantilised her. As Goldberg shows, the master/servant relationship was contractual and therefore subject to regulation in the courts in a way that the parent/child relationship was not.⁸¹ Masters had the right to discipline but not abuse those under their care.⁸² The case of Joan Jurdan highlights how an employer's use of physical chastisement was subject to moderation in the courts. When Thomas and Joan Herford were found to have 'unduly castigated and governed' Joan in 1416, the Mayor and Aldermen of London agreed to exonerate her from her contract to them.⁸³ Alice Holton seems to have been treated similarly through the physical punishment she was subjected to whilst in service with John Lucas in London in 1489, even though she was twenty-five years old at the time. In a deposition made in a matrimonial case before the London Consistory, Lucas admitted that he had once hit Alice and called her a 'false harlot' because when he sent her to buy food for his household one morning, she did not return from that errand until about three o'clock in the afternoon.⁸⁴ In 1577, the Mayor and Aldermen of the city of York accused one Thomas Allynson of having spoken 'certayne slanderous and filthie words' about his servant, Jane Walker. Allynson faced public punishment and humiliation for committing this

⁸⁰ Goldberg (ed.), *Women in England*, p. 95.

⁸¹ See Goldberg, 'What was a servant?', p. 18.

⁸² See Goldberg, 'Masters and men', p. 61.

⁸³ A.H. Thomas (ed.), *Calendar of plea and memoranda rolls preserved among the archives of the corporation of the city of London at the Guildhall, AD 1413-1437* (Cambridge, 1943), pp. 42-3.

⁸⁴ Consistory Database: John Jenyn v. Alice Seton, John Grose [21, 24 October 1489; 28 November 1489; 2, 24 March 1490; 30 November 1490].

offence. The civic authorities ordered him to make a declaration at St John's, Ousebridge during Morning Service one Sunday to retract his comments and repent. They also asked Jane to be present so that he could 'aske hir forgyvenes ther openly' before the congregation.⁸⁵ This shows how Allynson's mastership was subject to regulation by the civic authorities who apparently disapproved of the defamatory treatment of his female servant. The implication from these examples is that whereas the actions of some employers may have served to infantilise those under their care in social practice, civic authorities expected masters to instruct, correct and thereby socialise their servants without making slanderous accusations that would harm the reputations of their employees.

The influential role of masters and mistresses also extended over the marriages of their charges. For some young women, the consent of their masters was implicit by their presence when contracts of marriage were made. In 1449 Katherine, a maidservant to John Dene in York, married in the presence of her master and celebrated with him afterwards by sharing a crater of wine.⁸⁶ In the same city in 1556, Alice Bywell contracted matrimony to John Sellars at her master's house and in his presence.⁸⁷ Other young women requested the advice of their employers before they would make a decision about whether or not to marry. Evidence from the Plumpton correspondence reveals how a young woman at a middling social level in service in the fifteenth century depended upon the advice and instruction of her mistress and her family. A letter written by Geoffrey Green to Sir William Plumpton in 1464 describes how his sister Isabel put herself 'wholie' to her lady's 'rule and ordinance ... att all times' in the context of negotiations about a potential marriage with a 'young mercer in the Chepe'. Even when Isabel's mistress told her that the decision 'shold come of herselfe', she supposedly 'answerred that of her selfe she could nott ne wold nothing do without the advise of [Sir William Plumpton] and her friends [family/kin]'. Her brother also reported how she added that 'whatsoever [her mistress] thought she shold do, she wold do it'. It would appear that this young woman was reluctant to make up her own mind. She is presented as being reliant on the advice of others and her mistress seems to have

⁸⁵ A. Raine (ed.), *York civic records*, 7, YASRS, 115 (1950), p. 164.

⁸⁶ Goldberg, *Women, work and life cycle*, p. 236.

⁸⁷ York, BI, CP.G.599: Robert Parkinson v. Alice Bywell [Validity, 1556].

been considered particularly influential in this respect.⁸⁸ Isabel may well have been socialised in service to be dependent and obedient.

For some young women in service at slightly lower social levels, obtaining the consent of both their parents and their employers was a self-imposed condition that was pre-requisite to them contracting. Depositions from a marriage case that arose between Robert Philipson and Joan Corney and came before the London Consistory in 1489 are revealing. Joan deposed that when Robert had asked her to marry him, she told him that she would only agree if she could obtain the consent of her parents and John Pyke, her master. Joan also claimed that she warned Robert she would also only receive his courtship tokens 'if she could obtain her parents' and master's consent and not otherwise'.⁸⁹ When Robert Padley proposed marriage to a fellow servant in his master's household, Christian Hilles, in 1490, she was allegedly adamant that their master would not grant them permission to marry until after they had completed their terms of service. Christian acknowledged that service and marriage could not overlap, which reinforces the notion that the institution of service socialised young people towards marriage and in so doing acted as a preparatory phase before adulthood.⁹⁰ Elizabeth Croft was another young woman in service who insisted upon receiving her master's consent.⁹¹ A disputed marriage case between her and Herbert Rowland was heard by the London Consistory in 1494. Deposing before the court, she claimed to have told him when he proposed that 'she did not intend nor would not have him nor any other man without the consent of her friends [family or kin]'. Elizabeth testified that she had further explained 'that she did not want him nor any other man as her husband unless Master Bankis consented to it, because she did not wish to marry anyone without the consent of the said Bankis'. When her master did not grant his permission, Elizabeth allegedly informed Herbert 'you will never have my consent' and repeated her reasoning that if he could not get her master's goodwill then he would not have hers either.

⁸⁸ Stapleton (ed.), *Plumpton correspondence*, pp. 11-12, letter 8: Godfrey Green to Sir William Plumpton [14 June 1464].

⁸⁹ Consistory Database: Robert Philipson v. Joan Corney [4 February 1489; 6 March 1489].

⁹⁰ Consistory Database: Christian Hilles v. Robert Padley [24 May 1490; 9 June 1490].

⁹¹ Consistory Database: Herbert Rowland v. Elizabeth Croft, Margaret Hordley [31 January 1494].

Collectively, these cases indicate how young women were socialised to ask for consent from both their parents and their employers and it was considered the norm for well brought-up young women to do so in the later fifteenth century.⁹² In Chapter One, I have noted how McSheffrey suggests that some young women may have exploited conditional consent in order to avoid unattractive unions, but in other instances it represents how young women were dependent on seeking guidance and approval from their elders.⁹³ It is impossible to tell which situation applied in social practice to the cases I have highlighted. If it was the former, these young women were acting with a degree of agency in refusing to commit to a man they did not want. If it was the latter, these cases are indicative of how the agency they had in choosing a marriage partner was restricted by employers and parents whilst they lived away from home in service.

That some young males found their apprenticeships restrictive and controlling in social practice is suggested from the experience of William Stanes. In 1416, Richard Glover made an appeal to the Mayor and Aldermen in London to help him to retrieve his apprentice. William had been bound to Glover for a period of twelve years. During this time, he ran away from his master and made a contract with a brewer named John Farnburgh for a seven-year period. The civic authorities summoned both William and Farnburgh and decided that Glover should have his apprentice back. This case suggests that William was trying to escape a lengthy apprenticeship. We can speculate that the reason was because he had a negative relationship with his master and found the prospect of a twelve-year term particularly restrictive and infantilising. Although William displayed agency in running away, this ultimately proved ineffectual since he was ordered against his will to return to his original master and to complete the longer period of service.⁹⁴ The young man's actions were curtailed by civic officials and he appears to have lacked control over his own fate as a consequence. William Bolecley was another male apprentice who withdrew himself 'unlawfully' from his master's service 'without leave, and without reasonable cause', resulting in both 'loss and grievance' to his employer. The master appeared before the Mayor and Aldermen in London in 1416 to renounce William's actions, as he feared that his apprentice

⁹² See Goldberg, *Women, work and life cycle*, ch. 5; McSheffrey, *Marriage, sex and civic culture*, pp. 7-9.

⁹³ See McSheffrey, *Marriage, sex and civic culture*, p. 92.

⁹⁴ Thomas (ed.), *Calendar of plea and memoranda rolls*, p. 53.

might have been acting in his name whilst 'living at large'.⁹⁵ These examples indicate that a period of service prolonged social infancy. They support the arguments of Barron and Spindler who emphasise the restraining quasi-parental control that servants and apprentices were subject to and the limited independence they were afforded.⁹⁶

The experience of an apprentice named John Warington highlights the restrictive nature of his period of service. Matrimonial litigation between Warington and Margaret Baker from the York Consistory in 1417 is illustrative of a master's influence over the sexual activities and ultimately the marriage of an apprentice under his care. The case came to court because Warington attempted to have annulled a contract of marriage that he had made with Margaret on the basis that his master, John Bown, had forced him to marry her. Witnesses who testified on behalf of Warington claimed that after the master had suspected his apprentice had engaged in a sexual relationship with Margaret, Warington was presented with an ultimatum. He could either choose to be subject to his master's will and agree to marry the maidservant in order to make amends or be punished and imprisoned under the common law for breach of his apprenticeship contract. As such, Bown was shown to have threatened his apprentice with imprisonment. When faced with this threat, Warington reportedly displayed a degree of agency by trying to bargain with his master, asking him to be more generous to him in order to make the prospect of marriage to Margaret more appealing. According to one deponent, he also protested that had his father or any other members of his family been present, he would not have agreed to take her as his wife. This suggests that even though Warington was living away from home in service, his agency would have been qualified as he expected his family to have influence over any potential marriage. Given that he conceded and contracted marriage with Margaret, it was his master's will that prevailed.⁹⁷ Despite service providing young people with opportunities for sexual encounters, this case shows how the effects of these opportunities were limited because servants and apprentices were ultimately subject to the control of their masters and mistresses in whose households they

⁹⁵ H.T. Riley (ed.), *Memorials of London and London life in the XIIIth, XIVth and XVth centuries* (London, 1868), pp. 629-30.

⁹⁶ Barron, 'The child in medieval London', pp. 49-53; Spindler, 'Youth and old age in late medieval London', pp. 1-10, 18-19.

⁹⁷ Goldberg (ed.), *Women in England*, pp. 110-14. See also Goldberg, 'Masters and men', pp. 58-63.

resided. Bown forced Warington to marry Margaret to make amends for his sexual indiscretions. The apprentice complied because he was afraid of the consequences of being disobedient to his master. It follows that had Bown and his wife not subsequently decided to support Warington in his suit to have the marriage annulled – and acted as powerful witnesses who testified on his behalf – the young man may well have been bound to an unwanted marriage for life.

Other examples from the sixteenth century support the idea that some young males in service may have felt restricted because they were under surveillance in their masters' and mistresses' houses. In 1560, Robert Southgate, aged nineteen, testified on behalf of his master – and against his mistress – in a matrimonial case before the York Consistory. In his deposition, Robert described how he had witnessed his mistress committing adultery with one Robert Bell as he lay 'in his bed in the loft'. From this vantage point he claimed to have seen Bell creep in and out of a hole in the cellar wall, listened to their conversations and observed them having sex.⁹⁸ In a comparable matrimonial case from York in 1565, eighteen-year-old Thomas Norham also testified about having observed his mistress commit adultery when he spied on her through a hole in the wall.⁹⁹ If we read against the information provided in these depositions, we can see that masters and mistresses would have been able to keep an equally close eye on their employees if they so desired. An awareness of the potential for supervisory control and a lack of privacy may have been one of the reasons that encouraged servants to escape the confines of the house and to go out during their time off at evenings and holidays. This accords with Griffiths's view of service in the early modern era as 'a vital agency of social discipline' that was used by adults to keep young people's lives under control.¹⁰⁰ It also connects to Wallis's and Coster's respective claims that service reflected the mixture of subordination, abuse and paternalism that characterised life in early modern society.¹⁰¹

⁹⁸ York, BI, CP.G.1970: Alice Simpson v. Edward Simpson [Restitution, 1560], pp. 4, 11-12.

⁹⁹ York, BI, CP.G.1248: Frances Bigot v. Edmund Bigot [Restitution, 1565], pp. 10-11.

¹⁰⁰ Griffiths, *Youth and authority*, ch. 2 (p. 76). See also Griffiths, 'Tudor troubles', pp. 316-34.

¹⁰¹ W. Coster, *Family and kinship in England 1400-1750* (Harlow, 2001), pp. 54-6; Wallis, 'Apprenticeship and training in pre-modern England', p. 846.

Peer Interaction, Courtship, Sex and Marriage

Living away from home whilst in service provided at least some young people with opportunities to interact with one another. This is apparent from the depositions made in a marriage case involving Robert Smith and Rose Langtoft at the London Consistory in 1472.¹⁰² Rose, aged nineteen, was a maidservant in the household of Thomas Howden who denied making a present-tense contract with Robert. Statements from witnesses in this case incidentally give an indication of daily life in service, particularly the testimonies given by Rose's master and his nineteen-year-old apprentice, William Taylbos. Their purpose as two of Rose's witnesses was to affirm her protestation that she had remained in her master's house all day and did not go to Thomas Hynkley's house to make a contract with Robert, as his witnesses alleged. Whilst there is a possibility that the master's and apprentice's accounts were fabricated, they are still useful on the basis that these individuals must have deemed the statements they provided credible. Howden deposed that whilst he was in the house with Rose, he observed her washing clothes in the hall and preparing food in the kitchen.¹⁰³ The tasks Rose was shown to perform accord with Goldberg's argument that female service in the late fifteenth century was characterised by unskilled, domestic work.¹⁰⁴ When Howden left the house for an hour on business, William stated that he came in from the shop to visit Rose. This may well have been part of an elaborate strategy from the master and his apprentice to give consistency to their claim that Rose did not leave the house all afternoon. Even so, it still indicates how service brought young people of different sexes together and gave teenage apprentices and maidservants occasions to meet and even be alone with one another at times when their master was away from home.

Further evidence from the sixteenth century supports the idea that service afforded young males and young females opportunities to interact. In matrimonial litigation between Juliana Stoddart and William Bullock heard before the York Consistory in 1555, the deposition of Richard Smith reveals servants socialising. Richard was a sixteen-year-old apprentice in the household of a cook named Hugh

¹⁰² S. McSheffrey, *Love and marriage in late medieval London* (Kalamazoo, 1995), pp. 59-67, case 13: Robert Smyth v. Rose Langtoft [30 September 1472; 2 October 1472].

¹⁰³ McSheffrey, *Love and marriage*, pp. 62-4.

¹⁰⁴ Goldberg, *Women, work and life cycle*, p. 201.

Murray. He deposed that one evening, he and a fellow servant in Murray's household, William Petre, were lying in bed together when Juliana, one of Murray's maidservants, came with William to share the news that they had contracted marriage to one another before their master and his wife. According to Richard's testimony, the four young people all drank ale together around the bed in celebration.¹⁰⁵ The chances for social contact were increased in the absence of a master or mistress, as is shown by the actions of the maidservants of John Manne in York in 1555. One evening when John and his wife were out of town, their maidservants entertained Christopher and Nicholas Luty in their house until the early hours of the following morning.¹⁰⁶ Another female servant from York, Jane Wightman, socialised with two male companions during her time off. When the city magistrates accused her of being 'abrode in the streets in company w[i]th two men misbehaving themeselves' one night in 1596, she confessed the trio had been 'drinking w[i]thout the monck barre in the night tyme'. Wightman appears to do so, not only because she was living away from home, but also because service afforded her time off which she was able to spend away from her master and the confines of his household.¹⁰⁷ Such opportunities may not have presented themselves so readily had these young people continued to reside at home under the supervision of their parents.

There is evidence to suggest that service even functioned as an essential period of socialisation and preparation for married life at higher social levels. This is exemplified by the experience of Elizabeth Paston. Elizabeth was aged twenty-eight or twenty-nine when her mother Agnes sent her away from home to board with Lady Pole in 1457. Agnes funded Elizabeth's period of service, implicitly with the aim that it would help to secure the 'gode mariage' that she so desired for her daughter.¹⁰⁸ The experiences of fifteen-year old Anne Paston further emphasise how service acted as a precursor to marriage at elite social levels. Correspondence that discusses Anne's time in service provides insight into both her mother Margery's attitude towards servanthood and her thoughts about its relationship to

¹⁰⁵ York, BI, CP.G.3548: Juliana Stoddart v. William Bullock [1555], p. 3.

¹⁰⁶ A. Raine (ed.), *York civic records*, 5, YASRS, 110 (1946), p. 124; York, YCA, York House Book 21, f. 93v.

¹⁰⁷ York, YCA, York House Book 31, f. 182r.

¹⁰⁸ N. Davis (ed.), *Paston letters and papers of the fifteenth century*, 2 (Oxford, 1976), pp. 253-4, letter 150: Margaret Paston to John Paston I [29 January 1453]; Davis (ed.), *Paston letters*, 1, p. 41, letter 28: Agnes Paston, memorandum of errands [28 January 1458].

marriage. In 1470, Anne was living with 'cousin Calthorp' when he wrote to her mother to tell her that since Anne 'waxeth high' he believed 'it were tyme to purvey here a mariage'. Margery openly dreaded the prospect of her returning home and was reluctant to remove her from service. Margery expressed concern about the 'gret inquietenesse' and 'labour' which she had endured when Anne had resided with her previously. She claimed 'wyth me she shall but lese here tyme' but believed that 'wyth-ought she wull be the better occupied'. Service had clearly given Anne's mother a most welcome excuse to rid herself of a troublesome daughter.¹⁰⁹

Young men from gentry families who lived away from home had the chance to meet members of the opposite sex. One day in 1479, when William Paston attended a wedding with the hosts he lodged with whilst at Eton, he became acquainted with a young woman called Margaret Alborow. In a letter to his brother John III, he recalled how both his hosts and her parents had encouraged conversation between the couple. On the basis of their interaction, William identified Margaret as a possible marriage partner. Although he subsequently asked for advice from his brother on the matter, this does not detract from the degree of agency that William exercised in his selection of Margaret of his own accord, without interference. He may not have had the same chance to do so had he been living at home with his parents at the time.¹¹⁰

It is significant that Richard Cely was also living away from home on business in 1482 when he met Elizabeth Limerick one Sunday in Northleach church in the Cotswolds. After Matins, he was invited to drink with Elizabeth and her step-mother at the home of one of their kinswomen that evening. In a letter that Richard wrote to his brother George, he detailed how he and his companion William Bretten enjoyed 'ryught gode comynecacyon' with the two women. He declared that he was very pleased with her potential as a marriage partner. He described her as '[y]ewnge, lytyll and whery whellfauyrd and whytty' and claimed that 'the contre spekys myche good by hyr'. Richard requested advice from his brother and asked him to 'pray send me a letter how [y]e thynke be thys matter'.

¹⁰⁹ Davis (ed.), *Paston letters*, 1, p. 348, letter 206: Margery Paston to John Paston III [6 July 1470].

¹¹⁰ Davis (ed.), *Paston letters*, 1, pp. 650-1, letter 407: William Paston III to John Paston III [23 February 1479].

He also acknowledged that the marriage negotiations were largely outside of his control. Richard was dependent upon Elizabeth's father coming to London within the three weeks that followed, approving of him upon inspection and then making the financial decision about 'what some he wyll departte wyth' for his daughter's dowry.¹¹¹ The mention of money has connotations of the sort of business proposition marriage that Bennett believes prevailed amongst elite fifteenth-century families and could be taken as an example of a 'blatantly materialistic and impersonal' union that Dockray argues characterised at least some matches at this social level.¹¹² Given that Richard seems to have been fairly involved in the process from the initial meeting onwards, however, I think it would be inaccurate to dismiss this prospective marriage as a mere financial arrangement. Richard's agency may have been qualified somewhat by the level of Elizabeth's father's involvement, but he is still shown to have acted with initiative in having met and socialised with the young woman and picked her as a suitable future wife. I would argue that it was being away from home that enabled him to act with the comparative freedom to enhance his own courtship and marriage prospects in the context of a culture that expected men to choose and women to be chosen.

Service was also positioned as a preparatory phase to marriage below gentry level as is reflected by the disputed marriage case of Agnes Whitingdon v. John Ely from the London Consistory in 1487. Various depositions reveal that once Agnes, a maidservant, was betrothed to John, he demanded that she stop bringing laundry to the Thames. According to one deponent, John promised her that if her refusal to carry out her duties meant that she lost her position, he would take her in and pay for her meals until the marriage between them was solemnised.¹¹³ Once Agnes became a wife, she was to be employed no longer. This trajectory portrays service as a liminal phase, experienced by young women before they took on husbands and the responsibility of managing their own households.

¹¹¹ A. Hanham (ed.), *The Cely letters 1472-1488*, EETS, OS, 273 (1975), pp. 150-3, letter 165: Richard Cely the younger at London to George Cely at Calais or the mart [13 May 1482].

¹¹² H.S. Bennett, *The Pastons and their England* (Cambridge, 1922), p. 28; K. Dockray, 'Why did the fifteenth-century English gentry marry? The Pastons, Plumpton and Stonors reconsidered', in M.E. Jones (ed.), *Gentry and nobility in later medieval England* (Gloucester, 1986), pp. 64-7, 76.

¹¹³ McSheffrey, *Love and marriage*, pp. 56-9, case 12: Agnes Whitingdon v. John Ely [29 January 1487]; Consistory Database: Agnes Whitingdon v. John Ely [29 January 1487].

Living away from home gave young people below gentry rank opportunities to form relationships. As I have discussed earlier, a number of medievalists and early modernists have pointed to the benefits of service for bringing together unmarried men and women and affording them chances to find friendship, intimacy and ultimately a suitable spouse away from direct parental influence.¹¹⁴ Alice Scrace and Richard Cressy were both living away from home when they conducted a courtship and contracted marriage together. A matrimonial case between the couple came before the London Consistory in 1483. The depositions tell how they met when she was employed in service with one John Scot and he was on a three-week holiday from his studies at Lincoln's Inn. Alice claimed that on one occasion Richard visited her at her master's house, he asked her mistress to 'permit him to have a conversation with [Alice] in secret'. Whilst this suggests that unmarried couples were not usually allowed much intimacy unchaperoned, it was sanctioned in this instance. Alice revealed that it was during this private conversation that she and Richard exchanged present-tense promises of matrimony without the knowledge or consent of her master and mistress. When her master eventually discovered that she had contracted with Richard, she pretended that the promises had been exchanged in her father's store-house rather than in her master's house. She claimed to have been fearful of her master becoming angry because he was ignorant of the contract made under his roof.¹¹⁵ In the late fifteenth century it was a social expectation that a female servant would seek the consent of her master; Alice contravened this expectation by hiding the contract from hers. Neither her master and mistress nor her parents receive any further mentions in her testimony. It is thus apparent that none of them were privy to the marriage. Alice displayed agency in arranging and agreeing to the marriage herself, without influence or interference from a third party. Living away from home gave Alice and Richard the chance to act with a degree of autonomy that they might not otherwise have been able to enjoy. This is also apparent from other cases where young males and females in service contracted marriage without the knowledge of their

¹¹⁴ See Goldberg, *Women, work and life cycle*, ch. 5; Goldberg, 'Marriage, migration, servanthood and life-cycle', pp. 141-69; McSheffrey, *Marriage, sex and civic culture*, pp. 18, 88-92; V. Brodsky Elliot, 'Single women in the London marriage market', in R.B. Outhwaite (ed.), *Studies in the social history of marriage* (London, 1981), p. 96; O'Hara, *Courtship and constraint*, pp. 146-8, 150; M. Ingram, *Church courts, sex and marriage in England, 1570-1640* (Cambridge, 1987), pp. 200-1; Carlson, *Marriage and the English Reformation* (Oxford, 1994), p. 110; R. Adair, *Courtship, illegitimacy and marriage* (Manchester, 1996), p. 134.

¹¹⁵ Consistory Database: Richard Cressy v. Alice Scrace [28 March 1489].

masters and mistresses. In 1492, John Kendall and Elizabeth Wily contracted marriage in secret.¹¹⁶ Katherine Garington also agreed to marry William Yewle without the knowledge of her mistress, or her parents, in 1493.¹¹⁷ Given that there is also a reference to Katherine's 'lady' in the depositions but her mistress was not present at the time the contract was made – and we know that her father was also ignorant of the matter – the suggestion is that she acted independently by giving her consent to William without being subject to the influence of others.

We have seen how indenture terms for male and females in service forbade fornication inside or outside households of masters and mistresses. Instructional literature such as *How the Good Wife Taught Her Daughter* and *The Marchants Avizo* emphasised the importance of young females and young males preserving their reputations.¹¹⁸ In social practice, however, these ideals were contravened and sexual relationships did occur during service. It is apparent from a number of church court cases that being away from home facilitated some young people meeting and engaging in sexual activity. The matrimonial dispute between John Warington and Margaret Barker discussed above is illustrative. Despite the fact that a sexual relationship under the same roof as a master was expressly forbidden during apprenticeships, this case indicates how one master struggled to regulate and control his servants. We can infer from the depositions that Warington had had sex with a female servant in John Bown's household and despite being warned by his master never to so transgress again, Warington was caught in compromising circumstances with Margaret Barker on a subsequent occasion.¹¹⁹ Other servants who engaged in sexual relationships probably also did so contrary to their masters' and mistresses' approval. In the matrimonial litigation that arose between Christian Hilles and Robert Padley before the London Consistory in 1490, Christian claimed that Robert, one of her master's male servants, had made her pregnant. Witnesses attested to having seen the couple 'greatly in one another's company' and many times alone together during the summer months, turning hay in the

¹¹⁶ Consistory Database: John Kendall v. Isabel or Elizabeth Wily [July 1492].

¹¹⁷ Consistory Database: William Yewle, Thomas Grey v. Katherine Garington [4, 10, 19 November 1493; 17, 24 January 1494; 8, 13 March 1494; 8 May 1494].

¹¹⁸ Clode, *The early history of the guild of merchant taylors*, p. 344; LMA, Corporation of London Miscellaneous Manuscript 186.003; 'How the Good Wife Taught Her Daughter', in Shuffelton (ed.), *Codex Ashmole 61*, lines 1-209; Browne, *The marchants avizo*, ed. McGrath, pp. 3-4.

¹¹⁹ See Goldberg (ed.), *Women in England*, pp. 110-14.

meadows.¹²⁰ It is likely that these types of interactions provided young males and females with greater opportunities to enter into courtships and sexual relationships and to thereby exercise more agency than those who remained at home with their parents.

The experiences of a servant named William Petrie encapsulate how service functioned to provide opportunities for courtship, sex and marriage. Petrie was aged eighteen when he contracted marriage with Marion Raise, a fellow servant in the household of his master, William Bainbridge. Five years later, Petrie exchanged words with another of his master's female servants, Grace Garby. A matrimonial dispute arose between the three parties and was heard at the Consistory Court in Durham in 1575. Petrie's deposition is revealing. He testified that 'he had diverse times talk and communication [with Grace] in the hinder end of summer... in Langley myln'. He recalled how he and Grace 'met together one Sunday at afternoon in the Bourne Wood' where they 'exchanged words and gifts'. Given that Petrie made the further confession that 'he hath begotten of her one child that is dead and another child wherewith she is with at this time', it is apparent that the pair had also been engaging in a sexual relationship during their time in service.¹²¹ I would argue that it was being in service and living away from home that gave Petrie the opportunity to court girls, the opportunity to engage in a sexual relationship and the opportunity to contract marriage twice apparently without being subject to external influences. The implication from these various examples about peer interaction, courtship, sex and marriage is that for at least some young people, a period of service and life away from home was a transitional time that functioned to further the socialisation process by affording them more agency, assisting their progress towards adulthood and helping them to prepare for their adult lives.

¹²⁰ Consistory Database: Christian Hilles v. Robert Padley [24 May 1490; 9 June 1490].

¹²¹ J. Raine (ed.), *Depositions and other ecclesiastical proceedings from the courts of Durham, extending from 1311 to the reign of Elizabeth*, Surtees Society, 21 (1845), pp. 310-12, no. 324: 'The personal answer of William Petrie to the libel of Marion Raise and Grace Garby' [undated, possibly circa 1575].

Chapter Three

'Achieving Adulthood'

'Adultum' is the past participle of the Latin verb 'adolescere', which indicates how the developmental process reaches its conclusion in 'having grown up'.

Consequently, a further aspect of adolescence that has been explored in modern social-scientific scholarship is its culmination in adulthood. Anthropologists tend to view marriage as the pivotal event that marks the attainment of adult status.¹ Indeed, Schlegel and Barry argue that the whole point of the latter stages of adolescence is to prepare young males and young females for marriage and the assumption of gender-specific family responsibilities. They suggest that in most cultures, female adolescence is typically shorter than male adolescence. In those where a girl becomes a wife before puberty, her marriage is ensued by a type of adolescence. In others, when a girl marries during or after puberty, it is the onset of motherhood that subsequently marks her achievement of adult status.² Whilst sociologists also appreciate the importance of marriage for the transition to adulthood, they attach significance to a variety of milestones that are indicative of progression towards self-sufficiency. These factors emanate from the context of modern Western society. They include the completion of education, the commencement of full-time employment, the development of individualism, the onset of parenthood and the establishment of an independent family life.³

Historians of the pre-modern era have likewise explored the coming of age.

Medievalists such as Hanawalt and Karras highlight the centrality of marriage, householding and fatherhood as rites of passage for young males of middling

¹ J.J. Arnett, 'Conceptions of the transition to adulthood: perspectives from adolescence through midlife', *Journal of Adult Development*, 8:2 (2001), pp. 133-4.

² See Arnett, 'Conceptions of the transition to adulthood', pp. 133-4; A. Schlegel and H. Barry III, *Adolescence: an anthropological inquiry* (New York, 1991).

³ As I discussed earlier, individualism encompasses accepting responsibility for oneself, making independent decisions, developing individually-held principles, cultivating an independent identity, forming a relationship with parents based on equality and complying with social norms. See A. France, *Understanding youth in late modernity* (Buckingham, 2007), pp. 34-6; Arnett, 'Conceptions of the transition to adulthood', pp. 133-4; F.P. Rice, *The adolescent: developments, relationships and culture* (Boston, 1975), p. 245; P. Noller and V. Callan, *The adolescent in the family* (London, 1991), pp. 4-16; C. Wallace, and S. Kovatcheva, *Youth in society: the construction and deconstruction of youth in east and west Europe* (New York, 1999), p. 125; J.J. Arnett, 'Emerging adulthood: a theory of development from the late teens through the twenties', in *American Psychologist*, 55:5 (2000), p. 472; M.J. Zimmer-Gembeck and W.A. Collins, 'Autonomy development during adolescence', in G.R. Adams and M.D. Berzonsky (eds), *Blackwell handbook of adolescence* (Oxford, 2003), pp. 176-7.

rank.⁴ Schultz identifies gender variation at elite social levels based on sexual experience. He suggests that whilst girls became adult following marriage and sexual relations, boys did so upon being knighted and receiving their inheritance.⁵ Chojnacki also emphasises a gender variation in his work on Venetian patrician adolescence. He maintains that the prevalence of the Mediterranean marriage pattern meant that social adulthood in high society was marked by marriage for males, but motherhood for females.⁶ Variation in the attainment of adulthood according to both gender and social rank is noted by Goldberg.⁷ He argues that for most men with access to land, training or capital, social adulthood was defined by marriage and householding and those who did not become husbands or householders occupied an ambiguous position in medieval society.⁸ He maintains that marriage also had a stabilising effect on women, but it caused them to exchange dependence on their father or master for subjection to the authority of their husband.⁹ Whereas marriage empowered men as heads of households, it was important for women because it ultimately enabled them to become mothers to legitimate offspring.¹⁰ Phillips likewise points to sexual maturation as the signifier of a shift to adult status for young women from well-off backgrounds in medieval England.¹¹ Early modernists such as Gillis and Mitterauer also stress the importance of marriage for representing the transition to adult status for young males in early modern Europe.¹² Ben-Amos agrees that marriage and householding marked full integration into adult life for male apprentices in craft workshops in early modern England.¹³ Whilst the centrality of marriage as an indicator of

⁴ B.A. Hanawalt, *Growing up in medieval London: the experience of childhood in history* (Oxford, 1996), pp. 206-16; R.M. Karras, *From boys to men: formations of masculinity in late medieval Europe* (Philadelphia, 2002), chs. 4, 5.

⁵ J.A. Schultz, 'Medieval adolescence: the claims of history and the silence of German narrative', *Speculum*, 66:3 (1991), pp. 519-39.

⁶ S. Chojnacki, 'Measuring adulthood: adolescence and gender in Renaissance Venice', *Journal of Family History*, 17:4 (1992) pp. 371-95 (p. 384).

⁷ P.J.P. Goldberg, 'Life and death: the ages of man', in R. Horrox and M. Ormrod (eds), *A social history of England, 1200-1500* (Cambridge, 2006), pp. 421-2.

⁸ P.J.P. Goldberg, 'Migration, youth and gender in later medieval England', in P.J.P. Goldberg and F. Riddy (eds), *Youth in the Middle Ages* (Woodbridge, 2004), p. 98.

⁹ Goldberg, 'Migration, youth and gender', pp. 95-6.

¹⁰ Goldberg, 'Migration, youth and gender', p. 99; Goldberg, 'Life and death: the ages of man', pp. 421-2.

¹¹ K.M. Phillips, *Medieval maidens: young women and gender in England, 1270-1540* (Manchester, 2003), p. 7.

¹² J.R. Gillis, *Youth and history: transition and change in European age relations, 1770 to present* (London, 1981), pp. 2-4; M. Mitterauer, *A history of youth*, trans. G. Dunphy (Oxford, 1992), ch. 1.

¹³ See I.K. Ben-Amos, *Adolescence and youth in early modern England* (London, 1994), pp. 208-35; I.K. Ben-Amos, 'Service and the coming of age of young men in seventeenth-century England', *Continuity and Change*, 3:1 (1988), pp. 59-60.

adulthood in the sixteenth century is affirmed by Carlson, Rappaport maintains that it was the establishment of an independent household that was the pivotal event at this time.¹⁴

This brief overview of modern social-scientific research and of historical scholarship draws attention to some issues which I intend to investigate further. Historians have suggested that for young males of middling status in the pre-modern era, adulthood was marked by marriage, householding and fatherhood. The aim of this chapter is to problematise the idea that adult status was achieved through getting married, establishing an independent household and having children. I want to test how far this model of adulthood was universally applicable to young men and young women in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. I am interested in discovering if all three of the elements of marriage, householding and parenthood were required for people to become adult or if individual elements could be sufficient on their own. I assess the significance of setting up an independent household with a spouse by considering the position of young males and females from aristocratic backgrounds who contracted marriage some time before they began to live alone together. I ascertain the centrality of marriage by looking at the experiences of unmarried journeymen and single women. I determine the importance of parenthood by exploring the position of people who became parents without first being married and setting up their own household. This enables me to establish how far having a child in itself was enough to alter their status or if the additional factors were also required.

My problematisation of the achievement of adult status involves probing cultural understandings of adulthood in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries and how far these ideas were affected by social and cultural changes over this period. With the exception of a few medievalists, most historians of the pre-modern era who have studied the coming of age have tended to privilege the male experience.

Anthropologists think that there may be significant differences in male and female experience of becoming adult. Consequently, my analysis also considers how the attainment of adulthood varied in social practice according to gender and also because of differences in age and social rank. I begin by exploring how adulthood

¹⁴ E.J. Carlson, *Marriage and the English Reformation* (Oxford, 1994), pp. 106, 116; S. Rappaport, *Worlds within worlds: structures of life in sixteenth-century London* (Cambridge, 2002), pp. 322-9.

was understood and achieved for those young men and women from gentry families who contracted marriage at a young age. This provides a useful comparison to the experiences of the young of both sexes at lower social levels. I examine the understanding of adulthood for young men of lesser social rank and establish how adult status was attained by them, before contrasting their experiences to those of young females of an equivalent social status. In the final part of this chapter, I investigate how far parenthood was connected to adulthood for those who were not married when they had children.

Males and Females of Gentry Rank

In 1466, Thomas Stonor and Thomas Rokes drew up a contract of marriage between their young daughter and young son respectively. The children were both underage at the time so the agreement included the clause that if Rokes's son at the age of fourteen and Stonor's daughter at the age of thirteen refused to give their consent then the intended marriage would be void.¹⁵ As I discussed earlier, young males and young females were deemed to have reached their majority under canon law at ages perceived to coincide with their psychological and emotional maturity. The ages from which they were believed to be capable of exercising informed consent were set at twelve for girls and fourteen for boys. Whilst non-binding betrothals could be entered into from the age of seven onwards, it was only once they reached the age of discretion that young males and females were considered old enough to make a binding contract of marriage. If they decided against a previously arranged match, they could opt not to give their consent and thereby prevent a contract from becoming valid.¹⁶ This canon law provision is broadly encapsulated in the Stonor-Rokes agreement. It shows how some young people at elite social levels came to be afforded a degree of agency over their marriage decisions at this point.

Evidence from disputed marriage cases heard before the Consistory Court in York in the sixteenth century affirms how reaching the age of discretion was significant because it allowed earlier betrothals to be challenged. The litigation for annulment

¹⁵ C.L. Kingsford (ed.), *The Stonor letters and papers, 1290-1483*, 1, Camden Third Series, 29 (1919), pp. 93-4, letter 87: Humphrey Forster to Thomas Stonor [21 October 1466].

¹⁶ See R. Helmholz, *Marriage litigation in later medieval England* (Cambridge, 1975), p. 98.

that arose between Richard Waterhouse and Margaret Watmoe in 1555 was based on the claim that Margaret was under the age of seven when a betrothal had been arranged between them. Although this would have invalidated the contract in itself, Richard also claimed that once he reached the age of fourteen, he refused to have her as his wife. He reiterated that from then on they neither kept company with one another nor lived together in the same house.¹⁷ The age of discretion being attained at fourteen was also central for Thomas Hawne in his suit against Elizabeth Fox in 1561. His case for annulment rested on Elizabeth having been just four years old when he, at the age of ten, was unlawfully betrothed to her. Thomas's witnesses testified that 'common voice and fame' in the chapel was that ever since he came to the age of fourteen, he never consented to the matrimony. It was also noted that from this age onwards he refused to come into Elizabeth's company and was persistently angered by the mention of her being his wife.¹⁸

Although being under the age of discretion was an issue emphasised in these depositions in order to meet the requirements of canon law for the annulment of a marriage on the grounds of nonage – and the witnesses' statements would have been shaped accordingly – these cases still offer a window that allows us to comment on the position of some young males who were subject to underage marriages. It is likely that the reason marriages were arranged for individuals like Richard Waterhouse and Thomas Hawne when they were so young is because they were the first-born sons and heirs of their families. The implication is that if the boys' families changed their minds about a contract, making the claim that their sons did not consent at the of fourteen enabled them to ensure that it would be legally void. The boys themselves could also have challenged earlier betrothals upon reaching the age of fourteen if they wanted to assert the idea that they should be given choice over their own wife and were keen to exercise agency in this respect. It was obtaining the age of discretion that gave them the opportunity to make such a challenge.

¹⁷ York, BI, CP.G.619: Richard Waterhouse v. Margaret Watmoe [Annulment: minor, 1555, plaintiff wins]. For comparable cases see also York, BI, CP.G.505: Dorothy Lacey v. Henry Savil [Annulment: minor, 1553]; York, BI, CP.G.740: Frances Rawson v. Alfred Fleming [Annulment: minor, 1558, plaintiff wins].

¹⁸ York, BI, CP.G.803: Thomas Hawne v. Elizabeth Fox [Annulment: minor, 1561, plaintiff wins].

The example of Robert West can be used to give particular insights. In 1557, Robert brought a matrimonial suit against Elizabeth Beaumont for annulment on the grounds of nonage before the York Consistory. Even though a contract of marriage had been made between them when Elizabeth was ten and Robert was seven years old, it was only once he got to the age of fourteen that they began to reside together at his father's house. During this time, he was sent to boarding school by his father, whilst she remained at his home with his parents. Robert's father testified on his behalf. He claimed that any time his son returned home from boarding school to 'make merry', Robert and Elizabeth could not bear to be in each other's company. Another of his witnesses maintained that from the age of fourteen, he openly refused to have her as his wife. On the one hand, this case affirms how reaching the age of discretion was significant because it gave Robert the chance to repudiate a contract that had previously been made for him. On the other hand, given that he brought an action for annulment before the court when he was aged sixteen, the couple must have continued to cohabit for around a further two years after the initial protestations were made. The depositions make it clear that when they were living together with Robert's parents, his father remained in control of his education and sent him away from home to go to school, even though he was supposedly married. The fact that Robert continued to live with his parents and attend school suggests that the extent of his agency was limited. Irrespective of his marital status, he still seems to have been subject to the will of his father.¹⁹ This is also apparent from the comparable experience of John Wheeldon. He was married in his teens to a girl named Anne, who resided at his home with his parents whilst he attended school 'at Tadcaster and Saffrington in North Allerton'. As such, he was another married individual who lived away from his spouse.²⁰ For boys like Robert and John from high-status backgrounds who continued to live with their parents after contracting – and whose families had arranged their marriages at a young age probably for reasons of dynasty and property – reaching the age of consent may well have allowed them to become legally married, but this does not seem to have elevated them to adult status. If marriage in itself was not indicative of social adulthood for these young men, the

¹⁹ York, BI, CP.G.735: Robert West v. Elizabeth Beaumont [Annulment: minor, 1557, plaintiff wins], pp. 2-8.

²⁰ York, BI, CP.G.775: John Wheeldon v. Anne Wheeldon [Restitution, 1559, plaintiff wins].

implication is that becoming a householder and a father may have held more significance in terms of their attainment of adulthood than just acquiring a wife.

There is evidence to suggest that for some young women with elevated social status who were around their early teens when they married, becoming sexually active may have been more indicative of their social maturity than simply becoming a wife. This can be inferred from the circumstances that surrounded the marriage arranged between Sir Thomas Clifford's twelve-year-old daughter Elizabeth and Sir William Plumpton's son William in 1453. When the marriage was solemnised, Sir William promised Sir Thomas that the two young people would not lie together until she reached the age of sixteen. Accordingly, it was not until she was eighteen that she became a mother for the first time.²¹ As Phillips argues, canon law would not have prevented the marriage from being consummated immediately.²² However, the determination of Elizabeth's father to delay her first sexual experience and the possibility of pregnancy until she was more physically and mentally mature is representative of a deliberate postponement of her adult role as a wife and mother.

From a series of letters written between 1476 and 1478, it is apparent that sex and implicitly the onset of motherhood was also delayed for Katherine Ryche. She was the step-daughter of William Stonor and, like Elizabeth Clifford, had a gentry background. Charles Kingsford estimates that she was born in 1462 or 1463, which would have made her aged thirteen or fourteen at the time the letters were written.²³ Katherine was betrothed to her step-father's business partner, Thomas Betson and was still living at home.²⁴ That he was significantly older than her is evident from the very paternalistic tone he adopted in his correspondence. For example, on one occasion he urged her to be 'a good etter off your mete allwaye' so that she 'myght waxe and grow ffast to be a woman' and make him the 'gladdest man' in the world. He frequently lamented the contrast between his age and her youth. He declared that it was her 'yonge youthe' that caused him distress and reiterated his desire for her 'to eate [her] mete lyke a woman' to 'help [her]

²¹ T. Stapleton (ed.), *The Plumpton correspondence*, Camden Society, OS, 4 (1839), p. lxiv.

²² Phillips, *Medieval maidens*, pp. 36-7.

²³ C.L. Kingsford (ed.), *The Stonor letters and papers, 1290-1483*, 2, Camden Third Series, 30 (1919), p. 6.

²⁴ See Phillips, *Medieval maidens*, p. 41.

greately in waxynge [growing larger and stronger]'.²⁵ On another occasion, Betson reprimanded Katherine like a disgruntled father for failing to respond to his letters in sufficient time.²⁶

Katherine's young age was probably the primary reason why the couple were kept apart, despite being betrothed. In a letter dated 18 June 1478, Betson lamented to her mother how he longed for Katherine to be at home with him because he was pained to be without her. Even though he found the separation difficult, he acknowledged that he had to 'endure must needs for both God's sake and hers'.²⁷ Betson was resolved to waiting until the end of August for Katherine to arrive in London. He deferred to the authority of her mother in this respect. Whilst he knew her presence would be beneficial to him and eagerly anticipated her arrival, he told her mother 'your ladyshipe may do therin as it shall plese you'.²⁸ Katherine's parents still had the power to control her whereabouts. The level of control that she was subjected to – and the lack of agency that she had as a consequence – can be attributed to her youth. It is clear from the letters that a consummation of the union was delayed until at least the end of August 1478, when Katherine would have been around the age of fifteen or sixteen. This suggests that a distinction existed between the basic requirements for a marriage to be lawfully contracted in the eyes of the church and a more complex social and cultural understanding of marriage that was associated with solemnisation and consummation.

The anthropological findings of Schlegel and Barry are useful for showing how marriage does not in itself represent adulthood when women in some modern cultures marry very young.²⁹ Parallels can be drawn with gentry culture in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. As the examples of Elizabeth Clifford and Katherine Ryche show, there was an interval between the point at which these young women contracted marriage and the point at which they ceased to be

²⁵ Kingsford (ed.), *Stonor letters*, 2, pp. 6-8, letter 166: Thomas Betson to Katherine Ryche [1 June 1476].

²⁶ Kingsford (ed.), *Stonor letters*, 2, pp. 27-8, letter 185: Thomas Betson to Dame Elizabeth Stonor [22 December 1477].

²⁷ Kingsford (ed.), *Stonor letters*, 2, p. 53, letter 216: Thomas Betson to Dame Elizabeth Stonor [18 June 1478].

²⁸ Kingsford (ed.), *Stonor letters*, 2, pp. 54-5, letter 217: Thomas Betson to Dame Elizabeth Stonor [24 June 1478].

²⁹ See Arnett, 'Conceptions of the transition to adulthood', pp. 133-4; Schlegel and Barry, *Adolescence*.

treated as dependent on their natal families. This occurred when they began to cohabit with their husbands and commenced a sexual relationship. As I have already noted, Chojnaki argues that for young women in Venetian patrician society, the process of adolescence did not actually come to an end until a young woman became a mother.³⁰ I would suggest that for young women like Elizabeth and Katherine from elite social backgrounds in fifteenth- and sixteenth-century England, reaching a sufficient level of maturity to move away from their natal families, live with their husbands and be at risk of becoming mothers as a consequence of having sex were important steps towards their social adulthood.

Some aristocratic women who were especially keen to exercise control over their own marriages and implicitly their own futures adopted the strategy of arranging their marriages in secret. In Chapter One, I discussed how Margery Paston arranged a secret marriage between herself and Richard Calle in 1469. She showed remarkable agency not only in making the match but also in defending her commitment to him despite the interrogation she faced from the Bishop of Norwich and the opposition that she encountered from her family. Given that it was propertied families such as the Pastons who had the most interest in regulating their children's marriages, she must have been a particularly determined and assertive individual.³¹ That the family prioritised maintaining a high level of social status is apparent from John Paston III's fear that the marriage would result in his sister becoming a lowly shop trader selling 'kandyll and mustard in Framlyngham'.³² The point of this vitriolic rhetoric was to draw a contrast between Margery being of gentle birth and Richard having to make his livelihood through work rather than land.³³ Margery chose the man that she loved of her own volition and ended up married to the husband she desired. Whilst it is important to bear in mind that she was expelled from the family home and socially ostracised as a consequence, becoming married still released her from the constraints of her family. Since Margery was a rather strong-willed nineteen-year-

³⁰ Chojnacki, 'Measuring adulthood', p. 384.

³¹ See C. Richmond, *The Paston family in the fifteenth century: endings* (Manchester, 2000), pp. 51-4.

³² N. Davis (ed.), *The Paston letters and papers of the fifteenth century*, 1 (Oxford, 1971), pp. 541-3, letter 332: John Paston III to John Paston II [7 April 1469].

³³ N. Davis (ed.), *The Paston letters and papers of the fifteenth century*, 2 (Oxford, 1976), pp. 498-500, letter 861: Richard Calle to Margery Calle [close to 10/11 September 1469].

old who acted with such independence, I would argue that in her case, marriage would have been representative of the onset of her social adulthood.

Mary Bassett, the seventeen-year-old step-daughter of Lord Lisle, also contracted a secret marriage in 1540 with Gabriel de Montmorency, Seigneur de Bours – a French nobleman and the son of the family she had completed her period of service with. At this time the political context was such that she needed express permission from the King to marry a Frenchman.³⁴ However, given that the marriage was secret, such permission had been neither sought nor granted. Upon the secret marriage being discovered, the Lisle family was arrested and held in custody and Mary's mother was accused of concealing the arrangement. When questioned, both Lord and Lady Lisle claimed to be ignorant of the matter.³⁵ Mary also emphasised that she contracted marriage 'privily' and only afterwards did she 'declare the same unto her mother and sisters'. She also revealed that she did not yet know whether her step-father had ever been informed at all.³⁶ Like Margery Paston, Mary acted independently by contracting a marriage in private without the knowledge of her family. No lasting union may ever have emerged, but this does not detract from the fact that she acted in a way that was not dictated by her parents and that she would likely have suspected was contrary to their wishes. Had a marriage materialised, it may well have been indicative of the commencement of her social adulthood. This does not seem to have been applicable to younger girls whose families arranged their marriages for them in their early teens. For such individuals, it was subsequent cohabitation with a spouse with the potential of becoming a mother that seem to have been the most important factors for their progression to adult status.

Males Below Gentry Rank

A matrimonial dispute which reveals details about a summer-game held in Wistow in Yorkshire in 1469 illustrates the connection made between marriage and the onset of social adulthood for non-elite young men in a rural parish in the late

³⁴ B.A. Hanawalt, 'Female networks for fostering Lady Lisle's daughters', in J.C. Parsons and B. Wheeler (eds), *Medieval mothering* (Abingdon, 1999) pp. 239-58 (p. 253).

³⁵ M. St. Clare Byrne (ed.), *The Lisle letters*, 6 (Chicago, 1981), pp. 138, 141.

³⁶ St. Clare Byrne (ed.), *Lisle letters*, 6, p. 145.

medieval era.³⁷ I will return to analyse this case in depth in Chapter Four. For the moment, I just want to focus on the significance of young unmarried people being the primary participants in this Midsummer festival. When Thomas Barker, the young man who had been appointed the festival king on the Sunday before Midsummer day in 1469, married a young woman named Agnes at Sherburn-in-Elmet on the Sunday following the game, one witness named Richard Ponder reasoned, '*et idcirco postea officium Regale in ludo predicto non exercuit Thomas Barker*'. This meant that as a now married man, Barker was no longer permitted to play the king's part.³⁸ If marriage made him ineligible then it must have been requisite that the person acting the king was unmarried.³⁹ In this social and cultural context particular emphasis seems to have been placed on a hierarchy based on marital status. The onset of marriage moved Barker outside the group of unmarried individuals who participated in the summer-game and therefore represented a fundamental shift in his social position.

An example of the change of status that marriage also caused for a young man employed as an apprentice in an urban artisanal household is provided by the marriage case between John Warington and Margaret Barker that I discussed previously.⁴⁰ We can recall that Warington's case before the York Consistory in 1417 centred on the claim that his master, John Bown, had forced him to marry a fellow servant in the household named Margaret Barker. Bown had found the couple alone together in his hayloft and suspected that they had sex with one another there. According to the deposition of the witness John Gamesby, Warington told Bown that he would be willing to make Margaret his wife if he 'was able to make it so and be sufficiently good and generous to him'.⁴¹ The apprentice seems to have seen an opportunity to exercise a bargaining strategy with his master. Goldberg argues that he probably asked to be helped to get his own

³⁷ York, BI, CP.F.246. Although summer-games were predominantly a rural phenomenon, there is evidence that they also occurred in some urban settings. In the sixteenth century summer kings and queens were appointed annually in the town of St Ives, Cornwall, for example. See J.C. Cox, *Churchwardens' accounts from the fourteenth century to the close of the seventeenth century* (London, 1913), p. 280.

³⁸ York, BI, CP.F.246; S. Wenzel, "'Somers Game' and sermon references to a Corpus Christi play", *Modern Philology*, 86:3 (1989), p. 275.

³⁹ J.S. Purvis (ed.), *Tudor parish documents of the diocese of York* (Cambridge, 1948), pp. 160-1, note 1.

⁴⁰ See P.J.P. Goldberg (ed. and trans.), *Women in England c.1275-1525* (Manchester, 1995), pp. 110-14.

⁴¹ Goldberg (ed.), *Women in England*, p. 111.

business in order to make the prospect of marriage more attractive and advantageous. Warington may have felt that the idea of marriage was inconceivable without having a workshop to manage that would require the support of a wife and would supply the livelihood needed to support a family.⁴² Obtaining a wife and establishing an independent livelihood as a master of his own workshop appears to have encapsulated his ambitions for – and therefore defined – his social adulthood.

Evidence from the Plumpton correspondence further supports the notion that marriage and the ability to sustain an independent livelihood were inextricably connected for young men in trade. A letter written to Sir William Plumpton by Geoffrey Green in 1464 reveals how a ‘young man ... a mercer in the Chepe’ proposed to ‘sett up a shop of his owne’ and then subsequently ‘[made] great labour’ for Green’s sister Isabel to agree to marry him. Green noted that since the mercer had no livelihood and was ‘no gent’ by birth, Isabel’s mistress and her husband had agreed to support him by lending him money to establish his own business. Green also pointed out that this would allow the young man to marry.⁴³ The mercer evidently did not have adequate means of his own to enable him to support a wife and provide for a family. This reinforces the notion that financial independence was recognised as a fundamental requirement for these key markers of adult life.

The Warington case is also telling in relation to the connection between sexual activity and adulthood. By having sex with a maidservant under his master’s roof, Warington would have contravened the contractual obligations of his apprenticeship indenture. The litigation presents him as having been forced by his master, on the discovery of his indiscretions, to contract marriage with the young woman. The depositions show that Bown tried to exert and retain control over the young people in his household. If Warington and Barker were married then he could save his reputation within the local community as head of a morally upstanding and orderly household. Within the household, sexual activity was

⁴² See P.J.P. Goldberg, ‘Masters and men in later medieval England’, in D. Hadley (ed.), *Masculinity in medieval Europe* (New York, 1998), p. 59.

⁴³ Stapleton (ed.), *Plumpton correspondence*, pp. 11-12, letter 8: Godfrey Green to Sir William Plumpton [14 June 1464].

understood to be the exclusive preserve of the married householder and his wife.⁴⁴ Commencing a sexual relationship – but only in the context of being a husband and householder with the potential to start a family of his own – is presented as an important aspect of Warrington's future adult status.

That sex was ideally supposed to be reserved for marriage in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries is affirmed by the fact that those who had sexual relationships without being married faced paternalistic punishment. Earlier I discussed how in 1471 Thomas Wulley was reported to the constable by his father when he suspected that his son had fornicated with Margaret Isot. When the couple were discovered in a compromising position in the basement of a public house in their neighbourhood, they were arrested, held in custody at the constable's house and questioned about why they kept one another's company. On another occasion, when Thomas's mother found them lying naked in a bed together in Margaret's house, she made him wear Margaret's shoes in order to humiliate him in public. The actions of Thomas's father and mother and the constable reveal a desire to discourage pre-marital sexual activity. It is implicit that both parents and those who enforced order expected a sexual relationship to be reserved for married life.⁴⁵ As such, it can be taken as a mark of maturity.

John King was another servant who encountered paternalistic treatment when he had a sexual relationship outside of marriage with one Dorothy Turner in the house of his employer, Leonard Dykes, gentleman. Dorothy, and Dyke's son Thomas, were both witnesses in a disputed marriage case at the York Consistory in 1593. Thomas's testimony shows that John and Dorothy were both in service in his father's household. He recalled that John had been given his own bed to sleep in, whilst Dorothy was supposed to sleep beside another woman. When Dykes found out that the couple had spent all night together in the same bed, he was so angry about their 'evil dealings' and so dismayed about how his house had been abused in this way, that he 'broke King's head with a staff'. Dorothy was also 'reproved for her lewdness'.⁴⁶ Like John Bown, Leonard Dykes was a master keen to prevent illicit sex in order to be seen to be running an orderly and godly household.

⁴⁴ Goldberg, 'Masters and men', p. 63.

⁴⁵ Consistory Database: Thomas Wulley v. Margaret Isot [18 December 1488; 4, 9 March 1489].

⁴⁶ York, BI, CP.G.2770: Henry Hudson v. Anne May [Exceptions: witnesses, 1593].

Engaging in a sexual relationship outside of marriage may have represented an aspiration towards adulthood. However, it is apparent that it was only sex within the context of marriage, householding and parenthood that was deemed legitimate. Since sexual activity was the basis of the union between husband and wife, required to produce children and essential for the effective maintenance of a well-ordered household, it was fundamental to adult life.

Not all young men were able to obtain the authority and stability associated with the marriage, householding and mastership model of adulthood that I have demonstrated. One such group was unmarried journeymen – waged labourers without workshops or wives of their own who were only answerable to their employers during the course of a working day. An ordinance issued by the Mayor and Aldermen of London in 1415 indicates how the civic authorities were alarmed to discover that some journeyman tailors were living with one another ‘in companies by themselves ... in diverse dwelling-houses in the city’. The primary concern for the civic authorities was that journeymen were residing together without a master being present to supervise and rule them. They were described in negative terms as ‘unruly and insolent men without head or governance’ who were ‘youthful and unstable’. Journeymen were accused of often assembling in great numbers in various places, both inside and outside of the city, of beating and maltreating many inhabitants, and of generally causing disturbances to the peace. They faced paternalistic punishment as a consequence. The civic officials ruled that journeymen should be bound to the governance of their masters. They were also forbidden from holding assemblies. In addition, they were ordered to vacate their dwelling-houses within the space of the following week and were told that they ‘must not re-take them or any other houses, by themselves alone, for dwelling together therein’ on pain of imprisonment and a financial penalty.⁴⁷

Even if particularly emotive language and imagery was used to exaggerate the enormity of the situation in this ordinance, it still shows how some unmarried men, who lived together without being under the supervision of a master, were the source of great anxiety amongst masters and magistrates. The objective seems to have been for these individuals to be subject to strict controls, both inside and

⁴⁷ H.T. Riley (ed.), *Memorials of London and London life in the XIIIth, XIVth and XVth centuries* (London, 1868), pp. 609-12.

outside of the working day, even though as waged labourers, they were not obliged to be accountable to their masters beyond the hours of employment. Ordinances from the Brasiers' and Stringers' Companies in London that date from 1416 reiterate this aspiration. These ordinances reveal how journeymen were forbidden to rebel against their masters. They were told that if they did so they would face punishment to ensure that good governance was maintained. The ordinances also declared that if any dispute existed between a master and his servant or journeyman then no other master would be permitted to employ him until the issue had been resolved and a satisfactory agreement reached. Magistrates and employers clearly wanted to ensure that any servant, journeymen or apprentice would remain obedient to their masters at all times.⁴⁸ Since servants, apprentices and journeymen were addressed together, the suggestion is that they were viewed as having comparable status. Unmarried journeymen were not independent householders with families of their own. As such, they had no authority or responsibility as husbands, householders or fathers. I would argue that as a result, unmarried journeymen occupied a significantly more muted form of adulthood that was essentially akin to an extended adolescence.

Nevertheless, the very existence of the ordinances shows that these journeymen exercised agency in acting independently of their masters and with supposed disrespect towards the civic authorities. They had the opportunity to do so because, unlike those in lifecycle service, they lived apart from their employers. Unmarried journeymen may not have been able to achieve the same level of autonomy as those men of better social and economic standing who were able to marry, run their own businesses and establish their own families but they were still closer to this model of adulthood – and therefore more adult – than younger servants and apprentices would have been.

'Journeyman' and 'labourer' are effectively interchangeable terms for employees hired on a daily rate. A curfew for poor labourers issued by the civic authorities in York in 1530 highlights how these individuals were viewed in comparison to married householders and how, as a consequence, they were not treated by magistrates as men with equal status. These poor labourers were accused of

⁴⁸ Riley (ed.), *Memorials of London and London life*, pp. 624-7, 634-5.

having created 'common noysaunce and evyll examle' by attending taverns and alehouses nightly and playing unlawful games, contrary to diverse statutes. To 'keep good order and quiteness in the city' and to avoid 'myche unthrifty rewle and demeanour', magistrates decided that all labourers 'shalbe within thayre oun howsys by eight of the clok on the wark dayes at night', unless they had 'any lauffull busynes to doe after the said howres'. Anyone who contravened this rule was to be punished by imprisonment at the discretion of the city wardens.⁴⁹ Griffiths's work on Elizabethan England suggests that the sort of paternalistic treatment that I have identified intensified in the second half of the sixteenth century. He maintains that as the population boomed and economic conditions deteriorated at this time, an increasing number of men could not afford to establish their own workshops and were forced to remain as waged labourers. Griffiths believes such individuals became wedged in an intermediate status and stranded in a 'state of limbo' between youth and adulthood where they ended up 'standing still on the life course'. Many did not experience a full transition to adult status owing to the fact that financial autonomy, marriage and householding – effectively key aims of their socialisation – were simply out of reach.⁵⁰

Females Below Gentry Rank

The marriage case involving Agnes Whitingdon and John Ely from London in 1487 offers a window into the implications of marriage for a young woman below gentry level who was still in service when she contracted.⁵¹ Depositions reveal that when Agnes agreed to marry John, he demanded that she stop bringing laundry to the Thames. According to one deponent, John claimed that 'he does not want his wife carrying clothes'. Another witness testified that John was so 'troubled' when he 'saw Agnes with bare legs carrying clothes to wash in the Thames' that he told her master that he 'should get himself another servant to do this business because she was his wife and he did not want her through these labours to debilitate herself or fall ill and so on'. Moreover, he promised that if her refusal to perform such tasks lost Agnes her position as a servant, he would 'take her in and pay for her meals'.⁵²

⁴⁹ A. Raine (ed.), *York civic records*, 3, YASRS, 106 (1942), p. 134.

⁵⁰ See P. Griffiths, 'Tudor troubles: problems of youth in Elizabethan England', in S. Doran and N.L. Jones (eds), *The Elizabethan world* (Abingdon, 2011), pp. 318-19, 329.

⁵¹ Consistory Database: Agnes Whitington v. John Ely [29 January 1487].

⁵² See Phillips, *Medieval maidens*, p. 158.

As her betrothed, he seems to have treated her paternalistically and been keen to assume control over her actions and behaviour. As I noted earlier, Goldberg argues that in the late medieval era, young women exchanged dependence on a father or master for dependence on a husband upon marriage.⁵³ John's authority would have increased after he and Agnes actually began to live together, especially since the case implies that she was ultimately expected to give up her work in service to become a housewife. However, it is likely that she would still have gained a degree of agency when the couple set up their own household. She would have assumed responsibility for the management of the home and would have had authority over any servants therein. Marriage had different implications according to gender. It may have afforded Agnes some agency but could only ever be exercised within the context of her subjection to the authority of her husband. In comparison to husbands, it would seem that young wives were only able to access a less pronounced type of adulthood.

This gender difference is apparent from some other disputed cases where it is clear that marriage led to little, if any, increase in agency for young women. In the litigation that arose between William Hawkins and Margaret Heed of London in 1488, the idea that a young woman's family should afford her the freedom to choose her own husband is a central theme. The principle of a marriage being contracted on the basis of an independent decision from a young woman represents a significant step towards her social adulthood. However, the heavy emphasis on Margaret's family telling her that the decision had to be hers was likely just a retrospective strategy employed in order to influence the court's decision in their favour. In social practice she may have fared rather differently. Once she changed her mind about the match, she ran away from home. Although she was determined to resist familial control, she was subsequently returned to her parents, verbally reprimanded and physically chastised. The marriage between Margaret and William went ahead, even though some witnesses attested that she had resolutely proclaimed that she would never consent to have him. Margaret's inability to assert her own will against her family at this point resulted in the acquisition of a husband that she apparently did not want.⁵⁴

⁵³ Goldberg, 'Migration, youth and gender', pp. 95-6.

⁵⁴ Consistory Database: William Hawkins v. Margaret Heed [17 June 1488].

Maud Carr endured a very similar experience. In the York Consistory in 1562, she claimed that she had been compelled to marry Edward Burrell following threats from both her parents and beatings from her father Thomas.⁵⁵ Whilst Maud also ran away from home in order to try to avoid the union – which is indicative of her exercising agency – her initiative was counteracted by the fact that she eventually relented and contracted marriage. Unlike most of the population at large, Maud did not set up a new household on marriage. Since she continued to reside with her parents, she remained primarily under her father’s authority irrespective of her marital status. She recalled how she had persistently opposed the match and had demonstrated this by protesting about having to keep Edward’s company against her will. Maud was supposedly married but it is apparent that she continued to occupy a subordinate position. She was under her father’s control and this meant that she lacked independence.

Another young woman who was subject to a forced marriage orchestrated by her parents was Barbara Lutton. A matrimonial dispute arose between Barbara and Miles Belton before the York Consistory Court in 1567 seeking annulment on the grounds of her minority.⁵⁶ A betrothal between them had occurred when she was ten years old. Once she reached the age of consent at twelve, the marriage was solemnised and Miles came to live with her at her parents’ home. Like Maud Carr, Barbara did not move away from her parents to establish an independent household after her supposed marriage. Two years elapsed between Miles coming to live with her family and the action being heard by the court. Witnesses testified that she had been compelled by her father to marry and that once the couple were residing in the same household, her father continued to beat her for trying to resist the arrangement. Barbara’s father admitted that he attempted to stop her from objecting to Miles using physical force and her step-mother admitted to trying to reason with her verbally. Witnesses claimed that Miles even asked her step-mother to ‘bear with her’ and ‘be a good mother onto her’ and ‘not to request her to love him who she would not fancy’ and that he ‘humbly desired her father to cease and beat her no more’ because he endeavoured to save her and bore her goodwill. Barbara remained in a dependent position because she continued to reside with her parents and was subject to their rule. According to one deponent ‘daily in the

⁵⁵ York, BI, CP.G.1116: Edward Burrell v. Matilda Carr [Validity, 1562].

⁵⁶ York, BI, CP.G.1341: Barbara Lutton v. Miles Belton [Annulment: minor, 1567, plaintiff wins].

[same] household', she was reluctant to talk to Miles and often declared that she would never have him as her husband. Even though a marriage had been solemnised between them, Barbara seems to have refused to consider herself married. Her resistance in this respect indicates a degree of agency. The implication from this case is that for marriage to be more representative of social adulthood for a young woman, greater maturity, freedom of choice over her partner and perhaps the ability to establish an independent household with a husband were the essential elements required.

Single Women

Women who remained unmarried were the cause of much magisterial anxiety, especially in late fifteenth- and sixteenth-century society. As we have seen, economic contraction in the later years of the fifteenth century meant that women became increasingly marginalised within the labour force and possibly therefore more dependent on marriage for their livelihoods. Goldberg argues that at this time, single females were 'ghettoized' into an economy characterised by petty trade, retailing ale, prostitution and crime that reinforced magisterial perceptions about ungoverned women posing a direct threat to social order.⁵⁷ This is the context in which the civic authorities in Coventry agreed to impose a programme of reform on inhabitants of the city at their Michaelmas Leet meeting in 1492. An ordinance was issued and single women were one of the targets who became subject to specific paternalistic restrictions. It was declared before the Mayor that no single women under the age of fifty years were to take or keep houses or rooms by themselves. Instead, they were ordered to go into service until they were married. The first time they were found to disobey this rule the women were to be fined 6s. 8d. If they contravened it for a second time, they were warned to expect imprisonment until they could find a surety to go into service. In addition, any person who received single women or rented a house or a chamber to them was also set to face financial penalties and imprisonment to entice them to comply with the ordinance.⁵⁸ In 1495 another ordinance – which addressed 'euery maide & sole

⁵⁷ See Goldberg, 'Migration, youth and gender', p. 98; P.J.P. Goldberg, 'Coventry's 'Lollard' programme of 1492 and the making of Utopia', in R. Horrox and S. Rees Jones (eds), *Pragmatic utopias: ideals and communities, 1200-1630* (Cambridge, 2001), p. 98.

⁵⁸ M.D. Harris (ed.), *The Coventry Leet Book, or Mayor's Register: part 2*, EETS, OS, 135 (1908), pp. 544-5.

woman beyng within [th]e age of xl [y]eres [th]at kepeth eny house sole be hir self – reduced the scope of the stipulations to include only those single women aged under forty. The very existence of this second ordinance suggests that the practice of unmarried women living alone had continued despite the regulations the civic authorities issued three years earlier that forbade them from doing so. The 1495 ordinance gave single women three options. They could either take a chamber with an honest person, go into service by the time of the Feast of All Hallows upon pain of imprisonment, or else leave the city altogether.⁵⁹

Goldberg argues that the 1492 programme emerged from a very particular social context. He believes that it represented a radical reform manifesto associated with a faction of civic governors who had marked Lollard sympathies. As such, he views the ordinance as part of a wider utopian vision of a godly and ordered society, in which all knew their place and all worked to the common good.⁶⁰ Bennett takes a very different position. She sees the Coventry ordinances as part of a much more widely-applicable and long-running pattern of patriarchy. She agrees with Goldberg's idea that the ordinances were the product of a set of particular circumstances involving a declining economy and skewed sex ratios. However, she maintains that these ordinances must be viewed in the context of a 'compulsory service' clause that had been part of English law for almost one hundred and fifty years since the Statute of Labourers came into force in 1349. Bennett argues that in ordering able-bodied women to work in service rather than wage-labour and in compelling them to give up independent lodgings, magistrates in the late fifteenth century were relying on an established precedent that did not represent a modern or more intense patriarchal regime.⁶¹ I favour Goldberg's interpretation. Given that the civic authorities issued the stipulations for single women as part of a wider series of reforms imposed upon the inhabitants of Coventry, I would suggest that they were more concerned about the regulation of single women rather than the provision of labour through service per se. The city council quite clearly directed their restrictions towards women who had no connections to stable households. These women were not subject to the authority of fathers, masters or husbands.

⁵⁹ Harris (ed.), *Coventry Leet Book*, pp. 567-8.

⁶⁰ Goldberg, 'Coventry's 'Lollard' programme of 1492', pp. 106-7.

⁶¹ J.M. Bennett, 'Compulsory service in late medieval England', *Past and Present*, 209:1 (2010), p. 46.

They were perceived to be ungoverned and a threat to good order in society and this warranted provisions being made for their regulation.

Unmarried women were again identified as a particular source of magisterial anxiety in the economically difficult later sixteenth century. Griffiths highlights how in Norwich in 1577, magistrates called for tighter implementation of the Statute of Artificers to ensure that no females who were able to serve could hire chambers of their own. This Statute, which emerged in 1563, made it compulsory for any unmarried woman older than eleven but younger than forty to go into service.⁶² In other towns and cities, comparable patriarchal regimes were in operation. In 1582, jurors in Southampton lamented the existence of 'sundry maid servants that take chambers and so live by themselves masterless'. They believed that this was neither 'meet nor sufferable' for 'diverse young women and maidens'. Similarly, in 1588 jurors in Manchester ordered that 'no single woman, unmarried, shall be at her own hand, to keep house or chamber within the town of Manchester'. The following year, the economic and social reasoning behind such stipulations was revealed. The civic authorities felt that by baking bread and exercising other trades, these individuals were causing 'great hurt' to the poor inhabitants of the city because they were taking work away from married householders who had wives and children to support. The unmarried women were also accused of 'abusing themselves with young men and others' because there was no control being exercised over them, 'to the great dishonour of God and evil example of others'. Accordingly, the rather radical solution was a command that no single woman should be allowed to keep her own house or chamber or sell bread or ale or any other commodities. In 1596, Liverpool jurors were especially anxious about young women who were working as 'char women' – according to McIntosh, a term that was used to describe women who were not contracted to a fixed period of service, but hired by the day to do odd-jobs. Since it was recorded that many of these women had lately 'been gotten with child', they were warned to place themselves 'in some good and honest service' or else they would be banished from the town.⁶³ This series of examples shows how unmarried women were regarded as a threat to the social order of towns and cities especially at times of social and economic strain. It is apparent that the magisterial aspiration was for unmarried

⁶² Griffiths, 'Tudor troubles', pp. 319-20.

⁶³ See M.K. McIntosh, *Controlling misbehaviour in England, 1370-1600* (Cambridge, 1998), p. 111.

women outside the governance of a father, master or husband to be treated paternalistically irrespective of their ages. The implication is that unmarried women lived under the constant anticipation of becoming wives and, as such, experienced an extended adolescence until they attained married status.

For young women sex was supposed to be reserved until marriage and sex within the context of marriage was therefore connected to their social adulthood. The importance of withholding a sexual relationship until marriage is highlighted by a bequest made by Emma Preston, a York merchant's wife, in 1401. Emma bequeathed five marks to her servant Alice Stede, but only on the condition that she 'stay and remain an honest virgin and of good repute until she have a husband'. If she did not comply with this stipulation and instead chose to 'ignorantly or heedlessly...commit fornication or adultery' then she would only receive half of this sum.⁶⁴ The inextricable linkage between sex and marriage for a young woman is also apparent from the case of Agnes Welles v. William Rote from London in 1475. When John Welles discovered that William had had carnal knowledge of his daughter Agnes, he repeatedly tried to stab him and also threatened to shame him publically before the Mayor and Aldermen. It was John's intention to force the man who had seduced his daughter to marry her in order to protect her reputation. If sex had illicitly occurred before marriage then guaranteeing that a marriage ensued seems to have been considered the means to rectify the situation. This reinforces the idea that sex and marriage were synonymous and understood to encapsulate a sense of social maturity.⁶⁵

The importance of young women remaining chaste until marriage is evident from a number of other marriage cases from the London Consistory. Litigation that arose between Alice Parker and Richard Tenwinter in 1488 reveals a young woman's anxiety to conceal pre-marital sexual activity. Richard testified that when he asked to lodge in her room all night, Alice responded that she dare not allow him because she feared them being seen by the butcher who lived in the house opposite.⁶⁶ An action between Christian Hilles and Robert Padley which was heard in 1490 shows how Robert stipulated that he would only agree to take her as his wife on the

⁶⁴ Goldberg (ed.), *Women in England*, p. 126.

⁶⁵ S. McSheffrey, *Love and marriage in late medieval London* (Kalamazoo, 1995), pp. 81-2, case 19: Agnes Welles v. William Rote [10 March 1475].

⁶⁶ Consistory Database: Alice Parker v. Richard Tenwinter [22 January 1488].

condition that she remained chaste before they were married.⁶⁷ The need for young women to withhold sex before marriage is reinforced by a defamation case between Joan Sebar and Joan Rokker from 1497. This case revolved around a ‘malicious and angry’ row between female servants that erupted in the street following an allegation that Joan Sebar, a maidservant, had fornicated in a doorway and become pregnant as a consequence. Deponents in the case attested to the notion that this – alongside the accusation that she was a ‘strong hoor and strong harlot’ – gravely harmed her chances of finding a husband by damaging her status and reputation. One deponent, William Gerard, even claimed that if he was single and free to contract marriage, he would give Joan Sebar little faith or favour and would more quickly refuse to marry her because of these allegations.⁶⁸ As McSheffrey argues, maintaining a good reputation was of the utmost importance in medieval society. This was especially true for women because their value, honour and identity were more closely linked to marital status, marriageability and sexual repute than their male counterparts.⁶⁹ It is apparent from these various examples that employers, parents and magistrates expected young women to refrain from sexual activity until it could be deemed licit and socially acceptable within the context of marriage. Commencing a sexual relationship within a marriage was the only means through which young women could become mothers to legitimate children and it is implicit that this in turn was understood to represent the final step in their transition to adult status.

Unmarried Parents

When young women engaged in illicit sexual relationships and had children without first being married, there is evidence to suggest that the effect of parenthood on their status was rather different. This is demonstrated by the content of an order for the maintenance of an illegitimate child made by the Jury at the Sessions Court in Nottingham on 10 September 1589. This detailed how Katherine Wyldie, a ‘spinster’ from Sileby in Leicestershire, had given birth in Nottingham to a daughter named Ellen a month previously. Whilst it named John Simons as the illegitimate child’s father, no testimony from him is recorded. The

⁶⁷ Consistory Database: Christian Hilles v. Robert Padley [24 May 1490; 9 June 1490].

⁶⁸ McSheffrey, *Love and marriage*, pp. 86-7, case 22: Joan Sebar v. Joan Rokker [19 January 1497].

⁶⁹ S. McSheffrey, *Marriage, sex and civic culture in late medieval London* (Philadelphia, 2006), p. 164.

Mayor and Aldermen of Nottingham ordered that Simons should pay 12d. to the wardens of the parish of St Peter every Sunday for the keeping of the child for the following fourteen years. They also required him to pay an additional 20s. to the wardens of the parish on All Saints' Day. Simons was to remain in custody for three days and, once he had found sureties, was to be bound under the sum of 20 pounds to perform the order.⁷⁰

It is pertinent to discuss some of the social and cultural context that surrounded this maintenance order to explain why Katherine Wyldie's case was dealt with in the way it was at this time. The order is reflective of how a bureaucratised welfare system was in operation in the Elizabethan era. Formal poor relief was provided through the enactment of a series of Poor Laws in 1563, 1572, 1576 and 1598, which punished those deemed idle and vagrant and granted relief to supposedly deserving individuals.⁷¹ Each parish appointed two overseers, or wardens, who became responsible for assessing and distributing relief.⁷² Whilst magisterial oversight remained, the parish gradually emerged as the pre-eminent local institution for the administration of poor relief.⁷³ According to the law, a parish was held responsible for the welfare of a legitimate or illegitimate pauper child if it was the child's birthplace, or the parents had established residency by living there for one year.⁷⁴ In the 1576 Act, Parliament recognised that parishes were suffering financial hardship as a result of illegitimate children being kept at the charge of the parishes in which they were born. This reduced funds for the 'deserving' poor and Parliament felt this was unjust. Those in governance decided that illegitimate children should be supported by their putative fathers: if he could be found, he was

⁷⁰ W.H. Stevenson (ed.), *Records of the borough of Nottingham, 4, 1547-1625* (Nottingham, 1889), pp. 229-30.

⁷¹ S. Hindle 'Poverty and the poor laws', in S. Doran and N.L. Jones (eds), *The Elizabethan world* (Abingdon, 2011), pp. 301-4. Paul Slack also focuses on the concept of the respectable versus the dangerous poor. See P. Slack, *Poverty and policy in Tudor and Stuart England* (London, 1988), chs. 4, 5. Both of these studies note how the concept of 'idleness' was the key determinant that differentiated between undeserving vagrants, vagabonds, beggars and idle wanders on the one hand and respectable and deserving individuals referred to as the labouring poor [including labourers, widows, the elderly and recently married couples that worked but found it difficult to support themselves and their families] on the other.

⁷² Hindle, 'Poverty and the poor laws', p. 304.

⁷³ H.R. French, 'Parish government', in S. Doran and N.L. Jones (eds), *The Elizabethan world* (Abingdon, 2011), p. 151.

⁷⁴ W. King, 'Punishment for bastardy in early seventeenth-century England', *Albion: A Quarterly Journal Concerned with British Studies*, 10:2 (1978), p. 134.

to be made to accept responsibility for the child.⁷⁵ The 1576 Act instructed JPs to insist that fathers of illegitimate children provide maintenance for their offspring through a mandatory order or else face punishment by being publicly whipped and jailed.⁷⁶ These penalties had a two-fold purpose. They simultaneously gave a public warning and generated financial support for children that would not drain local funds for poor relief.⁷⁷ McIntosh argues that the worsening economic situation in the late sixteenth century magnified the perceived problem of bastard children, increased anxiety about the threat which illegitimacy posed to social order and hardened attitudes.⁷⁸ In an economic context where pressure on resources was increasingly tight, ascertaining the financial viability of the fathers of illegitimate children became a key issue for magistrates.⁷⁹ As Laura Gowing argues, only through the naming of a father could the keeping of the child be ensured. Moreover, such a father had to be present, prepared to admit paternity and financially able to maintain the child for this approach to prove effective.⁸⁰ As a consequence, communities began to take an increasingly less tolerant approach towards illegitimate pregnancies, intent on dissuading the poor from producing children it was feared they would be unable to support.⁸¹

The maintenance order made in the case of Katherine Wyldie's child describes Katherine as 'spinster'.⁸² In *Ductor in Lingas* (1617) John Minsheu noted that the word 'spinster' was 'a terme, or an addition in our Common Law, onely added in Obligations, Euidences, and Writings, vnto maids vnmarried'.⁸³ Given this context, it is likely that she was a young, never-married woman. Whilst she was recorded as being 'late of Sibley', her baby was born in Nottingham, where the child's father

⁷⁵ A. MacFarlane, 'Illegitimacy and illegitimates in English history', in P. Laslett, K. Oosterveen and R.M. Smith (eds), *Bastardy and its comparative history* (London, 1980), pp. 74-5.

⁷⁶ R.L. Greaves, *Society and religion in Elizabethan England* (Minneapolis, 1981), p. 216.

⁷⁷ Greaves, *Society and religion*, p. 217. See also I. Pinchbeck, 'The state and the child in sixteenth-century England', *The British Journal of Sociology*, 7:4 (1956), p. 283.

⁷⁸ McIntosh, *Controlling misbehaviour*, p. 3. See also E.A. Wrigley and R.S. Schofield, *The population history of England, 1541-1871: a reconstruction* (London, 1981), pp. 670-72; R.B. Outhwaite, 'Dearth, the English crown, and the 'crisis of the 1590s'', in P. Clark (ed.), *The European crisis of the 1590s: essays in comparative history* (London, 1985), pp. 23-43. See also A.B. Appleby, *Famine in Tudor and Stuart England* (Liverpool, 1978), pp. 132-45.

⁷⁹ L. Gowing, 'Ordering the body: illegitimacy and female authority in seventeenth-century England', in M.J. Braddick and J. Walter (eds), *Negotiating power in early modern society: order, hierarchy, and subordination in Britain and Ireland* (Cambridge, 2001) pp. 54-5.

⁸⁰ Gowing, 'Ordering the body', p. 52.

⁸¹ Carlson, *Marriage and the English Reformation*, p. 132.

⁸² *OED*: spinster (n.). See also C. Beattie, *Medieval single women: the politics of social classification in late medieval England* (Oxford, 2007), pp. 141-2.

⁸³ J. Minsheu, *Ductor in linguas, The guide into the tongues* (1st edn, London, 1617).

resided. This suggests that at the time of the proceedings, Katherine had relocated to Nottingham from the rural village half way between Loughborough and Leicester that she originated from. Late medieval and early modern scholars have shown the prominence of youth, including young women, among migrants to towns.⁸⁴ Accordingly, we can read her to be a rural migrant in her teens who moved in search of employment and enhanced economic opportunities.

With no further information available about the father of the child, it is only possible to surmise about the sexual encounter that occurred between Katherine and Simons. Adair notes that many illegitimate pregnancies in the early modern era were the product of sexual relationships between fellow servants. He believes that female servants living away from home were particularly vulnerable to sexual exploitation.⁸⁵ We can infer from the fact that the sum Simons was ordered to pay to maintain the child was higher than was usually stipulated, however, that this illegitimate pregnancy was not simply the result of consensual sexual activity connected to a promise of marriage between servants of a comparable age and status. Walter King argues that throughout the first decade of the seventeenth century, payments from fathers to mothers ranged from between 10s. to 40s. per year, with 40s. being the most common provision.⁸⁶ In 1590, Thomas Norman was ordered by the Mayor and Aldermen of the city of York to pay weekly maintenance of 3d. until his illegitimate child reached the age of seven.⁸⁷ In 1601, the 'husbandman' Henry Horneby from Preston was ordered to pay 26s. 8d. per year in maintenance.⁸⁸ Simons was asked to pay the equivalent of 52s. per year – virtually twice this sum – plus an additional fine of 20s. by All Saints' Day. He was subject to an exceptional level of punishment. The implication is that he was recognised by the civic authorities as a man with regular employment and comparatively high social and economic standing whom they believed would be able to fulfil these conditions. Whereas Katherine was young and unmarried, Simons could have been a married man with a wife and family of his own. He might

⁸⁴ See P. Clark and D. Souden (eds), *Migration and society in early modern England* (London, 1987); P.J.P. Goldberg, *Women, work and life cycle in a medieval economy: women in York and Yorkshire, c.1300-1520* (Oxford, 1992), ch. 6; L.R. Poos, *A rural society after the Black Death: Essex 1350-1525* (Cambridge, 1991), ch. 8.

⁸⁵ R. Adair, *Courtship, illegitimacy and marriage in early modern England* (Manchester, 1996), pp. 84-5, 88.

⁸⁶ King, 'Punishment for bastardy', p. 131.

⁸⁷ D. Sutton (ed.), *York civic records*, 9, YASRS, 138 (1978), pp. 135-6.

⁸⁸ Greaves, *Society and religion*, p. 217.

even have been her former employer. Irrespective of the precise position of authority he had in relation to her, the illegitimate pregnancy may well have been the product of abused power relations and the coercion of a young woman by an older man.

This case shows how, as a young and unmarried mother, Katherine was in a vulnerable position and sought protection from the civic authorities to get Simons to pay maintenance for the child he had fathered. In addition to their legal responsibilities under the Poor Law, magistrates had a moral and social obligation to help and guide a young woman otherwise not under the authority of a male head of household. They may have been especially concerned to ensure that she continued to care for the child rather than abandon it or commit infanticide, which would have stigmatised her and made any subsequent prospect of her becoming married even less likely. Katherine was a mother but since she was single, she seems to have been very dependent on paternalistic assistance to support her and enable her to raise her child. The idea that unmarried parents were placed in a subordinate position by civic authorities is reinforced by the punishments that were imposed on a female fortune-teller and a man named John Perkin in York in 1591. When John confessed before the authorities that he had had 'carnall knowledge' of this woman and that she had become pregnant as a result, she was whipped publically at Micklegate Bar and he was whipped publically at Walmgate Bar. The pair were banished from York and warned that if they came into the city again, they would be taken as rogues and punished accordingly.⁸⁹ The parents of illegitimate offspring were subject to a considerable level of magisterial intervention and therefore could not exercise the same amount of agency as married couples who had their own households in which to raise legitimate children. Overall it is apparent that without first becoming a spouse and establishing an independent household and family life, the onset of parenthood could not be equated with autonomous adulthood.

⁸⁹ York, YCA, York House Book 30, f. 300r.

Chapter Four

'Youth Culture'

The concept of 'culture' has an anthropological foundation and has been described as 'a people's learned and shared values, behaviour patterns, beliefs, emotions, creativity and practices' that includes their 'ways of living, habits and ideas'.¹ The term 'sub-culture' assumes a different meaning because it signifies 'a group within a group' that possesses distinctive cultural characteristics.² From the 1940s onwards, sociologists have drawn upon these anthropological concepts to explore youth cultures and practices in their studies of adolescence. Whilst sociological scholars have not reached a consensus about the nature and function of a youth culture, they have agreed about its existence. Some of the earlier work emphasises the negative anti-adult and deviant aspects of male youth sub-cultures.³ Female youth cultures have also been a subject of investigation ever since the mid-1970s, when researchers influenced by second-wave feminism began to take an interest in women's social lives.⁴ A number of sociological studies highlight variations in adolescent attitudes and activities according to gender. Young males are shown to favour gang activities, delinquency and disobedience to their parents, whereas young females are shown to afford their parents more deference and to prefer creative pursuits, often performed in pairs together indoors.⁵ Other sociologists stress the positive functions and benefits of youth cultures. Arnett and Jansen *et al.*

¹ A. Schlegel and B.L. Hewlett, 'Contributions of anthropology to the study of adolescence', *Journal of Research on Adolescence*, 21:1 (2011), pp. 281-9 (p. 281); J. Fornäs, 'Youth, culture and modernity', in J. Fornäs and G. Bolin (eds), *Youth culture in late modernity* (London, 1995), pp. 1-11.

² M.J. Kehily, 'A cultural perspective', in M.J. Kehily (ed.), *Understanding youth: perspectives, identities, practices* (London, 2007), pp. 12, 21.

³ See S.F. Niles, 'The youth culture controversy: an evaluation', *The Journal of Early Adolescence*, 1:3 (1981), pp. 265-71 (p. 265); C. Wallace and S. Kovatcheva, *Youth in society: the construction and deconstruction of youth in east and west Europe* (New York, 1999), pp. 30-2, 154; A. France, *Understanding youth in late modernity* (Buckingham, 2007), p. 35; M. Bucholtz, 'Youth and cultural practice', *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 31 (2002), p. 536; A. Cohen, *Delinquent boys* (Chicago, 1955); H. Becker, *The outsiders: studies in the sociology of deviance* (Chicago, 1963); M. Brake, *Comparative youth culture: the sociology of youth cultures and youth subcultures in America, Britain and Canada* (London, 1985), p. 6.

⁴ See France, *Understanding youth*, pp. 21-3.

⁵ See A. McRobbie and J. Garber, 'Girls and subcultures', in S. Hall and T. Jefferson (eds), *Resistance through rituals: youth subcultures in post-war Britain* (London, 1975), pp. 209-20; C. Smart, *Women, crime and criminology: a feminist critique* (London, 1976); D.M. Smith, 'Perceived peer and parental influences of youth's social world', *Youth & Society*, 17:2 (1985), p. 151; C. Murray and F. Thompson, 'The representation of authority: an adolescent viewpoint', *Journal of Adolescence*, 8:3 (1985), pp. 217-29 (p. 217); E.H. Sharp, J.D. Coatsworth, N. Darling, P. Cumsille and S. Ranieri, 'Gender differences in the self-defining activities and identity experiences of adolescents and emerging adults', *Journal of Adolescence*, 30:2 (2007), pp. 251-69 (pp. 252-3, 5); D.G. Perry and R.E. Pauletti, 'Gender and adolescent development', *Journal of Research on Adolescence*, 21:1 (2011), pp. 61-74.

argue that a youth culture is the product of adolescent agency. They believe that it is constructed by adolescents to enable them to fulfil their own expressive needs, boost their self-esteem, regulate their aggression and make a contribution to the cultural life of their communities.⁶

The question over the existence of a youth culture has been debated amongst historians of the pre-modern era. Medievalists such as Hanawalt and early modernists like Yarborough, Ben-Amos and Coster argue that there was no separate youth culture in England during their respective periods.⁷ Conversely, a distinctive youth culture amongst male apprentices across later medieval Europe has been identified by Karras.⁸ Evidence to suggest that a distinguishable youth culture existed amongst young men in England has likewise been uncovered by Capp, Bridgen and Griffiths.⁹ Some early modernists have detected a change over time. Stone, Hutton and Walsham all argue that the Reformation had a destructive effect on distinctively youthful activities and increased the amount of authority and discipline that adults exercised over young people instead.¹⁰

Work that has been done on youth culture in modern social-scientific research and by historians to date has drawn attention to some matters of interest. This chapter engages with the scholarship to question if a distinctive culture of youth can be identified in fifteenth- and sixteenth-century English society. To determine the extent to which young males and females had their own distinct culture I examine

⁶ Schlegel and Hewlett, 'Contributions of anthropology', pp. 284, 286-7; J.J. Arnett, 'Adolescents and heavy metal music: from the mouths of metalheads', *Youth & Society*, 23:1 (1991), pp. 76-98; J. Janssen, M. Deschesne and A. Knippenberg, 'The psychological importance of youth culture: a terror management approach', *Youth & Society*, 31:2 (1999), pp. 154-5, 164.

⁷ B.A. Hanawalt, *Growing up in medieval London: the experience of childhood in history* (Oxford, 1996), pp. 11-12, 127; A. Yarborough, 'Apprentices as adolescents in sixteenth-century Bristol', *Journal of Social History*, 13:1 (1979), pp. 67-81 (p. 70); I.K. Ben-Amos, *Adolescence and youth in early modern England* (London, 1994), ch. 8 (p. 205); W. Coster, *Family and kinship in England 1400-1750* (Harlow, 2001), p. 53.

⁸ R. Karras, *From boys to men: formations of masculinity in late medieval Europe* (Philadelphia, 2002), ch. 4.

⁹ B. Capp, 'English youth groups and the Pinder of Wakefield', *Past and Present*, 76:1 (1977), pp. 127-33. See S. Brigden, 'Youth and the English Reformation', *Past and Present*, 95:1 (1982), pp. 37-67; P. Griffiths, *Youth and authority: formative experiences in England, 1560-1640* (Oxford, 1996), ch. 3 (pp. 115-22) and ch. 4 (pp. 176-234); P. Griffiths, 'Tudor troubles: problems of youth in Elizabethan England', in S. Doran and N.L. Jones (eds), *The Elizabethan world* (Abingdon, 2011), pp. 316-34.

¹⁰ See L. Stone, *The family, sex and marriage in England 1500-1800* (London, 1977), pp. 119-26; R. Hutton, *Stations of the sun: a history of the ritual year in Britain* (Oxford, 1996), pp. 414-15; A. Walsham, 'The reformation of the generations: youth, age and religious change in England, c.1500-1700', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 21 (2011), pp. 93-121.

the nature of a number of social activities that young people participated in. Throughout the analysis, I consider how far each social activity promoted a clear separation between younger and older people, how much agency and independence it allowed the young people involved and the extent to which this may have facilitated the development of a cohesive youthful identity. Sociologists have suggested that youth cultures vary significantly according to gender. Historical studies that discuss youth culture in the pre-modern era have tended to focus predominately on young males. I am keen to redress this issue by exploring how far youth culture was indeed shaped by gender and how male and female experience differed as a consequence and over time.

I begin by looking at the summer-games and youthful guild activities that took place in rural settings to provide the basis for a comparative assessment of how understandings of youth and youth culture might have differed between rural and urban contexts. I then move on to consider youth cultures in larger urban areas. I look at social activities in towns and cities that young people took part in, either in separate, gender-specific groups, or together. I explore these social activities in three separate sub-sections, according to whether they were undertaken by young males or young females or young people of both sexes.

Rural Youth Culture

Within rural parishes, May-games that involved the crowning of a summer king and queen were the focal point of many Whitsuntide and Midsummer ales. These mock lords and ladies were elected to preside over festivities in their local community. 'May-game' was but one term for such revels – they were not confined to May but rather could be a feature of any summer month.¹¹ As I have noted earlier, a disputed marriage case that was heard before the Consistory Court in York in 1469 incidentally provides details about the summer-game held in the rural Yorkshire parish of Wistow on Midsummer Sunday in the same year.¹²

¹¹ See R. Hutton, *The rise and fall of merry England* (Oxford, 1994), ch. 1; M. Ingram, 'Who killed Robin Hood? Transformations in popular culture', in S. Doran and N.L. Jones (eds), *The Elizabethan world* (Abingdon, 2011), p. 469; A.F. Johnston and S.B. Maclean, 'Reformation and resistance in Thames/Severn parishes: the dramatic witness', in K.L. French, G.G. Gibbs and B.A. Kümin (eds), *The parish in English life, 1400-1600* (Manchester, 1997), p. 182; Hutton, *Stations of the sun*, pp. 246-7.

¹² See Chapter Three above, pp. 148-9.

Various depositions reveal that the most prominent roles in the summer-game were undertaken by unmarried individuals. After Thomas Barker got married, he could no longer perform the role of the festival king. Richard Ponder who was aged twenty-four and three other deponents in the litigation who also participated in the Wistow summer-game were all described as '*juvenes*', viz. William Dawson, aged twenty-three; Robert Garfare, aged twenty-four; and John Garfare aged twenty-six. Barker himself was twenty-three. The age of Margaret More, the female defendant in this case, is not disclosed but John Garfare had known her for twenty years.

The depositions state that on the Sunday of the summer-game, Thomas and Margaret were chosen by the '*juvenes*', or young people of Wistow, to act as king and queen. Robert and William were appointed knights and forty year-old Thomas Hird, who gave the most detailed account of the festivities, was seneschal. A barn adjoining the churchyard was designated a temporary 'somerhous' to host the game. Ponder recalled that between the hours of eleven and twelve on the Sunday morning, he and other '*juvenitus*' of Wistow went to the barn from the homes of Thomas Barker and Margaret's father, Richard More. Robert Garfare also explained that he went to the barn with many other men and women. Another deponent described how the king and queen were led there by villagers, preceded by a mime or minstrel. The procession may well have included members of the whole community, young and old alike. Indeed, we know that at least one older person was directly involved in the proceedings. Hird accompanied Margaret to the barn and remained there with her until after sunset, alongside a 'copious multitude' of others.¹³ She reportedly took pleasure in the proceedings from a location that effectively represented a mock castle 'in honorable fashion, as was fitting' for her role as queen.¹⁴

Even if older people were part of the procession and at least one had an active role to play in the summer-game, its central focus was still a man and a woman in their

¹³ See York, BI, CP.F.246; S. Wenzel, "'Somer game' and sermon references to a Corpus Christi play', *Modern Philology*, 86:3 (1989), p. 275; J.S. Purvis (ed.), *Tudor parish documents of the diocese of York* (Cambridge, 1948), pp. 160-1, note 1; J. Raine (ed.), *Testamenta Eboracensia: A selection of wills from the registry of York*, Surtees Society, 79 (1884), p. 103; S. Billington, *Mock kings in medieval society and Renaissance drama* (Oxford, 1991), pp. 58-60.

¹⁴ Wenzel, 'Somer game', p. 275; Billington, *Mock kings in medieval society*, pp. 58-9.

early twenties. Although young unmarried people did not have a monopoly over this activity, they were still the predominant participants, elected to specific roles which emphasised hierarchies of both marital status and gender.

The custom of choosing summer lords and ladies persisted into the Elizabethan era. In other rural locations, young people were also particularly conspicuous in summer-games. On 10 June 1565, the following memorandum was issued in the rural parish of Wing, Buckinghamshire:

The churchwardens have agreed and taken an order that all such young men as shall hereafter by order of the hole parish be chosen for to be lord at Whitsuntide for the behalf of the church, and refuse so to be, shall forfeit and pay for the use of the church iij s. iiij d. to be levied upon the said young men and their fathers and masters, where the just default can be found, and every mayde refusing to be layde for the said purpose to forfeit unto the said use xx d. to be levied in like order as is expressed. And it is provided that all such howses out of which the said lords or ladies, or one of them, are chosen to stand fre from that purpose and charge for the space of vj yere then next ensuing.¹⁵

The memorandum shows how young people of both sexes in the parish were obliged to adopt festival roles imposed on them by churchwardens. Once they had performed, the individuals and those from their households were to be free from the compulsion to do so again for the six years that followed. The summer-game was a folk tradition that was quite clearly harnessed as a means to raise funds for the church. This document is explicitly concerned about the prospect that some young men and women may not have wanted to be appointed as the festival lord or lady respectively. Parents and masters faced fines if the young people under their care refused to participate.

It is possible that the high level of adult management evident from the summer-game at Wing was as a result of the effects of the Reformation. Adherents to reformed ideology pursued the creation of an ordered and godly society and advocated the suppression of 'ungodly recreations' which they believed lured

¹⁵ J.C. Cox, *Churchwardens' accounts from the fourteenth century to the close of the seventeenth century* (London, 1913), p. 285.

young people away from religiosity towards an idle and undisciplined way of life.¹⁶ The Wing churchwardens can be seen as reflecting stricter standards of morality, familial discipline and personal decorum that has been termed a 'reformation of manners'.¹⁷ This may have encouraged youthful cultural traditions such as the summer-game to be utilised by adults as a means through which to assert control over young people in the parish. Stone argues that in the Reformation era, young people became subject to more patriarchal treatment from parents, masters and magistrates.¹⁸ Hutton maintains that the Reformation destroyed the independent festal role that youth had once been enjoyed, without adult interference.¹⁹ Walsham also believes that the 'reformation of manners' damaged an adolescent subculture that had previously been in existence and promoted the implementation of more severe restrictions on the young.²⁰

Shortly after their memorandum was issued, the Wing churchwardens recorded an example of dissent that obliged them to appoint an alternative candidate:

Item, this year above written was Harry Kene chosen lord and refused and so paid to the church ... iij s. iiij d. Robarte Rychardson the servant of Thomas Lygo was then chosen lorde and Katherine Godfrey lady.²¹

Certain young people, such as Harry Keen, may have refused to perform at the request of parish officials because they recognised that this activity was not owned by the young. Indeed, they could well have identified the festival roles as a source of patriarchal authority imposed upon them against their will by older churchmen. For the following fifteen years young males and females in Wing continued to be

¹⁶ R.W. Malcolmson, *Popular recreations in English society, 1700-1850* (Cambridge, 1973), pp. 6-10. For a discussion of the late fifteenth century, see P.J.P. Goldberg, 'Coventry's 'Lollard' programme of 1492 and the making of Utopia', in R. Horrox and S. Rees Jones (eds), *Pragmatic utopias: ideals and communities, 1200-1630* (Cambridge, 2001), pp. 97-116.

¹⁷ Hutton, *The rise and fall of merry England*, p. 111. See also P. Collinson, *The birthpangs of Protestant England: religious and cultural change in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries* (Basingstoke, 1988), p. 99; M. Ingram, 'From Reformation to toleration: popular religious cultures in England, 1540-1690', in T. Harris (ed.), *Popular culture in England, c.1500-1850* (Basingstoke, 1995), pp. 97-9; B. Reay, 'Popular religion', in B. Reay (ed.), *Popular culture in seventeenth-century England* (London, 1985), pp. 105, 107.

¹⁸ See Stone, *The family, sex and marriage*, pp. 119-26. See also A. Fletcher, 'Men's dilemma: the future of patriarchy in England, 1560-1660', in *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 4 (1994), pp. 61-81; S.C. Karant-Nunn, 'Reformation society, women and the family', in A. Pettegree (ed.), *The Reformation world* (London, 2000), pp. 443-59.

¹⁹ Hutton, *Stations of the sun*, pp. 414-15.

²⁰ Walsham, 'The reformation of the generations', p. 110.

²¹ Cox, *Churchwardens' accounts*, p. 285.

elected lords and ladies almost every summer.²² It is clear, however, that the summer-game was stage-managed by adults in the parish. Churchwardens assigned youngsters to these particular positions and parents and other adults implicitly encouraged them to perform. Youthful participation in the summer-game functioned to emphasise the differences between the sexes and to reinforce gender identities but it was not a social activity that afforded young people the opportunity to exercise agency or to act independently of older people.

In the century before the dissolution of parish guilds in 1546, young men and young women were often enrolled as members of single-sex guilds, or stores, within parishes. Young men's guilds and maidens' guilds gathered money to maintain lights before devotional images within churches and support other parish needs as they arose.²³ At Croscombe, Somerset, these two guilds made a significant contribution to the annual parish income, typically amounting to between twenty and thirty percent of the total sum.²⁴ Eamon Duffy argues that the maidens' store at Morebath, Devon probably included all unmarried females over the age of twelve or so and the young men's store all single males aged fourteen years and more. If Duffy is correct and the young people involved were of communicant age and therefore fairly young, then it would have been parents who enlisted their children in single-sex parish guilds and sanctioned the activities they undertook through these organisations. Members of the young men's store at Morebath were responsible for maintaining a taper before the patronal image of St George.²⁵ Members of the maidens' store at Morebath maintained lights before the statue of the Virgin and an image of St Sidwell.²⁶ Whilst St George was the patron saint of England who was identified as a fearless martial warrior, St Sidwell was a virginal martyr saint. The association made between the young men and St George and young women and St Sidwell highlights how the single-sex youth guilds at Morebath helped to nurture specific gender identities.

²² Johnson and Maclean, 'Reformation and resistance in Thames/Severn parishes', p. 191.

²³ E. Duffy, *The voices of Morebath: reformation and rebellion in an English village* (London, 2001), p. 26.

²⁴ K.L. French, *The people of the parish: community life in a late medieval diocese* (Philadelphia, 2001), p. 129; J.E. Binney (ed.), *The accounts of the wardens of the parish of Morebath, Devon, 1520-1573* (Exeter, 1904); C. Peters, *Patterns of piety: women, gender and religion in late medieval and Reformation England* (Cambridge, 2003), ch. 1.

²⁵ Duffy, *The voices of Morebath*, pp. 26-7.

²⁶ See Binney (ed.), *The accounts of the wardens of Morebath*, pp. 6-118.

There was a notable change in the activities of the young men in Morebath over time as the effects of the Reformation were felt at parish level. By 1549, the young men's store had disappeared.²⁷ This development is attributable to the dissolution of parish guilds implemented during the reign of Edward VI. In 1554, after a five-year absence, the young men's store was revived under the Marian regime.²⁸ This indicates that parishioners in Morebath were conservative and keen to resume earlier traditions when they were permitted to do so. Although the new faith repressed the role of youth guilds in the parish, albeit temporarily, it encouraged young men to congregate for different reasons. Brigden argues that young males were attracted to Protestantism because of its ability to provide opportunities and excuses for disobedience and that they became central to its reception as a consequence.²⁹ Iconoclasm was one new pastime that emerged. At Boxley Abbey in 1547, for example, 'boyes' were responsible for smashing the Rood of Grace and destroying a mechanical image of Christ.³⁰ The young men's store in the parish of Morebath was also affected by the wider aims of the Reformation in the decade after it was reinstated in the parish. In 1562, expenses were itemised for the taking down of the 'rowde lofthe' and as such dismantling signs of the old regime.³¹ Furthermore, in 1568 the young men's store paid for 'the making of commandments by the altar on the wall'.³² Both examples reflect transformations at parish level that emanated from the Protestant emphasis on scripture at the expense of devotional imagery. Even if funds for these tasks were being drawn from money raised by the young men's store, it is likely that they were initiated and overseen by churchwardens in the parish. If the young men were the zealous advocates of reformed ideology that Brigden suggests then they may have been fully supportive of how the money they raised was being spent. Nonetheless, if churchwardens managed the store funds then it is implicit that the young men lacked control over both the store and the use of its money within the parish.

²⁷ Duffy, *The voices of Morebath*, pp. 120-2.

²⁸ Binney (ed.), *The accounts of the wardens of Morebath*, p. 187.

²⁹ Brigden, 'Youth and the English Reformation', pp. 89, 107.

³⁰ Brigden, 'Youth and the English Reformation', pp. 102-3; C. Wriothesley, *A chronicle of England during the reign of the Tudors*, ed. W.D. Hamilton, Camden Society, NS, 11 (1875), pp. 74-6 and 20 (1875), p. 1.

³¹ Binney (ed.), *The accounts of the wardens of Morebath*, p. 211.

³² Binney (ed.), *The accounts of the wardens of Morebath*, p. 233.

There is further evidence to support the idea that older members of the parish of Morebath were influential over both the young men's guild and maidens' guild. Every year, two young men were elected wardens. They did not volunteer for these positions but rather their appointment was overseen by adults. This is apparent from the resolution of a situation that arose when John Skyner and John Wode were chosen in 1573 'but they would not do their diligence'. Given that this pair declined, 'Richard Tywell took the office in hand for his son and Thomas Tywell took this matter in hand for his son'.³³ This demonstrates how parents had a vested interest in the organisation of the young men's guild. It also shows how adults were able to impose roles on alternative candidates when individuals they previously selected and expected to adopt certain positions refused.

A significant level of adult control in the organisation and management of the maidens' guild is also apparent. Two 'maiden wardens' were elected annually until 1540, when changes instigated by the Reformation led to its dissolution. By surveying the names of those who were appointed as wardens, it is possible to assess the extent to which older members of the parish imposed boundaries and limits upon the guild's administrative and organisational tasks. For the most part, two females acted as wardens. This indicates that a select few young women not only participated in the guild activities but were also elected to positions that meant they had to assume a greater degree of responsibility for its organisation and financial management. There is evidence to suggest that despite this, female wardens did not necessarily have an enhanced ability to act independently of older members of the parish. Indeed, in certain years adults seem to have taken a direct role in limiting the amount of involvement that young women had. In 1527, 1531 and 1534, for example, at least one of the two 'maiden wardens' was male.³⁴ In 1527 'John Tywell and John Rumbelow' held the positions, whilst one 'Norman at Courte' was appointed on both of the later dates. Duffy's suggestion that these men were fathers who served in place of daughters who had been elected but subsequently deemed too young or inexperienced to manage the financial affairs is a possible explanation, but not a certain one.³⁵ Irrespective of the precise reason

³³ Cox, *Churchwardens' accounts*, p. 249.

³⁴ Binney (ed.), *The accounts of the wardens of Morebath*, pp. 6, 37, 62.

³⁵ Duffy, *The voices of Morebath*, p. 26.

why they became wardens, in these years especially, older people seem to have been particularly influential.

There is an additional reason to suppose that even when the wardens were both female, young women in the guild did not have much of an opportunity to exercise agency. Between 1527 and 1538, twenty-three of the twenty-four maiden wardens appointed at Morebath shared surnames with individuals serving as churchwardens over the period 1526 to 1540. Phillips notes similar results from the parish of Croscombe.³⁶ In Morebath, men – some of whom were churchwardens – also took charge of money gathered at maidens' collections. In 1541, the 'Three Men's Account' recorded that 'Richard Hucly hath in his keeping the 7s. 10d. of mayden money' and in 1544, 'the receipt/keeping of 5s. 9d. of mayden money'.³⁷ Older male parishioners seem to have supervised the maidens' activities and finances closely. We can infer that in doing so, they exercised control. If those individuals who held the position of warden were either adults themselves, or else had close familial links to adults with parish authority, then the young women in the guild may have been coerced into expounding the values and principles of their elders.

Even if the young men's guild and the maidens' guild were managed by adults, the performance of certain tasks and the pursuit of particular financial and devotional aims alongside those of the same sex and a comparable age still had an important function for the young people involved. The young men's guild and maidens' guild were unique organisations, implicitly sanctioned by parents and other adults in the parish, that gave young men the opportunity to socialise with their male peers and young women the opportunity to socialise with their female peers.³⁸ The collaborative age-based roles and activities that the young men's guild provided for young men and the maidens' guild provided for young women would have encouraged the development of one gender- and youth-based identity amongst young males and another gender- and youth-based identity amongst young females. Adult approval and facilitation of guild activities would not necessarily

³⁶ Binney (ed.), *The accounts of the wardens of Morebath*, pp. 1-114; K.M. Phillips, *Medieval maidens: young women and gender in England, 1270-1540* (Manchester, 2003), pp. 191-2.

³⁷ Binney (ed.), *The accounts of the wardens of Morebath*, pp. 121, 133.

³⁸ K.L. French, 'Maidens' lights and wives' stores: women's parish guilds in late medieval England', *Sixteenth Century Journal*, 29:2 (1998), pp. 411, 418-20.

have hindered the cultivation of such distinctive identities. However, I would argue that, like the summer-games discussed above, the extent of adult interference in the guilds meant that these organisations afforded their young male and young female members little opportunity to exercise agency or to act with autonomy from their elders.

Overall it is apparent that young people in rural areas were subject to a high degree of communal and familial regulation. Older people seem to have taken control of youthful activities with a view to enforcing conservative understandings of gender and gender difference as well as adult values that included obedience to superiors, order, discipline, and piety. The roles imposed on young unmarried people in summer-games emphasised gender differences and age hierarchies. Youth guilds also emphasised gender differences and were subordinated to the needs and concerns of older male community leaders like churchwardens. These activities may have helped young males and young females to develop two separate group identities based on their gender and youthfulness but they were not devised by the young for the young. As such, rural areas were somewhat lacking in a distinctive youth culture. I now want to examine how far there is evidence that a separate and distinguishable youth culture existed in larger urban areas in fifteenth- and sixteenth-century England. I have discovered that gender difference was an important aspect of youthful activities in rural locations. Accordingly I am also interested to see how far a variety of social activities that young men and young women in towns and cities took part in, either separately or together, functioned to create and reinforce masculine or feminine gendered youthful identities.

Urban Male Youth Culture

Young men in urban localities engaged in competitive sports. A proclamation issued against wrestling by the civic authorities in London in 1411 shows that this physical activity was undertaken by both younger and older males:

...no manere man ne child, of what estate or condicioun that he be, be so hardy to wrestell, or make ony wrestlyng, within the Seintuary ne the

boundes of Poules, ne in non other open place within the Citee of Londone...³⁹

We can assume, however, that it would have been males of similar builds and hence comparable ages who wrestled against one another. The games of football and cock-threshing were also popular male pursuits, especially at Shrovetide. Hutton argues that this festival, which was held in early spring, had a cathartic role and intrinsic propensity to promote violence and cruelty to both animals and humans.⁴⁰ That football was not specifically a young man's sport is highlighted by evidence from York which describes how a group of men in the city who played football before drinking together one Sunday afternoon in 1423 included one man aged forty and two others aged twenty and twenty-four respectively.⁴¹ Even so, there is evidence to suggest that at other times young men played competitive sports such as football and bowling amongst themselves in age-defined groups. In Nottingham in 1537 it was specifically male servants who were forbidden by magistrates from continuing to bowl and gamble for ale and silver.⁴² Football was also identified by civic authorities in London and York as having particular links with young men. This is highlighted by the fact that in 1586 and 1590 young men in London were barred from playing football.⁴³ Male servants in York experienced similar restrictions in 1596, after city magistrates forbade them from playing football in the streets.⁴⁴

Participation in these competitive sports seems to have been defined by gender. *How the Good Wife Taught Her Daughter* supports the summation that such pursuits were an exclusively male preserve. The Good Wife expressly prohibits her

³⁹ H.T. Riley (ed.), *Memorials of London and London life in the XIIIth, XIVth and XVth centuries* (London, 1868), p. 580.

⁴⁰ See Hutton, *Stations of the sun*, pp. 151-4. According to Hutton, the term 'cock-threshing' represents the earliest known reference to a distinctive game of the day, whereby people competed to kill a cock with missiles or blows. He notes that it made sense to kill off poultry if eggs were to be forbidden in Lent and to a brutal society it was equally logical to have some fun in the process. Hutton maintains that football provided another release for sadistic impulses. See also Riley (ed.), *Memorials of London and London life*, p. 571.

⁴¹ See P.J.P. Goldberg, 'Masters and men in later medieval England', in D. Halliday (ed.), *Masculinity in medieval Europe* (New York, 1998), pp. 64-5.

⁴² W.H. Stevenson (ed.), *Records of the borough of Nottingham, 3, 1485-1547* (Nottingham, 1885), p. 374.

⁴³ S. Rappaport, *Worlds within worlds: structures of life in sixteenth-century London* (Cambridge, 2002), pp. 8-9.

⁴⁴ York, YCA, York House Book 31, f. 252r. I will return to examine the significance of magisterial prohibitions in more detail in Chapter Five.

daughter from observing wrestling or cock-threshing for fear of her being mistaken as a woman with loose morals by the men involved:

Ne go thou not to no wrastlyng,
Ne yit to no coke schetyng,
As it were a strumpet other a gyglote...⁴⁵

The suggestion is that male involvement in these sports was not only connected to a desire to display prowess amongst fellow males, but also to attract attention from women and thereby enhance prospects for courtship or even just sex.

Another competitive activity that young men in York participated in during Shrovetide was a 'Sham Fight'. In 1554, the city council recorded the following expenses:

Item where dyverse the honest yong men of this Citie on Shrove tewesday last to showe my Lord Mayour and Aldermen and wholle Comonaltye of this Citie honest and pleasant pasytme, one sorte in defendyng a fort and thother in makyng thassaults were at chardges in dyvisyng and preparyng the same – they shall have towards their chardges in reward of the Chameber costs tenne shillyngs.⁴⁶

This game was modelled on the key martial principles of war and defence. Young men were divided into two groups – one set defended the mock fort whilst the other set charged at it. The performance was both age-specific and gender-specific. It seems to have been a formalised activity staged before civic magistrates on this festival day that was organised, supervised and sanctioned by adults. That it had adult approval is indicated by fact that the council met the financial costs of the young men's appearance before the Mayor, Aldermen and inhabitants of the city. Adults may not have been active participants in the game but we know from the record that they would have spectated as part of the 'wholle Comonaltye' that was present in the audience. Such a stage-managed activity may not have afforded its young participants much independence from adults in terms of their ability to own or manage the game. However, the presence and involvement of adults did not

⁴⁵ See 'How the Good Wife Taught Her Daughter', in G. Shuffelton (ed.), *Codex Ashmole 61: a compilation of popular Middle English verse* (Kalamazoo, 2008), lines 73-5.

⁴⁶ A. Raine (ed.), *York civic records*, 5, YASRS, 110 (York, 1946), p. 117. For a further discussion of the festivities at Shrovetide see Hutton, *Stations of the sun*, pp. 151-5.

negate the impact of young men adopting age- and sex-based roles. Taking part in this exclusively masculine performance alongside their peers likely facilitated a sense of shared identity amongst those involved. Indeed, it is apparent from this collective analysis that when young men participated in a variety of competitive activities together, a gendered youthful identity would have been created and reinforced. This identity emanated from them showing off their physical strengths and athletic skills to rival each other and also perhaps trying to impress members of the opposite sex.⁴⁷

Archery was a sport in which participants were bound by gender but much less so by their age. The needs of the Hundred Years War led to the promotion of archery as an activity suitable for English males for more than two centuries. With vivid memories of victories by English archers over the French at Crécy, Poitiers and Agincourt, the longbow featured prominently in the national consciousness.⁴⁸ Archery practice was made a legal requirement in parliamentary legislation and civic ordinances and was sanctioned by parents, masters and magistrates as a result. The 1388 legislation against unlawful games ordered servants and labourers to 'leave all playing at importune games' and commanded that they 'shall have bows and arrows, and use the same the Sundays and Holydays'.⁴⁹ This stipulation was repeated verbatim in 1409.⁵⁰ By 1477, in the context of civil strife caused by the War of the Roses, English men were reminded of their duty to practise archery in tribute to previous military successes: 'every person strong and able of body should use his Bow because ... the defence of his land [was] much by archers'.⁵¹ A statute from 1511 made more age-specific demands. With archery 'greatly decayed and out of exercise', Henry VIII ordered every man under the age of sixty 'not lame, decrepit, or maimed, nor having any other lawful or reasonable cause or impediment' to practise. Fathers and masters of those 'of tender age' were to provide a bow and two shafts for every male child aged between seven and

⁴⁷ Goldberg, 'Masters and men', pp. 64-5. Karras makes a similar claim about certain group activities giving young men the chance to prove their manliness to one another. See Karras, *From boys to men*, pp. 128-9.

⁴⁸ R. Ascham, *Toxophilus*, ed. P.E. Medine (Arizona, 2002), p. 20.

⁴⁹ 12 Richard II c.6 [1388], in A. Luders, T.E. Tomlins, J. France, W.E. Taunton and J. Raithby (eds), *The statutes of the realm*, 2 (London, 1810-28), p. 57. See also M.K. McIntosh, *Controlling misbehaviour in England, 1370-1600* (Cambridge, 1998), pp. 98-9 for a summary of the fifteenth-century legislation.

⁵⁰ 11 Henry IV c.4 [1409-10], in Luders *et al.* (eds), *The statutes of the realm*, 2, p. 163.

⁵¹ 17 Edward IV c.3 [1477-8], in Luders *et al.* (eds), *The statutes of the realm*, 2, pp. 462-3.

seventeen in their household and to give them instruction. Servants were to be taught the same skills, but were to have costs for their equipment subtracted from their wages. All men aged between seventeen and sixty were personally responsible for the possession of their own bow and four arrows and were required to practise in accordance with the legislation, upon pain of financial penalties.⁵² *The Boke of Justices of the Peas*, which dates from 1521, demonstrates how these measures were upheld at local level.⁵³ Virtually identical stipulations were re-issued in 1541.⁵⁴ Whilst constant anxiety about the decline of archery in subsequent laws makes the effectiveness of previous Acts questionable, my primary interest is in probing the age- and gender-based implications of this legislative framework for young men.⁵⁵

Shooting practice was a phenomenon found in town and country alike and there was probably little difference in practice between the two. We can see from the legislation that archery was not an exclusively youthful activity, but it was exclusively male. Magistrates prescribed it for men aged seven to sixty and made little differentiation between these individuals. This is also reflected in the civic orders from York that implemented the statutes in the city in the following decades. In 1554, men were reminded at their peril to 'exercyse shotyng in the long bowe'.⁵⁶ Fifteen years later, all 'fathers, maisters, children and yonge men' aged seven to sixty from every parish were ordered to appear before the city wardens to have their bows and arrows inspected.⁵⁷ A similar inspection of all inhabitants, 'their servantes and children betwene the age of 7 and 60 yeares', was

⁵² 3 Henry VIII c.3 [1511], in A. Luders, T.E. Tomlins, J. France, W.E. Taunton and J. Raithby (eds), *The statutes of the realm*, 3, (London, 1810-28), pp. 25-6.

⁵³ Ascham, *Toxophilus*, p. 20. *The Boke of Justices of the Peas* [1521] enjoined JPs to ensure that householders had provided bows and arrows for the male children and youths in their care and ordered that they were to punish and impose a fine of 12 pence on any householder found not to be in the possession of bows and arrows within a month of being investigated.

⁵⁴ 33 Henry VIII c.9 [1541-2], in Luders *et al.* (eds), *The statutes of the realm*, 3, (London, 1810-28), pp. 837-41 (pp. 837-8). The only notable difference from the earlier 1511 statute was that fines for defaulting increased from 12d. to 6s. 8d.

⁵⁵ In 1577, the crown was concerned that the laws prohibiting unlawful games and promoting archery had been 'verie moche neclegted' by JPs in York because the Queen had received reports that 'the laudable and commendable exercise and qualitie of shootinge in longe bowes' was 'so litle used and regarded'. See A. Raine (ed.), *York civic records*, 7, YASRS, 115 (York, 1950), pp. 148-9. An order issued on 3 April 1577 encouraged archery and prohibited unlawful games. Gunn argues that the gradual decline of archery in the late sixteenth century can be attributed to a variety of social changes and military realities. For a further discussion, see S. Gunn, 'Archery practice in early Tudor England', *Past and Present*, 209:1 (2010), pp. 70-81.

⁵⁶ Raine (ed.), *York civic records*, 5, p. 114.

⁵⁷ A. Raine (ed.), *York civic records*, 6, YASRS, 112 (York, 1948), pp. 155-6.

held on Heworth Moor at seven in the morning of a Monday in July 1590.⁵⁸ Whilst lesser demands were made of younger attendants below the age of seventeen, all males within the stipulated age-range, adult and non-adult, were to be inspected side-by-side on the Moor. On reaching the age of seven, boys effectively 'came of age' in terms of being required to participate in this expressly masculine pursuit. There is evidence from a number of locations to affirm that archery was performed by males of a variety of ages. One Sunday after Vespers in July 1422, a large group of men near Pocklington in Yorkshire shot arrows at butts together.⁵⁹ Alexander Chambir, aged twenty-eight, recalled in 1482 walking about the fields practising archery with a group of other men.⁶⁰ In 1504, there were 'childerne shotyng' before the Mayor and Aldermen in Canterbury and in the 1540s, 'lads' at Great Dunmow, Essex competed in shooting games.⁶¹

The jurors' verdict from an early sixteenth-century coroner's inquest involving the death of a boy during archery practice enables us to observe the role which archery assumed in the lives of younger males. The verdict, from 17 April 1515, documents how Richard Ryppen met his death the previous day as follows:

On 12 Apr., when John Marche late of Bayham, aged 13, was shooting arrows with other boys at Bayham, Richard Ryppen late of Bayham in Sussex of his own free will and without Marche's knowledge or wish ran towards the target at which Marche was shooting and which lay towards a hill. By misadventure Marche struck him on the left side of the head with an arrow worth ½d., of which blow he died at Bayham on 16 Apr.⁶²

The activity described corresponds directly to the requirements of the 1511 statute. John Marche is presented shooting arrows 'with other boys', which reinforces the position of archery as an exclusively male activity. Although Dobson argues that in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries the term 'boy' did not necessarily hold the connotations of youth that it does today, he concedes that it was applied in the modern sense in some popular literature at this time and that

⁵⁸ D. Sutton (ed.), *York civic records*, 9, YASRS, 138 (York, 1978), p. 109.

⁵⁹ Goldberg, 'Masters and men', p. 64.

⁶⁰ Consistory Database: Thomas Walker v. Katherine Williamson alias Walker [26 November 1490].

⁶¹ Gunn, 'Archery practice', p. 61; A. Clark, 'Great Dunmow revels, 1526-1543', *Essex Review*, 19 (1910), p. 198.

⁶² R.F. Hunnisett (ed.), *Sussex coroners' inquests, 1485-1558*, Sussex Record Society, 74 (1985), p. 10, case 41.

appears to be the usage here.⁶³ Steven Gunn's analysis of sixteenth-century coroners' inquest verdicts reveals that most accidents involving archery occurred on Sundays and Feast days, which correlates with the statutory provisions. Gunn also shows that boys aged between eight and thirteen are especially well represented as the victims of accidents involving archery.⁶⁴ It is very unusual that jurors in the Bayham case only noted the age of the boy who shot the fatal arrow. Verdicts normally document the age of the victim alone and, even then, only when that victim is a child.⁶⁵ John Marche is recorded as being thirteen years old. It follows that we can be fairly confident that the jurors used the term 'boys' to refer to a group of non-adult males.

The verdict states that Marche and Ryppen were both from Bayham. In the early sixteenth century, this rural community, situated on the borders of Kent and Sussex, held significance as the site of a large Premonstratensian abbey.⁶⁶ Marche and Rippen were most likely the sons of villagers, but their archery practice would have been comparable to that which occurred amongst lads in the city of Canterbury or indeed in any other urban locality. With no reference to adult witnesses, this verdict suggests that at times youngsters trained with only their peers without necessarily being subject to adult supervision. Even if archery was a requirement imposed on all men and was thereby widely acknowledged to be an integral part of a collective male culture, this evidence shows how it could still function as an entirely youthful male endeavour. When it did so, shooting practice may well have worked to consolidate age-based unity, to promote both a gendered and generational identity and to establish a common sense of youthful masculine distinctiveness amongst those involved.

Young men also dined and played card games together as pastimes. In some instances, they played alongside older men. In October 1484, the servant Thomas Hoton 'played at ye disse' at 'the tapster house of the dragon in Lop Lane' in York

⁶³ See E.J. Dobson, 'The etymology and meaning of boy', *Medium Aevum*, 9 (1940), pp. 121-54 (p. 133). Dobson notes that the popular fifteenth-century poem 'The Frere and the Boy' used the word 'boy' thirty times in the modern sense. Cf. P.J.P. Goldberg, 'Childhood and gender in later medieval England', *Viator: Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies*, 39:1 (2008), p. 252.

⁶⁴ Gunn, 'Archery practice', p. 60.

⁶⁵ See Goldberg, 'Childhood and gender', p. 254. Goldberg notes that ages of victims above their early teens were rarely recorded.

⁶⁶ W. Page (ed.), *The Victoria history of the county of Sussex*, 2 (1907), pp. 86-9.

with the proprietor, his servant and a mason called John Tynley.⁶⁷ Whilst en-route from Warwick to Newcastle-under-Lyme on his master's business in the 1530s, the male servant of Richard Hawkyns, who was aged sixteen or seventeen at the time, was enticed by the owner of an inn and his neighbour 'to fall to game and play with him at the cards'. The young man lost all of his master's money and subsequently fled without trace.⁶⁸ Similarly in 1564, the runaway servant of a London goldsmith lost his horse and all of his money to more experienced dicing partners.⁶⁹ Other gambling games had a more exclusively youthful provenance. The 'servants of divers men' diced and played 'unlawful' games at night in various households in Nottingham in 1483.⁷⁰ Magistrates alleged that male servants in Nottingham were being allowed to do the same 'in the nyghtt and daye' in the house of John Bate in 1566.⁷¹ Likewise in 1579, 'servants and sons of neighbours around the age of fourteen years' were purportedly permitted to play proscribed card games at the residence of Leonard Oxonous in Hereford.⁷² Each of these examples suggests that older people, whether as active participants, alehouse keepers or householders had some degree of involvement in young males' dicing. Depending on the circumstances in which the games were played, their function would have varied. When young men did not monopolise these recreations and older men shared in them, then cultural differences would probably have been blurred. If young men were left to play alone once they were inside adults' houses then the games would have been more age-specific and therefore more culturally separate.⁷³

In a very different urban setting, within a number of the more major churches, some young men assumed roles that were firmly age-based on St Nicholas's Day or Holy Innocents' Day. These feasts were celebrated annually on 6 and 28 December respectively. On these dates, one boy was chosen to act as a Boy Bishop and other

⁶⁷ L.C. Attreed (ed.), *The York House Books 1461-1490*, 2 (Stroud, 1991), pp. 310-11.

⁶⁸ McIntosh, *Controlling misbehaviour*, p. 123. When Laurence Foster, an apprentice to a London grocer, was sent to Canterbury about his master's business he likewise passed time at his lodgings 'at cards and dice and a game called faring' and bet away all the money his master had entrusted to him.

⁶⁹ Raine (ed.), *York civic records*, 6, p. 81.

⁷⁰ See W.H. Stevenson (ed.), *Records of the borough of Nottingham*, 2, 1399-1485 (Nottingham, 1885), pp. 330-1.

⁷¹ W.H. Stevenson (ed.), *Records of the borough of Nottingham*, 4, 1547-1625 (Nottingham, 1889), p. 130.

⁷² McIntosh, *Controlling misbehaviour*, p. 110.

⁷³ See Schlegel and Hewlett, 'Contributions of anthropology', pp. 281-9.

boys were appointed to be his clerks.⁷⁴ The Boy Bishop impersonated his older namesake.⁷⁵ He and his companions were feasted and honoured and, after the celebrations, visited people in the diocese to request donations to generate funds for the parish.⁷⁶ This practice was performed at the London parish of St Mary-at-Hill. An inventory from 1496 itemises 'vj copes for children' and 'a myter for a byyshop at seint Nicholas tyde, garnished with sylver and eyld and perle and counterfetestones'.⁷⁷ The Boy Bishop was very much the custom in cathedral churches, even the church of the new Henrician diocese of Gloucester.⁷⁸ It would appear that the very basis of this custom reinforced distinctions between younger and older males. A young man had the key role in the festivities and he and his companions remained the primary focus throughout. Boys certainly assumed distinguished roles, but adults were also heavily involved and participation was not exclusively youthful. Priests and teachers proposed candidates for Boy Bishop and other seniors supervised the liturgy, wrote sermons, provided feasts and processed alongside their younger counterparts.⁷⁹ The whole process was essentially run by adults and does not therefore represent an activity that was created by the young to form part of their own culture. Whilst it placed emphasis on the distinctiveness of the age- and gender-based identity of the young men who participated and observed, it did not provide them with the opportunity to act on their own initiative.

A dimension of male youth culture that we can see most vividly, if indirectly, from complaints by males in positions of authority is a preoccupation with fashion and appearance. The sermon that was written by an older churchman for the Boy Bishop from St Paul's Cathedral around 1490 links the 'youth of Englande' to vanity. This association was both gendered and generational. It was specifically young men who were accused of being daily 'very prone and redy' to buy 'all vayne marchaundyses of the worlde' and who tended to favour the 'longe heres and

⁷⁴ N. Orme, 'The culture of children in medieval England,' *Past and Present*, 148:1 (1995), pp. 70-1.

⁷⁵ For a further discussion of the history and practices surrounding this medieval custom see Hutton, *Stations of the sun*, pp. 100-3 and S. Shahar, 'The boy bishop's feast: a case-study in church attitudes towards children in the high and late Middle Ages', in D. Wood (ed.), *The church and childhood: studies in church history*, 31 (Oxford, 1994), pp. 243-60.

⁷⁶ S. Shahar, *Childhood in the Middle Ages* (London, 1991), pp. 179-80.

⁷⁷ Cox, *Churchwardens' accounts*, pp. 128-31.

⁷⁸ See E.F. Rimbault (ed.), *Two sermons preached by the boy bishop at St Paul's and at Gloucester* (London, 1875).

⁷⁹ Shahar, *Childhood*, p. 180; Orme, 'Culture of children', p. 71.

shorte collers of Almayns; evyll fasshenyd garmentes and devyllishe shoone and slyppers of Frensmen; powches and paynted gyrdylles of Spaynardes' and the 'newe founde hattes of Romayns'.⁸⁰ In 1554, the Merchants' Guild in Newcastle-upon-Tyne also drew attention to how their apprentices were wearing 'garded cotes, jagged hose lyned with silk' and 'cutt shoes', growing 'berds' and placing 'daggers ... crosse overthwarte their backs'.⁸¹

Mixed-gender Social Activities

At low and middling social levels, young males and young females were to be found patronising alehouses, taverns, and inns.⁸² A range of age-groups of both sexes attended these institutions and on at least some occasions, younger and older people shared company there. In 1488, Beatrice Thomson and her brother-in-law Thomas, aged forty, 'talked and drank together for some time' at the inn at the sign of the Bells in Warwick Lane, London with her servant Alice Billingham and 'the youth' John Wellis.⁸³ This is one example of a public house hosting mixed-gender and mixed-age fellowship. It is reasonable to suggest that such interaction would have obscured distinctions across these social hierarchies somewhat. Peter Clark describes the alehouse as a neutral territory that provided the young with social recognition and the liberty to mix with older people on more equal terms than they may have otherwise.⁸⁴ Mark Hailwood notes how the good fellowship of the alehouse had a broad appeal for men and women, young and old, the married and the unmarried, masters and servants alike.⁸⁵

Within the anonymity of a crowd and away from the oversight of their employers and families, young people sometimes took the chance to declare their love for one

⁸⁰ Rimbault (ed.), *Two sermons preached by the boy bishop*, pp. 10-11.

⁸¹ Goldberg, 'Masters and men', pp. 69-70. See J.R. Boyle (ed.), *Extracts from the records of the merchant adventurers of Newcastle-Upon-Tyne, I*, Surtees Society, 93 (1985), pp. 20-1. I will assess the significance of this ordinance further in Chapter Five.

⁸² B.A. Hanawalt, *Of good and ill repute: gender and social control in medieval England* (Oxford, 1998), p. 104.

⁸³ Consistory Database: Alice Billingham v. John Wellis [26 March 1488; 17 June 1488; 12 July 1488].

⁸⁴ P. Clark, *The English alehouse: a social history, 1200-1830* (London, 1983), p. 148.

⁸⁵ M. Hailwood, *Alehouses and good fellowship in early modern England* (Woodbridge, 2014), pp. 225-6.

another and even made contracts of marriage under such circumstances.⁸⁶ William Forster and Ellen Grey did so in 1472 as Robert Johnson, who was twenty-four, William Glenton, Richard Barbour and two other males drank wine with them in the tavern at the sign of the Greyhound in London's Eastcheap.⁸⁷ During Christmas week the same year, Isabella Laurens was drinking with friends in a York tavern when she told Thomas Gell, 'Thomas, I luf you wele'.⁸⁸ Mature adults may have been in the vicinity, but even though younger and older people occupied the same social space, they may nevertheless have socialised as discrete groups on the basis of generation. It is apparent that young people used public drinking places to meet and socialise together in mixed-gender peer groups.

Within some private houses, groups of young people of both sexes socialised together without being subject to the supervisory control of adults. A deposition from a marriage case between Anthony Barton and Elizabeth Sisson from the York Consistory in 1551 provides an insight. Peter Bellos, a nineteen-year-old servant, testified about how he had attended a supper one evening to celebrate the marriage of William Carter. Whilst there, he claimed to have seen Elizabeth Sisson and Anthony Barton contract marriage.⁸⁹ No mentions of adult witnesses to this agreement are made in the depositions. Adults were also apparently not part of the socialising that occurred in York in 1555 when William Bullock and Juliana Stoddart drank ale and enjoyed fellowship with two teenage servants in her master's household to toast the news that they had contracted marriage.⁹⁰

We can see another example of young people being left to their own devices to socialise from the deposition of William Parker in the matrimonial case between his master Matthew Usher and Katherine Hamerton. In his testimony before the York Consistory in 1562, William described how he and a fellow servant called

⁸⁶ See Clark, *The English alehouse*, p. 5. In this pioneering social history, Clark explains the following distinction: the alehouse had the lowliest position because it only sold ale and perhaps offered some limited lodgings; the tavern sold wine and ale; and the inn provided a selection of wine, ale, beer, food in addition to chambers. See also Hailwood, *Alehouses and good fellowship*, p. 10. Hailwood agrees that alehouses were the least exclusive establishments and maintains that they were far more prevalent than either inns or taverns in the early modern period.

⁸⁷ S. McSheffrey, *Love and marriage in late medieval London* (Kalamazoo, 1995), pp. 45-6, case 5: William Forster v. Ellen Grey [23 September 1472].

⁸⁸ P.J.P. Goldberg, *Women, work and life cycle in a medieval economy: women in York and Yorkshire, c.1300-1520* (Oxford, 1992), p. 248.

⁸⁹ York, BI, CP.G.540/A/B: Anthony Barton v. Elizabeth Sisson [1551], pp. 5-6.

⁹⁰ York, BI, CP.G.3548: Juliana Stoddart v. William Bullock [1555], p. 3.

Margaret Burton sat drinking with the couple in the kitchen of Katherine's father's house in York until the early hours one morning. Only the age of the male servant is recorded, but since Katherine still lived with her parents and Margaret was in service with them, both young women would probably have been of a comparable age to eighteen-year-old William. Katherine's parents and other members of the household were in bed when the socialising occurred, which suggests that these young people took advantage of the absence of their parents and employers. This is further indicated by the fact that it was at this time Matthew and Katherine contracted marriage.⁹¹ A group of young people seem to have seized an opportunity to act equally independently of adults one Easter Monday evening in the early 1570s. Elizabeth Smith, aged twenty-one, her sister Agnes, and companions Christabel Andro, William Headley and Edward Simpson had been 'making merry' in Ebchester, County Durham. On their way home, Headley and Agnes exchanged promises of marriage with one another.⁹² Although their ages are not specified, it seems to be significant that the couple chose a moment when they were alone with their peers to make these promises. The allusion is that at this time they recognised they were most free from interference from older people who might have been in their company earlier in the day and took the chance to behave exactly how they wished when not subject to adult supervision.

At higher social levels, young males and females from aristocratic backgrounds could have had the opportunity to socialise together if they took part in society games. However, it is likely that they were subject to the company of adults under such circumstances. 'Chance of Dice' was one such pastime played in some gentry households. Nicola McDonald discusses this game as a mixed-gender activity that had a ribald orientation and aimed to reveal the innermost social and sexual desires of its participants. Since the game was based upon sexual desires, it would have accentuated differences between the sexes. Given that the manuscript which records the game gives no indication of the ages of people it involved, men and women of all ages may well have played together at various seasonal parties and

⁹¹ York, BI, CP.G.924: Matthew Usher v. Katherine Hamerton [1562], pp. 7-8.

⁹² J. Raine (ed.), *Depositions and other ecclesiastical proceedings from the courts of Durham, extending from 1311 to the reign of Elizabeth*, Surtees Society, 21 (1845), pp. 239-40: William Headley v. Agnes Smith [undated, possibly circa 1571-3].

sociable evenings.⁹³ If older people shared in the game then it cannot be described as an exclusively youthful social activity. Even so, this does not mean that it could not have functioned in different ways for younger, unmarried players than for more mature, married players. Richard Green argues that in France, similar mixed-gender games acted as a vehicle for aristocratic courtship. He maintains that these games were a licenced strategy that brought young people of both sexes together in a controlled and heavily chaperoned environment and provided them with a degree of sexual intimacy, facilitated legitimate heterosexual coupling and ultimately promoted desirable marriages between them.⁹⁴ Society games like 'Chance of Dice' and the analogous 'Have Your Desire' may well have had a comparable effect on young people from aristocratic families in England.⁹⁵

Female Social Activities

Work activities often provided the context in which women might socialise. Capp maintains that women chatting whilst they worked constituted a highly significant element of female sociability in the early modern era. He proposes that it led to the formation of a 'semi-separate female subculture'.⁹⁶ This view is supported by my own findings. Evidence from matrimonial litigation in the York Consistory in 1411 incidentally reveals how female dyers' employees in York conversed whilst washing cloth at the River Ouse. The ages of most of the women are not recorded but we know that at least one was Joan Walton, aged twenty.⁹⁷ Elsewhere, women of various ages worked together. Around 1575, four young women deposed before Durham Consistory about how they had witnessed a brawl between two men in the churchyard of St Oswald's in the city. Their testimony presents the churchyard as a hub of female endeavour. Janet Martin, aged nineteen, explained how she came there on the afternoon the affray occurred 'to see [how] her maid had used [her] cloth, which was then in bleaching'. At the same time, twenty-three-year-old Janet

⁹³ N. McDonald, 'Games medieval women play', in C. Collette (ed.), *The Legend of Good Women: context and reception* (Cambridge, 2006), pp. 176, 183, 186.

⁹⁴ R.F. Green, 'Le roi que ne ment and aristocratic courtship', in K. Busby and E. Kooper (eds), *Courtly literature: culture and context* (Amsterdam, 1990), p. 213.

⁹⁵ For a detailed explanation of the dice-game 'Have Your Desire', see N. McDonald, 'Fragments of (have your) desire: Brome women at play', in P.J.P. Goldberg and M. Kowaleski (eds), *Medieval domesticity: home, housing and household* (Cambridge, 2008), pp. 247-54.

⁹⁶ B. Capp, 'Separate domains? Women and authority in early modern England', in P. Griffiths, A. Fox and S. Hindle (eds), *The experience of authority in early modern England* (Basingstoke, 1996), p. 128.

⁹⁷ P.J.P. Goldberg (ed. and trans.), *Women in England c.1275-1525* (Manchester, 1995), p. 43.

Surtes was collecting water from 'St Oswald well'. Janet claimed to have been the first to alert her companions to the brawl. She recalled that 'then all the women that was bleaching and such that was spynning, in the said churchyard, gat on their feit and went towards them'. Servants named Margaret Wilkinson and Sibilla Hunter, both aged twenty and Elizabeth Rutter who was forty-three worked alongside one another at the time.⁹⁸ Spinning and bleaching seem to have been exclusively female pursuits that encouraged interaction between younger and older women. It is apparent that female socialisation, which tended to happen alongside work activities, had more to do with gender than age. Conversing in this context would have facilitated gender-based networks and bonds between women of all ages and helped to develop a gendered rather than generational sense of identity amongst them.

In addition to conversing at work, women also talked together in private. A fundamental limitation of the historical record is that interactions that occurred as women socialised privately in the houses of relatives and friends lack visibility because they rarely had reason to be noted.⁹⁹ Nevertheless, there is some evidence to show how young women conversed together within households. A marriage case that came before the London Consistory in 1488 sheds light on female socialising within a private house. Agnes Weston testified that one afternoon in February of the same year, she had been present in the house of Richard Thomson 'for the sake of drinking with [his servant] Alice Billingham'. Whilst there, she witnessed a marriage contracted between Alice and a young man called John Wellis. Neither Agnes's nor Alice's ages are recorded but given that Alice resided with a master and mistress, she must have been a lifecycle servant. Agnes was described by Richard in unfavourable terms as 'a poor woman, of unreliable condition' with 'little or nothing in goods with which she can properly support herself' and a bad reputation for drunkenness.¹⁰⁰ She seems to have been a single woman whom Alice's master evidently disapproved of. The privacy of the house appears to have permitted young women to socialise with their female friends.

⁹⁸ Raine (ed.), *Depositions from the courts of Durham*, pp. 295-7, case 316: 'Fighting in the churchyard of St Oswald's Durham' [undated, possibly circa 1575].

⁹⁹ Phillips, *Medieval maidens*, p. 3; Griffiths, *Youth and authority*, pp. 209-11.

¹⁰⁰ Consistory Database: Alice Billingham v. John Wellis [26 March 1488; 17 June 1488; 12 July 1488].

A case from Durham in the 1560s supports the idea that private houses provided a suitable and safe place for women to talk to one another. In her deposition, Agnes Bleneinsop, a twenty-two-year-old maidservant, recalled how she had sat at her master's door with her master's daughter one holiday evening and interacted with passing acquaintances. The phenomenon of women sitting in doorways gave them the propriety and security associated with the home, but allowed them to speak to people outside. Spinning was often conducted by women at the same time. In Canterbury in 1560, for example, Magdalena Lewis described how she and six of her poor female neighbours sat at their doors in Ivy Lane spinning and conversing.¹⁰¹ In the Durham case, the discussion between Agnes and her master's daughter – who may well have been of a comparable age and therefore a peer – became observable because the women assembled at the boundary where the private house met the public sphere. It was at this point that Agnes claimed to have witnessed a slanderous exchange break out between her master's daughter and two passers-by, Ralph Wilson and a 'young woman' named Janet Percivall.¹⁰² Such a window into private female exchanges is very rare. Even if young women did on occasion enjoy distinctively youthful social interactions further indoors, as the examples of Alice Billingham and Agnes Bleneinsop suggest they might have done, the nature and effects of these social interactions are largely undetectable for the historian. Female activities which occurred away from the public realm were not the subject of magisterial concern in the way that male activities were and hardly ever got recorded in legal and civic documents as a consequence.

Within urban parishes, women assumed important roles as the principal organisers of Hocktide revels.¹⁰³ Hocktide was ritually observed on the first Monday and Tuesday after Easter. During this festival, groups of women chased, captured and bound male 'victims' who then had to forfeit money to secure their release. Women were the captors on the first day and on the second, the roles were

¹⁰¹ P. Clark and J. Clark, 'The social economy of the Canterbury suburbs: the evidence of the census of 1563', in A. Detsicas and N. Yates (eds), *Studies in modern Kentish history* (Maidstone, 1983), p. 80.

¹⁰² Raine (ed.), *Depositions from the courts of Durham*, pp. 108-9, case 145: Thomas Robson v. Ralph Wilson [undated, possibly 1560s].

¹⁰³ K.L. French, "'To free them from binding': women in the late medieval parish", *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, 27:3 (1997), pp. 389, 404; Phillips, *Medieval maidens*, p. 190.

reversed.¹⁰⁴ The custom of hocking afforded women, albeit momentarily, subversive agency. The reason it was forbidden in London in 1406 and again in 1409 is presumably because it inverted the status quo in this way.¹⁰⁵ Humphrey suggests that hocking as a means of raising parish funds became popular from around the mid-fifteenth century. Once this occurred, its rebellious connotations would have been tamed somewhat.¹⁰⁶ The organisation and participation in Hocktide revels to raise parish funds may have been a predominantly female endeavour but it was not an exclusively youthful one. That women of different marital statuses and implicitly various ages were involved is exemplified by the records of the accounts of the churchwardens at St Edmund's, Salisbury. In 1499 they received five shillings 'off diverse wiffes and maydens to save them from byndynge in Hok Tuysday' and in 1510 spent three shillings and four pence on a dinner for the women 'in die le Hockes'.¹⁰⁷ A number of other parishes also recorded the receipt of hock money from 'women' and 'wives'.¹⁰⁸ Phillips suggests that it was women of standing who were routinely in charge of the collection of hock money.¹⁰⁹ The activities that surrounded the festival of Hocktide also helped to define women by gender rather than marital status or age. They encouraged married and unmarried females to work together and reap rewards for their efforts as a collective entity. Katherine French believes that they acted as a 'forum of collective women's action' in the late medieval parish.¹¹⁰ Since no age-based distinctions were made between the women who took part then I would argue that an identity based on gender rather than generation or marital status would have been strengthened amongst them.

A more specifically youthful urban parish activity in which young females were prominent was dancing to raise funds. At St Edmund's, Salisbury, maidens

¹⁰⁴ For a fuller explanation of the practice see Hutton, *Stations of the sun*, p. 207; French, 'To free them from binding', pp. 387-412.

¹⁰⁵ Riley (ed.), *Memorials of London and London life*, pp. 561-2, 571.

¹⁰⁶ C. Humphrey, *The dynamics of urban festal culture in later medieval England* (PhD thesis, University of York, 1997). Humphrey also discusses the custom of hocking in his subsequent monograph. See C. Humphrey, *The politics of carnival: festival misrule in medieval England* (Manchester, 2001), ch. 2.

¹⁰⁷ Cox, *Churchwardens' accounts*, pp. 64-5.

¹⁰⁸ Phillips, *Medieval maidens*, pp. 190-3; Cox, *Churchwardens' accounts*, pp. 64, 261. The accounts for 1497-8 at St Edmund's Salisbury record that 15s. 10½d. was collected by the wives 'in festo Hokkes'. At St. Mary-at-Hill in 1496, women gathered 20s. 1d. and in 1497, 14s. 8d. See also Peters, *Patterns of piety*, p. 27.

¹⁰⁹ Phillips, *Medieval maidens*, pp. 191-2.

¹¹⁰ See K.L. French, 'Maidens' lights and wives' stores', p. 402.

collected money for dancing.¹¹¹ At St Laurence, Reading, young women danced at Whitsuntide by 'the tree at the church door' and raised a sum of 'ij s. xi d.' in 1505.¹¹² On some occasions young men also joined in. At St Ewen's, Bristol, there were ceremonial dances for young males and females over May-time which were held in celebration of their church's dedication day. In the year 1467-8, for example, the churchwardens' accounts recorded how dancing money was received from 'Margaret Nancothan, Wylliam Taylour, Margaret Wolf and Lawrence Wolf'.¹¹³ These activities may have been youthful in that the performances were intended solely for the young. However, it is implicit that on each of these occasions it was older people in the parish who would have organised and observed the dancing and then parents and other adults who would have made donations to the young women's collections. As such, churchwardens harnessed youthful activities to meet their needs, viz. contributing to the shared community aim of financially benefitting the church. These were youth events organised by adults in which young women principally participated but had no agency in arranging themselves. Accordingly, dancing to raise funds would not have functioned to promote social and cultural separation between young and old.

Within aristocratic and gentry households, female-only pursuits were mostly inter-generational. In some noble houses, circles of aristocratic, gentle and urban women read aloud devotional texts or romances for entertainment. In the household of Cecily Neville, the Duchess of York, young women were included. At supper, those in service listened as the Duchess repeated lessons from devotional readings discussed at dinner.¹¹⁴ Women also bequeathed books to one another.¹¹⁵ In 1420, widow Matilda Bowes left her god-daughter 'j romance book is called ye gospelles'. In 1498, Thomasin Hopton bequeathed a book of saints' lives and a life of the Blessed Virgin to her granddaughters Elizabeth Knevet and Thomasin Hopton respectively. There is a sense that a common culture of reading might have

¹¹¹ Phillips, *Medieval maidens*, p. 189.

¹¹² Cox, *Churchwardens' accounts*, p. 282.

¹¹³ Johnson and Maclean, 'Reformation and resistance in Thames/Severn parishes', p. 184; Goldberg (ed.), *Women in England*, p. 262. See B.R. Masters and E. Ralph (eds), *The church book of St Ewen's Bristol 1454-1584*, Bristol and Gloucestershire Archaeological Society, 6 (1967), pp. 68, 77.

¹¹⁴ Phillips, *Medieval maidens*, p. 71; F. Riddy, 'Women talking about the things of God': a late medieval sub-culture', in C.M. Meale (ed.), *Women and literature in Britain, 1150-1500* (Cambridge, 1993), pp. 104-27.

¹¹⁵ See C.M. Meale, '...alle the bokes that I haue of latyn, englisch, and frensch': laywomen and their books in late medieval England', in C.M. Meale (ed.), *Women and literature in Britain, 1150-1500* (Cambridge, 1993), pp. 128-58.

been gendered. It may well have facilitated a shared social network amongst women that served to transcend age and status divisions between them.¹¹⁶

In other fifteenth-century aristocratic households, women engaged in exclusively female society games together. Manuscripts that preserve a record of 'Ragman Roll' indicate its participants' gender as the players of this game were addressed as 'my laydes and maistresses'. McDonald describes this as a 'sexually licentious and inescapably rude' game that involved women of status talking amongst themselves about their bodies and desires.¹¹⁷ Considering both younger and older women read together within the same kinds of households, a similarly broad age-range of women might also have taken part in this game. McDonald argues that 'an adhoc and fluid...community of women' came together to share in this pastime.¹¹⁸ Such a female association would have worked to reinforce a shared gender identity rather any sense of a youth identity.

Games that involved gambling could have had a comparable effect for those younger and older women in aristocratic households who shared such pursuits. In November 1535, Lady Lisle sent her daughter Mary Bassett, aged thirteen, 'money to play' whilst she resided within the aristocratic French household of Madame de Bours. Lady Lisle was fearful about Mary wasting time in recreation and declared that she would prefer her to 'ply her work, lute and the virginals' instead.¹¹⁹ However, Lady Lisle seems to have been content to grant her daughter permission to play provided she remained under the direction of an adult. She did so on the condition that Mary would only play on the command of her mistress. On another occasion, Mary sustained a gambling loss after she played against a gentlewoman in the household. She wrote to her sister Philippa to lament: 'I owe a pair of shoes to a gentlewoman who seeth to my wants which I lost at play with her'.¹²⁰ Since the girl seems to have been obliged to repay the older woman, both playing partners must have been treated as equals for the purposes of the game. As younger and

¹¹⁶ Riddy, 'Women talking about the things of God', pp. 108-9. See also J. Raine (ed.), *Wills and inventories of the northern counties of England*, Surtees Society, 2 (1834), p. 65; C. Richmond, *John Hopton: a fifteenth century Suffolk gentleman* (Cambridge, 1981), pp. 125, 131.

¹¹⁷ McDonald, 'Games medieval women play', pp. 176, 182-4, 188. The extant manuscripts which record this society game are Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Fairfax 16 and Bodley MS 638.

¹¹⁸ McDonald, 'Games medieval women play', pp. 184, 186-7, 192, 197.

¹¹⁹ M. St. Clare Byrne (ed.), *The Lisle letters*, 3 (Chicago, 1981), p. 157.

¹²⁰ St. Clare Byrne (ed.), *Lisle letters*, 3, p. 165.

older played alongside and against one another, age-based differences between them would have become less pronounced.

One important aspect of the female experience at high social levels that seems to have been particularly youthful was a preoccupation with fashion. On 18 May 1506, Dorothy Plumpton composed a letter to her father from service in the household of Lady Darcy that displayed concern for her personal appearance. She rather boldly wrote: 'I beseech you to send me a fine hatt and some good cloth to make me some kevercheffes', in the midst of a series of appeals for him to show 'fatherly kyndnesse' and permit her to return home.¹²¹ Requests for clothing dominated most correspondence between Lady Lisle and her teenage daughter Anne during the 1530s. Her letters reveal that when she was in service with the de Riou family in France, Anne was highly anxious about dress and her looks.¹²² In May 1534, for example, she wrote to her mother to ask: 'Madame, if it might please you, I would heartily desire you to send me some demi-worsted for a gown, and a kirtle of velvet and also some linen to make smocks, and some hosen and shoes....I have need of three ells of red cloth to make me a cloak, with a hood of satin'.¹²³ A year later, Lady sent money to her daughter's mistress 'to procure... a gown of taffeta, a mantle and other necessities'.¹²⁴ That August, Anne justified her need for a winter gown, more shoes and more hose because she explained it was to emulate peers in her household. This she was determined to prioritise, irrespective of the financial implications:

Madame, I would most earnestly entreat you that if I am to pass the winter in France I may have some gown to pass it in. Madame, I know well that I am very costly unto you, but it is not possible to do otherwise, there are so many little trifling things which are here necessary which are not needed in England, and one must do as others do...¹²⁵

The suggestion is that Anne made a specific connection between fashion and peer approval. If she valued it as such then we can deduce that her anxiety to keep up

¹²¹ T. Stapleton (ed.), *The Plumpton correspondence*, Camden Society, OS, 4 (London, 1839), pp. 202-3, letter 165: Dorothy Plumpton to her father, Sir Robert Plumpton [undated, possibly circa 18 May 1504].

¹²² St. Clare Byrne (ed.), *Lisle letters*, 3, p. 133; Phillips, *Medieval maidens*, pp. 179-80.

¹²³ St. Clare Byrne (ed.), *Lisle letters*, 3, pp. 142-3.

¹²⁴ St. Clare Byrne (ed.), *Lisle letters*, 3, p. 149.

¹²⁵ St. Clare Byrne (ed.), *Lisle letters*, 3, pp. 150-1.

with the fashions of others in the elite household was representative of a youthful female interest shared amongst the young women who resided there.

The evidence I have presented in this chapter shows how access to a distinctive youth culture in fifteenth- and sixteenth-century English society was primarily dependent on locality and gender. Young people in rural areas seem to have been subject to the greatest degree of adult regulation. Summer-games and youth guilds that young males and females in rural settings took part in emphasised gender differences and hierarchies of age in much more accentuated ways than many of the youthful activities that occurred in larger towns and cities. Although these activities may have assisted the development of gendered youthful identities, they were not owned by young people and therefore did not represent a distinctive youth culture. Adults in urban areas also organised some parish and civic events for young people – like the customs of the Boy Bishop and Hocktide, dancing to raise church funds and performances like the ‘Sham Fight’ – and harnessed these to serve adult interests. However, the notable difference is that young males in towns and cities also seem to have had opportunities to arrange certain activities for themselves that promoted separation between them and older men and fulfilled their own cultural needs. When they engaged in competitive sports, or dined, gambled and drank alongside their peers, they were able to enjoy a distinctive male youth culture that reinforced the development of a masculine youthful identity.

I have found that since activities young women took part in tended to involve women of all ages, there was no comparable female youth culture. At all social levels, female activities were defined more by gender than age and accordingly promoted a gendered identity as opposed to a youthful one. Even though young women at low and middling social levels who drank in mixed-gender groups in public and in private may have had the opportunity to experience a youth culture when they did so, it was still not one defined by gender. Overall, I have identified the existence of a predominantly male urban youth culture in fifteenth- and sixteenth-century England. I will consider the nature of this in more depth in the following chapter.

Chapter Five

'Generational Conflict'

The existence of generational conflict is the third main theme addressed by modern social-scientific researchers interested in adolescence that I have identified and have chosen to problematise. Sociologists have taken three different approaches to the issue of whether adolescents typically display anti-adult attitudes and a tendency towards antisocial behaviour. The first emphasises the notion of a 'generation gap' and the prevalence of conflict between adolescents and adults. Adolescents are presented as a deviant element of society who display anti-adult attitudes and possess norms and values that are different from the mainstream.¹ Adherents to this approach also maintain that during adolescence, the role and influence of parents is replaced with a preference for peer interactions. Erikson, Bronfenbrenner and Ornstein all claim that an affiliation with a peer group assumes a special significance during this stage of the lifecycle.² Elkind argues that the desire for peer affirmation is the result of an ego-centrism in early adolescence. This manifests itself in a preoccupation with appearance and behaviour, so much so that young people constantly construct and react to an imaginary audience in their own minds. He maintains that this phenomenon tends to diminish by the age of fifteen or sixteen as individuals become more socio-centric in preparation for adulthood, which is essentially representative of them growing up.³ Newer work by Steinberg, and Pardini *et al.*, draws upon current ideas from developmental psychology to give a neurological rationale to the connections that they make between the peer associations of young males and the

¹ See K. Mannheim, 'The problem of generations', in P. Kecskemeti (ed.), *Karl Mannheim: essays on the sociology of knowledge* (London, 1952), pp. 276-322. This is a reprint of an article first published in 1923. See also K. Davis, 'The sociology of parent-youth conflict', *American Sociological Review*, 5:4 (1940), pp. 523-35; K. Kenniston, 'Social change and youth in America', *Daedalus*, 91 (1962), p. 161; B. Bettelheim, 'The problem of generations', in E.H. Erikson (ed.), *Youth: change and challenge* (London, 1963), pp. 65, 89; B.B. Brown and C. Klute, 'Friendship, cliques and crowds', in G.R. Adams and M.D. Berzonsky (eds), *Blackwell handbook of adolescence* (Oxford, 2003), p. 330; C. Wallace and S. Kovatcheva, *Youth in society: the construction and deconstruction of youth in east and west Europe* (New York, 1999), p. 125; L. Mayeux and A.H.N. Cillesen, 'Peer influence and the development of antisocial behaviour', in R.C.M.E. Engels, M. Kerr and H. Stattin (eds), *Friends, lovers and groups* (Chichester, 2007), pp. 33-46.

² E.H. Erikson, *Childhood and society* (2nd edn, London, 1963), pp. 234-5; T.P. Gullotta, G.R. Adams and C.A. Markstrom, *The adolescent experience* (4th edn, Burlington, 1999), p. 166; U. Bronfenbrenner, *Two worlds of childhood: US and USSR* (New York, 1970); A.C. Ornstein, 'Adolescent and youth culture: from tranquillity to activity', *The Urban Review*, 13:1 (1981), p. 2.

³ See D. Elkind, *Children and adolescents: interpretive essays on Jean Piaget* (2nd edn, London, 1974), chs. 5, 6 (p. 90).

tendency for these to promote antisocial behaviour, delinquency, aggression and conflicts with parents.⁴

The second approach directly challenges the notion of a 'generation gap' and the idea that parent and peer interactions are polarised during adolescence.

Sociologists who support this view, including Elkin and Westley, Wyn and White, and Brown and Bakken, claim that adolescents and their parents maintain a close relationship and have many attitudes, values, beliefs and practices in common.

They argue that since generational differences are only minor and insignificant, parent and peer relationships can co-exist and complement each other.⁵ The third

approach is effectively a synthesis of the first two arguments. Its followers claim that some elements of adolescent and adult life are shared, while others are different and therefore promote tension between the generations.⁶ Various studies

by Remmers and Radler, Rice, Niles, and Jurkovic and Ulrici maintain that parents and peer groups are influential in different aspects of a young person's life. Since

these areas of influence do not overlap, there is no need for parents and peers to compete against one another. Some even note a difference in attitudes according to the sex of young people: deference towards adults is particularly pronounced amongst teenage girls.⁷ Noller and Callan acknowledge that most

adolescent/parent relationships are positive but some friction between the generations can arise as the young try to assert their own identities.⁸ Lansford

makes a similar claim in respect of parent and peer influence over antisocial behaviour in the lives of young men. He identifies that sometimes parent and peer

relationships have a positive effect in moderating each other. At other times peer relationships have a harmful impact as they can encourage deviancy, aggression

⁴ D.A. Pardini, R. Loeber and M. Stouthamer-Loeber, 'Developmental shifts in parent and peer influences on boys' beliefs about delinquent behavior', *Journal of Research on Adolescence*, 15:3 (2005), pp. 299-323 (pp. 300, 317).

⁵ F. Elkin and W.A. Westley, 'The protective environment and adolescent socialisation', *Social Forces*, 35:3 (1957), pp. 243-9; J. Wyn and R. White, *Rethinking youth* (London, 1997), ch. 4 (p. 84); B.B. Brown and J.P. Bakken, 'Parenting and peer relationships: re-invigorating relationships on family-peer linkages in adolescence', *Journal of Research on Adolescence*, 21:1 (2011), pp. 159-61.

⁶ H.H. Remmers and D.H. Radler, *The American teenager* (New York, 1957); F.P. Rice, *The adolescent: developments, relationships and culture* (Boston, 1975), pp. 155-9; S.F. Niles, 'The youth culture controversy: an evaluation', *The Journal of Early Adolescence*, 1:3 (1981), p. 265; G.T. Jurkovic and D. Ulrici, 'Empirical perspectives on adolescents and their families', in L. L'Abate (ed.), *The handbook of family psychology and therapy*, 1 (Homewood, 1985), pp. 215-57.

⁷ D.M. Smith, 'Perceived peer and parental influences of youth's social world', *Youth & Society*, 17:2 (1985), pp. 132, 151; C. Murray and F. Thompson, 'The representation of authority: an adolescent viewpoint', *Journal of Adolescence*, 8:3 (1985), pp. 217-29 (p. 217).

⁸ P. Noller and V. Callan, *The adolescent in the family* (London, 1991), pp. 62, 140.

and antisocial behaviour and thereby exacerbate generational tensions within families.⁹

With these ideas from modern social-scientific scholarship in mind, the aim of this chapter is to ascertain how far generational conflict characterised the relationship between adolescents and adults in fifteenth- and sixteenth-century England. Social-scientific ideas have in fact impacted on historical scholarship on youth in the pre-modern era over the past forty years. Medievalists and early modernists have debated how far generational conflict and a polarisation of youth and age were key features of adolescence. On one side of the debate, Weinstein and Bell draw evidence from hagiography to argue that medieval adolescence featured conflicts with parents.¹⁰ Hanawalt maintains that generational tensions arose in medieval London because of the extent to which adults tried to control the lives of young men.¹¹ Overt conflicts between male apprentices and magistrates in fifteenth-century London are likewise identified by Spindler.¹² Similarly, Thomas argues that age division was a prevalent feature of sixteenth-century society. He believes that there was antagonism between the views and activities of younger and older people and that this in turn led to pressure from the social elite to subordinate the young.¹³ Gillis agrees that tensions were caused in the sixteenth century because young people rebelled against their elders' attempts to exercise authority over them.¹⁴ Springhall believes that lifecycle service was devised as a means to keep adolescents and their parents apart, at a time when tensions were most likely to arise amongst them.¹⁵ Rushton's study of domestic violence in service suggests that conflict was also a feature of the relationship between masters and their servants in the early modern period.¹⁶ The effects of the Reformation on the relationship between the generations have also been explored.

⁹ J.E. Lansford, 'Friendship quality, peer group affiliation, and peer antisocial behavior as moderators of the link between negative parenting and adolescent externalizing behavior', *Journal of Research on Adolescence*, 13:2 (2003), pp. 161-84 (pp. 163-4, 180).

¹⁰ D. Weinstein and R.M. Bell, *Saints and society, 1000-1700* (London 1982), p. 52.

¹¹ B.A. Hanawalt, 'Historical descriptions and prescriptions for adolescence', *Journal of Family History*, 17:4 (1992), pp. 341-51.

¹² E.D. Spindler, 'Youth and old age in London', *The London Journal*, 36:1 (2011), pp. 6-7.

¹³ See K.V. Thomas, 'Age and authority in early modern England', *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 62 (1976), pp. 205-48 (p. 233).

¹⁴ J.R. Gillis, *Youth and history: transition and change in European age relations, 1770 to present* (London, 1981), pp. 14-25.

¹⁵ J. Springhall, *Coming of age: adolescence in Britain 1860-1960* (Dublin, 1986), p. 21.

¹⁶ See P. Rushton, 'The matter in variance: adolescents and domestic conflict in the pre-industrial economy of northeast England, 1600-1800', *Journal of Social History*, 25:1 (1991), pp. 89-107.

Brigden argues that the advent of Protestantism provided young men with an excuse for rebelliousness and disobedience, so older people became particularly concerned about the actions and activities of younger men.¹⁷ Walsham also maintains that the exercise of patriarchal authority within society intensified in the Reformation era.¹⁸ On the other side of the debate, some medievalists and early modernists contest the notion that generational conflict was an inevitable feature of adolescence during their period. Schultz uncovers no evidence of conflict between adolescent children and their parents in his analysis of Middle High German texts.¹⁹ In a study of apprentices in sixteenth-century Bristol, Yarborough likewise finds little to suggest that significant tensions existed between young men and the civic authorities.²⁰

These contentions were active some years ago and have not been addressed in recent research. It is my intention to further the existing scholarship by revisiting these issues and contributing to the debate. I explore the extent to which the evidence for youth cultures discussed in Chapter Four also suggests that there was a 'generation gap' between young people, who we may identify as adolescents, and mature adults. To do so, I question how far youth cultural activities were deemed oppositional and deviant by masters, moralists and magistrates and treated as such in social practice. I want to determine if adult attitudes helped to promote social distance between younger and older people and see how much this changed over time. Since the population level rose rapidly during the sixteenth century, roughly half of the total population may have been below the age of twenty for the majority of it.²¹ The existence of such a youthful population had the potential to pose a greater challenge to the power and authority of the much smaller group of senior men who held civic office, preached sermons and wrote didactic texts at this time. Throughout the analysis, I consider how far the young opted to please themselves, how far adult attitudes encouraged them to become defiant and rebellious by resisting adult authority, deliberately breaking rules and testing

¹⁷ S. Brigden, 'Youth and the English Reformation', *Past and Present*, 95:1 (1982), pp. 37-67.

¹⁸ A. Walsham, 'The reformation of the generations: youth, age and religious change in England, c.1500-1700', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 21 (2011), pp. 93-121.

¹⁹ J.A. Schultz, 'Medieval adolescence: the claims of history and the silence of German narrative', *Speculum*, 66:3 (1991), pp. 519-39 (p. 521).

²⁰ A. Yarborough, 'Apprentices as adolescents in sixteenth-century Bristol', *Journal of Social History*, 13:1 (1979), pp. 67-81 (p. 70).

²¹ K. Wrightson, *Earthly necessities: economic lives in early modern Britain, 1470-1750* (London, 2002), p. 121; P. Clark, *The English alehouse: a social history 1200-1830* (London, 1983), p. 127.

boundaries, and how far young people just obediently or passively complied with orders and restrictions imposed upon them by parents, employers, preachers and magistrates. I also investigate an associated issue that has been addressed in sociological studies but is less central to the historiography on pre-modern youth – namely the extent to which adolescents preferred interactions with their peers. Brigden has argued that in the early modern period, male apprentices in urban localities may have felt a greater sense of solidarity with others ‘of the same condition’ and displayed less deference to their superiors as a consequence.²² Griffiths has also suggested that a combination of ‘convivial solidarity’ and ‘aggression’ were features of the male youth culture he identifies in early modern England.²³ I think more specifically about how peer relationships complemented or competed with the role and influence of parents, or those acting *in loco parentis*, during the adolescence phase of the lifecycle in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries and assess whether this caused friction between the generations.

I begin by highlighting some of the concerns that contemporaries expounded about young men dicing and playing unlawful games. I then move on a detailed analysis of two case-studies – one involves male servants who diced, the other involves male servants who bowled and gambled. I also look at the participation of young males in football and other activities that were deemed riotous. I assess the significance of moralists’ and magistrates’ reactions to the youthful preoccupation with fashion and other youthful pursuits, such as dancing, participating in May-games and congregating to drink together socially. Throughout the analysis, I think about the effects of change over time. I build upon the work done by Brigden and Walsham to assess the effect of the Reformation on relations between the generations. I also consider the impact of various other socio-economic factors on the experiences of young people in the pre-modern era.

Ideas about ‘Unlawful Games’

During the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, young males and their recreations were a constant concern for adults. Nationally applicable statutes that proscribed

²² Brigden, ‘Youth and the English Reformation’, p. 89.

²³ See P. Griffiths, *Youth and authority: formative experiences in England, 1560-1640* (Oxford, 1996), pp. 200-21 (p. 208).

certain games targeted the younger and poorer members of society specifically. In 1388, servants and labourers were prohibited from playing 'tennis or football and other games called coits, dice, casting of the stone, cails, and other such importune games' on 'Sundays and holydays'. This was a comprehensive ban, given that Sundays and holidays were the only days servants and labourers would have been afforded any significant amount of free time. Civic governors tried to prevent young males from playing a number of games and sports by labelling them 'unlawful' and encouraged them to practise archery instead.²⁴ Further legislation issued in 1409 added hand-ball and bowling to the list of banned 'unthrifty games' and forbade *all* persons from playing upon the pain of fines and imprisonment.²⁵ Between 1455 and 1485, society felt the effects of civil strife caused by the Wars of the Roses. In this context, Edward IV and Henry VII both attempted to enforce monarchical power and the common law throughout the realm and this led to magistrates placing more emphasis on the importance of maintaining good order at local level. As I have discussed earlier, economic recession was also a feature of the later fifteenth century. This combination of factors magnified concerns about gaming and gambling having a detrimental impact on the young because magistrates believed that these activities encouraged them to waste precious resources.²⁶ Consequently, by 1477 even those who hosted unlawful games faced punishment.²⁷ Moreover in 1495, an Act was passed that specifically banned servants and labourers from playing dice, cards, bowls and tennis other than at Christmas and even then restricted 'to pley oonly in the dwelling house of his maister or where the maister of the seid s[er]vaunts is p[re]sent'.²⁸ That similar stipulations had operated in social practice in an aristocratic household for quite some time is apparent from correspondence between Margaret Paston and her eldest son John Paston I in 1459. This letter describes how John I's younger brother, seventeen-year-old John Paston II, had told his mother whilst in service

²⁴ 12 Richard II c.6 [1388], in A. Luders, T.E. Tomlins, J. France, W.E. Taunton and J. Raithby (eds), *The statutes of the realm*, 2 (London, 1810-28), p. 57.

²⁵ 11 Henry IV c.4 [1409-10], in Luders *et al.* (eds), *The statutes of the realm*, 2, p. 163.

²⁶ See M. Keen, *England in the later Middle Ages: a political history* (2nd edn, London, 2003), ch. 20; M.K. McIntosh, *Controlling misbehaviour in England, 1370-1600* (Cambridge, 1998), pp. 69, 101.

²⁷ 17 Edward IV c.3 [1477-8], in Luders *et al.* (eds), *The statutes of the realm*, 2, pp. 462-3. This Act stipulated that no person 'shall willingly suffer any person to occupy or play any of the said [games] ... within their said houses, tenements, gardens or any other place, upon pain to have imprisonment of three years'.

²⁸ 11 Henry VII, c.2 [1495], in Luders *et al.* (eds), *The statutes of the realm*, 2, p. 569. The content of this statute was reiterated by The Statute of Winchester in 1511. See 3 Henry VIII c.3 [1511], in A. Luders, T.E. Tomlins, J. France, W.E. Taunton and J. Raithby (eds), *The statutes of the realm*, 3, (London, 1810-28), pp. 25-6.

that his mistress Lady Morlee forbade him and the other 'folkys' in her household from dicing, harping, luting, singing or engaging in any 'lowde dysportys' during Christmas, but permitted them to play 'at the tabyllys and schesse and cardys' in her company.²⁹

In 1541, masters were given the power to 'licence' servants 'to playe at cards dice or tables with their saide maister or with an other Gentlemen repayringe to their saide maister, openly in his or their house or in his or their p[re]sence, according to his or their discretion'.³⁰ These conditions reflect both an age and status hierarchy. Magistrates granted masters control. Employers were sanctioned to impose boundaries on their servants' activities and had the power to relax these to suit the needs of themselves or their gentlemen friends for companions to play with. It is implicit that magistrates had a negative perception of young males gaming because they viewed it as unthrifty behaviour that was antagonistic to masters' interests. They believed it was necessary to exercise control over young men as a consequence. Magistrates opposed the young and poor engaging in games without adequate adult supervision, but they permitted play when masters had a requirement for their servants to do so or when the servants were in the company of adults. This policy was slightly more permissive than the one encompassed in the 1495 Act. The rationale behind it may well have been a desire to encourage game-playing that Parliament deemed responsible. Those in government were prepared to permit a form of entertainment that could be closely supervised and contained if it meant servants would be dissuaded from congregating in groups that included only those of a comparable age and status which these adults so feared.

Proscriptions contained within apprenticeship indentures were fairly restrictive in terms of the recreational activities of young males. This is typified by the London Merchant Tailors' indenture of 1451 which records how John Harietsham was bound to 'commit no excessive waste of [his master's] goods' during his seven-year term. John also had to agree 'not to play at dice-tables or chequers, or any other unlawful games' but rather was 'to conduct himself soberly, justly, piously, well

²⁹ N. Davis (ed.), *The Paston letters and papers of the fifteenth century*, 1 (Oxford, 1971), pp. 257-8, letter 153: Margaret Paston to John Paston I [24 December 1459].

³⁰ 33 Henry VIII, c.9 [1541-2], in Luders *et al.* (eds), *The statutes of the realm*, 3, pp. 837-8.

and honourably, and to be a good and faithful servant according to the use and custom of London'.³¹ Masters wanted to prevent apprentices from playing unlawful games which did not cultivate the type of good conduct required of those in service and which were also regularly associated with thefts from employers. When Robert White made a seven-year apprenticeship contract in York in 1510, he agreed to abide by similar restraints. He had to promise not to 'waste his master's goods nor lend them without permission ... not to play dice, chess or other illicit games, not to withdraw from his master's service or absent himself day or night'.³² Masters had a particular anxiety about the propensity of young males to misbehave and this prompted them to attempt to extend their control over their apprentices beyond the boundaries of their own houses.³³ Magistrates supported them in doing so. The civic authorities in York, for example, imposed an eight o'clock curfew on apprentices in the city one evening in 1530. This was accompanied by the command that 'no man of this City shall suffer any apprentice to dispend any money within thayre howsys nor play at dyes, cards nor none oder unlauffull games'.³⁴ The picture that emerges is that masters and magistrates wanted to close down some of the very activities we have already seen apprentices seem to have most enjoyed.

The theme of generational difference is also central in numerous literary texts. The personification of 'Yowthe' in John Lydgate's version of *The Pilgrimage of the Life of Man* (1426) depicts this stage of the lifecycle as an energetic period. Youth is characterised by the playing of various sports and games such as football, wrestling, bowling, dicing, chess and tables.³⁵ Perkin Reveller, the apprentice in Chaucer's *Cook's Tale* who is presented as the embodiment of everything that would have caused alarm amongst those in authority, is renowned for being a

³¹ C.M. Clode, *The early history of the guild of merchant taylors of the fraternity of St John the Baptist, London* (London, 1888), p. 344.

³² J.W. Percy (ed.), *York Memorandum Book*, 3, Surtees Society, 186 (1973), p. 247.

³³ B.A. Hanawalt, *Growing up in medieval London: the experience of childhood in history* (Oxford, 1996), p. 165.

³⁴ A. Raine (ed.), *York civic records*, 3, YASRS, 106 (1942), pp. 133-4. For a similar order against unlawful games, issued in 1554-5 see A. Raine (ed.), *York civic records*, 5, YASRS, 110 (1946), p. 114. Unlawful games and disorder were also prohibited on 15 October 1563 and 30 June 1569. See A. Raine (ed.), *York civic records*, 6, YASRS, 112 (1948), pp. 65, 152-5. A stricter execution of the laws to prevent disorder was advised on 18 June 1578 and was repeated again in 1588-9. See A. Raine (ed.), *York civic records*, 7, YASRS, 115 (1950), pp. 148, 172-4; D. Sutton (ed.), *York civic records*, 9, YASRS, 138 (1978), p. 39.

³⁵ See F.J. Furnivall (ed.), *The Pilgrimage of the Life of Man, by John Lydgate AD 1426, from the French of Guillaume de Deguileville AD 1330, 1355*, EETS, 77 (1899), pp. 303-17.

skilled dice player.³⁶ Instructional literature routinely linked young males to the enticements of gaming and gambling. Its proscriptions and prescriptions reinforce the idea that moralistic writers believed young males were antagonistic enough to warrant control from their elders. In the poem *How the Wise Man Taught His Son*, which as we can recall was in circulation in the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, a father expressly forbids his son from dicing.³⁷ *The Child of Bristowe*, a poem found in a manuscript that dates from the later fifteenth century, negatively associates its young middling-status male protagonist with a tendency to succumb to gambling on dice games.³⁸ On discovering that the boy had lost his inheritance, his master immediately but erroneously assumes that dicing caused his careless squandering. The youngster is berated as the master exclaims: 'Y[o]u art a fole.... for thu hast played atte dice / or at som other games nyce / and lost vp sone [wha]t thu had'.³⁹ In social practice, some young men wasted money in this way. In 1478, Robert Cely lost the thirty shillings intended for the payment of the hosts he was residing with having 'playd hyt at dys, euery farthing'.⁴⁰

The linkage between dicing and gambling is reiterated in the fifteenth-century *Ballade of Jak Hare*. This poem makes a direct connection between an idle, reckless and thieving young knave and his inclination to play dice games, misuse money and incur disreputable debts whilst 'sitting ageyn the moon'.⁴¹ Since these activities are portrayed under the cover of darkness, they are explicitly associated with the connotations of nocturnal nefariousness. Anxieties about the nocturnal activities of young men also prevailed in the sixteenth century. In his *Toxophilus* Roger Ascham lamented the detrimental effects of dicing. Ascham believed that nothing 'chaungeth sooner the golden and syluer wyttes of men into copperye and

³⁶ See G. Chaucer, 'The Cook's Tale', in L.D. Benson (ed.), *The Riverside Chaucer* (3rd edn, Oxford, 1988), p. 85, lines 4384-8.

³⁷ 'How the Wise Man Tauzt His Son', in F.J. Furnivall (ed.), *The Babees' Book, Aristotle's ABC, Urbanitatis, Stans Puer ad Mensam, The Lvtill Childrenes Lvtill Boke, The Bokes of Nurture of Hugh Rhodes and John Russell, Wynkyn de Worde's Boke of Keruyng, The Booke of Demeanor, The Boke of Curtasye, Seager's Schoole of Vertue, &c. &c. with some French and Latin poems on like subjects, and some forewords on education in early England*, EETS, OS, 32 (1868), p. 50, line 60.

³⁸ B.A. Hanawalt, 'The Childe of Bristowe' and the making of middle-class adolescence', in B.A. Hanawalt and D. Wallace (eds), *Bodies and disciplines: intersections of literature and history in fifteenth-century England* (London, 1996), p. 155.

³⁹ C. Hopper (ed.), *The Childe of Bristow, a poem by John Lydgate*, Camden Society, OS, 73, Miscellany, 4 (1859), pp. 3-28 (p. 22, stanza 67).

⁴⁰ A. Hanham (ed.), *The Cely letters 1472-1488*, EETS, OS, 273 (1975), p. 29.

⁴¹ 'A Ballade of Jak Hare', in H.N. MacCracken (ed.), *The minor poems of John Lydgate, part II: secular poems*, EETS, OS, 192 (1934), pp. 446-7.

brassye ways, then dising and suche vnlefull pastymes'.⁴² Dicing is described as a 'bastarde borne' closely associated with 'werinsome Ydlenesse', the 'enemy of virtue' and 'drowner of youthe'. The text continues:

dysynge and carding haue .ii. Tutours, the one named Solitariousness, whyche lurketh in holes and corners, the other called Night, an vngracious couer of noughtyness, which .ii. thinges be very Inkepers and receyuers of noughtyness and noughty thinges ... For on the nighte tyme and in corners, spirits and theues, rates and mise, toodes and oules, nightecrowes and poulcattes, foxes and foumerdes, wilth all other vermine and noisome beasts, vse mooste styrringe, when in the daye light, and in open places whiche be ordeyned by God for honeste thynges, they darre not ones come...⁴³

The stark contrast between night and day mirrors the difference between activities Ascham deemed 'noughty' and those he identified as honest and godly. Ascham urged young men to avoid games involving 'ydleness and solitariness, night and darkness, fortune and chance, craft and subiltie'. He maintained that 'losse of name, losse of goodes and winning of an hundred gowtie, dropsy diseases' are the negative results of playing dice games.⁴⁴ Ascham thus believed young men who engaged in unlawful games posed a threat to society. 'Noughtye pastymes' such as dicing, playing cards and bowling, he believed, were used everywhere to the 'corruption' and 'great harme of all youth of [the] realme'.⁴⁵

Friction from Dicing, Bowling, Football and Disorder

In 1483, a Nottingham jury presented eight men before the Sessions Court for permitting 'servants of divers men' to partake in 'dice, *carpae*, and other unlawful and prohibited games' within their houses at night-time.⁴⁶ There are a number of clues to suggest that live-in male servants were the particular targets of the civic magistrates in Nottingham. It is significant that the servants described had access

⁴² R. Ascham, *Toxophilus*, ed. P.E. Medine (Arizona, 2002), p. 71.

⁴³ Ascham, *Toxophilus*, pp. 64-5, 69.

⁴⁴ Ascham, *Toxophilus*, p. 64. For a further discussion of Ascham's ideology, see V. Allen, 'Playing soldiers: tournaments and toxophily in late medieval England', in A.M. D'Arcy and A.J. Fletcher, *Studies in late medieval and early Renaissance texts, studies in honour of John Scattergood* (Dublin, 2005), pp. 35-82 (pp. 45-6).

⁴⁵ Ascham, *Toxophilus*, pp. 72, 93.

⁴⁶ See W.H. Stevenson (ed.), *Records of the borough of Nottingham, 2, 1399-1485* (Nottingham, 1885), pp. 330-1.

to the 'goods of their masters'. In comparison to journeymen and labourers, live-in servants had less access to ready money. Indentures show that apprentices commonly received bed and board and perhaps a small amount of pocket money in return for their service. In Coventry on 31 October 1494, for example, Richard Speight contracted to serve five years under William Bowyes and agreed to take a sum of 16d. per year.⁴⁷ In contrast to those who lived in, journeymen and labourers were paid a wage, lived separately from their employers and had no ties to them beyond the working day.⁴⁸ Resident employees not only had the greatest need to seek other means to support their gambling but also had the best opportunities to appropriate the goods of their masters. In the absence of a wage or many possessions of their own to bet with, it was their masters' goods that were closest to hand.

The Nottingham jurors voiced a triad of objections against the servants' activities. Firstly they were 'against the form of the Statute thereupon issued and provided'. This is a reference to the legislative framework against unlawful games outlined above. Secondly, they were 'to the grievous detriment of the aforesaid masters' and thirdly 'against the peace of our Lord the King'.⁴⁹ For these jurors, the issues of household governance and social order were the most important. The eight were presented for running badly-governed houses that directly threatened the order, discipline and economic wellbeing of masters' households. Indeed these disorderly houses were viewed as the antithesis of masters' well-governed residences. The maintenance of social order in a similar context was still a key consideration in Nottingham in 1496 when a 'spinster' named Joan Hunt was presented for having received servants 'with their masters' goods in her house at night time'. Jurors were particularly perturbed about the 'disorderly conduct' and 'grievous nuisance' that was caused, especially the servants' 'outcries' which were supposedly so disruptive that they prevented Joan's neighbours from sleeping.⁵⁰ Magistrates made a specific connection between the activities of young males and disorder.

⁴⁷ See M.D. Harris (ed.), *The Coventry Leet Book: or Mayor's Register, part 2*, EETS, OS, 135 (London, 1908), pp. 560-3 (p. 561).

⁴⁸ P.J.P. Goldberg, 'Masters and men in later medieval England', in D. Halliday (ed.), *Masculinity in medieval Europe* (New York, 1998), pp. 56-7.

⁴⁹ Stevenson (ed.), *Records of the borough of Nottingham*, 2, p. 331.

⁵⁰ W.H. Stevenson (ed.), *Records of the borough of Nottingham*, 3, 1485-1547 (Nottingham, 1885), p. 48.

The association made between young males and disturbances in these Nottingham cases is strengthened by the fact that the 'disorders' the jurors identify are stated as being nocturnal. This invites a contrast to be drawn between the servants' daily lives and their evening recreations. Their socialising is presented as occurring in the dark, behind closed doors and away from the watchful eyes of masters. This reinforces the way in which male servants' activities were thought to be deviant and representative of resistance to authority. This notion is supported by the fact that other notices of householders who hosted male servants made explicit linkages between the playing of unlawful games and resistance to labour, governance and authority amongst the young. A London ordinance of 1417 targeted inhabitants of the city who hosted 'sons, servants and apprentices together with the goods and chattels belonging to their parents and masters' in their houses because they encouraged young people to 'waste' these upon 'heinous sins ... and other most abominable deeds'.⁵¹ In 1475, jurors only a mile beyond Westminster in Fulham, Middlesex, expressed concern about how John Aleyn, Thomas Fuller and John, son of Roger Aleyn were 'accustomed commonly to play at dice and other illegal games and to walk about throughout the whole night and sleep in the day' so that 'they are unable to serve or labour when it is required of them'.⁵²

In the context of the economy becoming destabilised during the mid-Tudor crisis and undergoing another particularly troubled phase at the end of the sixteenth century, magistrates became more and more anxious about the harmful effects of unlawful games and were particularly keen to prevent them from being hosted.⁵³ Parliamentary legislation from 1541 declared: 'noe manner of p[er]son of what degree qualitie or condiction soever he or they be... shall for his or their gayne lucre or lyving, kepe have houlde occupie ex[er]cise or maynteyne any com[m]on house alley or place of bowlinge coytinge cloyse cayles halfe bowl tennys dysing tables or cardinge...'.⁵⁴ In 1566, Nottingham jurors drew upon this legislation when they presented one John Bate for not keeping good order in his house, permitting

⁵¹ H.T. Riley (ed.), *Memorials of London and London life in the XIIIth, XIVth and XVth centuries* (London, 1868), pp. 649-50.

⁵² McIntosh, *Controlling misbehaviour*, p. 101.

⁵³ McIntosh, *Controlling misbehaviour*, pp. 100-1.

⁵⁴ 33 Henry VIII, c.9 [1541-2], in Luders *et al.* (eds), *The statutes of the realm*, 3, p. 839.

unlawful games and the 'kypyng of men servaunttes in the nyghtt and daye'.⁵⁵ Magistrates punished Bate because they believed he led male servants astray by enticing them into his house during their time off at night and also during the day when they should have been on their masters' business. This was stated more precisely in 1589, when jurors at Hatfield, Hertfordshire presented an unlicensed alehouse keeper for permitting 'great disorder' to occur by 'keeping men's servants when they should have been about their masters' affairs and in the night time [away] from their masters' houses'.⁵⁶ In each of these instances, householders of both public and private residences faced magisterial retribution for encouraging young males to engage in activities that those in authority did not approve of and which violated what they deemed to be the boundaries of permissible behaviour.

Whilst the extent of adult involvement in the games played by the male servants in Nottingham is not made clear in the jurors' presentments, it is likely that whilst older people hosted, the activities described represent exclusively youthful peer socialising. The evidence from Nottingham indicates that there was no single adult response to young people. Griffiths identifies this in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and my analysis upholds his findings for the later fifteenth century.⁵⁷ It is apparent that some older people facilitated illicit youthful recreations, whilst others in authority objected. The cases also show how male servants in Nottingham seized the opportunity during their time off to escape the confines of their masters' houses and their masters' supervision so as to socialise with their peers.

Jurors only specifically presented the adult householders. They were especially concerned about individuals who encouraged male servants to engage in pursuits that encapsulated contemporary fears about the vices to which they were particularly susceptible. These adults, who the jurors probably felt should have known better, were blamed for being a bad influence on the young. That the servants who played the games are not mentioned in the presentments and remain anonymous should not undermine the idea that magistrates found their activities

⁵⁵ W.H. Stevenson (ed.), *Records of the borough of Nottingham, 4, 1547-1625* (Nottingham, 1889), p. 130. Bate was evidently a repeat offender because the jurors recorded that 'he haythe benne presenttyd afore and doythe nott mend'.

⁵⁶ McIntosh, *Controlling misbehaviour*, p. 110.

⁵⁷ See Griffiths, *Youth and authority*, pp. 111-22.

to be at variance with wider societal interests. Indeed, it was masters, not magistrates, who were responsible for the management and chastisement of their servants. A Coventry order of 1452 makes the masters' accountability in this respect evident. It states that 'any servant playing an illicit game, or betting, on feast days shall be imprisoned for 3 days and pay 4d. to the sheriffs and every master shall have the same penalty and pay 12d. to the sheriffs'.⁵⁸ Even so, the actions and behaviour of the servants was still the underlying concern of the Nottingham court. The magisterial perception was that their actions were intentionally antagonistic and delinquent.

From the perspective of the young men involved, a desire to act in an intentionally antagonistic and delinquent manner was probably not the reason why they chose to play 'dice, *carpae*, and other unlawful and prohibited games'. They would have been aware of the legislative framework against 'unlawful games' or the conditions of their indentures, so they would also have known that they were testing the rules in choosing to play such games. However, it could well have been the case that they gambled with one another and stayed up late to socialise together during their time off primarily because doing so gave them a chance to have fun alongside their peers. We can infer that most male servants preferred spending time with fellow servants at night at the expense of remaining in the company of their masters and going to their beds early. Peer socialisation gave them a sense of independence from their masters and helped to consolidate a sense of gendered and generational cohesiveness amongst them. That was probably the main attraction of these social activities, not an over-arching aspiration to act in a rebellious manner as the civic authorities supposed. The servants were effectively accused of challenging authority because magistrates and masters perceived groups of young men to be hostile and problematic and had imposed restrictions on them as a result. When young men chose to ignore prohibitions and play and gamble regardless, magistrates took this as evidence of their oppositional natures rather than acknowledging the possibility that they just wanted to enjoy themselves in the company of their friends.

⁵⁸ Harris (ed.), *Coventry Leet Book*, p. 271. For an explanation of the puritanical sentiments behind these orders, see P.J.P. Goldberg, 'Coventry's Lollard programme of 1492 and the making of Utopia', in R. Horrox and S. Rees Jones (eds), *Pragmatic utopias: ideals and communities, 1200-1630* (Cambridge, 2001), pp. 97-116.

Across the fourteenth, fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, legislation also categorised bowling as an 'unlawful' game for servants and apprentices. In January 1537 Nottingham burgesses appealed to their Mayor to forbid servants from bowling:

Awlso we desire Master Mere that he well cumand proclanachun to be made that no men's sarvantes be sufferd to bowle nother for ale nor sylver, nor other thynges, on payn of in presonment.⁵⁹

Once again the anxiety about bowling was that it encouraged servants to gamble, drink and waste both time and money in the process. Concerns about the detrimental effects of bowling did not focus only on younger men. In 1518, local officials in Coventry were commanded to 'suffer not poor craftsmen to use bowling there daily and weekly'.⁶⁰ The 1541 Act that forbade servants and apprentices from playing at bowls except at Christmas in the presence of their masters also prohibited *all* men from bowling in 'open places out of [their] garden or orcharde' under pain of a fine or imprisonment enforced by JPs and other local officials.⁶¹ Although bowling spanned a variety of age-groups across the social spectrum, the male servants in Nottingham seem to have played against each other for ale and money in peer groups.⁶² The very existence of the appeal from the burgesses to the Mayor suggests that they were particularly perturbed about male servants bowling. It was the civic authorities' attitudes towards activities that they deemed bold and defiant that generated tension and created social distance between young and old. For the male servants being targeted, however, the main attraction to the bowling and betting would not necessarily have been the fact that they had to disobey rules imposed by their elders in order to play. Rather, they could have just wanted to 'do their own thing'. The male servants may well have recognised that bowling was also a 'grown-up' game, played by men of all ages and statuses, which

⁵⁹ Stevenson (ed.), *Records of the borough of Nottingham*, 3, p. 374.

⁶⁰ McIntosh, *Controlling misbehaviour*, p. 112; Harris (ed.), *Coventry Leet Book*, p. 656.

⁶¹ 33 Henry VIII, c.9 [1541-2], in Luders *et al.* (eds), *The statutes of the realm*, 3, p. 840. This Act made more severe stipulations issued in 1495. See also 11 Henry VII, c.2 [1495], in Luders *et al.* (eds), *The statutes of the realm*, 2, p. 569.

⁶² See McIntosh, *Controlling misbehaviour*, p. 104. McIntosh argues that dramatic confirmation of the popularity of bowling amongst men comes from Castle Combe, Wiltshire, in 1570. The heading of a jurors' presentment from there reads 'these have played at bowls or stuball', after which follows 72 male names.

they wanted to be part of as they gambled and drank alongside their friends, irrespective of the consequences.

Whilst games and sports that involved gambling were contentious because most magistrates connected them to the loss of economic resources and the promotion of immorality, football was opposed because it was associated with the facilitation of social disturbance. Young men who played football were the source of generational tension in both London and York. The civic authorities in London banned young men from playing football in 1586. This ban was re-issued in 1590 after three journeymen were imprisoned for breaking windows and otherwise 'outrageously and riotously behaving themselves at football play in Cheapside', the principal street of the city. This indicates how at least some had disregarded the original proscription.⁶³ In February 1596, the city constables in York were ordered to present masters of servants 'as hereafter shall playe at foteball in the stretes so sone as they shall anye playe'.⁶⁴ Like the householders indicted in Nottingham in 1483 it was masters, not the servants themselves, who were reprimanded for allowing those under their charge to partake in such activities. Masters were threatened with punishment to persuade them not to permit football and were encouraged to restrict their servants' recreations accordingly. These examples reinforce the idea that magistrates regarded young males as rebellious and prone to fuelling disorder. This magisterial attitude would have furthered the gap between young men on the one hand and their masters and civic governors on the other.

It was a fundamental concern about disorder that prompted the Mercers' Company of London in 1513 to complain about the detriment that 'divers mennys apprentices ... greatly mysordered theymsef as well in spendyng gret Summes of money of theyre Maisters goods in Riott as wel uppon harlotes as at dyce, cardes and other unthryfty games as in their apparell'.⁶⁵ It is evident that guild members disapproved of the behaviour of the apprentices in their company, but the

⁶³ S. Rappaport, *Worlds within worlds: structures of life in sixteenth-century London* (Cambridge, 2002), p. 8.

⁶⁴ York, YCA, York House Book 31, f. 252r.

⁶⁵ Hanawalt, 'The Childe of Bristowe' and the making of middle-class adolescence', p. 167. See also L. Lyell and F.D. Watney (eds), *Acts of court of the Mercers' Company 1453-1527* (Cambridge, 1936), pp. 418-19.

reference to riot seems to have been exaggerated. On May Day 1517, however, a mob of about a thousand male apprentices rioted and attacked aliens who lived in London. This happened despite the fact that Aldermen had imposed a nine o'clock curfew to come into force in the city that evening, in an attempt to prevent precisely the sort of disorder that prevailed.⁶⁶ In the aftermath of the event, Henry VIII demanded that action be taken against the 'wild, indiscreet parsones named to be menes apprentices and menes servauntes of this citie' who got the blame for the disorder.⁶⁷ Given that the young men were disciplined, it is apparent that those in authority interpreted their actions as having been intentionally antagonistic. In breaking the curfew, the young men certainly pushed the boundaries of permissible behaviour. However, this was not the main aim of their riot. It is important to note that when they went on the rampage and caused mayhem, their primary target was aliens living in the city, not the civic governors. Elsewhere, some young men seem to have been more oppositional on occasion. When magistrates in York in 1554 named 'Taner, sarvaunt to William Pullayn of Skotton' as the 'chief offender' in 'the riotouse breking [of] the glase wyndos in this Citie', they accused him and his companions, who were likely fellow male servants, of wilful damage and disorder.⁶⁸ Since the window-breaking occurred during the Marian revival of Catholicism and more specifically in the year in which the Mystery plays were re-introduced in York by a devotionally conservative city council, it is probable that their destructiveness emanated from a desire to protest collectively against what they regarded as idolatrous images. From the charges laid against Taner it is clear that these actions were the cause of discord between young men and those elders with civic authority.

Tensions between the generations seem to have heightened around Shrovetide, which Hutton describes as the 'biggest and wildest' festival of early spring. Given that it preceded the long fast of Lent, it was effectively the chance for enjoyment before the numerous restrictions of the Lenten period set in.⁶⁹ Civic authorities were concerned that young males had the greatest potential to act rebelliously at this time. In an attempt to avoid 'great disorders, uncomely and dangerous behaviours' during Shrovetide in 1578, the Mayor and Aldermen in London

⁶⁶ Rappaport, *Worlds within worlds*, pp. 15-17.

⁶⁷ Hanawalt, 'The Childe of Bristowe' and the making of middle-class adolescence', p. 167.

⁶⁸ Raine (ed.), *York civic records*, 5, p. 118.

⁶⁹ R. Hutton, *Stations of the sun: a history of the ritual year in Britain* (Oxford, 1996), ch. 15 (p. 151).

banned assemblies of young men.⁷⁰ Those who played football during this festival were also a cause for particular magisterial anxiety because participation in this sport was believed to promote misrule and misbehaviour amongst young men.⁷¹ Another warning was issued to householders at Shrovetide in 1596, commanding that they keep their apprentices and journeymen indoors.⁷² The re-issuing of such orders suggests that young men repeatedly tested the rules that magistrates and masters sought to establish. Accordingly, it seems that during Shrovetide – a carnivalesque festival that had traditionally authorised challenge to the normal order of society – opposition was perhaps more than just an accidental feature of the activities of young men.

Moralists and Misbehaviour

Tensions between the generations also arose because contemporary perceptions about the prevalence of pride and vanity amongst the young were a source of friction between older and younger people in the pre-modern era. As I have shown in Chapter Four, an interest in fashion and appearance was identified as a predominantly youthful preoccupation at this time. Perkin Reveller, the apprentice whom Chaucer presents as a foppish individual is described as:

Broun as a berye, a propre short felawe,
With lokkes blake, ykembd ful fetisly.⁷³

In the mid-fifteenth century, Peter Idley encouraged his son to exercise moderation in dress. In his *Instructions*, Idley warns the boy to ‘be as pure as floure taken fro the bran / in all thy clothyng and all [th]yn arraye / but goo not euer too nyce and gay’.⁷⁴ We can recall that young men are universally criticised for their vanity in the sermon written for the Boy Bishop at St Paul’s Cathedral in London in the late fifteenth century.⁷⁵ The notion that conflict between the generations could arise over the issue of youthful vanity is reinforced by the writings of Alexander

⁷⁰ Rappaport, *Worlds within worlds*, p. 9.

⁷¹ Hutton, *Stations of the sun*, pp. 154-6.

⁷² Rappaport, *Worlds within worlds*, p. 9.

⁷³ Chaucer, ‘Cook’s Tale’, in Benson (ed.), *The Riverside Chaucer*, p. 85, lines 4368-9.

⁷⁴ C. D’Evelyn (ed.), *Peter Idley’s instructions to his son* (London, 1935), pp. 82-3.

⁷⁵ E.F. Rimbault (ed.), *Two sermons preached by the boy bishop at St Paul’s and at Gloucester* (London, 1875), pp. 10-11.

Barclay. Barclay's text, which appeared in England in 1508, is an adaptation of Sebastian Brant's *Ship of Fools*, published in German in 1494.⁷⁶ In Barclay's narrative, young men are reproached because of their inclination for 'newe fassion and disguised garments'. There is a vivid description of how 'younge Jentylmen' go around 'ful wantonly in dissolute aray ... some theyr neckes charged with cholers, and chaynes / as golden withttthes: theyr fyngers ful of rynges / theyr neckes naked almost unto the raynes / theyr sleues blasinge lyke to a Carnys wynges'. Barclay was primarily concerned about the social and financial implications and even accused young men of theft and robbery in their quest to maintain their displays of finery.⁷⁷ As such, his discussion about fashion and appearance was used to render their behaviour contrary.

That young males persisted in their pursuit of keeping up appearances irrespective of their elders' disapproval in social practice is clear from an ordinance of the Merchants' Guild in Newcastle-upon-Tyne in 1554. Guild members lamented how young males in their Company wore 'garded cotes, jagged hose lyned with silke ... cutt shoes, berds' and 'daggers ... crosse overthwarte their backs' and accused them of behaving like 'rageng ruffians' instead of 'honest apprentizes'.⁷⁸ The ordinance explicitly portrays the young males as delinquent individuals. Despite their preoccupation with fashion being perceived as antagonistic to adult interests, it is more likely that from the apprentices' perspective, taking pride in their appearance was a means of gaining approval from their peers as opposed to a way to rile their masters. I would argue that the social distance which arose between the younger and older members of this Company was more to do with adult perceptions about the apprentices being 'ruffians' than it was the main motive of those young men who seem to have just shared a fairly harmless interest in their clothing and how they looked.

A female preoccupation with fashion and appearance is also considered unfavourably in *How the Good Wife Taught her Daughter*.⁷⁹ The Good Wife warns

⁷⁶ T.H. Jamieson (ed.), *The Ship of Fools translated by Alexander Barclay*, 1 (Edinburgh, 1874), p. xxxviii.

⁷⁷ See Jamieson (ed.), *The Ship of Fools*, pp. 36-7.

⁷⁸ Goldberg, 'Masters and men', pp. 69-70. See also J.R. Boyle (ed.), *Extracts from the records of the merchant adventurers of Newcastle-Upon-Tyne*, I, Surtees Society, 93 (1985), pp. 20-1.

⁷⁹ As I have discussed earlier, the 'Good Wife' narrative originated around the mid-fourteenth century but continued to circulate in England into the sixteenth century.

her daughter neither to take excessive pride in her appearance nor to covet expensive clothing for fear of her losing faith and bringing shame upon herself:

Loke thou were no ryche robys,
Ne counterfyte thou no ladys;
For myche schame do them betyde,
That lese ther worschipe thorow ther pride.⁸⁰

Young women's dress is also targeted in Barclay's text. It describes young females in overtly sexualised terms with 'peaks set a loft' and warns that revealing clothing could be taken to signify loose morals. The function of female fashion is explained using the analogy of an alehouse sign: 'By the ale stake knowe we the ale hous / and euery Inne is knowen by the sygne / so a lewde woman and a lecherous / is knowen by hir clothis, be they cors or fine / folowyng newe fassyons, not graunted by doctryne ...'. Barclay was most uneasy about the connection between female clothing and sex. Like their male counterparts, young women were considered particularly prone to the vice of pride.⁸¹ As I have shown, correspondence between Dorothy Plumpton and Anne Bassett and their respective sets of parents suggests that in social practice, at least some young aristocratic women kept up with current fashions, were very anxious about their appearance, and were keen to achieve peer approval of it.⁸²

Another reason young people attracted the wrath of moral commentators was because they were believed to be susceptible to dancing profanely together. In the mid-fifteenth century, Peter Idley condemned young people who danced on holy ground using the illustrative 'tale of the sacrilegious carollers'. This narrative is about twelve young folk, a mixture of both males and females, who defied a priest. The young people are shown to have disobeyed 'dauncyd abou[gh]t [th]e chyrch [y]erd / tyll matins was fynysshed' and are eventually punished by death for their improper behaviour during divine service. The tale is intended to warn

⁸⁰ 'How the Good Wife Taught Her Daughter' in G. Shuffelton (ed.), *Codex Ashmole 61: a compilation of popular Middle English verse* (Kalamazoo, 2008), lines 119-22.

⁸¹ Jamieson (ed.), *The Ship of Fools*, p. 38.

⁸² T. Stapleton (ed.), *The Plumpton correspondence*, Camden Society, OS, 4 (1839), pp. 202-3, letter 165: Dorothy Plumpton to her father, Sir Robert Plumpton [undated, possibly circa 18 May 1504]; M. St. Clare Byrne (ed.), *The Lisle letters*, 3 (Chicago, 1981), pp. 133, 142-3, 149-51.

the young against the temptation to 'iape in chyrch or in any holy place'.⁸³ It seems to have been based on the premise of an adult assumption that when they assembled they would misbehave. This notion is also encapsulated in Barclay's depiction of the behaviour of young males in church as somewhat rebellious in his edition of *The Ship of Fools*. He complains how:

theyr lewde sounde doth the churche fyll ... some gygyll and lawghe and some on maydens stare ... as for the servyce they have small force or care ... some with theyr slyppers to and fro doth prance / clappyng with their helys in church and in quere / so that good people can nat the seruyce here.⁸⁴

The views which Barclay expounded about dancing and revelling in church in the early sixteenth century are comparable to, but more extreme than, those voiced by Idley. In Barclay's text, the youthful follies of 'lepynges and dauncis' are acknowledged to be of great concern because of their fundamental association with 'carnall lust'. Such exuberant youthful dancing is blamed for promoting 'pryde, fowle lust and lecherye' and maintaining 'in yonge hertis the vyle synne of rybawdry'. According to the proscriptions issued, 'maydes' and 'younge men' were believed to be equally inclined to succumb to its negative effects of 'great mysgouernaunce' and 'worke vnprofytable'.⁸⁵

Moralistic writers regarded young people as being particularly prone to certain vices that they felt warranted paternalistic treatment and there is evidence to show that more restrictive attitudes towards young people and their social activities emerged during the Reformation era. Reformed ideology put much more emphasis of the duty of the young to 'Honour thy father and thy mother' and obey their elders. Reformers also adhered to the doctrine of Original Sin, which suggested that the young were inherently inclined to behave badly unless firmly corrected. Zealous Protestants made the implantation of faith in the young a top priority and were particularly concerned about the spiritual welfare of young people.⁸⁶ Since they challenged youthful recreations that were associated with

⁸³ D'Evelyn (ed.), *Idley's instructions*, pp. 207-10.

⁸⁴ Jamieson (ed.), *The Ship of Fools*, pp. 221-2.

⁸⁵ Jamieson (ed.), *The Ship of Fools*, pp. 291-5.

⁸⁶ See P. Tudor, 'Religious instruction for children and adolescents in the early English Reformation', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 35:3 (1984), p. 393; K. Sather, 'Sixteenth and

Catholic or pagan practices and advocated the suppression of these 'ungodly' pursuits, it is apparent that their campaign had a firmly generational character.⁸⁷ In the later sixteenth century, the concerns of moralists and magistrates were magnified further by the negative effects of demographic pressure, as well as the economic instability caused by the financial cost of wars with France and Spain and the price inflation and increases in taxation that accompanied them.⁸⁸ As I have discussed earlier, anxieties about the depletion of local parish relief funds increased contemporary fears about the problem of illegitimate children and the threat they posed to social order.⁸⁹ Adults in authority became less tolerant of pre-marital sex and illegitimate pregnancies amongst the young and were harsher in their approach towards activities that they believed promoted such things.⁹⁰

Consequently, the desire to prevent young men and women dancing together during May-time – and to thereby suppress folk traditions that were essentially pagan in the process – became more prevalent from the mid-sixteenth century. Whereas in the earlier period moralistic authors like Peter Idley opposed irreverent types of youthful dancing because they believed it encouraged the young to misbehave, those in the Reformation era were more explicitly concerned about young people dancing together and its connections to lust, pre-marital sexual activity, pregnancy and the inculcation of other such 'devilish' practices.⁹¹ Evidence of these more restrictive attitudes is found in John Northbrooke's *Treatise* (1577). Northbrooke used a dialogue between the personifications of 'Youth' and 'Age' to contrast the follies of the former with the wisdom of the latter

seventeenth century child-rearing: a matter of discipline', *Journal of Social History*, 22:4 (1989), p. 736.

⁸⁷ See R. Hutton, *The rise and fall of merry England* (Oxford, 1994), p. 111; P. Collinson, *The birthpangs of Protestant England: religious and cultural change in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries* (Basingstoke, 1988), p. 99; M. Ingram, 'From Reformation to toleration: popular religious cultures in England, 1540-1690', in T. Harris (ed.), *Popular culture in England, c.1500-1850* (Basingstoke, 1995), pp. 97-9; B. Reay, 'Popular religion', in B. Reay (ed.), *Popular culture in seventeenth-century England* (London, 1985), pp. 105, 107; D. Underdown, *Revel, riot and rebellion: popular politics and culture in England, 1603-1660* (Oxford, 1985), p. 48; R.W. Malcolmson, *Popular recreations in English society, 1700-1850* (Cambridge, 1973), pp. 6-10. Cf. a discussion of the late fifteenth century in Goldberg, 'Coventry's 'Lollard' programme of 1492', pp. 97-116.

⁸⁸ Goldberg, *Medieval England*, pp. 206, 213; Wrightson, *Earthly necessities*, p. 121.

⁸⁹ McIntosh, *Controlling misbehaviour*, p. 3.

⁹⁰ E.J. Carlson, *Marriage and the English Reformation* (Oxford, 1994), p. 132.

⁹¹ See F.J. Furnivall (ed.), *Philip Stubbes's anatomy of the abuses in England in Shakespeare's youth c.1583, part I* (London, 1877), pp. 83-4; G. Babington, *The Ten Commandments* (London, 1588), pp. 318-21. In 1588, Bishop Babington fuelled opposition to dancing, especially amongst young women. He also expounded the idea that dancing was an enticement to whoredom 'especially in a maide'. He employed satanic imagery to reinforce this point as follows: 'It is a strange iugling, when wee thinke the maide doth daunce, and it is not so, but the deuill in her, or by her'.

and to polarise the interests of younger and older people. This *Treatise* condemns dancing amongst the young as a 'wicked' exercise because of its tendency to inflame 'filthie concupiscence and lust' between young men and women.⁹² It attributes dancing with the loss of female virginity and the promotion of illegitimate pregnancies which it is implicit would have ended up as a financial drain on the parish. 'Age' declares:

Through this dauncing many maydens haue bene vnmaydened, whereby I may saye, it is the storehouse and nurserie of Bastardie ...⁹³

Northbrooke's vitriol against dancing was age-based. Adults had a duty, Northbrooke argued, to protect the young from its perils.⁹⁴ In 1581, Thomas Lovell reiterated concerns about the connection between young people dancing and vice. Like Northbrooke, Lovell opposed dancing as an 'antichristian' exercise and 'filthie sporte' that he believed promoted 'vnchaste behaueour' and 'whoredome' and was prone to leading young men and women 'hedlong vnto hel'. He even disapproved of the young dancing as a means to raise parish funds, because he exclaimed that: 'sinne may at no time well be vsed'.⁹⁵ As I have discussed in Chapter Four, young people in various urban locations including Bristol and Reading had been actively involved in dances to raise parish funds in the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries.⁹⁶ However, it is clear that by the Elizabethan era, activities such as these faced opposition. Philip Stubbes was another moralistic author who opposed dances and other May-time revels amongst 'all the yung men and maides' who participated in Elizabethan communities.⁹⁷

⁹² J. Northbrooke, *Spiritus est vicarius Christi in terra. A treatise wherein dicing, dauncing, vaine plaies or enterludes with other idle pastimes, &c. commonly used on the Sabboth day, are reprooued, by the authoritie of the worde of God and ancient writers* (London, 1577), p. 113.

⁹³ Northbrooke, *A treatise etc.*, pp. 139-40.

⁹⁴ Northbrooke, *A treatise etc.*, p. 142. Northbrooke believed it was essential for magistrates and rulers to cut down the 'wicked vice' of dancing and to set sharp punishments for those who continued engaging in it, so that 'God may be glorified and sinne abandoned'.

⁹⁵ T. Lovell, *Dancing and minstrelsie* (London, 1581), EEBO, images 17, 25.

⁹⁶ York, BI, CP.F.246; P.J.P. Goldberg (ed. and trans.), *Women in England c.1275-1525* (Manchester, 1995), p. 262. See also B.R. Masters and E. Ralph (eds), *The church book of St Ewen's Bristol 1454-1584*, Bristol and Gloucestershire Archaeological Society, 6 (1967), pp. 68, 77; J.C. Cox, *Churchwardens' accounts from the fourteenth century to the close of the seventeenth century* (London, 1913), pp. 66-7, 282.

⁹⁷ Furnivall (ed.), *Philip Stubbes's anatomy of abuses*, p. 149.

In social practice, perceptions about the connection between the young congregating and inciting conflict with their elders had a detrimental effect on youthful activities in at least some localities. Indeed, when Edward VI's regime outlawed holy days, processions and games the effect on young people was significant. Brigden notes that in 1547, many 'mennes servantes' were punished for assembling in a May-game and in 1549, masters were commanded to keep 'servauntes and youth' from joining May-games, interludes or gatherings on holy days.⁹⁸ It is evident that magistrates were suspicious of assemblies of the young. A comparable fear about misrule was likely also the main reason why Archbishop Grindal of York imposed the following injunction on the laity in 1574:

Item that the minster and churchwardens shall not suffer any lords of misrule or somer lords, or laydes, or any disguised persone or others in Christmasse or at Maye games or anye mistrels morice dauncers or others at Rishebearinges or at anye other tymes to come unreverentlye into anye churche or chappell or churcheyard and there daunce or playe anye unseemelye partes with scoffes ieastes wanton gestures or rybaulde talke namely in the tyme of divine service or of anye sermon.⁹⁹

Grindal wanted to prevent the profanation of the Sabbath and to avoid social disorder. Such prohibitions – alongside similar sentiments expounded at parochial level by radical Protestant preachers and members of the congregation – functioned to gradually erode popular customs and traditions in parishes in which the young had once had a key role.¹⁰⁰ By the late sixteenth century, activities that they had previously been free to enjoy had become a source of tension.¹⁰¹ This is further emphasised by the fact that in 1598, John Stow noted with nostalgic regret how the pastimes of his youth – which included dancing, shooting, wrestling, casting the stone, and watching maidens play music and dancing for garlands before their masters and mistresses – were 'being now suppressed'.¹⁰²

⁹⁸ Brigden, 'Youth and the English Reformation', p. 91.

⁹⁹ J.S. Purvis (ed.), *Tudor parish documents of the diocese of York* (Cambridge, 1948), pp. 160-1.

¹⁰⁰ M. Ingram, 'Who killed Robin Hood? Transformations in popular culture', in S. Doran and N.L. Jones (eds), *The Elizabethan world* (Abingdon, 2011), p. 474; Hutton, *Stations of the sun*, pp. 252-4.

¹⁰¹ See Walsham, 'The reformation of the generations', pp. 93-121 for a further exploration of the generational effects of the Reformation.

¹⁰² J. Stow, *Survey of London* (London, 1598), pp. 91-9.

I have suggested in Chapter Four that activities that were organised, managed and supervised by adults, such as summer-games and dancing to raise funds, were predominantly significant for buttressing a sense of youthful identity rather than providing young people with opportunities to act with agency or independence. I would argue that the concerns of moralist reformers were based more on over-exaggerated radical perceptions and fears instead of the social practice. It might have been beneficial for zealous Protestants to present young people's activities as antagonistic in order to make their ideologies and instructions seem more resonant, so it is important to identify that they may have greatly overstated the ability of the young to use such activities to act in a deviant manner to suit their own purposes. Even if this was the case, it is still clear that moralistic writers treated youthful activities as undesirable and at variance with their own interests and the wider interests of society. This provided the basis for the promotion of conflict between younger and older people.

Friction between the generations over the behaviour of the young in a church setting is also apparent from the sermon written for the Boy Bishop at Gloucester Cathedral in 1558 which depicts young men as rebellious.¹⁰³ The preacher was required to 'recall' with shame 'how boyyshly' he and his companions once acted in church. The sermon also emphasises the 'corruptyd' activities of young males by claiming that they routinely displayed attitudes that brought them into direct confrontation with adults. Young males are described as a collective group 'so sone ripe, and so sone rottyn ... so late innocentes, and so sone lewd lads'. Urban boys in particular were accused of displaying ill-manners, running about the 'open streates' with one another, learning how to 'curse bitterly, to blaspheme, to lye, to moke ther elders, to nykname ther sequalls' and refusing 'to knowledge no dutie to ther betters'.¹⁰⁴ These portrayals had negative connotations, associating assemblies of young males with disrespectful attitudes towards adults, delinquency and antisocial behaviour.¹⁰⁵ In social practice, young males who

¹⁰³ S. Shahar, 'The boy bishop's feast: a case-study in church attitudes towards children in the high and late Middle Ages', in D. Wood (ed.), *The church and childhood: studies in church history*, 31 (Oxford, 1994), p. 250. See also Rimbault (ed.), *Two sermons preached by the boy bishop*, pp. xxxv-xxxvi.

¹⁰⁴ Rimbault (ed.), *Two sermons preached by the boy bishop*, pp. 23-5.

¹⁰⁵ D.A. Pardini, R. Loeber and M. Stouthamer-Loeber, 'Developmental shifts in parent and peer influences on boys' beliefs about delinquent behaviour', *Journal of Research on Adolescence*, 15:3 (2005), pp. 300, 317.

misbehaved at church stirred up tensions between themselves and older clergy. This was apparent when John Laybourn, aged twenty, and his companion William Marley brought a crow into the church in Wolsingham, County Durham, on Christmas Eve in 1569 and made it fly around as they waited for the service to begin. The pair were verbally reprimanded by the minister for doing so, but responded defiantly. Whilst Laybourn answered 'It is well if ye doo no worse', Marley 'willed the minister to go to service and the crow should not trouble him'.¹⁰⁶ This got the young men into further trouble with the church authorities as they were brought before an ecclesiastical court at Durham, accused of misconduct and forced to account for their actions.

Tensions over Taverns

Tensions between the generations also arose over youthful social drinking. Didactic literature emphasises how adults disapproved and feared young men and young women attending taverns and, as I will soon demonstrate, these ideas also formed the basis of adult perceptions of the connection between social drinking and oppositional youthful behaviour in social practice. Moralistic authors frequently instructed young men to avoid the perils of taverns and alehouses. Characters who were presented unfavourably in such narratives were often closely linked to these institutions. Whilst Perkin Reveller 'loved bet the taverne than the shoppe', Jak Hare routinely made 'his offeryng at the ale stakes'.¹⁰⁷ In a debate between 'Resoun and Conscience' and 'Lust' over the fate of the twenty-year-old man in *The Mirror of the Periods of Man's Life* (circa 1430), the tavern is described as the place where 'wilde felawis to-gidere drawe', making women 'myrie cheere ... al ny[gh]t til [th]e day do dawe'. It is portrayed as the location that encouraged young men to waste time and money which should have been more usefully directed towards their 'leernynge' instead.¹⁰⁸ In the MS Lambeth 853 version of *How the Wise Man Taught His Son*, the Wise Man entreats his son to avoid the tavern, warning that 'þi wittis it wole ouer lede...and bringe þee into greet

¹⁰⁶ J. Raine (ed.), *Depositions and other ecclesiastical proceedings from the courts of Durham, extending from 1311 to the reign of Elizabeth*, Surtees Society, 21 (1845), pp. 231-2.

¹⁰⁷ Chaucer, 'Cook's Tale', in Benson (ed.), *The Riverside Chaucer*, p. 85, line 4376; 'A Ballade of Jak Hare', in MacCracken (ed.), *The minor poems of Lydgate*, p. 447.

¹⁰⁸ 'The Mirror of the Periods of Man's Life', in F.J. Furnivall (ed.), *Hymns to the Virgin and Christ, the Parliament of Devils and other religious poems* (London, 1867), pp. 60-1.

myscheef'. He also urges him to 'go to bedde bi tyme, & wynke' rather than 'to sitte & drink out of tyme'.¹⁰⁹ In his *Instructions*, Idley reiterates virtually identical ideas.¹¹⁰ He advises his son: 'In tauernes also not clappe ne clater'. Idley seems to have expected him to be there. It seems somewhat contradictory that he subsequently tells the young man to flee the vices of 'ffelawship of women and tauernes' and 'be not idle'.¹¹¹ This is repeated verbatim to emphasise its negative economic effects: 'flee Tauernes and felawshippe of women / ffor [th]at maketh light in [th]e purse with som men'. Idley was adamant that if his son avoided the tavern, he would escape the lure of drunkenness, lewdness, prostitution and financial ruin.¹¹² Apprentices like John Harietsham and John Harbard were also bound to 'not frequent taverns' as part of the conditions of the lengthy terms of service that they agreed to in their indentures.¹¹³

Young women were also advised against patronising public houses by their parents and employers. We saw earlier that when Katherine Nougale became apprenticed to a London 'silkthrowster' in 1392, she did so on the condition that she would not frequent a tavern unless she had to be there on the business of her mistress.¹¹⁴ For the mother in the MS Lambeth 853 version of *How the Good Wife Taught Her Daughter* (circa 1430) concerns about finances and reputation likewise prevail.¹¹⁵ Whilst the Good Wife initially warns her daughter: 'Go þou not ... to þe tauerne þi worschip to felle / For þei þat tauernes haunten, Her þrifte þei adaunten', the advice that follows is remarkably inconsistent:

And if þou be in place þere good ale is on lofte,
 Wheþer þat þou serue þerof, or þat þou sitte softe,
 Mesurabli þou take þer-of þat þou falle in no blame,
 For if þou be ofte drunke, it falleth þee to schame;
 For þo þat ben ofte drunke,

¹⁰⁹ 'How the Wise Man Tauzt His Son', in F.J. Furnivall (ed.), *The Babees' Book etc.*, p. 50, lines 57-72.

¹¹⁰ D'Evelyn (ed.), *Idley's instructions*, p. 58.

¹¹¹ D'Evelyn (ed.), *Idley's instructions*, pp. 82-3.

¹¹² D'Evelyn (ed.), *Idley's instructions*, p. 87.

¹¹³ C.M. Clode, *The early history of the guild of merchant taylors of the fraternity of St John the Baptist, London* (London, 1888), p. 344; M. Bateson (ed.), *Records of the borough of Leicester*, 3, (Cambridge, 1905), p. 29.

¹¹⁴ LMA, Corporation of London Miscellaneous Manuscript 186.003.

¹¹⁵ M.L. Bailey, *Socialising the child in late medieval England, c.1400-1600* (Suffolk, 2012), pp. 59-60; F. Riddy, 'Mother knows best: reading social change in a courtesy text', *Speculum*, 71:1 (1996), pp. 70-4.

Prift is from hem sunke...¹¹⁶

Although the mother would prefer her daughter to remain at home doing her housework, there is no suggestion that the young woman should not be in public houses, just that she should not become drunk and behave shamefully there. *The Thewis of Good Women* (circa 1450) is more extreme in its command for young women to: 'Fra drunkyne folk and tawarne flee'.¹¹⁷ Furthermore, the author of the later version of the *Good Wife* poem (circa 1480s) – found in the Oxford, Bodleian MS Ashmole 61 – seems to have been even more opposed to females in taverns.¹¹⁸ The tone of this version of the text is much more hostile than the previous. The mother sharply commands her daughter: 'Ne go thou nought to the taverne' and warns: 'Forsake thou hym that taverne haunteth / And all the vices that therinne bethe'.¹¹⁹ No longer was the girl expected to be working or drinking in public. Although the ideas about drunkenness are very similar to the earlier edition, no location is specified when she advises:

Wherever thou come at ale or wyne,
Take not to myche, and leve be tyme,
For mesure therinne, it is no herme,
And drounke to be, it is thi schame.¹²⁰

The reason attitudes became stricter towards young women in the later fifteenth century version of the poem may well be because – as Goldberg and McSheffrey have argued and I have discussed earlier – tighter controls came to be exercised by parents over their daughters' marriages at this time.¹²¹ This meant that the desire of parents or those acting *in loco parentis* to protect the reputations of the young women under their care would also have been intensified. The existence of such

¹¹⁶ 'How the Good Wiff Tau3te Hir Dou3tir', in F.J. Furnivall (ed.), *The Babees' Book, Aristotle's ABC, Urbanitatis, Stans Puer ad Mensam, The Lvtill Childrenes Lvtill Boke, The Bokes of Nurture of Hugh Rhodes and John Russell, Wynkyn de Worde's Boke of Keruyng, The Booke of Demeanor, The Boke of Curtasye, Seager's Schoole of Vertue, &c. &c. with some French and Latin poems on like subjects, and some forewords on education in early England*, EETS, OS, 32 (1868), p. 39, lines 66-79.

¹¹⁷ J.R. Lumby (ed.), *Ratis Raving and other moral and religious pieces in prose and verse*, EETS, OS, 43 (1870), p. 107.

¹¹⁸ See Bailey, *Socialising the child*, p. 64, note 85. Bailey explores more fully the variations in the 'Good Wife' tradition of courtesy literature for girls on pp. 58-72 and in Appendix A of her text. The dates cited for each of these poems are estimates made by Bailey.

¹¹⁹ 'How the Good Wife Taught Her Daughter' in Shuffelton (ed.), *Codex Ashmole 61*, lines 65-8.

¹²⁰ 'How the Good Wife Taught Her Daughter' in Shuffelton (ed.), *Codex Ashmole 61*, lines 69-72.

¹²¹ See P.J.P. Goldberg, *Women, work and life cycle in a medieval economy: women in York and Yorkshire, c.1300-1520* (Oxford, 1992), ch. 5; S. McSheffrey, *Marriage, sex and civic culture in late medieval London* (Philadelphia, 2006), pp. 7-9.

sentiments had the potential to inflame conflict between the generations. On the one hand, young women who were keen to go drinking with mixed-gender groups of friends could have been forbidden from doing so. On the other hand, those who we know were out socialising in taverns in the late fifteenth century – like Elen Gray or Isabella Laurens – may well have been there without the knowledge or consent of their parents or guardians.¹²²

Moralists and magistrates became increasingly concerned about the effects of social drinking in the sixteenth century. As I have noted above, anxieties were magnified because of the unstable nature of the economy and the demographic pressure that society was under.¹²³ Many young people were faced with unemployment as a consequence and this generated further fears about social harmony.¹²⁴ The prevalence of the alehouse meant that in social practice moralists and magistrates became particularly perturbed about young men who had free time on their hands resorting to these establishments. McIntosh argues that between 1370 and 1600 the number of alehouses in England increased significantly.¹²⁵ Hailwood suggests that there were around 24,000 alehouses in England by 1577, a ratio of around 1 to every 142 inhabitants and that in the fifty years that ensued they doubled in number to around 50,000.¹²⁶ Jessica Warner attributes the emergence of a more restrictive attitude to juvenile social drinking from the mid-1550s onwards to changes in the supply and value of young people's labour. She argues that generational tensions prevailed when economic times were hard. Under these circumstances, Warner believes that adults viewed the young as a particular threat because their propensity for idleness and disorder became most pronounced when they found themselves at a loose end.¹²⁷ These fears were encapsulated by Arthur Dent who in 1601 complained about the 'many lay losels and lurkish youths both in towns and villages which do nothing all the day long but walk the streets, sit upon the stalls and frequent taverns and alehouses'.¹²⁸

¹²² S. McSheffrey, *Love and marriage in late medieval London* (Kalamazoo, 1995), pp. 45-6 case 5: William Forster v. Ellen Grey [23 September 1472]; Goldberg, *Women, work and life cycle*, p. 248.

¹²³ Goldberg, *Medieval England*, pp. 206, 213; Wrightson, *Earthly necessities*, p. 121.

¹²⁴ Wrightson, *Earthly necessities*, pp. 148, 167.

¹²⁵ McIntosh, *Controlling misbehaviour*, pp. 74-5.

¹²⁶ M. Hailwood, *Alehouses and good fellowship in early modern England* (Woodbridge, 2014), p. 3.

¹²⁷ J. Warner, 'Historical perspectives on the shifting boundaries around youth and alcohol. The example of pre-industrial England, 1350-1750', *Addiction*, 93:5 (1998), p. 645.

¹²⁸ Clark, *The English alehouse*, p. 127.

Northbrooke used the dialogue between 'Youth' and 'Age' in his *Treatise*, which appeared in this socio-economic context in 1577, to expound radical views against the alehouse. He emphasised its potential to harm the young by building upon an old medieval trope that contrasted the alehouse with the church. In the fourteenth-century *Book of Vices and Virtues*, it had been described as the 'deueles scole house' and devil's 'owne chapel'. *Dives and Pauper* (circa 1405) also blamed the tavern for drawing people away from 'holy chirche ... messe ... matynys' and 'Goddis seruisse'.¹²⁹ Northbrooke developed this ideology. As a fervent reformer he was chiefly opposed to taverns because of their propensity to distract people from divine services on the Sabbath. He believed that Sunday was a day that belonged to the Lord, upon which no worldly activities should be permitted. More specifically, Northbrooke was concerned about the young acting to the 'disglorie' of Christ's name because of their 'swearings, drunkennesse, ydlenesse, violating the Sabboth daye, neglecting to heare his worde, and to receiue his sacraments'. He entreated them to 'resort to the house of prayer with the godlye congregation' instead.¹³⁰ Northbrooke presented the alehouse as a contra-patriarchal institution – effectively a den of vice that disrupted proper patterns of order and authority in society.¹³¹ These sorts of adverse perceptions seem to have been shared by magistrates in social practice. In 1603 the council in York recorded how:

yonge men ... have heretofore neglected ther duetyes towardes god in not resortinge to devyne service and sermons on the Saboath daies both in the forenones and afternones but have contynewed idleye sittinge at ther doores in the strete or walkinge or playinge up and downe the strete or resortinge unto ailehowses and tavernes to the great dishonor of god, contempt of his gospell and to the great greif of the godlie and better sorte of people...¹³²

Moralists and magistrates clearly imagined that young men were intentionally antagonistic when they decided to play in the streets and resort to alehouses and

¹²⁹ See W.N. Francis (ed.), *The book of vices and virtues*, EETS, 217 (1942), p. 153; P.H. Barnum (ed.), *Dives and Pauper*, EETS, 275 (1976), p. 189.

¹³⁰ Northbrooke, *A treatise etc.*, p. 2. Northbrooke insisted that the path to righteousness through Christ could not be found in the alehouse.

¹³¹ Griffiths, *Youth and authority*, pp. 188, 200-2; Malcolmson, *Popular recreations in English society*, p. 8.

¹³² York, YCA, York House Book 32, f. 309r.

taverns. Conversely, for the young men who made such decisions, they may simply have done so in order to spend time with groups of their friends.

We know that social drinking was a popular means for young men to interact with their peers and even to facilitate courtships on those occasions when young women joined them. One such is the previously noticed example of Thomas Wulley and Margaret Isot. We can recall how a matrimonial dispute heard before the London Consistory revealed that one evening in 1471, Thomas and Margaret had gone to the public house run by John and Joan Cracow in St John's Street in the city 'as they had many times before, for the sake of drinking'.¹³³ The constable and other parish officers subsequently found the pair in a state of undress and alone together in the basement there. Meeting under the auspices of drinking together afforded this young couple the opportunity to engage in a sexual relationship. If they wanted to be together then a public house appears to have given them the chance to escape parental supervision in a neutral location. Until they were discovered, they were able to act with a good degree of agency and independence. However, their behaviour was deemed so improper and offensive by the magisterial elements in the city that Thomas and Margaret were eventually arrested and held in custody at the constable's house.

Magistrates in York also interpreted an evening of mixed-gender socialising amongst young people that they came across in 1555 as confrontational. Christopher and Nicholas Luty were brought before the Mayor and Aldermen and asked to explain their actions. The brothers confessed that on one Sunday night at about ten o'clock, they had 'inordynally and secretly' entered the house of John Manne in Stonegate when he and his wife were out of town. They were accused of 'suspiciously' accompanying 'mayde sevants of the sayd Manne unto it was j or ij of the clock'. The civic authorities clearly viewed this as an illicit visit. From their perspective, the Luty brothers had ignored the existence of the nine o'clock curfew and had entered into the house of a man who they knew to be away without his consent. The magisterial reaction both during and after the event emphasised a gap between the generations that may well have been the cause of social divergence between young and old. On the evening in question, the watchmen and

¹³³ Consistory Database: Thomas Wulley v. Margaret Isot [18 December 1488; 4, 9 March 1489].

sergeant, who were responsible for policing the neighbourhood, suspected that there was 'compaignie in the sayd hows at suche unlawfull tyme of the night' and tried to enter to investigate. As the female servants in the house refused to open the door, they were stalled for enough time to allow the Luty brothers to escape out the back and through another house. This was supposedly 'to the great disquetyng and nuysans' of the neighbourhood.¹³⁴ The brothers were ultimately caught, committed to ward and placed under a curfew which required them 'no moare to goe abrode forth of ther lodgyngs after undewe tyme of the night'.¹³⁵ The magistrates evidently believed that their actions had been deviant and were keen to prevent further disorder. From Christopher and Nicholas's points of view, however, it was an opportunity that they had seized, in the absence of a master or mistress, to enjoy themselves and to socialise, flirt and perhaps even court Manne's female servants.

One Saturday night in May of the same year, William Hosyar was brought before the Mayor and Aldermen in York to answer for his actions in going to one Trystam Lytster's house and 'makyng mery and drynkyng' with 'Shawe, Gawyn Bulyman and George man-servant to the seyde Lytster' until about eleven o'clock. William was a masterless servant who had moved to York from Lincoln aged seventeen in search of work. The four came into conflict with local officials when they subsequently went to fetch a 'gridiron' – an implement used for cooking on – from another house outside the city walls. In order to access the house, they stole the keys of Monk Bar from its sleeping watchmen. On returning to Lytster's house, they fell asleep on a bed fully clothed and still in possession of the keys.¹³⁶ Lyster claimed to know nothing of their activities because he had gone to bed 'abowte ix of the clocke' that night. Since this was curfew hour, it was precisely the time when a good inhabitant of the city would have been expected to go to bed. The narrative was likely constructed in this way to make the master appear ignorant of the socialising that occurred under his roof. Doing so enabled magistrates to ensure that Lyster could be exonerated. It also supported their understanding of the young men's activities as deliberately transgressive as they were presented as having happened supposedly without a master's knowledge or approval. Gawyn

¹³⁴ Raine (ed.), *York civic records*, 5, p. 124.

¹³⁵ York, YCA, York House Book 21, f. 93v.

¹³⁶ See *MED*: 'gridiron'. The *MED* defines a 'gridiron' as 'a grill used for roasting, broiling, or toasting'.

accused William of being ‘the principall procurar’ who encouraged the group ‘to goe furth abrode that night’.¹³⁷ Of the four, it was only William who faced punishment. The Mayor decided that ‘Hosyar shold be taken as a vacabond and soo to be whypped about the towne at a cart and banished from the Citie’.¹³⁸ For the magistrates, William, young, unemployed and masterless, seems to have been considered the most dangerous.¹³⁹ Without a master, he was identified as being outside the boundaries of normative regulation. Since he was not subject to the same discipline faced by Lyster’s servants, for example, it was up to magistrates to punish him. The magistrates assumed that the activities William had organised were subversive. From his perspective, it was probably nothing more untoward than an evening of entertainment with some friends that went wrong when they drank too much and lost their wits.

Magistrates in York took an equally harsh attitude towards a young woman they caught drinking with two males outside the city walls in 1596. Although Jane Wightman, a servant of John Elwick in York, was accused of being ‘abrode in the streets in company w[i]th two men misbehaving themeselves’ in the city one night, it was solely Jane – and not her two male companions – who appeared before the Mayor and Aldermen. A blatant double standard was exercised in choosing to target the young woman’s misbehaviour rather than that of the men who she accompanied. Jane confessed that she had been drinking with the two males ‘w[i]thout the monck barre in the night tyme’ on her evening off and explained that she had ‘comed in at the barr in ther company’ to go ‘home toward[e]s her m[ai]sters’ house’. The Mayor committed her to ward for ‘her misbehaviour in being so late abrode in such company’.¹⁴⁰ Jane’s conduct may have been interpreted as unruly but it is likely that from her point of view this was an accidental effect rather than the main attraction. Her priority was probably just to take an opportunity during her free time to socialise with friends, not wilfully antagonise her master or the city magistrates. The social distance which was created between the young woman and her elders when Jane faced retribution was

¹³⁷ Raine (ed.), *York civic records*, 5, pp. 122-4.

¹³⁸ York, YCA, York House Book 21, f. 91r, v.

¹³⁹ See P. Griffiths, ‘Masterless young people in Norwich 1560-1645’, in P. Griffiths, A. Fox and S. Hindle (eds), *The experience of authority in early modern England* (Basingstoke, 1996), pp. 146-86.

¹⁴⁰ York, YCA, York House Book 31, f. 182r.

the result of the magisterial understanding about what had happened rather than it being her fault for having socialised in this way per se.

Overall, this chapter has shown how moralist and magistrate perceptions of generational conflict were rife in English society throughout the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries and that they intensified in the second half of the sixteenth century. These perceptions seem to have been the product of senior men putting a very negative interpretation on the actions of the young. These men appear to have been influenced by ideology and prejudice rather than an informed understanding of young people's need for some free time and space to fulfil a desire to socialise with their peers. It was their attitudes, rather than an overt desire from the young to be intentionally confrontational, that emphasised the gap between the generations.

Conclusion

This thesis set out to establish how far adolescence existed both as a cultural concept and in social practice in fifteenth- and sixteenth-century England. I drew its conceptual framework from modern social scientific research and accordingly tested and explored historically three of its main claims about adolescence. I began by questioning the extent to which a social and cultural understanding of a concept of adolescence, as a lengthy and gradual transitional process from a state of dependence (childhood) to a state of relative independence and autonomy (adulthood), was apparent in fifteenth- and sixteenth-century society. Then I examined how far a youth culture, distinguishable and different from mainstream adult culture, can be identified. Finally, I investigated the extent to which there was a discernable 'generation gap'. I questioned how far generational conflict was a dominant feature of the relationship between younger and older people and assessed whether prevalent peer interactions amongst the young inflamed tensions with adults. Two main strands to my findings have emerged in response to the driving question about the existence of adolescence in the pre-modern era. My thesis is that access to adolescence was shaped by gender and that this in turn was affected by social changes over time.

The Female Experience of Adolescence

Whereas modern social scientific literature uniformly recognises the existence of a youth culture as a distinctive feature of the adolescent phase and points to clear gender differences in the cultural activities of young males and of young females, historical scholarship has not specifically addressed the question of a female youth culture.¹ Rather, historians of the pre-modern era have focused on debating

¹ S.F. Niles, 'The youth culture controversy: an evaluation', *The Journal of Early Adolescence*, 1:3 (1981), p. 265; T. Parsons, 'Age and sex in the social structure of the United States', *American Sociological Review*, 7:5 (1942), pp. 604-16; T. Parsons, *Social structure and personality* (London, 1964); A. Cohen, *Delinquent boys* (Chicago, 1955); S.N. Eisenstadt, *From generation to generation* (New York, 1956); H. Becker, *The outsiders: studies in the sociology of deviance* (Chicago, 1963); M. Brake, *Comparative youth culture: the sociology of youth cultures and youth subcultures in America, Britain and Canada* (London, 1985), p. 6; A. Schlegel and B.L. Hewlett, 'Contributions of anthropology to the study of adolescence', *Journal of Research on Adolescence*, 21:1 (2011), pp. 284, 286-7; J.J. Arnett, 'Adolescents and heavy metal music: from the mouths of metalheads', *Youth &*

whether or not an (implicitly male) youth culture was operative and have thereby marginalised the female experience.² I expressly set out to explore female social activities in fifteenth- and sixteenth-century England and my analysis has shown that women were restricted because they did not have access to a distinctive age- and gender-based youth culture.

In Chapter Four, I observed how young women participated in a female culture that was non age-specific. Younger and older women worked side-by-side and conversed with one another whilst washing and bleaching cloth in York in 1411 and in Durham in 1575, and behind closed doors in private houses.³ Women of all ages also arranged and participated in Hocktide revels in urban parishes.⁴ At higher social levels, women of a variety of ages read aloud together – as they did in the household of Cecily Neville, the Duchess of York – or played games with one another that sometimes involved gambling.⁵ Young women had no exclusively

Society, 23:1 (1991), pp. 76-98; J. Janssen, M. Deschesne and A. Knippenberg, 'The psychological importance of youth culture: a terror management approach', *Youth & Society*, 31:2 (1999), pp. 154-5, 164. See A. McRobbie and J. Garber, 'Girls and subcultures', in S. Hall and T. Jefferson (eds), *Resistance through rituals: youth subcultures in post-war Britain* (London, 1975), pp. 209-20; C. Smart, *Women, crime and criminology: a feminist critique* (London, 1976); D.M. Smith, 'Perceived peer and parental influences of youth's social world', *Youth & Society*, 17:2 (1985), p. 151; C. Murray and F. Thompson, 'The representation of authority: an adolescent viewpoint', *Journal of Adolescence*, 8:3 (1985), pp. 217-29 (p. 217); E.H. Sharp, J.D. Coatsworth, N. Darling, P. Cumsille and S. Ranieri, 'Gender differences in the self-defining activities and identity experiences of adolescents and emerging adults', *Journal of Adolescence*, 30:2 (2007), pp. 251-69 (pp. 252-3, 255); D.G. Perry and R.E. Pauletti, 'Gender and adolescent development', *Journal of Research on Adolescence*, 21:1 (2011), pp. 61-74.

² B.A. Hanawalt, *Growing up in medieval London: the experience of childhood in history* (Oxford, 1996), pp. 11-12, 127; A. Yarborough, 'Apprentices as adolescents in sixteenth-century Bristol', *Journal of Social History*, 13:1 (1979), pp. 67-81 (p. 70); I.K. Ben-Amos, *Adolescence and youth in early modern England* (London, 1994), ch. 8 (p. 205); W. Coster, *Family and kinship in England 1400-1750* (Harlow, 2001), p. 53; B. Capp, 'English youth groups and the Pinder of Wakefield', *Past and Present*, 76:1 (1977), pp. 127-33; S. Brigden, 'Youth and the English Reformation', *Past and Present*, 95:1 (1982), pp. 37-67; P. Griffiths, *Youth and authority: formative experiences in England, 1560-1640* (Oxford, 1996), ch. 3; P. Griffiths, 'Tudor troubles: problems of youth in Elizabethan England', in S. Doran and N.L. Jones (eds), *The Elizabethan world* (Abingdon, 2011), pp. 316-34.

³ P.J.P. Goldberg (ed. and trans.), *Women in England c.1275-1525* (Manchester, 1995), p. 43; J. Raine (ed.), *Depositions and other ecclesiastical proceedings from the courts of Durham, extending from 1311 to the reign of Elizabeth*, Surtees Society, 21 (1845), pp. 295-6, case 316: 'Fighting in the churchyard of St Oswald's, Durham' [undated, possibly circa 1575] and pp. 108-9, case 145: Thomas Robson v. Ralph Wilson [undated, possibly 1560s]; Consistory Database: Alice Billingham v. John Wellis [26 March 1488; 17 June 1488; 12 July 1488].

⁴ K.L. French, 'To free them from binding': women in the late medieval parish', *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, 27:3 (1997), pp. 389, 404; K.M. Phillips, *Medieval maidens: young women and gender in England, 1270-1540* (Manchester, 2003), pp. 190-3; J.C. Cox, *Churchwardens' accounts from the fourteenth century to the close of the seventeenth century* (London, 1913), pp. 64-5, 261. See also C. Peters, *Patterns of piety: women, gender and religion in late medieval and Reformation England* (Cambridge, 2003), p. 27.

⁵ Phillips, *Medieval maidens*, p. 71. See also F. Ridzy, 'Women talking about the things of God': a late medieval sub-culture', in C.M. Meale (ed.), *Women and literature in Britain, 1150-1500* (Cambridge,

youthful female activities or interests to call their own. Since they lacked opportunities to socialise exclusively together with only their same-sex peers, they were unable to consolidate common values, behaviours or identities predicated on both gender and age. When they drank with young men in mixed-gender groups – as several young women did whilst socialising in a York tavern during Christmas week in 1472 or within a private house in York in 1555 when their master was out of town – they may have experienced a hint of peer group cohesiveness but this did not constitute a gender-specific youth culture.⁶ With women of all ages taking part in urban female activities, it was a feminine rather than a youthful identity that was reinforced amongst them. I conclude that young women were socialised to identify first and foremost as female as opposed to as youthful. As a consequence, they enjoyed little sense of adolescent identity or solidarity.

The social and ideological construction of youthful femininity in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries was based on the premise that young women matured more quickly than their male counterparts. I have discussed, for example, how girls were deemed to have reached the age of discretion two years earlier than boys, at twelve years old.⁷ Gender difference therefore underpinned the very understanding of youth. Young women were supposed to be virginal, sedentary, and silent creatures, whereas it was believed that young men were predisposed to display the opposite characteristics. This understanding of masculinity was influenced by the Galenic theory of the Four Humours, which portrayed the male as hot and dry and consequently full of energy, power, fieriness and rashness.⁸ The idea that young women should maintain chaste and pure traits and preserve their reputations manifested itself in a double standard whereby young women were subject to stricter constraints than young men.

1993), pp. 104-27; N. McDonald, 'Games medieval women play', in C. Collette (ed.), *The Legend of Good Women: context and reception* (Cambridge, 2006), pp. 182-4, 188; M. St. Clare Byrne (ed.), *The Lisle letters*, 3 (Chicago, 1981), p. 157.

⁶ P.J.P. Goldberg, *Women, work and life cycle in a medieval economy: women in York and Yorkshire, c.1300-1520* (Oxford, 1992), p. 248; A. Raine (ed.), *York civic records*, 5, YASRS, 110 (1946), p. 124; York, YCA, York House Book 21, f. 93v.

⁷ See R.H. Helmholz, *Marriage litigation in medieval England* (Cambridge, 1974), p. 98.

⁸ J.A. Burrow, *The ages of man: a study in medieval writing and thought* (Oxford, 1988), pp. 18, 20; F.S. Dunlop, *The late medieval interlude: the drama of youth and aristocratic masculinity* (Woodbridge, 2007), p. 18; R.M. Karras, *From boys to men: formations of masculinity in late medieval Europe* (Philadelphia, 2002), p. 15.

This is apparent from the stipulations contained within the instructional text *How the Good Wife Taught Her Daughter*. In the Oxford, Bodleian MS Ashmole 61 version (circa 1480s) the Good Wife advises her daughter to refrain from watching young men participate in competitive sports like wrestling or cock-threshing in order to protect her reputation and avoid being branded a 'strumpet' or 'gyglote'. The Good Wife also makes the demand that the young woman should not frequent the tavern.⁹ This is particularly notable because in the earlier, MS Lambeth 853 version of the poem (circa 1430) she only warns her daughter not to get *drunk* in the tavern.¹⁰ This echoes a more conservative gender ideology that had emerged by the later fifteenth century and reflects how concerns about young women being shielded from vice in order to preserve their reputations had heightened. This accords with Riddy's argument that there was a change in the way the *Good Wife* text was understood by the late fifteenth century. She maintains that it became more likely to be used by urban mercantile mistresses – who had a particular concern to uphold and maintain the bourgeois respectability of their households – to train their female servants, who might have been rural migrants.¹¹ That this more conservative attitude towards gender ideology continued to prevail in the mid-sixteenth century is reflected from my case study of John Onley and Alice Bennett, the coroner's inquest involving the unfortunate servant girl who met her death in 1545 in the company of her master's thirteen-year-old son. In their verdict, the jurors used a narrative that played on conservative gender stereotypes to distract from suspicion of actual homicide.¹²

These more conservative attitudes were also manifested towards women in service from the late fifteenth century. On the basis of evidence from bequests made to servants noted in wills from fourteenth- and fifteenth-century York,

⁹ See 'How the Good Wife Taught Her Daughter', in G. Shuffelton (ed.), *Codex Ashmole 61: a compilation of popular Middle English verse* (Kalamazoo, 2008), lines 73-5.

¹⁰ 'How the Good Wiff Tauzte Hir Dougtir', in F.J. Furnivall (ed.), *The Babees' Book, Aristotle's ABC, Urbanitatis, Stans Puer ad Mensam, The Lvtille Childrenes Lvtil Boke, The Bokes of Nurture of Hugh Rhodes and John Russell, Wynkyn de Worde's Boke of Keruyng, The Booke of Demeanor, The Boke of Curtasye, Seager's Schoole of Vertue, &c. &c. with some French and Latin poems on like subjects, and some forewords on education in early England*, EETS, OS, 32 (1868), p. 39, lines 66-79; 'How the Good Wife Taught Her Daughter' in Shuffelton (ed.), *Codex Ashmole 61*, lines 65-8. See also M.L. Bailey, *Socialising the child in late medieval England, c.1400-1600* (Suffolk, 2012), p. 64, note 85. The dates cited for each of these poems are estimates made by Bailey.

¹¹ F. Riddy, 'Mother knows best: reading social change in a courtesy text', *Speculum*, 71:1 (1996), p. 85.

¹² R.F. Hunnisett (ed.), *Sussex coroners' inquests, 1485-1558*, Sussex Record Society, 74 (1985), p. 35, case 127.

Goldberg has argued that economic contraction in the later fifteenth century led to female servants being excluded from artisan craft workshops in favour of male employees. In 1511 the ordinances of the Norwich worsted weavers justified excluding women from the craft by claiming that their lack of strength resulted in the creation of inferior products.¹³ This is part of a wider trend that has been identified in other northern European towns and cities by the respective studies of Merry Wiesner and Martha Howell.¹⁴ As women were forced out of such positions, so the nature of their service shifted to become associated with more unskilled and domestic tasks. Goldberg argues that the status of female servants fell as a consequence.¹⁵

My research accords with this trajectory. If the treatment of female servants in the early fifteenth century is compared to their treatment in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth century, it is clear that a marked shift occurred. Earlier I discussed the case of John Warington, the York apprentice who in 1417 was forced by his master to contract marriage with Margaret Barker, a servant in his household, after the master suspected they had had sex with one another under his roof. It is significant that in the first instance, the master's main priority was to uphold the respectability of his household and protect the reputation of his female servant by ensuring the man that she had been seduced by would provide her with the security of a marriage.¹⁶ Now, if the experiences of the female servants with whom Richard Egleton had a sexual relationship in his father's house in 1489, or of Katherine Bronyng, who was made pregnant by her master's son in 1505 are reconsidered, it is apparent that a very different attitude emerged in the intervening decades. The church courts simply 'let off and dismissed' Egleton and allowed Browne to remain 'unpunished'.¹⁷ These young men were able to exploit sexually the female servants in their households without facing retribution. It is my contention that this was because there had been an accentuation in the gender and

¹³ See Goldberg, *Women, work and life cycle*, pp. 200, 333.

¹⁴ See M.E. Wiesner, *Working women in Renaissance Germany* (New Brunswick, 1986) and M.C. Howell, *Women, production and patriarchy in late medieval cities* (Chicago, 1986).

¹⁵ See Goldberg, *Women, work and life cycle*, p. 201.

¹⁶ See Goldberg (ed.), *Women in England*, pp. 110-14.

¹⁷ Goldberg (ed.), *Women in England*, pp. 95-6, 123; E.M. Elvey (ed.), *The courts of the archdeaconry of Buckingham, 1483-1523*, Buckinghamshire Record Society, 19 (1975), p. 81, no. 112 and p. 207, no. 292.

status differences between these women and the sons of their employers by this period.

In social practice, a decline in social status for female servants meant that young women of elite or middling status became less likely to leave home prior to marriage to enter service.¹⁸ Opportunities for them to experience a period of service were therefore reduced. In Chapter Two, service was identified as a formal cultural framework that accorded with the purpose of an adolescent phase. It encouraged young people to become emancipated from their parents and to progress in their development as autonomous and independent individuals and thereby prepared them for adulthood. Females in service were variously able to socialise with male servants, to conduct courtships, to arrange their own marriages and to engage in sexual relationships.¹⁹ If service coincided with the cultural purpose of adolescence then it follows that those individuals who had access to service had the best chance to further their independence in anticipation of adult life. My analysis has buttressed the arguments of Goldberg, Yarborough, Ben-Amos and Carlson, who view lifecycle service as a semi-autonomous transitional period, but has stressed a further dimension by clarifying that access to service was both determined by gender and influenced by social changes over time.²⁰

Those young women who remained at home until marriage during the late fifteenth and sixteenth centuries continued to occupy a very dependent position and thereby had substantially different experiences from those who lived away. This dependency manifested itself particularly in parental control over their marriages. The fathers of Margaret Heed, Maud Carr and Elizabeth Craven, for example, are presented as having had control over their daughters' marriages

¹⁸ See Goldberg, *Women, work and life cycle*, p. 201.

¹⁹ See, for example, York, BI, CP.G.3548: Juliana Stoddart v. William Bullock [1555], p. 3; York, YCA, York House Book 21, f. 93v; Consistory Database: Richard Cressy v. Alice Scrace [28 March 1489]; John Kendall v. Isabel or Elizabeth Wily [July 1492]; Christian Hilles v. Robert Padley [24 May 1490; 9 June 1490]; Goldberg (ed.), *Women in England*, pp. 110-14.

²⁰ See P.J.P. Goldberg, 'Marriage, migration, servanthood and life-cycle in Yorkshire towns of the later Middle Ages: some York cause paper evidence', *Continuity and Change*, 1:2 (1986), pp. 141-69. See also Goldberg, *Women, work, and life cycle*, ch. 5; P.J.P. Goldberg, 'Masters and men in later medieval England', in D. Hadley (ed.) *Masculinity in medieval Europe* (New York, 1998), pp. 56-70; Yarborough, 'Apprentices as adolescents', pp. 67-81; M.K. McIntosh, 'Servants and the household unit in an Elizabethan English community', *Journal of Family History*, 9:1 (1984), pp. 3-23; E.J. Carlson, *Marriage and the English Reformation* (Oxford, 1994), pp. 107-10, 116, 140.

despite the young women's opposition to the suitors that were chosen for them.²¹ With a reduction in opportunities for employment *outside* of marriage, young women from elite and middling backgrounds became more dependent *upon* marriage as a means of providing their livelihoods from this time.²² This may well have been the case for sixteen-year-old Katherine Harper, who continued to reside with her father whilst she worked in his lodging house in York in the 1550s. Katherine admitted that she was entirely reliant on her father to provide her livelihood and that she 'hathe nothings of har owne proper good[es]'.²³ As young women who remained at home continued to find themselves in a state of child-like dependency, they did not experience the same freedoms and opportunities as those in service. Indeed, there is reason to believe that they lost out on many of the moments of liberty and licence that characterise adolescence.

By the late fifteenth century, well brought-up young women came to be expected to request consent for their marriages from their fathers and/or masters, even though this was not a requirement of canon law. In London in the last decades of the century, young women like Margaret Shepperd, Agnes Parker and Maud Gyll all made promises of marriage that were conditional on obtaining their parents' consent.²⁴ Joan Corney and Elizabeth Croft asked consent from all who had paternal or quasi-paternal authority and claimed they would only marry their respective suitors if they could obtain the consent of their families *and* their masters.²⁵ Goldberg identifies the same phenomenon within urban society in Yorkshire at much the same period, but not earlier.²⁶ The expectation that approval was required as an explicit condition of marriage is not only further evidence that women were being socialised to remain dependent but also mirrors

²¹ Consistory Database: William Hawkins v. Margaret Heed [17 June 1488]; York, BI, CP.G.1262: Matilda Carr v. Edward Burrell [Validity, 1563]; York, BI, CP.G.2173: Robert Bower v. Elizabeth Craven [Validity, 1585, defendant wins].

²² Goldberg, *Women, work and life cycle*, ch. 5; S. McSheffrey, *Marriage, sex and civic culture in late medieval London* (Philadelphia, 2006), pp. 7-9.

²³ York, BI, CP.G.599: Robert Parkinson v. Alice Bywell [Validity, 1556]. Nineteen-year-old Anne Pullen, who lived and worked with her father at his lodging house in York towards the end of the century, was an equally dependent individual. See York, BI, CP.G.2770: Henry Hudson v. Anne May [Exceptions: witnesses, 1593].

²⁴ Consistory Database: Richard Tymond v. Margery Sheppard [28 May 1487; 27 June 1487; 22, 29 November 1487]; John Pollyn v. Agnes Parker [12 July 1487; 16, 26 November 1487]; Laurence Wyberd, John Austen v. Maude Gyll [17 November 1491].

²⁵ Consistory Database: Robert Philipson v. Joan Corney [4 February 1489; 6 March 1489]; Herbert Rowland v. Elizabeth Croft, Margaret Hordley [31 January 1494].

²⁶ Goldberg, *Women, work and life cycle*, p. 201. See also McSheffrey, *Marriage, sex and civic culture*, pp. 7-9.

the wider social changes noted in respect of women servants and women's craft employment.²⁷

So far I have seen that in later fifteenth-century England conservative gender ideologies began to manifest themselves, for example in the exclusion of female lifecycle servants from artisanal activity, in numbers of guild ordinances that limited women's access to craft workshops and in the convention that young women were expected to obtain consent from fathers or masters for their marriages. The most extreme manifestation of such a conservative gender ideology was the ordinance issued in Coventry in 1492 which, as I observed in Chapter Three, prohibited single women under the age of fifty from living alone.²⁸ I also discussed Goldberg's argument that these stipulations emanated from city governors with Lollard sympathies, who intentionally targeted women living outside of the control of a patriarchal household so as to help maintain a 'godly and ordered society'.²⁹ Lollardy promoted conservative and hierarchical gender ideologies.³⁰ Its persistence and revival at the end of the fifteenth century and the beginning of the sixteenth century is notable. Reformed ideology emerged and came to be accepted in England following this Lollard revival. Roper, in her study of Augsburg, argues that part of the appeal of Reformed ideology can be attributed to the fact that it fitted into a guild ethos that was already sympathetic to its ideas about the need to obey the Ten Commandments and to reinforce patriarchy and hierarchy by stressing the duty of wives towards their husbands, servants towards their masters and children towards their parents.³¹

Protestant ideology rejected the Catholic valuing of celibacy and sexual abstinence and gave new value to the institution of marriage. Moralists who adhered to Reformed ideology were particularly anxious about sexual relations occurring outside of their 'proper' place, which they deemed to be only in marriage between a husband and wife. In 1577, for example, John Northbrooke condemned dancing

²⁷ See McSheffrey, *Marriage, sex and civic culture*, pp. 88, 90.

²⁸ M.D. Harris (ed.), *The Coventry Leet Book, or Mayor's Register: part 2*, EETS, OS, 135 (1908), pp. 544-5, 567-8.

²⁹ See P.J.P. Goldberg, 'Coventry's 'Lollard' programme of 1492 and the making of Utopia', in R. Horrox and S. Rees Jones (eds), *Pragmatic utopias: ideals and communities, 1200-1630* (Cambridge, 2001), pp. 97-116.

³⁰ See S. McSheffrey, *Gender and heresy: women and men in Lollard communities, 1420-1530* (Philadelphia, 1995), pp. 137-50.

³¹ See L. Roper, *The holy household: women and morals in Reformation Augsburg* (Oxford, 1991).

as a 'wicked' exercise because he believed it had a propensity for inflaming 'filthie concupiscence and lust' between young couples that was especially dangerous for women, for whom he claimed it led to loss of virginity and illegitimate pregnancy and thereby the ruination of their reputation and respectability.³² Single mothers with illegitimate children were also the cause of particular anxiety, especially after the enactment of the 1576 Poor Law which instructed JPs to punish the parents of illegitimate children and required fathers to provide maintenance for their offspring so as to avoid exhausting local poor relief funds.³³ These concerns became most pertinent at times of economic crisis, such as during the late 1580s and 1590s when hardship was caused by a combination of disruption to trade instigated by the war with Spain, increased taxation and price inflation, recurrent harvest failures, and high mortality.³⁴ In Nottingham in 1589, for example, Katherine Wyldie relied upon the civic authorities to demand maintenance money from John Simons, her child's father, to provide the financial support and protection she required to enable her to raise her daughter. Because she was single, Katherine was more vulnerable and dependent than a married mother living with her husband in their own household and raising legitimate offspring. Women who remained unmarried occupied a position that was effectively akin to an extended childhood.

Although in a slightly more favourable position, even upon marriage young women continued to be subordinated: they did not become householders in their own right and, within the context of the patriarchal family, simply swapped the authority of their father or master for the authority of their husband. Elements of such female subordination are encapsulated by the example of Agnes Whittington from 1487. Once betrothed to John Ely, he ordered her to stop carrying laundry to

³² J. Northbrooke, *Spiritus est vicarius Christi in terra. A treatise wherein dicing, dauncing, vaine plaies or enterludes with other idle pastimes, &c. commonly used on the Sabboth day, are reprooued, by the authoritie of the worde of God and ancient writers* (London, 1577), pp. 113, 139-40. Philip Stubbes was another who greatly feared dancing promoting pre-marital sexual activity and illegitimate pregnancies. See also F.J. Furnivall (ed.), *Philip Stubbes's anatomy of the abuses in England in Shakespeare's youth c.1583, part I* (London, 1877), p. 155.

³³ R.L. Greaves, *Society and religion in Elizabethan England* (Minneapolis, 1981), pp. 216-17; See also I. Pinchbeck, 'The state and the child in sixteenth century England', *The British Journal of Sociology*, 7:4 (1956), p. 283.

³⁴ E.A. Wrigley and P. Schofield, *The population history of England 1541-1871: a reconstruction* (Suffolk, 1981), pp. 670-72; R.B. Outhwaite, 'Dearth, the English crown, and the 'crisis of the 1590s'', in P. Clark (ed.), *The European crisis of the 1590s: essays in comparative history* (London, 1985), pp. 23-43. See also A.B. Appleby, *Famine in Tudor and Stuart England* (Liverpool, 1978), pp. 132-45.

the Thames for her master and offered to provide for her until they were married if she lost her position in service as a result. Agnes may well have acquired some agency upon marriage through running a household, being a mistress and ultimately fulfilling the role of a mother, but this was still all within the context of being subordinate to and dependent upon her husband.³⁵ Women like Agnes continued to be denied much autonomy perhaps until they were widowed. At elite social levels, marriage in itself did not hold particular significance for those young women who were liable to be married early, even as young as the age of consent, as they experienced a delay between their marriages and the point at which they began to reside with their husbands and start their own families. When the marriage between Elizabeth Clifford and William Plumpton was solemnised in 1453, for example, they lived together with his parents but were not permitted to lie together until she reached the age of sixteen.³⁶

Motherhood seems to have been the marker of social adulthood for women. However, as the example of Katherine Wyldie has shown, it was only when motherhood occurred within marriage that women began to approach their adult status and even then they were still subordinate to their husbands. Consequently, women could merely achieve a more muted version of adulthood. It was really only when they became widows that they might have been able to attain the greater degree of agency synonymous with a fuller adult status. My findings contribute to the historiography on pre-modern youth because, with the exception of Schultz, Chojnacki and Goldberg who have suggested that the achievement of adulthood differed for young men and young women in the medieval era, the majority of studies have exclusively focused on males and emphasise the significance of marriage, householding and fatherhood as the pivotal events that represented adult status for young men in the later medieval or early modern period.³⁷ By asking questions about gender, I have shown that in the fifteenth and

³⁵ S. McSheffrey, *Love and marriage in late medieval London* (Kalamazoo, 1995), pp. 56-9, case 12: Agnes Whittington v. John Ely; Consistory Database: Agnes Whittington v. John Ely [29 January 1487].

³⁶ T. Stapleton (ed.), *The Plumpton correspondence*, Camden Society, OS, 4 (1839), p. lxiv.

³⁷ See J.A. Schultz, 'Medieval adolescence: the claims of history and the silence of German narrative', *Speculum*, 66:3 (1991), pp. 519-39; S. Chojnacki, 'Measuring adulthood: adolescence and gender in Renaissance Venice', *Journal of Family History*, 17:4 (1992) pp. 371-95; P.J.P. Goldberg, 'Migration, youth and gender in later medieval England', in P.J.P. Goldberg and F. Riddy (eds), *Youth in the Middle Ages* (Woodbridge, 2004), p. 99; P.J.P. Goldberg, 'Life and death: the ages of man', in R. Horrox and M. Ormrod (eds), *A social history of England, 1200-1500* (Cambridge, 2006), pp. 421-2;

sixteenth centuries, the achievement of adult status – marking the end point of an adolescent phase – was shaped by gender. Compared to men, young women had a distinctive, and somewhat muted experience of both adolescence and adulthood and that may have become more marked over time.

The Male Experience of Adolescence

In Chapter Four, I identified a youth culture in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries that was both age- and gender-based and solely accessible to young males. I observed how, exclusively alongside their peers, young men wrestled in London circa 1411, played football together in York one Sunday afternoon in 1423, practised archery in Bayham in 1515, or drank together until eleven o'clock one Saturday night in a house in York in 1555.³⁸ Participation in activities that were distinctively youthful and masculine provided young men with an element of agency and autonomy: it allowed them to act independently of adults, but also of children. Young men drew their identity from such interactions with their peers. The apprentices from the Merchants' Guild in Newcastle-upon-Tyne in 1554, for example, who wore 'garded cotes, jagged hose lyned with silke ... cutt shoes, berds' and 'daggers ... crosse overthwarte their backs', probably did so primarily in order to gain peer approval.³⁹ Sharing distinctive activities and interests on the basis of age and gender promoted the development of a homosocial youthful identity.

Within this youth culture young men often prioritised enjoying themselves alongside their friends and peers at the expense of heeding rules imposed upon them by parents, masters and magistrates. This is apparent when the male

Hanawalt, *Growing up in medieval London*, pp. 206-16; Karras, *From boys to men*, ch. 5; J.R. Gillis, *Youth and history: transition and change in European age relations, 1770 to present* (London, 1981), p. 4; Ben-Amos, *Adolescence and youth*, ch. 9; Carlson, *Marriage and the English Reformation*, pp. 106, 116; S. Rappaport, *Worlds within worlds: structures of life in sixteenth-century London* (Cambridge, 2002), pp. 322-9; P. Griffiths, 'Tudor troubles: problems of youth in Elizabethan England', in S. Doran and N.L. Jones (eds), *The Elizabethan world* (Abingdon, 2011), pp. 318-19, 329.

³⁸ H.T. Riley (ed.), *Memorials of London and London life in the XIIIth, XIVth and XVth centuries* (London, 1868), p. 580; Goldberg, 'Masters and men', pp. 64-5; R.F. Hunnisett (ed.), *Sussex coroners' inquests, 1485-1558*, Sussex Record Society, 74 (1985), p. 10, case 41; W.H. Stevenson (ed.), *Records of the borough of Nottingham, 3, 1485-1547* (Nottingham, 1885), p. 374; Goldberg, 'Masters and men', pp. 69-70; York, YCA, York House Book 31, f. 252r.

³⁹ Goldberg, 'Masters and men', pp. 69-70. See also J.R. Boyle (ed.), *Extracts from the records of the merchant adventurers of Newcastle-Upon-Tyne, 1*, Surtees Society, 93 (1985), pp. 20-1.

servants chose to play 'dice, *carpae*, and other unlawful and prohibited games' within eight households in Nottingham in 1483, or bowled for ale and prizes of silver in 1537, or were entertained at night by an unlicensed alehouse keeper in Hatfield in 1589.⁴⁰ It is notable that these particular males were all living away from home and in service. Unlike their female counterparts, who experienced a contraction of employment opportunities from the later fifteenth century, young men's access to service was not impacted in the same way. As I discussed above, a period of lifecycle service accorded with the function of an adolescent phase. Here it is evident that male youth culture afforded young men extra opportunities to further their independence by giving them the time and the freedom to leave their masters' houses to socialise with each other. It was socialising with their peers that was the main priority for young men and, whilst they may at times have pushed the boundaries of permissible behaviour in doing so, their primary aim was not to be deliberately disobedient. This is even apparent in the case of the thousand male apprentices who rioted and attacked foreign immigrants living in London on May Day 1517, and thereby broke a nine o'clock curfew imposed by the Aldermen of the city.⁴¹ Breaking the curfew was not their main objective; it was an unintentional consequence of their pursuit of a particular shared objective. Instead of setting out to provoke conflict with their elders, the riot represented a joint enterprise by male apprentices with a common anti-foreigner goal. It may well have been a violent occurrence, however it is important to stress that this violence was not directed towards the civic governors, but rather at aliens living within the city.

In contrast to how young men's actions were intended, those in authority perceived young males collectively to be antagonistic and rebellious. That authors of instructional literature across both the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries had negative attitudes towards young men is apparent when I consider how they were at pains to encourage adults to exercise control over the lives of young males and were anxious for them to avoid the perils of tavern-haunting and dicing.⁴²

⁴⁰ See W.H. Stevenson (ed.), *Records of the borough of Nottingham, 2, 1399-1485* (Nottingham, 1885), pp. 330-1; Stevenson (ed.), *Records of the borough of Nottingham, 3*, p. 374; M.K. McIntosh, *Controlling misbehaviour in England, 1370-1600* (Cambridge, 2002), p. 76.

⁴¹ Brigden, 'Youth and the English Reformation', p. 47; Rappaport, *Worlds within worlds*, pp. 15-17.

⁴² See 'How the Wise Man Taught His Son', in F.J. Furnivall (ed.), *The Babees' Book, Aristotle's ABC, Urbanitatis, Stans Puer ad Mensam, The Lvtill Childrenes Lvtill Boke, The Bokes of Nurture of Hugh*

Moreover, there were Parliamentary statutes to proscribe certain games and sports, restrictive terms in indentures to prohibit apprentices like John Harietsham (1451) from frequenting taverns, having sex or playing at dice-tables, chequers, or any other 'unlawful' games, and civic curfews such as the eight o'clock curfew imposed by magistrates on apprentices in York in 1530 in an attempt to prevent them from gambling or playing dice and cards.⁴³ All of these served to portray young men as troublesome. As such, they created a sense of distance between male apprentices and servants on the one hand and masters and magistrates on the other effectively akin to a 'generation gap'.

As I discussed earlier, Protestantism stressed the importance of conservative and hierarchical gender ideologies and the maintenance of 'good order'.⁴⁴ Fears and perceptions of the deviancy of younger people were magnified as a result of the uptake of Reformed ideology and in turn, the social distance between older and younger men also became greater. Northbrooke's *Treatise* (1577), based on a dialogue between 'Youth' and 'Age', highlights the divergence between these two perspectives. Within this framework, Northbrooke advised the young to avoid a variety of pastimes including attending the theatres to watch plays, frequenting the tavern or dancing with one another because of his over-arching aim to ensure that 'God may be glorified and sinne abandoned'.⁴⁵ The views of such moralists were reinforced by comparable magisterial perspectives as was apparent in 1603

Rhodes and John Russell, Wynkyn de Worde's Boke of Keruyng, The Booke of Demeanor, The Boke of Curtasye, Seager's Schoole of Vertue, &c. &c. with some French and Latin poems on like subjects, and some forewords on education in early England, EETS, OS, 32 (1868), p. 50; C. D'Evelyn (ed.), *Peter Idley's instructions to his son* (London, 1935), pp. 82, 87; 'The Mirror of the Periods of Man's life', in F.J. Furnivall (ed.), *Hymns to the Virgin and Christ, the Parliament of Devils and other religious poems* (London, 1867), pp. 60-1; 'A Ballade of Jak Hare', in H.N. MacCracken (ed.), *The minor poems of John Lydgate, part II*, EETS, 192 (1934), p. 447; J.R. Lumby (ed.), *Ratis Raving and other moral and religious pieces in prose and verse*, EETS, OS, 43 (1870), p. 93; R. Ascham, *Toxophilus*, ed. P.E. Medine (Arizona, 2002), p. 71.

⁴³ 12 Richard II c.6 [1388], in A. Luders *et al.* (eds), *The statutes of the realm*, 2 (London, 1810-28), p. 57; 11 Henry VII, c.2 [1495], in Luders *et al.* (eds), *The statutes of the realm*, 2, p. 569. The content of this statute was reiterated in 3 Henry VIII [1511], in A. Luders *et al.* (eds), *The statutes of the realm*, 3, (London, 1810-28), pp. 25-6. See also C.M. Clode, *The early history of the guild of merchant taylors of the fraternity of St John the Baptist, London* (London, 1888), p. 344; A. Raine (ed.), *York civic records*, 3, YASRS, 106 (1942), pp. 133-4.

⁴⁴ See Goldberg, 'Coventry's 'Lollard' programme', pp. 97-116; R. Hutton, *The rise and fall of merry England* (Oxford, 1994), p. 111. See also P. Collinson, *The birthpangs of Protestant England: religious and cultural change in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries* (Basingstoke, 1988), p. 99; M. Ingram, 'From Reformation to toleration: popular religious cultures in England, 1540-1690', in T. Harris (ed.), *Popular culture in England, c.1500-1850* (Basingstoke, 1995), pp. 97-9; B. Reay, 'Popular religion', in B. Reay (ed.), *Popular culture in seventeenth-century England* (London, 1985), pp. 105, 107.

⁴⁵ See Northbrooke, *A treatise etc.*, pp. 1-148 (p. 142).

when the council in York lamented how young men were playing in the streets or resorting to alehouses and taverns rather than attending divine services on Sundays.⁴⁶

Keith Thomas has argued that conflict between the generations was rife in early modern society as a consequence of young people being subordinated to their elders at every possible opportunity and because of their antagonistic reactions to a gerontocratic ideology.⁴⁷ My findings challenge this interpretation. I believe that it was *perceptions* of generational conflict that were rife in social practice, fuelled by the imaginations of groups of men with influence who were prejudiced and believed young males to be constitutionally hot-headed, rebellious and pre-disposed to vice. They viewed young men's peer group activity as a breeding ground for such vice. The advent of Reformed ideology in England seems to have precipitated a widening of the gap between the generations in social practice. Building upon Thomas's seminal work, Brigden has argued that in the Reformation era young men were attracted to the new faith because it represented an opportunity to challenge patriarchal authority. She maintains that in the process they were provided with new opportunities and excuses for disobedience that in turn magnified discord with older people.⁴⁸ Whilst I agree that the distance between younger and older people became greater, I believe that this was the product of an intensification of moralists' and magistrates' fears about youthful misbehaviour rather than any intentional desire from young men to defy their elders. I have observed how those adults in authority became increasingly suspicious of gatherings of young men; Archbishop Grindal of York forbade May-games, dancing and other forms of 'misrule' in 1574, for example.⁴⁹ These activities had previously been enjoyed by the young; at the parish of St Ewen's in Bristol in 1468, it was of course both young males and young females who had danced at May-time to raise funds.⁵⁰

⁴⁶ York, YCA, York House Book 32, f. 309r.

⁴⁷ See K.V. Thomas, 'Age and authority in early modern England', *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 62 (1976), pp. 205-48.

⁴⁸ Brigden, 'Youth and the English Reformation', pp. 89, 91.

⁴⁹ J.S. Purvis (ed.), *Tudor parish documents of the diocese of York* (Cambridge, 1948), pp. 160-1.

⁵⁰ A.F. Johnston and S.B. Maclean, 'Reformation and resistance in Thames/Severn parishes: the dramatic witness', in K.L. French, G.G. Gibbs and B.A. Kümin (eds), *The parish in English life, 1400-1600* (Manchester, 1997), p. 184; Goldberg (ed.), *Women in England*, p. 262. See B.R. Masters and E. Ralph (eds), *The church book of St Ewen's Bristol 1454-1584*, Bristol and Gloucestershire Archaeological Society, 6 (1967), pp. 68, 77.

Protestant ideology served to uphold the values of hierarchy and patriarchy rather than attack them. I would argue that the actions of young men were determined not by a rejection of the social order of which patriarchal authority was an integral part but rather were motivated by peer solidarity and a common identity. For ‘Taner, sarvaunt to William Pullayn of Skotton’ and his accomplices, who were likely fellow male servants, participating in the ‘riotouse breking [of] the glase wyndos’ in the city of York in 1554 was probably the result of a collective enthusiasm for the Protestant faith and a desire to act together to retaliate against the re-introduction of the Mystery plays by a religiously conservative city council.⁵¹ A recognition of the shared inclination towards Protestant ideology amongst young men was probably also the reason why the Mayor and Aldermen banned them from assembling in London during Shrovetide in 1578 and again had to order masters to keep their apprentices and journeymen indoors at this time in 1596.⁵² Shrovetide was essentially a Catholic tradition that had authorised challenge to the normal order of society before the penitential restraint of the Lenten period set in.⁵³ It is apparent that magisterial fears and suspicions about young men challenging authority were intensified at this time. It was the negative attitudes of those with patriarchal authority towards young men that strengthened the notion that older and younger were operating at variance.

Modern social scientific research may not have reached a consensus about the nature and function of peer influence in the life of the adolescent but it does uniformly agree that peer associations are a key characteristic of this phase of the lifecycle.⁵⁴ Brigden has suggested that ‘solidarity’ amongst urban male apprentices

⁵¹ Raine (ed.), *York civic records*, 5, p. 118.

⁵² Rappaport, *Worlds within worlds*, p. 9.

⁵³ R. Hutton, *Stations of the sun: a history of the ritual year in Britain* (Oxford, 1996), ch. 15 (p. 151).

⁵⁴ See K. Manheim, ‘The problem of generations’, in P. Kecskemeti (ed.), *Karl Manheim: essays on the sociology of knowledge* (London, 1952), pp. 276-322; K. Davis, ‘The sociology of parent-youth conflict’, *American Sociological Review*, 5:4 (1940), pp. 523-35; B.B. Brown and C. Klute, ‘Friendship, cliques and crowds’, in G.R. Adams and M.D. Berzonsky (eds), *Blackwell handbook of adolescence* (Oxford, 2003), p. 330; C. Wallace, and S. Kovatcheva, *Youth in society: the construction and deconstruction of youth in east and west Europe* (New York, 1999), p. 125; D.A. Pardini, R. Loeber and M. Stouthamer-Loeber, ‘Developmental shifts in parent and peer influences on boys’ beliefs about delinquent behaviour’, *Journal of Research on Adolescence*, 15:3 (2005), pp. 299-323 (pp. 300, 317); L. Mayeux and A.H.N. Cillessen, ‘Peer influence and the development of antisocial behaviour’, in R.C.M.E. Engels, M. Kerr and H. Stattin (eds), *Friends, lovers and groups* (Chichester, 2007), pp. 33-46; Niles, ‘The youth culture controversy’, p. 266; F. Elkin and W.A. Westley, ‘The protective environment and adolescent socialisation’, *Social Forces*, 35:3 (1957), pp. 243-9; J. Wyn and R.

in the early modern period was at the expense of deference to their elders. Griffiths has further argued that 'aggression' characterised early modern male youth culture as much as 'convivial solidarity'.⁵⁵ I have uncovered a distinctive youth culture amongst young men across both the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries that was defined by peer interaction and a desire to cultivate a homosocial peer identity. My analysis reveals that an inclination to provoke generational conflict was not an integral part of this homosocial identity. This identity was shaped from a desire to socialise with peers rather than to incite conflict by antagonism and rebellion. Moralists, preachers, craft masters and civic magistrates – the men who wrote conduct literature, publically complained about youthful behaviour and made by-laws – may have held perceptions to the contrary but this was not the primary motive of the young. It was not the conduct of male youth per se, but rather the essentially negative moralistic and magisterial views about the nature of young men and their socialising that caused tensions, real or imagined, and created social distance between older and younger people.

Young men in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries aspired to the normative cultural ideal which was to marry and to become householders. I have already discussed how within the context of a patriarchal society this dominant model of adulthood was effectively inaccessible for women because they would always be subordinate in marriage and householding, at least until their widowhood. It was also unobtainable for unmarried journeymen. Since the attainment of household status was deemed a key source of social stability in fifteenth- and sixteenth-century society, single journeymen – who exercised authority over neither wife nor household dependants – often aroused magisterial fears.⁵⁶ Not being householders themselves or under the supervision of a master or mistress, they were perceived to be outside of the boundaries of control.⁵⁷ This was the concern

White, *Rethinking youth* (London, 1997), ch. 4; B.B. Brown and J.P. Bakken, 'Parenting and peer relationships: re-invigorating relationships on family-peer linkages in adolescence', *Journal of Research on Adolescence*, 21:1 (2011), pp. 159-61; F.P. Rice, *The adolescent: developments, relationships and culture* (Boston, 1975), pp. 155-9; G.T. Jurkovic and D. Ulrici, 'Empirical perspectives on adolescents and their families', in L. L'Abate (ed.), *The handbook of family psychology and therapy*, 1 (Homewood, 1985), pp. 215-57; Smith, 'Perceived peer and parental influences', pp. 132, 151.

⁵⁵ See Brigden, 'Youth and the English Reformation', p. 89; Griffiths, *Youth and authority*, pp. 200-21 (p. 208).

⁵⁶ Goldberg, 'Migration, youth and gender', pp. 96-9. See also L.R. Poos, *A rural society after the Black Death: Essex 1350-1525* (Cambridge, 1991), ch. 10.

⁵⁷ Goldberg, 'Migration, youth and gender', p. 98.

in London in 1415 when journeymen were forbidden from living in companies by themselves because they needed 'a superior to rule them' and keep them in 'stable governance'.⁵⁸ It is further reflected when poor labourers were placed under curfew by the civic authorities in York in 1530.⁵⁹ Such men occupied a quasi-adolescent phase because, unlike adolescents, they did not live under the authority of a father or a master but, like adolescents, they had not reached the full autonomy of adult status. The significance of the aspiration to become a master, husband and householder for a young man within an urban artisanal context is highlighted by the case of the apprentice John Warington. In 1417, Warington's irate master made him marry Margaret Barker, the fellow servant he had seduced. Warington asked his master to make a marriage with Margaret more attractive – very likely, as Goldberg has suggested, by helping him to set up his own business – before he would agree to take her as his wife.⁶⁰ For Warington, the idea of getting married without having a workshop to manage and to provide the livelihood to sustain a family was unthinkable.

The male and female experiences of adolescence were different and increasingly divergent over time. Bennett has challenged the notion that a 'great transformation' occurred between the medieval and early modern eras.⁶¹ Having studied the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries as a whole, I would argue that gradual changes did occur, notably from the later fifteenth century onwards. The more conservative and hierarchical gender ideologies that became especially visible over this period were lent particular strength with the advent of Reformed ideology. The result was that the distance between the male and female experience became increasingly wide. Young men continued to have ready access to service and they were able to take part in an age- and gender-based youth culture that promoted peer interactions and the cultivation of a collective identity. They aspired to a model of adulthood that involved getting married and establishing their own household, which many were ultimately able to achieve. Young men had the most definite experience of both adolescence and adulthood. Access to and exit

⁵⁸ Riley (ed.), *Memorials of London*, pp. 609-12.

⁵⁹ Raine (ed.), *York civic records*, 3, p. 134.

⁶⁰ See Goldberg (ed.), *Women in England*, pp. 110-14; Goldberg, 'Masters and men', p. 59.

⁶¹ See J.M. Bennett, 'Medieval women, modern women: across the great divide', in D. Aers (ed.), *Culture and history, 1350-1600: essays on English communities, identities and writing* (New York, 1992), pp. 147-75.

from adolescence was determined by gender. This in turn was affected by social changes over the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

In contrast to the male experience, the female experience of adolescence was significantly more muted. As opportunities for those from moderately well-off backgrounds to go into service declined from the later fifteenth century onwards so they became more dependent on parents. Accordingly, those young women who remained at home were largely excluded from the sort of adolescence accessible to most young men in towns and may not have experienced an adolescence at all. Even the young women who still went into service had a much lesser experience of adolescence than their male counterparts. Females were subordinated to fathers, masters and ultimately husbands within the context of the patriarchal family and of society. Moreover, young women had no distinctive female youth culture; they were always assimilated into a larger feminine cultural identity. As such, they were largely unable to achieve a degree of autonomy comparable to that of males. Gender shaped the whole experience of adolescence. Whilst young men were socialised to become *adult*, young women were socialised to be *feminine*.

Possibilities for Further Research

This thesis has raised questions which have implications for the direction of future research. One further aspect of study could be drawn from the anthropological inquiry of Schlegel and Barry who argue that in cultures where girls marry upon or shortly after puberty they do not achieve adult status until they become mothers, usually a few years later.⁶² It would be fruitful to extend my analysis of larger urban communities to consider how far females who married young and continued to live with their parents or moved in with their in-laws within other communities, such as peasant society or aristocratic society, did actually achieve some kind of adulthood with the onset of motherhood in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Moreover, since the studies of Wrigley and Schofield, Goldberg and Beattie respectively have all variously demonstrated that there was a significant minority of people, both male and female, who remained unmarried in the medieval and

⁶² See A. Schlegel and H. Barry III, *Adolescence: an anthropological inquiry* (New York, 1991).

early modern periods, more work needs to be done to investigate further their position in society.⁶³ This thesis has concentrated specifically on larger urban communities, so it would be worthwhile undertaking a study of youth in smaller urban communities. It would also be particularly valuable to explore in more detail the experiences of young men and young women in rural areas. This would enable a fuller comparison between the experiences of young people in urban areas and those of their rural counterparts to be made. Doing so would mean that we could see how far my conclusion, that young men were socialised to be *adult* and young women were socialised to be *feminine*, stands up more generally. Examining these issues more widely would allow for the development of a more comprehensive picture of the process of becoming adult in fifteenth- and sixteenth-century England.

⁶³ See Wrigley and Schofield, *The population history of England*; Goldberg, *Women, work and life cycle*; C. Beattie, *Medieval single women: the politics of social classification in late medieval England* (Oxford, 2007).

Abbreviations

BL	British Library, London
Consistory Database	S. McSheffrey (ed. and trans.), 'Consistory: testimony in the late medieval London Consistory Court'
CP	Cause Paper
EEBO	Early English Books Online
EETS	Early English Text Society
JP	Justice of the Peace
LMA	London Metropolitan Archives, City of London
MED	Middle English Dictionary
MS	Manuscript
NS	New Series
ODNB	Oxford Dictionary of National Biography
OED	Oxford English Dictionary
OS	Original Series
YASRS	York Archaeological Society Record Series
York, BI	Borthwick Institute for Archives, York
York, YCA	York City Archives, York

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