Learning Parenting: Family, schooling and childhood in England, c. 1930-1970

Eleanor Alice Murray

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The candidate confirms that the work submitted is her own and that appropriate credit has been given where reference has been made to the work of others.

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Abstract

This thesis reshapes understandings of how skills, ideas and practices related to parenting were transmitted between generations in mid-twentieth century England. It draws on three collections of schoolchildren's essays, which span from the 1930s to the 1960s, as its main source material. The thesis argues that in order to understand how parenting identities and practices changed over time, historians need to return to the beginning of life course by examining children's voices. The thesis examines what adults sought to *teach* children about parenthood, before exploring the shifting informal means through which children themselves learnt about and made sense of parenting across the period, encompassing popular culture, familial relationships, pretend play and imagination.

The thesis makes three major contributions to the field. Firstly, it demonstrates that shifts in attitudes towards childrearing were driven by the experiences of working- and middle-class children growing up across the mid-century, rather than adults and parents. This period was marked by an 'intensification' of motherhood and fatherhood, which children contributed to significantly. Secondly, the thesis expands definitions of 'parenting'. It disentangles the emotions of childrearing from the biological state of *parenthood*. Through doing so, the thesis reveals that children developed parental ways of thinking and feeling, long before having offspring of their own. Thirdly, the thesis demonstrates the methodological value of using children's voices to explore the intergenerational transmission of parenting. Adults recalled learning about parenting as children in passive ways, by observing and helping their mothers and fathers at home. In contrast, children's voices reveal that girls and boys actively emulated, adapted and rejected their parents' practices, helping us to understand generational shifts in parenting identities and practices. Through focussing on children's voices, the thesis contributes to historical understandings of the life course, parenting, subjectivity and emotion.

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Abbreviations

CLS: Centre for Longitudinal Studies

DHSS: Department of Health and Social Security

MOA: Mass Observation Archive

NAMCW: National Association for Maternity and Child Welfare

NAMCWCPIM: National Association of Maternity and Child Welfare Centres and for the Prevention of Infant Mortality

NCDS: National Child Development Study

n.p.: Used to refer to story papers and comics with no page numbers

SN: Study Number

TC: Topic Collection

WC: Worktown Collection

Introduction

This thesis explores the ways in which children growing up in England between the 1930s and 1960s learnt about and understood values, practices and skills related to parenting. It argues that in order to understand how parenting identities and cultures shifted across the twentieth century, historians need to return to the beginning of the life course, to examine the mediums through which children first learnt about parenthood. This thesis uses the contemporaneous school essays of children aged between seven and fourteen as its main source material and brings together three major sets of schoolchildren's writings, each comprising of hundreds of essays. These are essays from the Mass Observation Archive, which were written by schoolchildren in and around Bolton between 1937 and 1938, essays submitted to the Camberwell Public Libraries Essay Competitions from 1951 to 1952, 1954 to 1956 and in 1961, as well as essays written by eleven-year-olds from across the country for the National Child Development Study in 1969. It conducts a qualitative analysis of children's descriptions of their family lives as well as their imaginations of their future lives as parents.

This thesis makes three significant contributions to the history of parenting. Firstly, it rethinks the mechanisms through which parenting identities changed across mid-twentieth century England. This period was marked by an 'intensification' of motherhood and fatherhood, particularly after the Second World War, in which ideas about what parenting involved expanded.[1] Historians have argued that the intensification of parenting

[1] Laura King, *Family Men: Fatherhood and Masculinity in Britain, 1914-1960* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), pp. 86, 89–90; Elizabeth Roberts, *Women and Families: An Oral History, 1940-1970* (Oxford: John Wiley & Sons, 1995), pp. 143, 153; Janet Finch and Penny Summerfield, 'Social Reconstruction and the Emergence of Companionate Marriage, 1945-59', in *Marriage, Domestic Life and Social Change: Writings for Jacqueline Burgoyne, 1944-88*, ed. by David Clark (London: Routledge, 1991), pp. 6–27 (pp. 16, 25–26); Deborah Thom, '"Beating Children Is Wrong": Domestic Life, Psychological Thinking and the Permissive Turn"', in *The Politics of Domestic Authority in Britain since 1800*, ed. by Lucy Delap, Ben Griffin, and Abigail Wills (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), pp. 261–83 (pp. 263, 269).

was driven by decreasing family sizes and improving living standards on the one hand, and increased cultural expectations of parenthood on the other.[2] As Laura King puts it, 'As parents were told of their vast influence on their children, more of them had the means available to deliver living standards they thought appropriate, thus giving their children the best start in life possible'.[3] Many working-class men and women raising families after the Second World War wanted to have more emotionally involved relationships with their children and provide them with a '"better"' upbringing than they had had earlier in the century, and had the resources to 'put this change into practice'.[4] In this sense, historians of family life argue that intensifying experiences and expectations of parenting were driven by adults.

In this thesis, I argue that historians have placed too much emphasis on the birth of a child and the raising of small children as the force producing change in parenting identities and cultures in the mid-twentieth century. This thesis shows that change was rooted much earlier in the life course than historians have previously recognised and draws on children's writings to demonstrate this. The essay collections studied in this thesis contain writings produced by three cohorts of children growing up at ten-year intervals across the mid-century. They provide a clear insight into the childhood experiences and attitudes of three generations of future parents. The Mass Observation Archive represents a generation of individuals born in the 1920s who would go onto become parents during

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[2] Roberts, *Women and Families*, pp. 143, 153; Laura Tisdall, 'Education, Parenting and Concepts of Childhood in England, c. 1945 to c. 1979', *Contemporary British History*, 31.1 (2017), 24–46 (p. 36); Selina Todd and Hilary Young, 'Baby-Boomers to "Beanstalkers"', *Cultural and Social History*, 9.3 (2012), 451–67 (pp. 459–60).

[3] Laura King, 'Hidden Fathers? The Significance of Fatherhood in Mid-Twentieth-Century Britain', *Contemporary British History*, 26.1 (2012), 25–46 (p. 28).

[4] Roberts, *Women and Families*, p. 143; King, *Family Men*, pp. 99–101; Sally Alexander, 'Becoming a Woman in London in the 1920s and 1930s', in *Metropolis: Histories and Representations of London Since 1800*, ed. by David Feldman and Stedman Jones Gareth (London: Routledge, 1989), pp. 245–71 (pp. 262–63); On change between generations see Lynn Abrams, 'Mothers and Daughters: Negotiating the Discourse on the "Good Woman" in 1950s and 1960s Britain', in *The Sixties and Beyond: Dechristianization in North America and Western Europe, 1945-2000*, ed. by Nancy Christie and Michael Gauvreau (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2013), pp. 60–83 (pp. 68–69, 79); Todd and Young, pp. 459–60.

the late 1940s, 1950s and possibly into the 1960s. The Camberwell collection represents those born in the late 1930s and 1940s (and the 1950s for the 1961 essays) who became parents mostly during the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s. The NCDS represents those born in 1958 who became parents during the 1980s, 1990s and 2000s.[5] Rather than comparing the experiences of different generations of parents across the twentieth century, as historians and sociologists have done in previous studies, this thesis uses children's writings to show that significant changes went on *between* generations, which drove shifts in attitudes towards parenting roles.[6]

Children's writings provide a fuller picture of the way attitudes towards parenthood shifted over time. This thesis shows that children's perceptions of what parenting involved were already beginning to expand in the 1930s as a result of decreasing family sizes. Changing family structures and ways of living, as well as the growing psychological importance attached to parent-child relationships, continued to profoundly affect what children expected of their parents across the period. By the late 1960s, children increasingly saw motherhood and fatherhood as adult identities in their own right. Boys and girls were acutely aware of the emotional demands of childrearing and had ambitious plans to combine caring for young infants with paid work when they became parents in the future. Children's ideas about childrearing in the 1960s more closely mirrored attitudes which emerged at the end of the century, rather than attitudes held by parents at

[5] The approximate dates at which these children became parents have been calculated using the average age of marriage as well as the average amount of time between when couples married and had their last child. The average age of first marriage amongst women in 1935 was 25, which had fallen to 22.6 by 1971 and later rose to 28.9 by 1995. For men these ages were 27, 24.6 and 29.6 respectively. The average time between marriage and the birth of last child (in families with three children) for those who married between 1946 and 1950 was 10.2 years, and 7.8 years for those who married between 1956 and 1960. The spacing between first and last birth also seemed to be getting shorter into the 1980s. See David Coleman, 'Population and Family', in *Twentieth-Century British Social Trends*, ed. by A.H. Halsey and Josephine Webb, 3rd edn (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2000), pp. 27–93 (pp. 42–45, 56–58).

[6] For examples of studies which compare change across different generations of parents see Angela Davis, *Modern Motherhood: Women and Family in England, 1945 - 2000* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2012); Julia Brannen, Peter Moss, and Ann Mooney, *Working and Caring over the Twentieth Century* (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004).

the time they were growing up.[7] In the 1950s and 1960s, child-centred childrearing advice was dominant and attitudes towards gendered childrearing roles shifted only tentatively amongst adults.[8] Examining the voices of boys and girls growing up in the post-war period shows that they had more certain ideas about the value of establishing routines for their infants and positive attitudes about men and women combining a career with parenting. The ideas that individuals developed as *children* were instrumental in creating later changes in parenting identities.

Secondly, this thesis makes a conceptual contribution to the field. It reconceptualises what 'parenting' means and rethinks how the term should be used by historians and scholars in other disciplines. Sociologists Ellie Lee, Jennie Bristow, Charlotte Fairclough and Jan Macvarish argue that the verb 'parenting' came into common usage in the 1970s to denote a switch in cultural emphasis away from 'parenthood' - the biological act of having a child - to '[an] explicit focus on the parent and their behaviour', due to an increased scrutiny of parents in this period.[9] This interpretation has been challenged by Siân Pooley and Kaveri Qureshi who question 'whether such linguistic shifts in the expert literature reflect meaningful changes in the pressures experienced by families'.[10] This thesis further complicates Lee, Bristow, Fairclough and Macvarish's interpretation of 'parenting'. It argues that the term can also be used to analyse parenting behaviours and practices in isolation, disentangling them from the practical act of bearing and raising a child.

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[7] On changing experiences of motherhood see Davis, *Modern Motherhood*, pp. 134–36; 166–68; Ina Zweiniger-Bargielowska, 'Housewifery', in *Women in Twentieth-Century Britain: Social, Cultural and Political Change*, ed. by Ina Zweiniger-Bargielowska (Oxon: Routledge, 2014), pp. 149–64 (p. 158); On changing experiences of fatherhood see Julia Brannen and Ann Nilsen, 'From Fatherhood to Fathering: Transmission and Change among British Fathers in Four-Generation Families', *Sociology*, 40.2 (2006), 335–52 (pp. 340–41).

[8] Roberts, *Women and Families*, p. 150; Davis, *Modern Motherhood*, pp. 119–30; King, *Family Men*, p. 190.

[9] Ellie Lee and others, *Parenting Culture Studies* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), pp. 6–8.

[10] Siân Pooley and Kaveri Qureshi, 'Introduction', in *Parenthood between Generations: Transforming Reproductive Cultures*, ed. by Siân Pooley and Kaveri Qureshi (New York: Berghahn Books, 2016), pp. 1–42 (p. 10).

Parenting is much more than raising a child. It is a relationship, a way of thinking and feeling as well as a position of authority.[11]

Scholars assume that becoming a parent is a transformative personal experience, and that it is only after having a child of their own that people can start to meaningfully reflect on their own experiences of being parented and access the sensation of caring for a child as a *parent*, instead of as a sibling, cousin, aunt or uncle.[12] Through examining children's essays however, this thesis argues that individuals growing up in the mid-century developed parent-like ways of thinking and feeling affection. Children gained a feeling of parental responsibility as a result of the day-to-day familial roles they were entrusted to perform by their mothers, as well as during the times they had to unexpectedly step into their parents' shoes when they fell ill. For children, parenting represented a state of mind rather than a life stage to be entered into once having a baby of their own. Parenting was an identity that children adopted, to add to and justify the position of authority they believed they held within the family. In this way, this thesis argues that individuals fashioned parenting identities for themselves and learnt how to perform family practices in parental ways long before they had children of their own.

This argument leads to the third major contribution that this thesis makes. It demonstrates the methodological value of using children's writings to study the intergenerational transmission of ideas and practices related to parenting in the past, a field which has been

[11] In thinking about the identities, emotions and roles involved in parenting see King, *Family Men*, pp. 5, 15; Joanne Begiato, '"Think Wot a Mother Must Feel": Parenting in English Pauper Letters C. 1760–1834', *Family & Community History*, 13.1 (2010), 5–19 (pp. 10–16); Judith Suissa, 'Untangling the Mother Knot: Some Thoughts on Parents, Children and Philosophers of Education', *Ethics and Education*, 1.1 (2006), 65–77 (p. 73).

[12] Angela Davis, 'Generational Change and Continuity Among British Mothers: The Sharing of Beliefs, Knowledge and Practices c. 1940-1990', in *Parenthood between Generations*, ed. by Pooley and Qureshi, pp. 207–28 (pp. 216–19); Kaveri Qureshi, 'First-Time Parenthood among Migrant Pakistanis: Gender and Generation in the Postpartum Period', in *Parenthood between Generations*, ed. by Pooley and Qureshi, pp. 160–80 (pp. 161–62, 169–70); Suissa, pp. 69–70; Juliet Mitchell, *Siblings: Sex and Violence* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2008), p. 168.

dominated by studies of adult voices and the advice given to parents at the time.[13] Historians of childhood are increasingly drawing on sources created by children, where possible, to shed light on the subjectivities and emotions of those growing up in the past.[14] Children's contemporaneous writings are a distinctly different type of source material to oral testimony and autobiography, or contemporaneous records written about children by adults, which historians have commonly used to study the lives of children and adolescents.[15] Oral testimonies and autobiographies are retrospective. They therefore tell us about how people remember their experiences of childhood later in life, and the way people use memories of growing up to construct a narrative about themselves, rather than about their lived experiences *as* children.[16] Children's writings, by contrast, reveal what it felt like to be a child at the time and allow historians to explore how children made sense of their place in the world around them.[17] They give us an insight into processes of socialisation from the 'children's vantage'.[18]

Children are a crucial but currently missing link in histories of the intergenerational transmission of parenthood. Historians and scholars in other disciplines often favour

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[13] Davis, 'Generational Change and Continuity', pp. 216–24; Lucinda McCray Beier, 'Expertise and Control: Childbearing in Three Twentieth-Century Working-Class Lancashire Communities', *Bulletin of the History of Medicine*, 78.2 (2004), 379–409 (p. 393); Pooley and Qureshi, p. 5.

[14] Hester Barron and Claire Langhamer, 'Feeling through Practice: Subjectivity and Emotion in Children's Writing', *Journal of Social History*, 51.1 (2017), 101–23; James Greenhalgh, '"Till We Hear the Last All Clear": Gender and the Presentation of Self in Young Girls' Writing about the Bombing of Hull during the Second World War', *Gender & History*, 26.1 (2014), 167–83; Claire Halstead, '"Dear Mummy and Daddy": Reading Wartime Letters from British Children Evacuated to Canada During the Second World War', in *Children, Childhood and Youth in the British World*, ed. by Shirleene Robinson and Simon Sleight (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), pp. 92–108.

[15] For an example of a study which uses retrospective testimony see Carol Dyhouse, *Girls Growing Up in Late Victorian and Edwardian England* (London: Routledge, 1981), pp. 3–39; For an example of a study which uses adult writings about children see Mathew Thomson, *Lost Freedom: The Landscape of the Child and the British Post-War Settlement* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

[16] Alessandro Portelli, 'What Makes Oral History Different', in *The Oral History Reader*, ed. by Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson, 3rd edn (Oxon: Routledge, 2016), pp. 48–58 (p. 52); Sarah Kenny, '"Basically You Were Either a Mainstream Sort of Person or You Went to the Leadmill and the Limit": Understanding Post-War British Youth Culture Through Oral History', in *Children's Voices from the Past: New Historical and Interdisciplinary Perspectives*, ed. by Kristine Moruzi, Nell Musgrove, and Carla Pascoe Leahy (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), pp. 233–59 (pp. 237–38); Charlotte Greenhalgh, *Aging in Twentieth-Century Britain* (Oakland, California: University of California Press, 2018), pp. 135–38.

[17] Barron and Langhamer, 'Feeling through Practice', pp. 105–6.

[18] Carolyn Steedman, *The Tidy House: Little Girls Writing* (London: Virago Press, 1982), p. 31.

using adult voices and retrospective testimony to examine cross-generational transmission because, as Paul Thompson argues, life stories reveal 'the complexity of the transmission of family influences' by bringing together 'direct personal testimony with collective memory'.[19] Focussing on adult accounts, however, limits our understandings of how intergenerational transmission works at the start of the life course. Historians have demonstrated that childhood was important in the passing on of parenthood in this period, as memories of being parented when they were young profoundly affected people's mothering and fathering identities later in life.[20] However, parents attach new meanings to their relationships with their mothers and fathers and the skills they learnt as children in light of their experiences of raising their own offspring, which obscures the patterns of learning that happened when they were children.[21]

This thesis rectifies the overemphasis on adult voices in historical studies of parenting. Children's accounts have been used by sociologists in a study of the intergenerational transmission of religious giving, to explore the 'potential impacts of parental methods' on children's behaviours and attitudes, while other sociologist have explored the way children challenge their parent's expectations.[22] I similarly draw on children's voices to demonstrate that girls and boys growing up in the mid-century learnt about parenting very

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[19] Paul Thompson, 'Family Myths, Models and Denials in Shaping of Individual Life Paths', in *Between Generations: Family Models, Myths and Memories*, ed. by Daniel Bertaux and Paul Thompson (London: Transaction Publishers, 2009), pp. 13–38 (p. 15); Pooley and Qureshi, p. 5; Brannen, Moss and Mooney; Richard Hall, 'The Emotional Lives and Legacies of Fathers and Sons in Britain, 1945-1974'(unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Cambridge, 2019), pp. 140-151; Joanne Begiato, 'The "Afterlife" of Parenting: Memory, Parentage, and Personal Identity in Britain c. 1760-1830', *Journal of Family History*, 35.3 (2010), 249–70 (pp. 256–59); Abrams, pp. 68–69, 79; Carolyn Steedman, *Landscape for a Good Woman: A Story of Two Women* (London: Virago, 1986; repr. 2005), pp. 6–8, 16–18.

[20] Roberts, *Women and Families*, p. 143; Davis, 'Generational Change and Continuity', pp. 216–24; Alexander, pp. 262–63.

[21] Brannen, Moss, and Mooney, pp. 27–28; Elizabeth Roberts, *A Woman's Place: An Oral History of Working Class Women, 1890-1940* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1984), pp. 33–34.

[22] Patricia Snell Herzog and Scott Mitchell, 'Intergenerational Transmission of Religious Giving: Instilling Giving Habits across the Life Course', *Religions*, 7.7 (2016), 93 (pp. 1, 10–15); Julie Seymour and Sally McNamee, 'Being Parented? Children and Young People's Engagement with Parenting Activities', in *Learning from the Children: Childhood, Culture and Identity in a Changing World*, ed. by Jacqueline Waldren and Ignacy-Marek Kaminski (New York: Berghahn Books, 2014), pp. 92–107 (pp. 93, 101–2).

differently to the way adults reflecting back on their childhoods remembered later in life. Historians who have drawn on oral testimony suggest that children learnt about what it meant to be a mother or a father in passive ways, such as through watching and helping their parents at home.[23] By contrast, I reveal that children used the resources available to them, including pretend play and imagination, to *become* parents. Children created new shared norms with their peers about what they expected of mothers and fathers and envisaged new possibilities for what parent-child relationships could be like, which contributed to changes in ideas about gendered childrearing roles.

Furthermore, using three sets of children's essays together provides a valuable opportunity to examine the way processes of intergenerational transmission changed over time. Previous historical studies of children's writings have tended to consist of detailed analyses of specific sets of essays or letters.[24] These studies provide insights into the experience of being a child in specific communities and time periods. By comparison, bringing together children's essays that span the mid-century in this thesis sheds light on the way children's views of their role in family life changed, and how this affected the lives they would potentially go onto lead as parents. Drawing on children's writings, therefore, fundamentally alters our understandings of how generational influences shaped change and continuity in parenting across the period.

Intergenerational transmission of parenting knowledge

The study of intergenerational transmission is a broad field in which scholars have explored how, partly consciously, partly subconsciously, values related to work, migration, education and family life are transmitted from older to younger generations

[23] Davis, 'Generational Change and Continuity', pp. 212-216; Alexander, pp. 262-263; see also Steedman, *The Tidy House*, p. 31.
[24] For example Emily C. Bruce, '"Each Word Shows How You Love Me": The Social Literacy Practice of Children's Letter Writing (1780–1860)', *Paedagogica Historica*, 50.3 (2014), 247–64; Halstead; Barron and Langhamer, 'Feeling through Practice'.

within families.[25] These studies explore not only what values are passed on, but also the way individuals choose to accept or reject their 'intergenerational inheritance'.[26] Within this broader field, scholars from different disciplines are increasingly examining how ideas, practices and cultures of care specifically related to childrearing are transmitted between parents and children.[27] The most significant contribution to this field thus far has been a collection of chapters written by anthropologists, historians and sociologists entitled *Parenthood Between Generations* edited by Pooley and Qureshi. This volume explores the complexities of intergenerational transmission, such as how individuals learn 'socially-constructed and historically-specific' forms of parenting, the way transmission is shaped in different ways by gender, class, sexuality, age, ethnicity and nationality, and how it shifts over historical time, as well as the relationship between prescription and practice. [28]

Their book is particularly valuable as it outlines four specific processes through which the intergenerational transmission of parenting takes place. These are implicit normative expectations, moral judgement, habituation and memory. However, Pooley and Qureshi concentrate on processes of transmission in adulthood, by exploring the experiences of people who had had, or were contemplating having, a baby of their own. They draw on the accounts of men and women to examine how 'parents and their *adult* children share values, ideas and practices concerning the bearing and bringing-up of children'.[29]

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[25] Daniel Bertaux and Paul Thompson, *Pathways to Social Class: A Qualitative Approach to Social Mobility* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2007), pp. 33–40; Thompson; Mary Chamberlain, 'Family and Identity: Barbadian Migrants to Britain', in *Caribbean Migration: Globalised Identities*, ed. by Mary Chamberlain (London: Routledge, 1998), pp. 152–69.
[26] Thompson, Family Myths, p. 15.
[27] Brannen and Nilsen; Bob Pease, 'Beyond The Father Wound: Memory-Work And The Deconstruction Of The Father-Son Relationship', *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Family Therapy*, 21.1 (2000), 9–15.
[28] Pooley and Qureshi, p. 21.
[29] Pooley and Qureshi, pp. 22–30, 5 (emphasis my own).

This thesis builds on Pooley and Qureshi's work by exploring how intergenerational transmission works in childhood. The parent-child relationship works very differently at the start of the life course to the way it does in the middle. Young children live their lives in the context of 'structural and generational' hierarchies, with parents exercising control over them.[30] Despite this, recent sociological literature shows that 'children do not simply passively accept the dictates of their parents' or 'adapt themselves to what their elders say and do'.[31] Rather, they develop strategies to achieve a sense of autonomy over their day-to-day lives. Samantha Punch's study of children growing up in rural Bolivia, for example, demonstrates that children were expected to help with housework from an early age. However, children found ways to avoid particularly arduous jobs by delegating them to younger siblings or sought to combine running errands with meeting up with friends, to make dull tasks more interesting.[32]

In a study of Norwegian children's contributions to domestic work in the 1980s, Anne Solberg argues that children who independently undertook large amounts of housework saw themselves as autonomous members of the household and, in some cases, viewed their position in the family as 'the same, in principle' to that of their parents.[33] These studies are important for thinking about transmission, as they show that children did not accept the values that their elders may have wished to pass on to them. Rather, children negotiated the roles they played and established identities for themselves within the family unit.

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[30] Seymour and McNamee, p. 103.
[31] Seymour and McNamee, p. 95; Anne Solberg, 'Negotiating Childhood: Changing Constructions of Age for Norwegian Childhood', in *Constructing and Reconstructing Childhood: Contemporary Issues in the Sociological Study of Childhood*, ed. by Allison James and Alan Prout, 2nd edn (Oxon: Routledge, 1997; repr. 2015), pp. 111–27 (p. 112).
[32] Samantha Punch, 'Negotiating Autonomy: Childhoods in Rural Bolivia', in *Conceptualizing Child-Adult Relations*, ed. by Leena Alanen and Berry Mayall (London: Routledge Falmer, 2001), pp. 23–36 (pp. 30–32).
[33] Solberg, p. 118.

Children's writings provide a way for historians to explore parent-child relationships in the past, from the perspective of young children. Much like contemporary sociological studies, children's writings reveal the way children thought about their relationships with their parents and the expectations adults placed on them. Carolyn Steedman demonstrates this in a study of a story co-written by three eight-year-old working-class schoolgirls in 1972. The girls wrote a story about a fictional family with young children. The story reflected the 'values and norms' these girls had learnt from their relationships with older generations, but their writing also provided an insight into how they were 'questioning those values and … questioning the future that they saw before them'.[34] Similarly, in their study of the emotional practices of children growing up in 1930s Bolton, Hester Barron and Claire Langhamer argue that historians should not presume that children were socialised into thinking and feeling in ways expected by adults. Rather, they show that children attached their own meanings to their experiences and relationships and argue that children's essays reveal the way they 'negotiated their own place within the world'.[35]

Children are capable of writing in 'a deliberate and highly structured way', and of representing themselves in ways which highlight their autonomy.[36] In a study of schoolgirls' writings about what they did during the bombing of Hull in the Second World War, James Greenhalgh shows that girls actively tried to construe themselves as 'useful members of the family, and the war effort'. Girls emphasised the part they played in taking care of their families and homes, thereby '[blurring] boundaries between … mother and child'.[37] This thesis contributes to this literature, by using children's writings to demonstrate that children's participation in specific forms of parenting work did not '[blur] the boundaries' of generational hierarchies but collapsed them altogether.

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[34] Steedman, *The Tidy House*, pp. 31–32.
[35] Barron and Langhamer, 'Feeling through Practice', pp. 104, 112–15, 117.
[36] Steedman, *The Tidy House*, pp. 28, 66.
[37] James Greenhalgh, pp. 176–78.

To understand how children learnt about and identified with parenting roles, I adapt Pooley and Qureshi's framework of transmission. Two of Pooley and Qureshi's processes will be important here, moral judgement and habituation. Implicit normative expectations, which relates to the way 'older generations communicate taken for granted normative expectations concerning *child-bearing* to their adult children' will not be discussed here.[38] Children rarely discussed puberty or sexual relationships in their essays. This not surprising as historians have discussed the minimal amount of communication children had with their parents about menstruation and reproduction in this period, as well as the contentions surrounding sex education in school.[39] Similarly, memory, which Pooley and Qureshi describe as the way people made sense of their early experiences of being parented after having a child of their own, will not be discussed in this thesis.[40]As noted above, memory is retrospective and reveals what memories of childhood mean to people later in life, rather than about people's experiences *as* children at the time.[41]

The first process examined in this thesis is moral judgement. These are judgements about the best way to raise a child, which differ according to the historical and cultural context. Pooley and Qureshi state that they 'are the subject of explicit discussion between generations' and 'often result in the publication of prescriptive texts, the organization of programmes of inculcation and the establishment of formalized religious or ethical moral codes'.[42] Moral judgements about childrearing were not only communicated to parents but also to children. The first chapter examines the values and skills that politicians and

[38] Pooley and Qureshi, p. 22 (emphasis my own).
[39] Roberts, *A Woman's Place*, p. 16; Dyhouse, p. 21; Simon Szreter and Kate Fisher, *Sex Before the Sexual Revolution: Intimate Life in England 1918-1963* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp. 123–26; Jane Pilcher, 'School Sex Education: Policy and Practice in England 1870 to 2000', *Sex Education*, 5.2 (2005), 153–70.
[40] Pooley and Qureshi, pp. 27-29.
[41] Portelli, p. 52.
[42] Pooley and Qureshi, p. 24.

health professionals sought to teach children in parentcraft lessons at school in order to prepare them for future parenthood.

Moral values were also presented to children in books and comics. In a study of evangelical children's papers published between 1880 and 1914, Stephanie Olsen argues that writers sought to instil middle-class moral values in young male readers to prepare them for their future roles as fathers, by teaching them the importance of being temperate, religious and a dependable economic provider.[43] In their analysis of children's emotional socialisation, Ute Frevert, Pascal Eitler, Olsen and Uffa Jensen argue that childcare manuals written for adults and fiction written for children both aimed to help readers learn how to think, feel and act.[44] Alongside children's essays, this thesis explores representations of parenting and childrearing in children's weekly papers and comics. Chapter two demonstrates that psychologically influenced ideals of parenting were represented in print material for children, particularly from the post-war period. Of course, it is difficult for historians to ascertain how forms of popular culture influenced young peoples' attitudes.[45] However, this thesis examines children's papers and comics to gain a fuller picture of the models of family life that children encountered.

The second central process is *habitus*. This is 'the process by which the repetition of everyday practices produce routines and habits of the body that come to be seen as natural and unquestionable'.[46] Pooley and Qureshi explore *habitus* from the perspective of adults. In a chapter assessing the experiences of first-time motherhood among migrant Pakistani women in Britain, Qureshi argues that after the birth of a child, mothers studied how

[43] Stephanie Olsen, *Juvenile Nation: Youth, Emotions and the Making of the Modern British Citizen, 1880-1914* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2014), pp. 76–77, 80–81, 84.
[44] Ute Frevert and others, *Learning How to Feel: Children's Literature and the History of Emotional Socialization, 1870-1970* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), pp. 13–15.Learning how to feel, 13-15.
[45] Andrew Davies, *Leisure, Gender and Poverty: Working-Class Culture in Salford and Manchester, 1900-39* (Buckingham: Open University Press, 1992), pp. 94–96.
[46] Pooley and Qureshi, pp. 26–27.

older, more experienced women handled babies in an attempt to develop their maternal caregiving practices. While many first-time mothers had looked after infant siblings or cousins when they were younger, Qureshi argues that caring for a baby as a mother was a distinctly different experience to caring for a baby as an older sister, as women sought to develop very particular maternal 'nurturing capacities'.[47]

I argue that we cannot make assumptions about the differences between the subjective experiences of parents and young children without consulting the voices of children themselves. Although they were not caring for their biological children, this thesis shows that girls in the mid-century still strove to carry out their family responsibilities in ways they had seen their mothers do. To explain this, I draw on Marcel Mauss's 1935 theorisation of *habitus*:

> The child … imitates actions which have succeeded and which he has seen successfully performed by people in whom he has confidence and who have authority over him.[48]

Qureshi draws on Mauss in her analysis of first-time motherhood, to argue that habituation formed a part of women's conscious efforts to develop their maternal caregiving practices.[49] In this thesis, I use Mauss's theory to argue that girls also strove to do their homemaking and sisterly practices in specifically maternal ways. It is the 'confidence' and 'authority' which Mauss describes that are key to understanding why girls sought to imitate their mothers. Mothers were often the most prominent model of womanhood in many girls' lives.[50] Of course, in some families grandmothers, aunts and adult sisters were also important examples of femininity for young girls, but mother-

[47] Qureshi, p. 162.
[48] Marcel Mauss, 'Techniques of the Body', *Economy and Society*, 2.1 (1973), 70–88 (p. 73).
[49] Qureshi, pp. 161–62.
[50] Alexander, pp. 262–63; Davis, *Modern Motherhood*, p. 62.

daughter relationships were made distinctive by a mother's parental authority.[51] Girls sought to demonstrate that they could carry out these tasks just as capably as their mothers so as to prove their own usefulness and importance in family life in specifically gendered ways. Their desire to be like their mothers related to their wish to be seen as mature and independent, and to be taken seriously *as* children. As Jens Qvortup puts it: 'It is the fate of children to be waiting. They are waiting to become adults; to mature; to become competent; to get capabilities; to acquire rights; to become useful'.[52] In doing domestic and childrearing tasks like their mothers, a maternal authority emerged in their childhood subjectivities.

Of course, children not only tried to emulate their mothers through their practice of routine responsibilities, but also in unexpected family emergencies. Across the mid-twentieth century, mothers had to rely on their daughters and sons to stand in for them and take over for their domestic and caregiving work when they fell ill or had to be away from home. In these unexpected situations, children performed these jobs *as mothers*. This sense of inhabiting a maternal role through performing labour on their mother's behalf was more pronounced amongst children growing up in the 1950s and 1960s, as they were generally less involved in time- and labour-intensive domestic routines than children in previous generations had been.[53]

In his 1977 work on *habitus*, Pierre Bourdieu argued that people's actions, behaviours and practices are 'charged with a host of social meanings and values'. Children come to understand those 'social meanings' by imitating other people's actions in the course of everyday life as, according to Bourdieu, 'children are particularly attentive to the gestures and postures which, in their eyes, express everything that goes to make an accomplished

[51] Davis, *Modern Motherhood*, pp. 63–34; Roberts, *A Woman's Place*, pp. 11–13; 172–74.
[52] Jens Qvortrup, 'Editorial: The Waiting Child', *Childhood*, 11.3 (2004), 267–73 (p. 267).
[53] On changing patterns of children's labour see Roberts, *Women and Families*, pp. 33–34; Zweiniger-Bargielowska, pp. 159–60.

adult – a way of walking, a tilt of the head, facial expressions, ways of sitting and of using implements'.[54] Bourdieu's theory seeks to explain how children acquired knowledge and skills though the practice of normal everyday life. However, the need for children to temporarily do jobs *outside* of their usual routines was something distinctly different. When children were asked to temporarily substitute for their mother's labours, they actively sought to do them in maternal ways and, in the process, learnt about the 'social meanings' attached to domestic and childcare practices when they were performed by mothers. Children also learnt about the 'social meanings' of maternal practices when imitating parents in play.

In this way, children's experiences shed new light on the reproduction of mothering in the mid-century. In a 1978 study of motherhood, Nancy Chodorow argues that 'Women's capacities for mothering … are built developmentally into the feminine psychic structure. Women are prepared psychologically for mothering through the developmental situation in which they grow up, and in which women have mothered them'.[55] This study has been criticised for focussing on white middle-class, heterosexual and nuclear family life. While taking these criticisms into account, Chodorow later reflected that the book remains useful for thinking about the 'intrapsychic and intersubjective reproduction of mothering'.[56] This thesis contributes to understandings of *how* girls developed maternal subjectivities in this period. It also shows that mothering was not only reproduced in girls, as pronounced maternal feelings were also prevalent amongst boys in latter decades who were asked to occasionally substitute for their mother's labours. In this sense, I argue

[54] Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, trans. by Richard Nice (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), p. 87.
[55] Nancy J. Chodorow, *The Reproduction of Mothering: Psychoanalysis and the Sociology of Gender* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978), p. 39.
[56] Nancy J. Chodorow, 'Reflections on The Reproduction of Mothering—Twenty Years Later', *Studies in Gender and Sexuality*, 1.4 (2000), 337–48 (pp. 341–42).

that *habitus* crossed gender lines, as both girls and boys developed a maternal state of mind through occasionally performing their mother's responsibilities on her behalf.

There is, of course, a distinct challenge in examining the intergenerational transmission of parenting between parents and young children. Unlike their adult counterparts, young children were not yet parents. It is therefore necessary to think carefully about when, and in what particular circumstances, children were learning skills and values specifically related to parenting and how they made sense of them. A framework of childhood familial relationships and responsibilities is set out below, which ranges from typical childhood jobs at one end, to situations which required children to carry out responsibilities as parents on the other. The framework allows the thesis to think through the specific moments in which children were tangibly doing the work of and feeling like parents.

Conceptualising children's learning about parenthood

As noted above, this thesis examines the experiences of children who were aged between seven and fourteen. Seven was around the age at which children were able to take on more independent responsibility for minding younger siblings, housework or running errands in the mid-century.[57] Sociologists also show that from this age, children 'start to think more about their emotional relationships', reflect on their place in the world around them, and 'actively construct their own understandings of their everyday lives in interaction with others'.[58]

In the interwar period, children finished compulsory education at the age of fourteen and this was generally seen to represent the end of childhood. As Sally Alexander argues, at this age 'younger brothers and sisters were left behind with the schoolroom, learning by

[57] Anna Davin, *Growing Up Poor: Home, School and Street in London, 1870-1914* (London: Rivers Oram Press, 1996), p. 88; Roberts, *A Woman's Place*, pp. 22–24.
[58] Rosalind Edwards, Melanie Mauthner, and Lucy Hadfield, 'Children's Sibling Relationships and Gendered Practices: Talk, Activity and Dealing with Change', *Gender and Education*, 17.5 (2005), 499–513 (pp. 501–2).

rote, the Saturday job, and street games, as the need to earn a living propelled the child into the adult world of work with new preoccupations and responsibilities'.[59] Even those who carried on in education past the statutory leaving age felt that they were living through a transition from childhood to adulthood.[60] Of course, fourteen did not mark the end of youth, as young people continued to live in the family home, contribute their wages to the family budget and for girls at least, assist their mothers with domestic work.[61] The school leaving age was raised to fifteen in 1944, but I will continue to examine accounts written by children's up to the age of fourteen in the later samples of essays to maintain consistency across the analysis.

To explore how children of this age range learnt about parenting, I draw on David Morgan's theory about 'family practices', which considers the different actors involved in the practice of everyday family living and the roles that they play. He defines 'family practices' as 'sets of practices which deal with ideas of parenthood, kinship and marriage and the expectations and obligations which are associated' with them. These are ways of doing things 'which participants tend to think of as being in some way ''different" and which may colour other practices which overlap with them'.[62]

This thesis uses this idea of 'family practices' to understand the distinct but inter-linked practices undertaken by different family members in the course of parenting, marriage, childhood and siblinghood in the mid-century. For instance mothers and fathers cared for their children through rhythms of feeding, bathing, comforting and playing.[63] This work was not exclusively performed by parents, as older children were also routinely involved

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[59] Alexander, p. 256.
[60] Hester Barron and Claire Langhamer, 'Children, Class, and the Search for Security: Writing the Future in 1930s Britain', *Twentieth Century British History*, 28.3 (2017), 367–89 (p. 372).
[61] Davies, *Leisure, Gender and Poverty*, pp. 83–89; Selina Todd, 'Young Women, Work and Leisure in Interwar England', *The Historical Journal*, 48.3 (2005), 789–809 (pp. 795–99).
[62] David Morgan, *Family Connections: An Introduction to Family Studies* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1996), p. 11.
[63] Angela Davis and Laura King, 'Gendered Perspectives on Men's Changing Familial Roles in Postwar England, c.1950–1990', *Gender & History*, 30.1 (2018), 70–92 (pp. 81–86).

in looking after siblings.[64] In this case, both the adults' parenting work and the children's sibling work were imbued with their own 'expectations and obligations' which were distinctly separate, even though the work itself was similar. This thesis seeks to understand how children made sense of the overlaps between their own familial practices and those of their parents, as well as the ways in which children distinguished between general housework and childcare duties and *parenting*, a set of activities which carried distinct social meanings.[65]

This thesis outlines seven types of childhood responsibility and their level of overlap with parenthood. The first type of responsibility is the most inherently child-like responsibility while the seventh contains the highest degree of overlap and is therefore the most parent-like in practice. These seven types of jobs are: errands; minding a baby for a neighbour; doing regular domestic work; regularly caring for younger siblings; occasionally doing domestic work in place of a parent; occasionally doing childcare in place of a parent; and doing domestic work and/or childcare in place of a parent on a more permanent basis. In theory, where children had regular routine responsibilities for errands, housework and childcare, they performed them as children and older siblings. Where children unexpectedly took on extra responsibilities to make up for their parents' missing labours, whether temporarily or permanently, they performed these jobs as parents.

Errands involved children being sent out of the house to complete small tasks for their parents, and sometimes also for aunts, uncles, grandparents and neighbours, and was a common childhood job throughout the period. Boys and girls carried out errands, which could involve going to do food shopping, taking dinner to a father at work, or paying a bill. Errands were small simple tasks that were specifically reserved for children because

[64] Davin, *Growing Up Poor*, p. 97.
[65] Suissa, pp. 69–70.

they 'saved adult time'.[66] Minding a baby for a neighbour was also a common task that working-class children undertook in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries.[67] Children were left to look after a baby for a short amount of time, implying that adults trusted them. However, as this kind of responsibility tended to be irregular and was done for babies that children were unrelated to, children did not generally relate these minding duties to parenting or other forms of family care they might have been involved in.

The next type of childhood job concerns children who regularly helped their mothers with housework. This work often involved making the beds, mopping the floors, washing clothes, setting the table and cleaning up after evening meals. These types of jobs were mostly done by girls, but boys were also expected to contribute where mothers had no daughters to help them.[68] Children sometimes assisted their mothers in completing these jobs and sometimes they did them alone.

Regularly looking after younger siblings was similar. Older children were entrusted with getting younger siblings out of bed and dressed in the morning, bathing them, as well as playing and reading with them to keep them entertained or out of mischief. Both older sisters and brothers were involved in this work, but girls were more likely to be trusted with practical caregiving roles.[69] This thesis shows that older children in larger working-class families played similar caring roles throughout the mid-century, although children growing up in the 1930s were more often entrusted with regular responsibilities. Responsibilities were delegated to older children by mothers, who were usually too busy with housework or wage earning to perform all practical aspects of childrearing

[66] Davin, *Growing Up Poor*, pp. 180–87.
[67] Roberts, *A Woman's Place*, p. 25.
[68] Roberts, *A Woman's Place*, p. 22; Roberts, *Women and Families*, pp. 33–34.
[69] Leonore Davidoff, *Thicker Than Water: Siblings and Their Relations, 1780-1920* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), pp. 113–14; Davin, *Growing Up Poor*, pp. 89–90.

themselves. This meant older children generally saw regular sibling care jobs as a normal part of their childhood routines.[70]

The next type of job refers to children who occasionally did domestic work in place of their mothers when they were ill or away from home. Children took on extra jobs around the home that they normally saw their mothers do, and they therefore attached a maternal significance to them. In these situations, children were more likely to have to do *motherly* domestic work rather than just general household chores. Housework formed part of women's practices as housewives and mothers and, in discussing the lives of adult women, historians tend to examine housewifery and motherhood together.[71] In this thesis, however, it is necessary to establish which aspects of women's housework were a specific part of their job as mothers. Doing so enables the thesis to distinguish between when children were performing general household chores and when they were performing *maternal* ones and thereby learning about what mothers did.

As Claire Langhamer notes, the amount of housework that had to be completed increased when couples had children, and the majority of this extra work fell to mothers.[72] I draw on Ann Oakley's 1974 study of housewifery to argue that domestic work became a part of motherhood when women did it to care for their children, such as washing their clothes, buying and cooking their food and cleaning up after them.[73] When their mothers were ill, children were more likely to have to complete *maternal* domestic work, by doing domestic labour for siblings on their mother's behalf. Even girls who were regularly involved with housework in the interwar period, who might have already been doing some of these jobs in their roles as older sisters, became more important when their mothers

[70] On older siblinghood in working-class families in the early-twentieth century, see Roberts, *A Woman's Place*, pp. 23–24; Miriam Forman-Brunell, *Made to Play House: Dolls and the Commercialization of American Girlhood, 1830-1930* (London: Yale University Press, 1993), p. 169.
[71] Davis, *Modern Motherhood*, pp. 146–48; Zweiniger-Bargielowska, pp. 159–61.
[72] Claire Langhamer, *Women's Leisure in England 1920-60* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), pp. 144–46, 156–59.
[73] Ann Oakley, *The Sociology of Housework* (Oxford: Martin Robinson, 1974), p. 171.

fell ill. They had to suddenly take on all of their mothers' jobs and care for their families in their mother's place.[74]

Similarly, occasionally caring for a younger sibling in place of a parent meant that children were caring for them *as parents*. This was because they had to temporarily take over all practical and affective childrearing tasks. Leonore Davidoff's study of siblinghood between 1780 and 1920 shows that when mothers went away, they expected their older children to put more effort into looking after younger siblings than they would do if they were still at home.[75]

The final stage in this framework concerns children who took over domestic and childcare responsibilities on a more permanent basis, such as when a parent passed away or left the family home. In these instances, surviving fathers could expect an older daughter to raise younger children and run the home. If a family lost a father, mothers sometimes attempted to make up the shortfall in earnings, and left their older children responsible for the home and younger siblings, or boys sometimes felt that they had to become the man of the house.[76] In these cases, children's domestic, caring and emotional practices took on a greater meaning, as they had to effectively *become* a parent in order for the family to carry on.

This framework is useful for understanding the practical overlap between children's and parents' role, and when children were doing parenting work. However, this framework in and of itself is insufficient to truly understand the intergenerational transmission of parenting values. It is orientated around practical jobs and as outlined above, parenting

[74] Dyhouse, p. 20.
[75] Davidoff, pp. 95–96.
[76] Davin, *Growing Up Poor*, p. 180; Pat Thane and Tanya Evans, *Sinners? Scroungers? Saints?: Unmarried Motherhood in Twentieth-Century England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), pp. 84–85; Andrew Dobson, *Youth in the Fatherless Land: War, Pedagogy, Nationalism and Authority, 1914-1918* (London: Harvard University Press, 2010), pp. 137–40.

did not only consist of a set of practical childrearing tasks. Parenting was also an identity, an affective relationship and a way of thinking.[77]

We must therefore not only think about what children were doing, but also interrogate how they *felt* about what they were doing. To think about the emotions that children developed through their roles in family life, this thesis draws on Karen Vallgårda, Kristine Alexander and Olsen's concept of 'emotional formation'. They suggest that children developed ways of feeling through 'reiterated everyday emotional practices'.[78] The idea of 'emotional formation' is similar to Monique Scheer's understanding of 'emotional practices'. Scheer draws on Bourdieu's work to argue that emotions are deeply connected to the body and are the product of habituation. For Scheer: 'The habitus specifies what is "feelable" in a specific setting' and 'orients the mind/body in a certain direction without making the outcome fully predictable'. In this way, 'Emotions can be viewed as acts executed by a mindful body, as cultural practices'.[79]

Vallgårda, Alexander and Olsen's ideas about 'emotional formation' help us to understand how children felt when physically performing their familial responsibilities, as well as the way they felt when enacting parental practices in play. For instance, chapter four shows that older daughters in the interwar period who regularly dressed, bathed and fed younger siblings believed that they shared these responsibilities with their mothers, as both mothers and older daughters performed these tasks. The trust their mothers placed in them and their sense of responsibility led these girls to develop subjective feelings of maternal authority, even though they were performing these tasks as older sisters. Similarly, when occasionally taking over the domestic and childcare practices they saw

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[77] King, *Family Men*, pp. 5, 15; Begiato, '"Think Wot a Mother Must Feel"', pp. 10–16.
[78] Karen Vallgårda, Kristine Alexander, and Stephanie Olsen, 'Emotions and the Global Politics of Childhood', in *Childhood, Youth and Emotions in Modern History: National, Colonial and Global Perspectives*, ed. by Stephanie Olsen (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), pp. 12–34 (p. 20).
[79] Monique Scheer, 'Are Emotions a Kind of Practice (and Is That What Makes Them Have a History)? A Bourdieuian Approach to Understanding Emotion', *History and Theory*, 51.2 (2012), 193–220 (p. 205).

their mothers do regularly, children experienced strong feelings of maternal responsibility. In a study of the writings of First World War officers, Michael Roper shows that some officers compared their experiences of caring for the men in their charge to the way a mother would care for her children and, in a sense, felt like a mother in those moments.[80] This thesis furthers Roper's analysis, by demonstrating how affective aspects of parenting developed in individuals from childhood more widely.

The framework used in this thesis departs from other aspects of Vallgårda, Alexander and Olsen's 'emotional formation' theory. They suggest that the emotions children formed depended on larger 'emotional structures' as children were subject to 'a variety of attempts of emotional enculturation' as adults tried to promote '[programmes] of feeling that accorded with a particular set of moral standards'.[81] As Hester Barron and Claire Langhamer argue, Vallgårda, Alexander and Olsen's approach places too much focus on adult attempts to enforce certain ways of feeling onto children.[82] This thesis responds to Barron and Langhamer's call to instead analyse how children 'themselves understood and described their emotional practices' through its use of girls' and boys' writings, rather than examining children's emotions through the lens of adult expectations.[83]

This way of thinking about children's emotions is particularly important in exploring how the intergenerational transmission of parenting practices works in childhood. Scholars tend to assume that when helping parents with housework and childcare, children develop practical skills in running a household or handling a baby.[84] While these practical skills might prove useful to people when they come to start a family of their own later in life,

[80] Michael Roper, *The Secret Battle: Emotional Survival in the Great War* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2009), pp. 164–65.
[81] Vallgårda, Alexander, and Olsen, pp. 20–21.
[82] Barron and Langhamer, p. 104.
[83] Barron and Langhamer, p. 112.
[84] Ann Oakley, *Becoming a Mother* (New York: Martin Robinson, 1979), p. 67; Brian Jackson, *Fatherhood* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1983; repr. Oxon: Routledge, 2012), p. 122; Davis, 'Generational Change and Continuity', pp. 212–14; Davis, *Modern Motherhood*, pp. 70, 78.

scholars argue that the affective, emotional side of parenting is only experienced after the birth of a child. According to previous studies, having a baby enables people to relate to their own parents' experiences on a deeper level.[85] Through examining the voices of children directly, rather than relying on parents' accounts, this thesis demonstrates that those growing up in the mid-century felt like parents in certain situations, and it is important to pay attention to that. Parental ways of thinking and feeling formed part of children's developing subjectivities and personalities as a result of their 'reiterated everyday emotional practices', challenging previous assumptions that people only develop parenting identities after having a child of their own.[86]

Parenting and family life across the twentieth century

The twentieth century is a significant period for studying parenting, as cultural expectations of parenthood expanded and the lived experiences of mothers and fathers changed across the period. Previous historical literature in the field has tended to examine either motherhood *or* fatherhood.[87] This thesis examines girls' and boys' writings alongside each other, and assesses whether the values, skills and ideas they learnt were specifically maternal or paternal. Through adopting this approach, the thesis examines the role that childhood learning played in contributing to changing ideas about gendered childrearing roles.

The most significant shift in understandings of parenthood across the late-nineteenth and twentieth centuries was that the work of raising children was something that mothers and fathers were increasingly expected to do themselves. In a study of motherhood in the late-

[85] Davis, 'Generational Change and Continuity', pp. 216–19; Qureshi, pp. 169–70; Suissa, p. 73.
[86] Vallgårda, Alexander and Olsen, 'Emotions and the Global Politics of Childhood', p. 20.
[87] For studies of fatherhood see King, *Family Men*; Julie-Marie Strange, *Fatherhood and the British Working Class, 1865–1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015); For studies of motherhood see Ellen Ross, *Love and Toil: Motherhood in Outcast London, 1870-1918* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993); Jane Lewis, *The Politics of Motherhood: Child and Maternal Welfare in England, 1990-1939* (London: Croom Helm, 1980); Davis, *Modern Motherhood*; For a notable exception which studies fatherhood and motherhood see Joanne Begiato, *Parenting in England 1760-1830: Emotion, Identity, and Generation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

nineteenth century, Ellen Ross argues that while middle-class women 'had much earlier embraced child nurturing as a private identity', working-class women's 'principal identity … remained that of managers of their households rather than nurturers of their children'.[88] Working-class mothers understood their value in terms of running the home and earning wages which were essential for the household budget, rather than tending to infants and children, which was a job that could be done by older daughters, grandparents or neighbours.[89]

Middle-class health professionals and politicians concerned about infant mortality pushed working-class mothers to take greater personal responsibility for the care of their infants.[90] The Infant Welfare Movement also attempted to stress to working-class fathers that they were an important influence in their children's lives, as relationships with fathers were considered crucial for children's emotional development, reflecting the influence of Freudian psychology in this period.[91]

While expectations of parenting were expanding as a result of middle-class ideals, the lived experiences of working-class families were also changing. The average completed family size fell from 5.8 individuals for those married in the 1870s to 3.53 individuals for marriages between 1900 and 1909 and further still to 2.46 individuals for those married between 1916 and 1920.[92] The increasing penchant for smaller families enabled parents to stretch their incomes further, leading to improving living standards for some.[93]

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[88] Ross, pp. 195–96.
[89] Ross, pp. 135–37, 213; *Gender and Fatherhood in the Nineteenth Century*, ed. by Trev Lynn Broughton and Helen Rogers (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), pp. 8–9; Davin, *Growing Up Poor*, pp. 97–100.
[90] Trudi Tate, 'King Baby: Infant Care into the Peace', in *The Silent Morning: Culture and Memory After the Armistice*, ed. by Trudi Tate and Kate Kennedy (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013), pp. 104–30 (p. 111); Jane Lewis, 'The Social History of Social Policy: Infant Welfare in Edwardian England', *Journal of Social Policy*, 9.4 (1980), 463–86 (p. 468).
[91] Tim Fisher, 'Fatherhood and the British Fathercraft Movement, 1919–39', *Gender & History*, 17.2 (2005), 441–62 (pp. 443–44, 450–51, 455–57).
[92] Coleman, 'Population and Family', p. 36 (table 2.3).
[93] John Stevenson and Chris Cook, *The Slump: Britain in the Great Depression*, 3rd edn (Routledge, 2009), p. 26.

Although many working-class mothers still had to undertake paid work, having fewer children meant that women could spend more time caring for each child, and families had more space to enjoy time together at home.[94]

This thesis asks what impact decreasing family sizes and the growing tendency for women to do more childrearing work themselves had on children's familial identities. As Selina Todd notes, decreasing numbers of children not only reduced the 'maternal domestic burden' but also reduced the 'burden that was shouldered by daughters'.[95] I show that girls growing up in smaller families in the interwar period believed that they were sharing responsibility for housework and the care of younger siblings with their mothers and they accessed a sense of motherly responsibility and authority through their roles as daughters and older sisters.

It should be made clear here that the analysis in this thesis focuses predominantly on girls' learning about motherhood. Experiences and expectations of motherhood differed from fatherhood in this period. Mothers did the bulk of the practical childcare work as well as the domestic labours that childrearing entailed.[96] Maternal work was distinctly different to paternal work. In the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, fathers were predominantly expected to be the family breadwinner, as well as play with their children, discipline and educate them.[97]

The gendered division of household labour affected the way children, and particularly girls, learnt about parenting. While fathers tended mostly to play with their children outside of working hours, older daughters in larger working-class families provided more

[94] John Benson, *The Working Class in Britain: 1850-1939* (London: Longman, 1989), pp. 96, 100–102; Katherine Holden, 'Family, Caring and Unpaid Work', in *Women in Twentieth-Century Britain*, ed. by Zweiniger-Bargielowska, pp. 134–48 (p. 139).
[95] Todd, p. 797.
[96] Roberts, *A Woman's Place*, p. 116; Langhamer, *Women's Leisure*, pp. 146–48.
[97] John Tosh, *A Man's Place: Masculinity and the Middle-Class Home in Victorian England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), pp. 84–86; Strange, pp. 96–98; King, *Family Men*, pp. 16–17, 82–84.

consistent help to their mothers. Some boys were also expected to help with these tasks, especially if they had no sisters, but historians have noted that girls were most often charged with childcare and domestic work.[98] As childcare and its associated domestic labours were parenting tasks that mothers were responsible for, it follows that girls in particular learnt about motherhood through their familial responsibilities.

As this thesis focuses predominantly on girlhood and motherhood, it does not shed as much light on boyhood and fatherhood. This does not mean to suggest that boys and fathers were unimportant in family life, but that the division of domestic and childrearing labour in the mid-century lent itself to the reproduction of maternal values and skills, with repercussions for later parenting identities. Historians have noted that most mothers continued to take responsibility for childcare and housework until the end of the twentieth century.[99] Exploring the way girls thought about their familial responsibilities illuminates how these attitudes developed from childhood.

In identifying with their mothers, feelings of maternal self-sacrifice and duty established themselves in working-class girls' own psyches in the interwar period. Self-sacrifice became a particularly important part of working- and middle-class mothering identities post-war, as women were expected to do more and more for their offspring and place fewer domestic burdens on their children.[100] Roberts has previously attributed the intensification of mothering in the 1950s and 1960s to the growing influence of child-centred psychology and women wanting to have more emotionally-involved relationships with their children.[101] This thesis shows, however, that shifting experiences of girlhood

[98] Roberts, *A Woman's Place*, p. 22.
[99] Davis and King, pp. 81–86.
[100] Langhamer, *Women's Leisure*, p. 157; Davis, *Modern Motherhood*, p. 146; Roberts, *Women and Families*, p. 143; Zweiniger-Bargielowska, pp. 159–60.
[101] Roberts, *Women and Families*, p. 154.

in the interwar period also played a significant role in shaping motherhood post-war when these girls became mothers themselves.

The Second World War marked a more dramatic shift in cultural constructions of parenthood. Following the familial and societal disruptions experienced in wartime, the government put family life at the centre of reconstruction efforts.[102] A greater psychological significance was placed on both motherhood and fatherhood in the popular press.[103] There was also a tangible shift in parenting experiences in the post-war period. Working-class men and women who had grown up in a more stringent economic climate earlier in the century were keen to live their own lives differently to the way their parents had. They wanted their offspring to have greater opportunities for education, play and leisure than had been possible for them when they were growing up.[104] Historians have argued that better housing conditions, relative economic prosperity, growing opportunities for mothers to work part-time post-war and the availability of the contraceptive pill in the post-war period enabled parents to put their aspirations for their children into practice.[105]

Girls were expected to help with childcare and housework less than in previous generations and Ina Zweiniger-Bargielowska notes that women ended up doing more of this work themselves in the post-war period.[106] I argue that, as a result, children saw domestic and childcare work as a distinct part of motherhood, due to the fact that mothers were responsible for these labour-intensive aspects of childrearing, instead of seeing these

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[102] Leonore Davidoff and others, *The Family Story: Blood, Contract and Intimacy, 1830-1960* (Essex: Longman, 1999), pp. 200–202.
[103] Finch and Summerfield, pp. 6–7; King, *Family Men*, p. 190.
[104] Roberts, *A Woman's Place*, p. 143; Alexander, pp. 262–63; Todd and Young, pp. 459–60; Tisdall, p. 36.
[105] Claire Langhamer, 'The Meanings of Home in Postwar Britain', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 40.2 (2005), 341–62 (p. 355); Dolly Smith Wilson, 'A New Look at the Affluent Worker: The Good Working Mother in Post-War Britain', *Twentieth Century British History*, 17.2 (2006), 206–29 (p. 217); Tisdall, p. 36; King, 'Hidden Fathers?', p. 28; Stephen Brooke, 'Gender and Working Class Identity in Britain during the 1950s', *Journal of Social History*, 34.4 (2001), 773–95 (pp. 781–86); Abrams, p. 80.
[106] Roberts, *Women and Families*, pp. 33–35; Zweiniger-Bargielowska, pp. 159–60.

as family jobs shared by mothers and daughters.[107] This thesis shows that both girls and boys were expected to take over responsibility for childcare and housework from their mothers in family emergencies after the Second World War. When girls and boys temporarily substituted for their mothers, they strongly believed that they were *being* mothers through doing these practices on her behalf, intensifying their expectations of motherhood.

The time span of this thesis is defined by the period in which the three collections of essays, which are the main source material for this study, were written. However, children's experiences between the 1930s and 1960s had implications for the way parenting identities and practices developed beyond 1970, when these children went on to have offspring of their own. This thesis, therefore, considers the changes in attitudes towards childrearing which emerged in the 1990s and 2000s, and the role that children's experiences in the mid-century played in contributing to later shifts.

From the 1970s, greater cultural and psychological emphasis was placed on parenting and the home. The importance attached to the family home as a place of emotional security and safety for children in the aftermath of the war reached new heights in the 1970s. There were widespread concerns about road traffic and child molestation, as well as the emergence of high profile discussions of paedophilia, which increased calls for the 'segregation of the child from the outside world, particularly the urban world'.[108] The heightened significance placed on the home was accompanied by an increased scrutiny of parenting, and particularly mothering.[109] Harry Hendricks notes that in the following decades, language about children being challenging and difficult for parents to manage became increasingly prominent in the mainstream press.[110] At the same time, spending

[107] Oakley, *The Sociology of Housework*, p. 171.
[108] Thomson, pp. 1–2, 135–36, 176–79.
[109] Thom, pp. 263, 269.
[110] Harry Hendrick, *Narcissistic Parenting in an Insecure World: A History of Parenting Culture 1920s to Present* (Bristol: Policy Press, 2016), pp. 247–53.

time with children became an increasingly important part of men's fathering identities.[111] As will be shown in this thesis, changing attitudes towards parenthood were evident in children's writings in the 1960s, as some discussed the challenges of childrearing, while many aspired to combine work with parenting. The perceptions children formed in the 1950s and 1960s were therefore instrumental in intensifying expectations of parenting in latter decades of the century.

Sources and methodology

This thesis draws on over a thousand essays written by children between the 1930s and late 1960s, from three different archival collections. It is important to set out how the essays in each collection were originally collected, as well the social backgrounds of the children represented, before outlining the methodological approach used in this thesis. Mass Observation collected children's essays as part of its social investigative study of the opinions, attitudes and everyday lives of people living in and near the northern mill town of Bolton in the late 1930s.[112] Bolton, also referred to as 'Worktown', was chosen as an area for investigation because Tom Harrisson, one of Mass Observation's three founders, believed that it was an 'archetypal industrial town'. Indeed, James Hinton suggests that Bolton was characterised by 'bad housing, poor health, air pollution, and a largely absent middle class'.[113]

Bolton was affected by the interwar decline in older industries, including cotton, coal and engineering, but it was not struggling as much as neighbouring mill towns such as Blackburn and Preston.[114] These children's essays do not, therefore, represent the

[111] King, *Family Men*, pp. 81–84; Brannen and Nilsen, pp. 340–41.
[112] Barron and Langhamer, 'Feeling through Practice', pp. 101–3.
[113] James Hinton, *The Mass Observers: A History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), p. 18.
[114] The 1931 census recorded that in Bolton 16.7% of male workers and 12.4% of female workers were unemployed, compared with 25.4% of men and 41.6% of women in Blackburn, and the Lancashire averages of 17.2% of men and 16.3% of women unemployed, see Michael Savage, 'Women and Work in the Lancashire Cotton Industry, 1890-1939', in *Employers and Labour in the English Textile Industries, 1850-1939*, ed. by J. A. Jowitt and A. J. McIvor (London: Routledge, 1988), pp. 203–23 (pp. 216-217

extremities of financial hardship experienced in industrial areas in this period. The children were, however, living through important national shifts that affected daily life in towns and cities across the country, such as the growth of commercialised leisure. Their writings give insights into the importance of the cinema and trips to seaside resorts - in their case Blackpool - for working-class families in this period.[115]

Teachers who supported Mass Observation's aims arranged for their pupils to write essays, which they then sent to the researchers. These children were predominantly working-class or lower-middle-class and between the ages of nine and fourteen.[116] The children were also largely female. This gender imbalance was caused by the fact that the teachers who contributed their pupil's essays were mostly women and so they taught either all-girl or mixed gender classes.[117] Children would have known that their work would be read by their teacher but they probably would have been unaware that their writings were to be contributed to a social investigative project.[118] As part of its 'Worktown' project, Mass Observation collected children's essays from schools in areas near to Bolton. These areas include Westhoughton, a small mining and cotton town, as well as Middlesbrough and Salford, which both had large working-class populations.[119]

(table 11.5)); on the impact of the interwar economic decline on industrial towns see Stevenson and Cook, pp. 19–21, 68.

[115] Mass Observation Archive (hereafter MOA), Worktown Collection (hereafter WC) 59 Children, WC59/E, children's essays on 'What I did on my holiday'; On the growth of commercial leisure see Stevenson and Cook, pp. 33–34.

[116] For more on the children, their essays and how they were collected by Mass Observation see Barron and Langhamer, 'Feeling through Practice', pp. 105–6, 115; Barron and Langhamer, 'Children, Class, and the Search for Security', pp. 370–71; On Mass Observation's aims and their research practice Hinton, *The Mass Observers*, pp. 1, 30–38.

[117] Barron and Langhamer, 'Feeling through Practice', p. 102.

[118] Barron and Langhamer, 'Feeling through Practice', p. 107.

[119] For more on Westhoughton see Sue Adams, 'Don't Shush Me! – Nora Bateson, Activist Librarian', in *No Small Lives: Handbook of North American Early Women Adult Educators, 1925-1950*, ed. by Susan Imel and Gretchen T. Bersch (Charlotte, North Carolina: Information Age Publishing, 2015), pp. 47-54 (p. 48); For more on Middlesbrough see Barron and Langhamer, 'Children, Class, and the Search for Security', pp. 370–71; For more on Salford see Andrew Davies, 'Leisure in the "Classic Slum" 1900-1939', in *Workers' Worlds: Cultures and Communities in Manchester and Salford, 1880-1939*, ed. by Andrew Davies and Steven Fielding (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1992), pp. 102–32.

The Camberwell Public Libraries Essay Competition ran yearly after the Second World War. The libraries set at least two essay topics for children to choose from, and hundreds of children entered the competition each year.[120] Camberwell Public Libraries' Chief Librarian and Curator sent essays submitted by children to the competition for the years 1951 to 1952, 1954 to 1956 and essays written on the topic 'Games I play with my friends' which were submitted to the competition in 1961, to Iona and Peter Opie. The Opies were pioneering researchers of children's folklore, and these essays were sent to them to aid their research for books on children's play.[121] These essays are now held by the Bodleian Libraries.

Unlike Mass Observation, there is a more equal representation of essays written by girls and boys in this collection. Those who entered were predominantly between the ages of eight and twelve, though some children as young as six or as old as fourteen also submitted essays. The children who entered lived in and around Camberwell, in areas including Peckham, Nunhead, Herne Hill and Dulwich. This area of London was badly affected by wartime bombing and the council began a programme of house building in 1956. The old Metropolitan Borough of Camberwell (which later became part of the London Borough of Southwark) had a high proportion of workers in unskilled occupations in the 1950s. The 1951 census shows that 86% were in manual occupations, 11% in intermediate occupations and just 2% in professional occupations, but this proportion of unskilled workers was not as high as in other parts of London such Poplar and Shoreditch. Camberwell, then, had a largely working-class population but there was some variation within the borough. Dulwich, for example, had a largely middle-class

[120] Oxford, Bodleian Libraries, Archive of Iona and Peter Opie, Children's Papers and Covering Correspondence, c. 1947-1989, Camberwell Public Libraries Essay Competition, c. 1951-1961, MSS. Opie 34-43.

[121] MS. Opie 37, fols 390-404; MS. Opie 43, fol. 1, letter sent by Camberwell Public Libraries' Chief Librarian and Curator to Peter Opie, 19th January 1961; MS. Opie 43, fol. 2, letter sent by Camberwell Public Libraries' Chief Librarian and Curator to Peter Opie 11th July 1961. For details about the dates of the essay competitions, see 'Camberwell Public Libraries Essay Competitions, c.1951-1961', https://archives.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/repositories/2/archival_objects/34443 [accessed 16th September 2020].

population, and so some of the children who entered the competition would have been from middle-class backgrounds.[122]

The aims of Camberwell Public Libraries in organising this competition are less clear than in the case of Mass Observation. Steedman shows that creative writing was increasingly promoted in primary and secondary schools from the 1950s. Creative writing was considered particularly important for working-class children, 'the supposedly inarticulate, the disposed and the deprived' who were believed to 'lack of sense of self'. Steedman reflects on the progressive teaching practices used in Southwark and argues that 'an entire autobiographical pedagogy originated on the Old Kent Road'.[123] It was in this area of London and in nearby areas that the Camberwell essayists lived and went to school.

Similar ideas about inspiring working-class children's literary selfhoods may have influenced Camberwell Public Libraries in their decision to launch an essay competition. Indeed, the competition gave entrants the opportunity to write on a rich array of topics. Set essay topics ranged from 'What I did on 5th November' to 'A visit to the moon', which enables this thesis to analyse children's descriptions of their day-to-day lives as well as the fantasy worlds that they created. Schools usually sent essays to a local library branch on the children's behalf. It seems that teachers organised for all their pupils to compose an essay for the competition, and children composed a draft in their exercise books, before

[122] For more on Camberwell and Southwark in this period see Harold Carter, 'Building the Divided City: Race, Class and Social Housing in Southwark, 1945–1995', *The London Journal*, 33.2 (2008), 155–85 (pp. 156, 161 (table 1), 162–63, 165).
[123] Carolyn Steedman, 'State-Sponsored Autobiography', in *Moments of Modernity?: Reconstructing Britain - 1945-64*, ed. by Becky E. Conekin, Frank Mort, and Chris Waters (London: Rivers Oram Press, 1999), pp. 43–44, 50–51.

rewriting their essays for submission.[124] Occasionally, children wrote their entries at home, such as when they were away from school due to illness.[125]

In addition to the Camberwell collection, this thesis draws on other children's writings held in the Archive of Iona and Peter Opie in the Bodleian Libraries. This archive holds the Opie's original working papers for their publications on children's games and rhymes. The Opies were in contact with teachers from across the country between the late 1940s and 1980s. The teachers arranged for their pupils to answer questionnaires devised by the Opies on their play lore, as well as write short letters and essays describing their play and games. The Opies put together working folders about different types of play, which included children's essays they had collected through their school contacts.[126] This thesis draws on the essays included in the Opie's working files on the topic 'Make Believe' play, and analyses them alongside hundreds of children's essays from the Camberwell Collection on the topic 'The games I play with my friends'.[127] These have been used in chapter five, which explores children's pretend play.

Finally, the National Child Development Study is an ongoing cohort study tracing the lives of people born across England, Scotland and Wales in a specific week in March 1958. There were over 17,000 children involved in the project when it first began. In 1969, when the children were eleven years old, they were asked complete a short questionnaire at school and write an essay in response to the question:

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[124] One teacher attached a note to an essay written by a pupil in her class. The teacher explained that the child had written an initial draft of their essay in their exercise book at school. However, they had had to redraft the essay at home when they were ill and had used a scratchy pen that had been difficult for the child to write with. The teacher explained that they were including the child's initial draft essay, which they had written at school, in order to demonstrate the child's ability. See MS. Opie. 43, fol. 18.

[125] Carol Lindley's essay, for example, included a note from her father stating she had not had any help with her competition entry, MS. Opie 34, Carol Lindley, 'The best way to spend a winter evening', fols 243-244.

[126] Julia C. Bishop, 'The Working Papers of Iona and Peter Opie', *Oral Tradition*, 28.2 (2013) <https://doi.org/10.1353/ort.2013.0012>.

[127] Bodleian Libraries, Archive of Iona and Peter Opie, Working Papers, c. 1930s-1990s [and some earlier collected material], Opie Subject Files, c. 1930s-1990s, MS. Opie 92, Make Believe 1.

> Imagine you are now 25 years old. Write about the life you are leading, your interests, your home life and your work at the age of 25.

Approximately 14,000 – 15,000 children participated in the 1969 survey and 13,669 wrote an essay, representing 92.6% of the cohort. Children wrote their essays in a classroom setting, and they were given thirty minutes to write their compositions. The essays were commissioned with the hope of comparing children's aspirations for the future with the actual course their lives took in adulthood. The children knew that they were part of a cohort study but would have been unaware as to how exactly their contributions would be used by the researchers, or if they would be read by their teachers.[128] This thesis examines a sample of 495 essays compiled and transcribed for a research project organised by Virginia Morrow and Jane Elliott in 2007.[129]

Morrow and Elliott complied their sample based on three factors, the gender of the child, their social class and academic ability. The sample of 495 essays includes an equal representation of boys and girls with fathers in manual and non-manual occupations. The sample also includes around 70 children with no father figure. Information included with this data set makes it possible to ascertain each individual child's sex and whether their father was in a manual or non-manual occupation (which has been used to assess each child's class background), or where a child had no father figure.[130]

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[128] Jane Elliott, 'Imagining a Gendered Future: Children's Essays from the National Child Development Study in 1969', *Sociology*, 44.6 (2010), 1073–90 (pp. 1074–75).

[129] University of London. Institute of Education. Centre for Longitudinal Studies (henceforth CLS). (2008). *National Child Development Study: Sample of Essays (Sweep 2, Age 11), 1969* (henceforth NCDS). [data collection]. UK Data Service. SN: 5790, http://doi.org/10.5255/UKDA-SN-5790-1.

[130] For details on the background of the NCDS, how the essays were initially collected and the methodology the researchers employed in compiling the sub-sample of 495 essays see Jane Elliott and Virginia Morrow, *Imagining the Future: Preliminary Analysis of NCDS Essays Written by Children at Age 11* (London: Centre for Longitudinal Studies, Institute of Education, 2007), pp. 5–11; see also Jane Elliott, pp. 1074–75. Since I started this research, a further collection of 10,511 essays (which includes the original sample of 495 transcribed essays) from this NCDS study have been transcribed and released through the UK Data Service. I have focused my analysis on the original sample of 495 essays. Examining over 10,000 essays would have been unachievable in the time frame of my PhD and using the smaller sample of 495 essays ensures that the writings I have consulted from this study have an equal balance of girls and boys as well as working- and middle-class children. For details about this larger collection of essays see University College London. UCL Institute of Education. Centre for Longitudinal

The NCDS operated differently to Mass Observation and Camberwell Public Libraries, in that it asked just one question to the thousands of children involved in the cohort study. The Mass Observation Archive and Camberwell collection hold essays written by children on a variety of topics, which makes it possible to build a composite picture of childhood in largely working-class communities in the north and south of England. The NCDS, meanwhile, offers breadth rather than depth in recording the responses of children across the country to one specific question. While the NCDS only asked children to imagine life at age twenty-five, many still mentioned their parents, siblings, friends and family obligations in their descriptions of their future lives, which shed light on the way they understood their relationships and place in the world at the time.[131]

The original spelling, grammar and punctuation from the essays across all three collections has been retained as far as possible, so as to preserve the authenticity of the children's voices. However, spelling has been corrected in places where children's spelling makes the essays difficult to read. I have also used pseudonyms when referring to essayists in the Mass Observation and Camberwell collections, and changed the names of any other people they mention, so the individuals are less identifiable. The NCDS does not contain individual names, and the essayists have been referred to in general terms.

It should be recognised that children across all three collections wrote their essays in slightly different contexts, which had the potential to affect the responses they gave. Barron and Langhamer show that children adapt their writing to '[reflect] the norms and emotional expectations of the social context'.[132] With the Camberwell collection and the NCDS especially, children would have thought carefully about their writings as they knew they were going to be reviewed by competition judges and researchers respectively.

Studies. (2018). *National Child Development Study: "Imagine you are 25" Essays (Sweep 2, Age 11), 1969*. [data collection]. UK Data Service. SN: 8313, http://doi.org/10.5255/UKDA-SN-8313-1.

[131] Elliott and Morrow, pp. 13–14.

[132] Barron and Langhamer, 'Feeling through Practice', p. 107; see also James Greenhalgh, p. 171.

Graham Dawson notes that perceptions of audience shape the kinds of stories that people tell about themselves.[133] Children writing for the Camberwell collection and NCDS may have tried to be creative or elaborate on their experiences, to present a version of themselves that they thought would appeal to competition judges or interest researchers. As a result, these essays may not necessarily reflect their ordinary day-to-day experiences. Some children imagining themselves at age twenty-five for the NCDS created elaborate future lives for themselves, with large houses, pools, expensive holidays and servants.[134] These essays, though, are valuable for the revealing the way children aspired to live their lives.

By contrast, the schoolchildren in 1930s wrote for a teacher that they were familiar with. Some of the teachers who collected essays for Mass Observation actively tried not to influence their pupils' responses, by asking them to present their own views on subjects so as to produce 'heartfelt accounts' that would contribute to the organisation's ambition of creating a representative picture of working-class life.[135] Furthermore, some titles limited opportunities for creativity. When setting the essay topic 'From school to bed' a teacher reported to Mass Observation that she had 'stressed [to the pupils] that they must write about "last night only"'.[136]

However, essays across all three collections, no matter how creative or ordinary, demonstrate the ways in which children sought to compose narratives about themselves, offering an insight into their subjective view of the world. Dawson notes that 'even the most mundane of narratives is an active composition' which requires a 'complex process of selection, ordering and highlighting' through which individuals reveal the way they

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[133] Graham Dawson, *Soldier Heroes: British Adventure, Empire and the Imagining of Masculinities* (London: Routledge, 1994), p. 23.
[134] CLS, NCDS, SN: 5790, N12633Y, girl, non-manual father; N12624X, girl, non-manual father.
[135] On the practices teachers used when collecting essays for Mass Observation see Barron and Langhamer, 'Feeling through Practice', pp. 115–16.
[136] MOA, TC59/6/B, note from teacher, fol. 245.

made sense of their experiences.[137] In a similar way, the fictional stories children wrote were ultimately representations of the way they understood the people and places around them.[138] While being mindful of different contexts in which these child authors composed their writings, it is possible to use them to compare changes in children's subjective experiences over time.

Of course, there are distinct challenges in drawing on archived data from three different collections. The most notable is that children did not write responses to exactly the same essay titles across the three collections, which can make comparisons between the essay sets difficult. As James Greenhalgh notes, 'the genre of the school essay … dictates certain parameters that must be observed by the pupil, including content, format and adherence to the prescribed question'.[139] The children whose essays were collected for Mass Observation and the Camberwell Public Libraries Essay Competitions were, though, asked to write about similar themes. After reviewing the collections as a whole, I predominantly focussed my analysis on essay titles which asked children about how they spent time at home, their friends, the games they played, and what they wanted to be when they left school.[140] I examined hundreds of essays from the Mass Observation Archive and over a thousand in the Camberwell collection which were written for particular titles, and from this research, conducted a close analysis of approximately 200 to 300 essays from Mass Observation and 300 essays from the Camberwell collection.

The NCDS asked children to imagine their lives at age twenty-five. Both the Mass Observation and Camberwell collections contain essays written by children on similar topics, 'When I grow up', 'When I leave school' and 'What I want to be when I leave school' respectively. This makes it possible to compare the aspirations children held

[137] Dawson, p. 22.
[138] Steedman, *The Tidy House*, p. 17.
[139] James Greenhalgh, p. 169.
[140] See the Appendix for a full list of all the essay titles across the three collections.

across the period. Comparing these three essay sets shows that children imagined themselves as parents significantly more in 1969 than in the other two earlier collections and girls that discussed at length how they would care for their offspring. Of course, there are differences in the way these essay titles were phrased. Children in the NCDS were asked to specifically write about their family lives, which may account for variations in children's responses across the period. I have sought to take account of this when analysing these essays, as this difference in phrasing has the potential to affect the analysis presented in chapter six specifically.

It should be recognised that there are limitations with the source base. Historians already face the challenge of locating child-authored material in archive collections, as children are 'less likely to be empowered to freely create the kinds of sources that historians might later access in their research'.[141] It is especially difficult to find the voices of children who have been marginalised in society, such as those from black, Asian and minority ethnic backgrounds. The disadvantages and discrimination these communities have faced have made 'their voices particularly liable to silencing in historical sources'.[142]

Those who wrote essays for Mass Observation and the Camberwell Public Libraries Essay Competitions were predominantly white working- or middle-class children.[143] Similarly, the mean number of eleven-year-old children who responded to the NCDS survey in 1969 who were of Euro-Caucasian ethnicity was 0.972.[144] Children who were

[141] Nell Musgrove, Carla Pascoe Leahy, and Kristine Moruzi, 'Hearing Children's Voices: Conceptual and Methodological Challenges', in *Children's Voices from the Past*, ed. by Moruzi, Musgrove, and Pascoe Leahy, pp. 1–25 (p. 11); Peter N. Stearns, 'Challenges in the History of Childhood', *The Journal of the History of Childhood and Youth*, 1.1 (2007), 34–42 (pp. 35–36).
[142] Musgrove, Pascoe Leahy, and Moruzi, p. 11.
[143] Children's names (which were written at the top of their essays) suggest that the vast majority of those who essays were collected for Mass Observation and the Camberwell Essay Competition were white British. In 1961, 94% of the population of Camberwell had been born in the British Isles, see Carter, 'Building the Divided City', p. 172.
[144] UK Data Service, Study Number 8313, National Child Development Study: 'Imagine you are 25' Essays (Sweep 2, Age 11), 1969, Alissa Goodman and others, *National Child Development Study: Age 11 Essays - Imagine You Are 25, 1969, User Guide to the Data* (London: Centre for Longitudinal Studies, Institute of Education, 2017), Appendix B.

born in other countries in the same week in 1958 as the main cohort and migrated to Britain during childhood and adolescence were later included in the NCDS study. 375 migrant children were added when the cohort were aged seven, 243 at age eleven and 270 at age sixteen.[145] However, the number of participants born overseas is very small compared to the complete NCDS cohort, which includes approximately 17,415 individuals.

The lack of ethnic diversity in these essay collections means that the thesis is limited in its analysis, as it only examines the experiences of white children in the mid-century. Chapter one examines politicians' and health officials' attitudes towards families who migrated to England in the post-war period. The chapter demonstrates that some parentcraft advocates made presumptions of whiteness when imagining future parents and supports arguments made by Jordanna Bailkin, that policy makers promoted specifically middle-class Eurocentric ideals of childrearing.[146] Assumptions of whiteness in relation to family life permeated English society in the mid-century. Wendy Webster shows that in the 1950s that there were very few cultural representations of black motherhood, despite post-war migration from commonwealth countries, and some policy makers viewed black families as a 'burden' on the welfare state.[147]

While this thesis examines the attitudes of politicians and health officials towards black, Asian and minority ethnic communities, this thesis's predominant focus on contemporaneous child-made sources means that the voices of individuals from these communities are not themselves consulted. As Nell Musgrove, Carla Pascoe Leahy and Kristine Moruzi show, retrospective oral testimonies are a valuable resource for

[145] For more information on the cohort involved see '1958 National Child Development Study', https://www.closer.ac.uk/study/1958-national-child-development-study/ [accessed 6th June 2020].
[146] Jordanna Bailkin, *The Afterlife of Empire* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012), pp. 177–79, 189–95.
[147] Wendy Webster, *Imagining Home: Gender, Race and National Identity, 1945-1964: Gender, Race and National Identity, 1945-64* (London: UCL Press, 1998), pp. 121–22, 127.

recovering the childhood experiences of marginalised groups. They argue that historians must, in any case, recognise and examine the 'disempowerment' of marginalised groups in the historical record, a call which this study seeks to respond to in chapter one.[148]

Additional sources

A significant additional source included in this analysis are the stories printed in children's story papers and comics. They were published weekly and offer a window onto the representations of parenting and childcare that children would have encountered across the period. Many boys and girls growing up in the mid-century read some form of children's literature regularly. Surveys of children's leisure activities in 1949 found that reading was the most popular activity amongst girls aged twelve and fifteen, and reading was the second most popular amongst boys, closely following sport. While books were popular, surveys found that children often read story papers and comics.[149]

Children's papers and comics provide a broader context within which to place and understand children's shifting attitudes to parenting and childcare. It is not possible to examine how far cultural representations tangibly shaped children's ideas about parenting. However, historians have shown that individuals sought to compose narratives about themselves that made sense within historically and culturally specific cultural norms. As Penny Summerfield notes, cultural representations and 'public discourses are inevitably drawn upon in the composition of a story about the self'.[150] Historians have argued that newspapers reflected and shaped popular ideals about parenting and gender

[148] Musgrove, Pascoe Leahy, and Moruzi, pp. 9–11.
[149] Joseph McAleer, *Popular Reading and Publishing in Britain 1914-1950* (Oxford: New York: Clarendon Press, 1992), pp. 136, 138–39; see also James Chapman, *British Comics: A Cultural History* (London: Reaktion Books, 2011), pp. 33–34; Mel Gibson, *Remembered Reading: Memory, Comics and Post-War Constructions of British Girlhood* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2015), pp. 109–14, 122.
[150] Penny Summerfield, 'Culture and Composure: Creating Narratives of the Gendered Self in Oral History Interviews', *Cultural and Social History*, 1.1 (2004), 65–93 (p. 69).

roles.[151] In much the same way, depictions of family life in the papers and comics would have likely played a role in shaping the stories that children composed about their own current and imagined future families.

Papers and comics have been consulted from across the period, to coincide with the dates covered by the three essay collections. The publications examined in this thesis are *Girls' Crystal*, *Bunty*, *Wizard* and *Dandy*. Papers and comics ranging from the dates 1935 to 1940, 1950 to 1961 and 1967 to 1971 have been examined, with every other issue held at the British Library being read, to gauge what representations of parenting and childrearing children were regularly encountering.[152] I occasionally draw on examples from *Schoolgirls' Own* and *Eagle*, though these have not been researched to the same extent as the four main titles mentioned above.

Girls' Crystal began in 1935. It was produced by Amalgamated Press, one of the leading publishers of children's papers and comics.[153] Whilst a firm favourite amongst girls, *Girls' Crystal* was not always the most popular comic in terms of sales.[154] In the 1930s, *Schoolgirls' Own* and *Schoolgirls' Weekly* were particularly popular.[155] In 1953, *Girls' Crystal* changed format from long form stories to picture strips but rival paper *School Friend*, which relaunched after the war in 1950, was more popular with a circulation of 950,000.[156] However, *Girls' Crystal* will be used here to provide continuity across the analysis. It ran until 1963 making it one of the longest running papers for elementary

[151] King, 'Hidden Fathers?', pp. 34–35; Adrian Bingham, *Family Newspapers?: Sex, Private Life, and the British Popular Press 1918-1978* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), p. 12.
[152] Before the lockdown was imposed, I had been back to the British Library to go through the other issues of these papers and comics, so that I would have read every edition for the selected periods. I had completed this work for *Girls' Crystal* between 1935 and 1961. It should also be noted that the British Library holds most but not all *Dandy* comics published in the 1950s. The British Library only holds 8 issues of *Dandy* that were published in 1953 and 18 issues that were published in 1958.
[153] On Amalgamated Press see Chapman, p. 29.
[154] Penny Tinkler, *Constructing Girlhood: Popular Magazines for Girls Growing Up in England, 1920-50* (London: Taylor & Francis, 1995), p. 45.
[155] Tinkler, p. 45; McAleer, p. 140.
[156] Chapman, p. 108.

schoolgirls in this period. Most Amalgamated Press girls' papers did not survive the paper shortages brought about by the Second World War, but *Girls' Crystal* continued.[157]

Bunty launched in 1958. It was the first of a new series of titles launched by DC Thompson in the post-war period which were aimed specifically at working-class schoolgirls, which was seen as a relatively new market of readership in the post-war period due to the 1944 Education Act, which extended the school leaving age.[158] *Bunty* became an instant favourite. James Chapman notes that as older girls' comics such as *Girls' Crystal* and *School Friend* began to peter out, *Bunty* 'became the market leader with sales of 500,000'.[159] D.C. Thompson had originally intended for *Bunty* to sit alongside comics aimed at middle-class girls, such as *Princess* and *Girl*, but it became popular with girls across the social spectrum.[160] Issues of *Bunty* which were published between 1967 and 1971 have been consulted for this thesis.

Wizard launched in 1922 and was one of D.C. Thompson's 'big five' boys' story papers in the interwar years. I have only conducted an in-depth analysis of issues of *Wizard* that were published between 1935 and 1940, as sales of story papers such as *Wizard* declined after the Second World War when comics became more popular, and it was eventually incorporated into boys' paper *Rover* in the 1960s.[161] The majority of continuing serials in boys' story papers were orientated around sport, boarding schools, adventure or war and focused on the relationships between boys and older male role models such as teachers.[162] Only consulting issues of *Wizard* would suggest that boys did not regularly read stories

[157] For a list of girls' papers from this period and the dates they ran between see Tinkler, p. 46.
[158] Mel Gibson, 'What Bunty Did next: Exploring Some of the Ways in Which the British Girls' Comic Protagonists Were Revisited and Revised in Late Twentieth-Century Comics and Graphic Novels', *Journal of Graphic Novels and Comics*, 1.2 (2010), 121–35 (p. 123).
[159] Chapman, p. 108.
[160] Gibson, 'What Bunty Did Next', p. 123.
[161] Chapman, p. 30, 78.
[162] Kelly Boyd, 'Knowing Your Place: The Tensions of Manliness in Boys' Story Papers, 1918-1939', in *Manful Assertions: Masculinities in Britain Since 1800*, ed. by Michael Roper and John Tosh (London: Routledge, 1991), pp. 145–67 (pp. 145–46, 157–59).

set in the home or which revolved around family life. Unisex comics such as *Dandy*, which were aimed at both boys and girls, show otherwise. *Dandy* printed stories almost exclusively about boys and many revolved around boys' home and school lives, as well as their relationships with their families and friends. It was very popular amongst young readers. In 1950 *School Friend* was the bestselling girls' paper with a circulation of 950,000 but this was surpassed by *Dandy*.[163] The popularity of *Dandy* is important, as it shows that both boys and girls were regularly reading stories about parents and children. Unfortunately, the British Library's collection of *Dandy* comics only begins in 1950 and its collection of *Beano*, *Dandy*'s partner paper, is patchy for the years before 1945. Therefore, issues of *Dandy* printed between 1950 and 1961, and 1967 and 1971 have been consulted for this analysis.

In addition, the children's page of the *Daily Mirror*, titled the *Children's Mirror*, which ran between November 1946 and August 1954 before becoming its own spin-off paper the *Junior Mirror*, will also be analysed.[164] The *Junior Mirror* ran until February 1956, before it was incorporated into the *Women's Sunday Mirror* as a dedicated children's page, where it ran for several months.[165] The *Children's* and *Junior Mirror* were aimed at the children of the predominantly working-class readership of the *Daily Mirror*.[166] Every edition of the *Children's* and *Junior Mirror* have been read for this thesis and both featured real life stories about its readers and their families, which are important for thinking about the representations of family life that children encountered. The *Children's* and *Junior Mirror* regularly asked for its young readers' opinions on certain topics and printed a representative sample of the replies. These printed replies have been used to add

[163] Chapman, p. 108.
[164] For the last edition of the *Children's Mirror* in the *Daily Mirror* see *Daily Mirror*, 28 August 1956, p. 12.
[165] *Junior Mirror*, 'Next week *Junior Mirror* will be inside *Woman's Sunday Mirror*, 29 February 1956, p. 3; the last edition of the *Junior Mirror* children page appears to be *Woman's Sunday Mirror*, 29 July 1956, p. 19.
[166] On the readership of the Daily Mirror see Adrian Bingham and Martin Conboy, *Tabloid Century: The Popular Press in Britain, 1896 to the Present* (Oxford: Peter Lang Ltd, 2015), pp. 180–83.

additional children's voices to this thesis's analysis on a wider set of topics to those prescribed in essay writing exercises.

Chapter summaries

This thesis is made up of six chapters. Chapter one examines the attempts made by politicians, policy makers and health professionals to prepare children for future parenthood, through parentcraft education in schools. It brings together existing literature on mothercraft and parentcraft from across the twentieth century and contributes original research from the publications of the National Association for Maternal and Child Welfare, as well as government reports. Chapter one serves to contextualise the discussion of children's essays in this thesis, by examining what skills and values *adults* sought to teach children for future parenthood. This chapter's analysis also extends into the 1980s, to set out the broader social, cultural and political context within which the children in these three essay samples would have grown up and began to have children of their own.

Since at least the mid-nineteenth century, politicians believed it was necessary to educate children, and especially working-class girls, for their future responsibilities as parents. Working-class girls were targeted in particular, as it was assumed that mothers had the ability to maintain their children's physical health and morality, even when they were living in poor conditions.[167] Schools were perceived to be the best place for working-class girls to learn skills needed for future motherhood, rather than the home. This was to guarantee that each girl received adequate training in mothercraft and to prevent the reproduction of supposedly inadequate working-class mothering practices.[168]

[167] Jane Lewis, 'The Social History', pp. 477–78.
[168] Dyhouse, pp. 101–2.

The twentieth century witnessed shifts in political discussions around the purposes of parentcraft education. In the interwar period, politicians tended to see teaching working-class girls middle-class mothering practices as a way of improving future childrearing practices in working-class communities, without needing to bring in wider structural reforms.[169] After the Second World War, politicians believed that parentcraft education should fit within a broader package of social reforms, sitting alongside the welfare state and house-building programmes, to improve the health, morals and general welfare of the working classes.[170] The 1970s saw the rise of the New Right, with politicians placing the emphasis back on to the family and good parenting as a form of social control.[171] Ideas about how children could be best prepared for parenthood was the subject of much debate. Throughout the period, though, school-based parentcraft training was designed to teach working-class children how to be middle-class parents.

After exploring the political motivations behind recommendations for parentcraft education and politicians' rather rigid views of how values should be passed from adult to child, this thesis moves onto explore the complexity of children's lives and the variety of informal means through which children formed ideas about the physical and emotional practices that went into being a parent. Chapter two continues to examine the childrearing advice promoted by experts but explores how this advice shaped children's ideas about childrearing, and the way children imagined themselves as caregivers and parents in the future. Across the mid-twentieth century, childcare experts published parenting manuals, and their ideas were widely disseminated in the popular press, magazines, radio programmes and children's comics. Childrearing advice developed in a cycle across the

[169] Anna Davin, 'Imperialism and Motherhood', *History Workshop*, 5, 1978, 9–65 (pp. 26–27).
[170] Hendrick, *Narcissistic Parenting*, pp. 89–90.
[171] Karen Winter and Paul Connolly, '"Keeping It in the Family": Thatcherism and the Children Act 1989', in *Thatcher's Children?: Politics, Childhood And Society In The 1980s And 1990s*, ed. by Jane Pilcher and Stephen Wagg (London: Falmer Press, 1996), pp. 30–43 (pp. 31–32, 35–36); Rodney Barker, *Political Ideas in Modern Britain*, 2nd edn (London: Routledge, 1997), p. 230.

mid-twentieth century, shifting from the routine-driven advice promoted by Truby King in the interwar period to more child-centred theories of baby care after the Second World War, before experts such as Gina Ford shifted back to advocating routines by the 1990s.[172]

This chapter examines the effect that these cycles of advice had on children's ideas about what good childcare practice looked like. It does this through examining children's essays in which they wrote about what they wanted to do when they grew up. However, it should be noted that this chapter's analysis is based predominantly on girls' accounts, as they were more likely to imagine themselves as caregivers in the future, whether in occupations such as nannying and nursing or as mothers. In the 1940s and 1950s, children began to explicitly talk about childcare as being the job of mothers, rather than that of nannies or domestic servants, reflecting popularised versions of Bowlby's maternal deprivation theory, which began to appear in girls' comics at this time. Rather than just reflecting current ideas, however, girls' writings also anticipated the greater cultural value that would be placed on routine-led methods of childrearing later in the century, as girls in 1969 aspired to settle their babies into regular patterns of feeding and sleeping. Children interpreted their parents' baby care practices and messages in popular culture for themselves, leading them to develop different ideas to parents and childcare experts at the time. This chapter demonstrates the importance of examining changes between generations –represented in the voices of those who were yet to become parents – which reveal that experiences in childhood played a large role in shaping individual attitudes towards childrearing.

While chapter two examines children's attitudes towards childrearing, and how these were shaped by changing cycles of parenting advice, chapters three and four explore what children learnt about parenting through their everyday lived experiences. These chapters

[172] Davis, *Modern Motherhood,* pp. 112–41.

examine how children understood their own familial responsibilities, and the way they made sense of the overlap between their parents' and their own childhood work at home. They specifically explore what girls learnt about motherhood through helping with housework and sibling care and assesses this through the lens of habituation. Again, it should be made clear these chapters focus on girls and motherhood, as mothers predominantly undertook these forms of familial labour. Daughters rather than sons, especially in the interwar period, were expected to help their mothers with these tasks.[173]

Chapter three shows that in the interwar period, working-class girls valued the domestic skills they learnt from their own mothers more than those they learnt at school. These girls were often heavily involved in routines of domestic work and sought to cook and clean in ways their mothers had showed them to. Mothers were a prominent model of womanhood and by showing that they had mastered the techniques their mothers had taught them, girls were able to prove their usefulness and feminine worth as daughters. While it is important not to conflate housewifery with motherhood, this chapter shows that through imitating their mothers' domestic practices, girls felt a degree of maternal authority in completing their household chores. In the 1950s and 1960s, girls were not as involved in domestic work as their counterparts had been earlier in the century. Girls tended to think of their chores as things they did to help their mothers, rather than being an integral part of their childhood routines as daughters. In this way, girls began to view housework as a distinct maternal practice, thereby increasing girls' expectations of what motherhood entailed.

The fourth chapter explores the way older siblings understood their responsibilities and position in family life. Scholars have argued that parents and older siblings care for infants in distinctly different ways, and that the experience of looking after a younger brother or

[173] Roberts, *Women and Families*, pp. 33–35.

sister in childhood does not prepare individuals for parenting, beyond giving them confidence in handling a baby.[174] This chapter complicates this assessment, by arguing that sibling responsibilities should be thought of as being on a spectrum from something markedly child-like at one end, to something distinctly motherly at the other. It demonstrates that girls developed a sense of maternal responsibility as a result of the trust their mothers placed in them to care for younger siblings independently, and that this feeling was more common amongst working-class children in the interwar period. In the 1950s and 1960s, girls and boys were asked to temporarily take on extra childcare responsibilities when mothers were ill and fathers were unable to help. These responsibilities inspired feelings of maternal authority as they usually watched their mothers complete these childrearing tasks and, in these moments, children believed that that they were *being* mothers.

Chapters five and six begin to move away from the routines of children's everyday lives, by exploring the ideas that children expressed about mothering and fathering roles in pretend play and in their imaginations of themselves as future parents. Chapter five assesses what children learnt about parenting through playing with dolls and toy prams, as well as through games of 'mothers and fathers' with their friends. The first half of this chapter continues to assess the overlap between girls' work and motherhood, but through the lens of play. Dolls and toy domestic appliances were intended to socialise girls into mothering and housewife roles.[175] Historians have argued that girls' relationships with their dolls were more complicated than toy manufacturers, psychologists and parents assumed.[176] This chapter contributes to this assessment by showing how girls' relationships with toys changed across the mid-century. Play enabled children to test boundaries and put themselves in positions of power. Girls in the interwar period wanted

[174] Mitchell, pp. 1–2, 168; Qureshi, pp. 161–62.
[175] Oakley, *The Sociology of Housework*, pp. 113–14.
[176] Forman-Brunell, pp. 5–6.

to play with dolls, prams and toy washing sets, but their desire to play with these toys reflected their wish to escape the drudgery of their own domestic and childcare responsibilities, rather than to imitate mothering behaviours. By the 1950s and 1960s, girls were still playing with dolls and toy domestic appliances to test the boundaries of parent-child relationships, but these toys became more important to their enactment of mother characters. As girls were less likely to be involved in routines of domestic work, these toys also allowed them to develop an understanding of what it meant when real-life versions of these objects were used by mothers.

The second half of this chapter examines what girls and boys learnt about parenting through their group games of 'mothers and fathers'. In role play children took on other identities which allowed them to experiment with gendered childrearing practices, as play enabled girls to become fathers and boys to become mothers. It is argued that the maternal and paternal characters children adopted did not necessarily reflect the behaviours they observed in their own parents. Rather, these characters were extensions of themselves, which children used to make sense of their own emerging gender identities as girls and boys. Through group play with siblings and friends, children created shared norms about what they believed motherhood and fatherhood should entail, which contributed to patterns of change and continuity in parenting practices across the latter decades of the century.

Finally, chapter six examines the way children imagined their own futures. It shows that across the mid-century, boys and girls believed that their future value lay in paid work and imagined themselves in a variety of occupations. In the late 1960s, however, parenting became a consistent feature of children's life plans for the first time. Many girls, for example, believed that they could combine paid work with motherhood and many boys imagined a future in which they could spend a large amount of time with their

children around their jobs. In this sense, children saw parenthood as an adult identity in its own right, which would take prominence in their lives alongside work.

Children's life plans in the 1960s can be attributed to shifts in family life and changes in the way father-son relationships in particular were presented in comics. However, their optimistic ideas about combining work with parenting more closely mirrored attitudes which emerged amongst parents later in the century, rather than those of parents in the 1960s. This chapter argues that experiences of growing up in the 1960s created change in children's attitudes from previous generations. Their understandings of motherhood and fatherhood also affected the development of parenting identities in the 1980s and 1990s, when children in the late 1960s started families of their own.

This thesis re-examines the processes through which experiences and expectations of parenting changed over the twentieth century. It argues that people's experiences *as children* were crucial in intensifying ideas around parenthood. This thesis throws light on the processes of learning that went on through the rhythms of everyday life, to uncover the way intergenerational transmission worked in early stages of the life course. Children's contemporaneous writings reveal that they developed parental ways of thinking and feeling and were active in creating their own ideas about what it meant to be a parent, driving changes in parenting identities across the century. Chapter one serves to contextualise the arguments presented in this thesis. The chapter demonstrates that there were limited provisions for teaching parentcraft education in schools in the twentieth century. As politicians and health professionals believed that parentcraft education was important for reforming working-class family life, lessons were targeted at supposedly less intelligent schoolgirls and teaching middle-class childrearing values.[177] Chapters two to six reveal that informal methods of learning and transmission, including familial

[177] Leslie Smith, 'The Politics of Preparation for Parenthood', in *Schooling in Turmoil*, ed. by Geoffrey Walford (London: Croom Helm, 1985), pp. 12–37 (pp. 16–18).

relationships, play and imagination were more important in shaping children's ideas about parenting than formal instruction.

Chapter One: Teaching parenthood: 'expert' opinion on preparing children and adolescents for future parenthood

Throughout the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, children were thought of as future adults, workers and citizens by politicians, policy makers and health officials.[178] It was widely believed that investing in children's education and health was important, in order to later benefit from an efficient workforce and societally- and culturally-engaged populace. As Allison James and Alan Prout argue, children are often 'depicted as providing the continuity between generations', implying that it is in future adulthood, 'more than now, that [children's] importance will lie'.[179] This chapter specifically explores conceptions of children as future parents, by examining provisions for mothercraft, and later, parentcraft teaching in schools from the early decades of the twentieth century through to the 1980s. Although the timeframe of the thesis spans from the 1930s to 1960s, this chapter continues to analyse recommendations for parentcraft teaching until the 1980s. The eleven-year-old children writing for the NCDS in 1969 would have still been at school until the mid-1970s, and so this chapter covers the period of their education. Further, the 1970s and 1980s marked the rise of the New Right, an ideology which shaped English politics until the end of the century, and placed political importance on parents as a force for social control.[180] Discussing ideas about parenthood into these latter decades is imperative for thinking about the political climate in which the children, whose essays are studied in this thesis, would go on to raise their own children in.

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[178] Laura King, 'Future Citizens: Cultural and Political Conceptions of Children in Britain, 1930s-1950s', *Twentieth Century British History*, 27.3 (2016), 389–411; Harry Hendrick, *Children, Childhood and English Society, 1880-1990* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 41.

[179] Allison James and Alan Prout, 'Re-Presenting Childhood: Time and Transition in the Study of Childhood', in *Constructing and Reconstructing Childhood: Contemporary Issues in the Sociological Study of Childhood,* ed. by Allison James and Alan Prout, 2nd edn (Oxon: Routledge, 1997; repr. 2015), pp. 202–19 (pp. 227, 236).

[180] Hendrick, *Narcissistic Parenting,* pp. 247–53; Winter and Connolly, pp. 31–32, 36–37.

Parentcraft was explicitly designed to prepare children for their future roles as mothers and fathers. This school topic encompassed teaching children practical baby care skills, including techniques for feeding, as well as about infants' emotional needs. The emergence of parentcraft as a school subject needs to be understood within the context of late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century class relations. From the mid-1800s a new generation of political economists believed that it was possible for the working classes to evolve into moral and obedient citizens. These thinkers found evidence for this in the lives of the 'respectable' working classes, whose living standards rose with the economic upturn of the 1860s and 1870s. Policy makers turned their attention to the so-called disreputable poor, 'those who had turned their backs on progress, or had been rejected by it'.[181] Policy makers and philanthropic organisations attempted to address the problems of the underclass through education, surveillance of behaviour, and the careful management of state and charitable resources, to moralise the poor.[182]

In the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, debates about the poor intensified amid concerns about Britain's efficiency as an imperial nation. Working-class mothers were blamed for high rates of infant mortality and malnutrition, which were seen to be denying the nation strong soldiers and workers.[183] Within this context, the Infant Welfare Movement and Board of Education encouraged elementary schools to include lessons in mothercraft on their syllabuses, to complement the efforts being made by middle-class health professionals to reach and educate working-class mothers.[184] Mothercraft was aimed at modifying working-class family life by encouraging mothers-to-be to act and think more like middle-class ones. As Nicholas Rose argues, government intervention in

[181] Gareth Stedman Jones, *Outcast London: A Study in the Relationship Between Classes in Victorian Society* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971), pp. 5–6, 10–11.
[182] Stedman Jones, pp. 271–72, 277; Nikolas Rose, *Governing the Soul: Shaping of the Private Self*, 3rd edn (London: Free Association Books, 1999), p. 129.
[183] Davin, 'Imperialism and Motherhood', p. 26; Tate, pp. 114–15.
[184] Jane Lewis, 'The Social History', pp. 477–78.

family life, whether that be through education or wider welfare reforms, sought to 'regulate the conduct of citizens' by managing individual subjectivity, to quell the threat supposedly posed by the working classes.[185]

Previous studies have examined recommendations for mothercraft in schools in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, as well as for parentcraft in the 1970s and 1980s, but to date there has not been a study exploring how recommendations developed across the century.[186] Moreover, assessments of parentcraft have often formed part of broader studies of school health education, meaning that parentcraft has not always received detailed attention in these works.[187] This chapter rectifies this gap in the literature, by bringing existing scholarship together with original archival research, to conduct an in-depth analysis of parentcraft over the twentieth century. In doing so, the chapter explores how the changing political landscape effected recommendations for parentcraft.

Previous studies of parentcraft have tended to focus on education programmes aimed at working-class parents.[188] Explicitly focussing on parentcraft education in schools, however, allows this chapter to examine the importance placed on *future children* in political and cultural rhetoric. Policy makers across the political spectrum in the twentieth century framed provisions for children in terms of the future value children would later bring to society as adults. In their view, children needed to be equipped with moral values, skills and physical fitness to successfully carry out their adult duties.[189] Preparing children to be parents, however, did not just aim to ready individuals for their own adult lives. Rather, parentcraft in schools had an explicit *intergenerational* focus, as it sought to

[185] Nikolas Rose, pp. 1–3, 123–26.
[186] Jane Lewis, *The Politics of Motherhood*, pp. 89–94; For a detailed study of parenting education in the 1970s and 1980s see Smith.
[187] Diana E. St John, 'Educate or Domesticate?: Early Twentieth Century Pressures on Older Girls in Elementary School', *Women's History Review*, 3.2 (1994), 191–218 (p. 208); Jane Pilcher, 'Body Work: Childhood, Gender and School Health Education in England, 1870—1977', *Childhood*, 14.2 (2007), 215–33 (pp. 219–21, 224–25); Dyhouse, pp. 95–99.
[188] Jane Lewis, *The Politics of Motherhood*, pp. 89–116; Fisher.
[189] King, 'Future Citizens', pp. 394–95.

improve the lives of children yet to be born. The parentcraft movement effectively stretched the notion of future adulthood to the following generation, as unborn children were placed at the centre of campaigns to improve parenting, for the explicit benefit of these future infants. Exploring the significance attached to future childhood in political debates opens up new ways of examining how the relationship between generations was conceptualised across the twentieth century.

The supposed intergenerational benefits of parentcraft extended two ways. Parentcraft advocates sought to override the influence that working-class parents had on their children's minds, and prepare a new generation of working-class parents-to-be to think and act like middle-class ones, by teaching them appropriate childrearing techniques in school.[190] The ways in which successive governments and organisations sought to prepare children for parenthood changed across the period. In the main, however, parentcraft was perceived as a way of improving the lives of unborn children, by shaping the minds of current working-class students towards accepting medically and psychologically-influenced ideas of childrearing.

This chapter explores recommendations for parentcraft education across four key areas. Firstly, it examines how ideas about parentcraft developed across the century, showing that the perceived value of parenting education shifted with changing political ideologies. It then turns to explore in greater detail the way provisions for parenting education reflected ideas about class, race and gender. The ideas that parentcraft experts sought to promote were distinctly middle-class and Eurocentric and until the 1940s, advocates predominantly directed their teaching at girls.

[190] Dyhouse, pp. 95–99, 102.

1.0 Sources and the changing educational and social context for parentcraft

It must be acknowledged here that while governments and other organisations promoted parentcraft education, it was not a standardised or compulsory element of school syllabuses, and not all schools offered courses related to childcare or parenthood.[191] This chapter is therefore more concerned with recommendations for the teaching of parentcraft, rather than actual practice in schools or student experiences. Nevertheless, a detailed study of developing thinking around parentcraft is important for understanding how politicians, health professionals and philanthropic organisations apportioned blame for cyclical poverty, and the role that they believed children as future parents should play in addressing it.

This chapter examines reports from the Board of Education, The Royal College of Midwives, the National Children's Bureau, Medical Officers of Health (MOsH) and government departments. It also explores a wide range of publications from the National Association of Maternity and Child Welfare Centres and for the Prevention of Infant Mortality (henceforth NAMCWCPIN), which changed its name to the National Association for Maternal and Child Welfare (henceforth NAMCW) in the late 1940s.[192] The NAMCW was one of the leading organisations providing parentcraft courses for schools in this period.[193] The organisation published manuals for teachers interested in introducing parentcraft onto their syllabuses, as well as student textbooks.[194] In addition,

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[191] London, British Library, B.S.10/5, Board of Education, Circular 1353, *The Teaching of Infant Care and Management to School Girls* (London: His Majesty's Stationary Office, 1925), p. 3; Gillian Pugh, 'Work in Schools', in *Preparation for Parenthood: Some Current Initiatives and Thinking* ed. by Gillian Pugh (London: National Children's Bureau, 1980), pp. 13-21 (pp. 14-16).
[192] British Library, P.P.1098.ccn, National Association for Maternal and Child Welfare (NAMCW), *Annual Report 1948-1949* (London: National Association for Maternal and Child Welfare, 1949).
[193] P.P.1098.ccn, National Association of Maternity and Child Welfare Centres and for the Prevention of Infant Mortality (NAMCWCPIM), *Annual Report 1939* (London: National Association of Maternity and Child Welfare and for the Prevention of Infant Mortality, 1939), p. 8; Pugh, p. 15; Smith, pp. 18–19.
[194] For example British Library, X.529/1814, Leonora Pitcairn, *Parentcraft Education: Preparation for Family Living, Personal Relationships, Design for Living, Home-Making and Citizenship* (London: National Association for Maternal and Child Welfare, [1965](?)); X.329/250, Leonora Pitcairn, *A Guide for the Teaching of Child Care to Young Students* (London: National Association for Maternal and Child

the NAMCW held annual conferences and invited speakers, such as MOsH, teachers and other health and education professionals, to give papers. The reports shed light on developing thinking in the field of maternal, child and infant welfare as a whole, and not just from within the NAMCW.

The promotion of parentcraft education was set against a background of developing educational provision. Before 1944, most children attended public elementary schools until the leaving age of fourteen.[195] Some children attended secondary and grammar schools from the age of eleven, although as these were fee-paying, attendance was restricted to those whose parents could afford the cost. Scholarships were available for children from public elementary schools but these required children to pass a competitive qualification exam.[196] The 1944 Education Act made extended provisions for secondary school education and the school leaving age was raised to fifteen in 1947, which was later raised again to sixteen between 1972 and 1973.[197] Advocates of parentcraft education argued that schools should use this extra year of compulsory schooling to introduce or extend parentcraft teaching.[198]

The Education Act created a tripartite system of education which was set up with the aim of sending children, on the basis of their eleven-plus exam results, into different streams of secondary education based on their academic ability rather than their parents' ability

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Welfare, 1963); X.319/18405, Leonora Pitcairn, *Young Students' Book of Child Care*, 4th edn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978).

[195] 83.9% of children aged twelve to fourteen went to elementary schools in 1931, whereas 16.1% of children the same age attended grant-aided secondary schools, see A. H. Halsey, 'Schools', in *British Social Trends since 1900: A Guide to the Changing Social Structure of Britain*, ed. by A. H. Halsey, 2nd edn (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 1988), pp. 226–67 (p. 234 (table 6.2)).

[196] Edward Royle, *Modern Britain: A Social History 1750-2011*, 3rd edn (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2012), pp. 425–26.

[197] Halsey, p. 230.

[198] P.P.1098.ccn, NAMCWCPIM, *Annual Report 1946* (London: National Association of Maternity and Child Welfare and for the Prevention of Infant Mortality, 1946, p. 14; London, British Library, B.S.385/110, Department of Health and Social Security (DHSS), *The Family in Society: Preparation for Parenthood, An Account of Consultations with Professional, Voluntary and Other Organisations October 1972 - February 1973* (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1974), p. 19.

to pay the fees – these were grammar, technical and secondary modern schools.[199] Of course, these lofty aims rarely played out in practice, as the system continued to work against working-class pupils.[200] State comprehensives increasingly became the norm for secondary education in latter decades, and while these did not set entrance examinations, they still divided students according to academic ability.[201] Parentcraft advocates believed that it was more important for pupils of lower ability to study this subject than their supposedly more intelligent counterparts.[202]

At the same time, family demographics changed. As noted in the introduction, average family sizes declined from the early twentieth century.[203] The age at which people married and had children also lowered.[204] This chapter will explore how shifting experiences of family life affected ideas about what 'good' parenthood looked like, and the way these ideas affected suggested parentcraft teaching for working-class pupils especially.

1.1 The development of parentcraft education: future parents or future children?

1.1.1 1907-1938

In the early-twentieth century the Board of Education encouraged local education authorities to provide mothercraft lessons for schoolgirls in their final year of elementary school. These were to focus on teaching girls medically approved methods of infant care, such as hygienic methods of feeding, in the hope of reducing future rates of infant mortality. In 1925 the Board of Education issued a Memorandum on 'The Teaching of Infant Care and Management to School Girls'. The Board had released a similar Memorandum in 1910 but decided to issue another to highlight the value of mothercraft

[199] Ken Jones, *Education in Britain: 1944 to the Present* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2003), pp. 20–21.
[200] Ibid., pp. 58-59.
[201] Ibid., pp. 21, 84.
[202] Smith, pp. 18–19.
[203] Coleman, 'Population and Family', pp. 34–36.
[204] The average fertility rate amongst women aged fifteen to nineteen increased from 15.3 in 1940 to 49.4 in 1970 and the fertility rate amongst women aged twenty to twenty-four similarly increased from 97.0 in 1940 to 156.1 in 1970, see Coleman, 'Population and Family', p. 43 (table 2.6), 42–45, 56–58.

teaching as '[t]here are still … many schools in which no such instruction is given'.[205] The Memorandum stated that: 'the healthy development of the baby and little child is mainly dependent upon … good mothering'.[206]

Voluntary organisations supported this call for mothercraft teaching in schools. In 1937 the NAMCWCPIM established a mothercraft teaching sub-committee under the leadership of Dr Leslie Housden 'to consider the measures necessary to ensure that no girl attains motherhood without previous adequate instruction in Mothercraft'.[207] It devised 'suitable courses of instruction' in parentcraft for schools to implement.[208] Policy makers and health professionals saw educating mothers as the clearest way of addressing high rates of infant mortality and poor health amongst working-class families. As Jane Lewis shows, MOsH for England, including the Chief Medical Officer for the Board of Education George Newman, believed that these issues were caused primarily by working-class maternal ignorance rather than poverty. This was despite evidence which showed that mothers continued to use unhygienic methods of baby care because the recommendations of health experts were often impractical or too expensive for poorer women to carry out.[209]

In the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century politicians were doing more to intervene in the lives of the nation's poor children. Infant and maternal mortality, hunger and poverty were increasingly seen as issues that would threaten 'political stability, economic production, and racial efficiency', and therefore needed to be addressed by politicians.[210] Experiences of trying to recruit soldiers for the Boer War, and finding that

[205] Board of Education, p. 3.
[206] Board of Education, p. 6.
[207] P.P.1098.ccn, NAMCWCPIM, *Annual Report 1937* (London: National Association of Maternity and Child Welfare and for the Prevention of Infant Mortality, 1937), p. 7.
[208] P.P.1098.ccn, NAMCWCPIM, *Annual Report 1938* (London: National Association of Maternity and Child Welfare and for the Prevention of Infant Mortality, 1938), p. 11.
[209] Jane Lewis, 'The Social History', pp. 468–69; Ross, pp. 217–18.
[210] James Vernon, 'The Ethics of Hunger and the Assembly of Society: The Techno-Politics of the School Meal in Modern Britain', *The American Historical Review*, 110.3 (2005), 693–725 (p. 699).

many young working-class men in urban areas were malnourished, highlighted the issues that poor health posed to maintaining national and imperial efficiency.[211] The solution to these problems was seen to lie in educating working-class mothers and, where needed, helping women to stretch limited resources through some form of state provision, such as free school meals for their children, to enable mothers to better perform their social duties.[212] Attempting to improve the quality of the British race through education and some social provisions for the poorest was supported by politicians across the political spectrum. As Davin shows, the future leader of the Labour Party Ramsay McDonald also espoused ideas about maintaining imperial efficiency in the early twentieth century.[213]

As well as concerns about defending the Empire, governments were prompted into providing assistance to poor families by political pressure from Trade Unions and Marxists, who argued that schoolchildren needed food and adequate clothing.[214] From 1906, free school meals were provided to the poorest children, in 1907 school medical inspections were introduced and in the early-twentieth century the number of Infant Welfare Centres, which had limited scope to provide mothers with free milk for their babies centres, expanded.[215] It is worth noting that the Education (Provision of Meals) Act of 1906 did not apply to all parts of Britain. Scotland introduced more comprehensive legislation in 1908 due to pressure from newly elected Liberal politicians, which meant that the Education (Scotland) Act provided clothing as well as food and examined cases of suspected parental neglect.[216] In addition, the First World War raised concerns about the potential of a working-class uprising. Politicians were keen to ensure that the

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[211] Dyhouse, p. 92.
[212] Dyhouse, pp. 92–95; Vernon, pp. 701–2; Neil MacMaster, *Racism in Europe: 1870-2000* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2001), p. 46.
[213] Davin, 'Imperialism and Motherhood', p. 18.
[214] Harry Hendrick, *Child Welfare: Historical Dimensions, Contemporary Debate* (Bristol: Policy Press, 2003), pp. 68–69.
[215] Hendrick, *Child Welfare*, pp. 70, 97–98.
[216] John Stewart, '"This Injurious Measure": Scotland and the 1906 Education (Provision of Meals) Act', *The Scottish Historical Review*, 78.205 (1999), 76–94 (pp. 77, 86–91).

sacrifices that families had made during the war seemed worthwhile. They did this through promising to improve infant health and further reduce infant mortality.[217] Educating mothers was considered particularly important in the fight against infant mortality. It was widely believed that if equipped with the right skills, mothers had the ability to keep their children physically and morally well, even when living in poor material conditions.[218] As Davin notes, educational programmes were a far cheaper alternative to trying to eradicate poverty, unemployment and bad housing.[219]

The Board of Education believed that it was particularly important to educate future mothers while they were still at school. This was because the efforts of health professionals to teach working-class mothers how to care for their children in medically approved ways relied on cooperation from mothers.[220] Working-class mothers in the early-twentieth century could be hostile to interventions from health visitors and often preferred to seek baby care advice from experienced local women.[221] As the Board outlined in its 1925 memorandum:

> The reduction in infant mortality is no doubt due to the combined action of various factors, but there can be no question that one of the weapons which has been most effective in the campaign is *the education of the mother*. The healthy development of the baby and little child is mainly dependent upon the care and intelligence of the mother, upon her knowledge and good sense, upon her willingness to learn and to take advantage of such opportunities for advice and help as are available, in short, upon good mothering. No one can compel the mother to accept advice

[217] Tate, pp. 113–15.
[218] Dyhouse, p. 92; Jane Lewis, 'The Social History', p. 468.
[219] Davin, 'Imperialism and Motherhood', p. 26.
[220] Jane Lewis, *The Politics of Motherhood*, p. 95.
[221] Beier, p. 381.

> … The whole of the Infant Welfare Movement, therefore, has been directed primarily towards persuading her to learn how to keep her baby well.[222]

The references here to 'intelligence', 'willingness' and 'persuading' mothers to accept advice reinforce the arguments put forward by Jane Lewis, Tim Fisher and Lucinda McCray Beier about the Infant Welfare Movement. Efforts to eradicate infant mortality were not only concerned with teaching basic skills but with changing attitudes, to convince poorer mothers to both act and *think* like middle-class ones.[223] Childhood, in comparison to adulthood, was seen as an opportune time to impress middle-class parenting values onto impressionable young working-class minds.[224] Childhood was a period in which teachers could override the influence of supposedly incompetent mothers and stamp out the effects of maternal ignorance in future generations by changing the attitudes of *girls*, before they went on to have children of their own.[225] The Board wanted health visitors to go into schools and deliver lessons in infant care to encourage girls to see doctors and health visitors as trusted sources of expertise, so that they would seek out medical advice when they came to have children of their own.[226]

It was seen as important that girls received this message while still at school, as the Board stated that schooling 'is the only time when we can make sure that [girls] shall have some teaching in mothercraft. Once she has left school she may perhaps attend classes, but she is far more likely to have no encouragement or even opportunity to learn about infant care until after she has a baby of her own'.[227] As Nikolas Rose argues, in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries: 'Medico-hygienic expertise began to elaborate a set of doctrines for rearing healthy children' and medicine was used to 'reinforce the demands

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[222] Board of Education, p. 6.
[223] Jane Lewis, 'The Social History', pp. 484–85; Fisher, p. 444; Beier, pp. 391–92.
[224] Vernon, pp. 711–12.
[225] Dyhouse, pp. 101–2.
[226] Board of Education, p. 6; see also Beier, pp. 391–92.
[227] Board of Education, p.6.

of morality'.[228] In this case, policy makers increasingly conflated consulting medical expertise, discarding traditional working-class methods of baby care and looking after infants themselves, with good motherhood.[229]

It was not only their age that made educating elementary schoolgirls seem particularly important, but also their experiences as daughters in working-class homes. The board wrote that 'In an elementary school nearly all the elder girls have to "mother" younger brothers and sisters, and many are well accustomed to handling babies'. It believed that schoolgirls' experiences of caring for younger children meant that 'the practice of mothercraft is a matter of every-day familiarity and needs only to be directed into right channels'. Mothercraft would therefore have 'practical living interest' for these girls which, the board hoped, meant that they would be 'likely to remember enough of what they learn to render them … ready to welcome assistance from the Maternity and Child Welfare staff of the Local Authority' later in life.[230] As will be shown later in this chapter, boys were presumed not to be as involved or interested in infant care as their female counterparts. The Infant Welfare Movement only sought to reach men with education campaigns once they had had children of their own. They believed that men's transformation into fathers made them more receptive to their messages, and that they could get them on board to help encourage their wives to follow expert advice.[231]

Of course, education was not the only policy recommended for reducing the reproduction of ignorance in working-class communities. Educational programmes were believed to be especially important for changing the attitudes of the 'respectable' poor, but some politicians thought that particular sections of society were beyond help.[232] The Eugenics Education Society formed in 1907 and supported the idea of sterilising people considered

[228] Nikolas Rose, pp. 130–31.
[229] Ross, pp. 195–99.
[230] Board of Education, p. 6.
[231] Fisher, pp. 443–44.
[232] Jane Lewis, 'The Social History', pp. 479–80.

to be 'mentally defective' in order to prevent more 'children of low intelligence' being born.[233] John Welshman shows that the Eugenics Education Society found some support amongst politicians and health officials in the early decades of the century. A Departmental Committee on Voluntary Sterilisation was set up by the Ministry of Health in 1932 and it recommended the introduction of a voluntary sterilisation programme. Welshman argues that historians should not overstate the influence that eugenic thinking had on politicians, as this recommendation was ultimately rejected, but it still shows that in the interwar period many politicians laid blame for cyclical poverty with the poor themselves.[234]

Government recommendations for mothercraft education in schools were not committed to improving the lives of present schoolchildren. In responding to the Board of Education's 1925 Memorandum, George R. Bruce, Medical Officer of Health for Hastings, echoed this view: 'Improved teaching and practice of hygiene in our schools will help to give us healthier prospective parents; mothercraft teaching will help to give us healthier children, and to still further reduce infant mortality'.[235] In the minds of health professionals, the benefits of mothercraft teaching would skip a generation, by improving the prospects of the infants that current schoolchildren would go on to have. The supposed intergenerational benefits of mothercraft went beyond conceptualising children as future adults which, as Jane Pilcher argues, was the main focus of health education in this period.[236] The language used by advocates of mothercraft stretched the notion of future citizenship to the next generation, arguing that it would be possible to ensure that *future children* would become healthy and efficient members of society themselves through

[233] John Welshman, *Underclass: A History of the Excluded, 1880-2000* (London: Hambledon Continuum, 2006), pp. 45, 56, 58.
[234] Welshman, *Underclass*, pp. 58–59.
[235] George R. Bruce, 'Some Considerations on the Teaching of Mothercraft to School Girls', *Journal of the Royal Sanitary Institute*, 46.12 (1925), 541-44 (p. 541).
[236] Pilcher, 'Body Work', pp. 215–16, 220–21.

better educating their mothers. The Board of Education and MOsH in this period believed that rather than improving the physical conditions in which the poor lived, they could be helped most effectively through improved infant care skills and a change in mindset.

1.1.2 1939-1969

The Second World War marked a shift in the way politicians apportioned blame for cyclical poverty and supposed poor parenting. The wartime and post-war period led to a recognition across the political spectrum that governments could and should to do more to tackle poverty and unemployment, and that welfare policies would benefit society as a whole, by improving national efficiency and reducing working-class discontentment.[237] The expansion of government intervention into everyday life during wartime, as well as public support for the Beveridge Report, persuaded more Conservative politicians that large scale welfare policies should be introduced.[238] This was considered to be especially important post-war, as support for welfare policies was seen as a way for the Conservatives to remain an electable force after Labour's decisive victory in 1945.[239]

The creation of the welfare state led to a re-thinking about how best to prepare children for future parenthood. Instead of predominantly focusing on improving the life chances of future generations, politicians and health professionals thought more about how the lives of current children could be improved, and how they could be supported in working towards fulfilling lives as adults and parents.[240] This kind of thinking was most evident amongst Labour and Liberal politicians, who were interested in improving the material conditions in which families lived, and trying to provide children with a good start in

[237] Rodney Lowe, 'The Second World War, Consensus, and the Foundation of the Welfare State', *Twentieth Century British History*, 1.2 (1990), 152–82 (p. 162).
[238] Lowe, pp. 158, 162.
[239] Steven Fielding, 'Labourism in the 1940s', *Twentieth Century British History*, 3.2 (1992), 138–53 (p. 142).
[240] British Library, 7582.aa.37, NAMCWCPIM, *Report of a Conference on Parentcraft and Homecraft* (London: National Association of Maternity and Child Welfare Centres and for the Prevention of Infant Mortality, 1947), p. 7.

life.[241] These politicians believed that all children would benefit from growing up in the welfare state, having access to health care, education, and state provisions such as free school meals, as well as a modern comfortable home to live in, and that these conditions would enable children to flourish into well-rounded citizens and parents.[242] Under this thinking, educational programmes on their own were not considered enough to improve parenting practices. Rather, wider structural changes were needed.

Responding to a paper at the 1947 NAMCWCPIM conference on 'Parentcraft and Homecraft', Labour MP E.M. Braddock argued that major changes had to be made to the everyday lives of working-class families in order for the aims of the parentcraft movement to be successful. She stated that 'it was an absolute impossibility to teach parentcraft and deal with problem families when so many of the country lived, ate and slept under such dreadful housing conditions as those at present prevailing'.[243] Politicians and health professionals were still concerned about perceived poor parenting amongst working-class communities and, as Welshman argues, these concerns were expressed in terms of the 'problem family'.[244] The language of 'problem families' was increasingly used in the 1940s and 1950s, and it had its roots in the wartime evacuation of schoolchildren from inner-city areas to the countryside.[245] The evacuation programme began in early September 1939 and, by the end of the month, over 25,000 schoolchildren had been evacuated from London and other cities.[246] Evacuation drew attention to the conditions in which some poorer children from cities had been living in. Some health professionals continued to place blame on parents themselves.

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[241] King, 'Future Citizens', p. 400.
[242] Hendrick, *Narcissistic Parenting*, pp. 89–90; Vernon, p. 724.
[243] NAMCWCPIM, *Report of a Conference on Parentcraft and Homecraft*, pp. 21-22.
[244] Welshman, *Underclass*, pp. 77–79.
[245] Welshman, *Underclass*, p. 69.
[246] Peter Cunningham and Philip Gardner, '"Saving the Nation's Children":1 Teachers, Wartime Evacuation in England and Wales and the Construction of National Identity', *History of Education*, 28.3 (1999), 327–37 (p. 327).

In the NAMCWCPIM's 1939 Annual Report, the mothercraft sub-committee reflected on the evacuation scheme:

> The importance of [mothercraft] teaching and the pressing need for its further development was emphasised after the outbreak of war by the unsatisfactory condition of so many of the children dealt with under the evacuation scheme. In the opinion of the Sub-Committee this was due in great measure to the ignorance of the parents and the lack of any organised teaching of Mothercraft on a national scale.[247]

While there was acknowledgement that state provisions could provide some help, MOsH around the country felt that the issues problem families faced were caused primarily by '"subnormal" mental capacity, broken families, frequent pregnancies, ill-health, absent husbands, and alcoholism'.[248] Braddock, though, did not believe that problem families were characterised by a '"subnormal" moral capacity'. Rather, she argued that 'problem families' were a product of the poor conditions in which they lived and that blame should be not be placed on parents or children themselves, but 'on the nation as a whole' for ignoring the adversities they had they faced for so long. Braddock stated that under the Labour government, 'legislation was at present definitely being directed towards getting at the reasons for the problems'. Once poverty, unemployment and other circumstances 'which led to people living crowded together' had been solved, it would be 'possible to achieve improvement in parentcraft'.[249]

Of course, politicians and thinkers on the left were not only interested in improving the health and welfare of the working classes. Rather, the creation of the welfare state formed part of a broader ideological vision to reform society. It was hoped that through 'the

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[247] NAMCWCPIM, *Annual Report 1939* (London: National Association of Maternity and Child Welfare and for the Prevention of Infant Mortality, 1939), p. 8.
[248] Welshman, *Underclass*, p. 70.
[249] NAMCWCPIM, *Report of a Conference on Parentcraft and Homecraft*, pp. 21-22.

benign embrace of the state [people] would fulfil their promise', but that in order for that to happen, people had to be accepting of, and willing to contribute to, a socialist democracy.[250] Sections of the Labour Party believed that children of the present, who would go on to become the citizens and parents of a future socialist society, needed to feel the benefits of growing up under the welfare state with a child-centred education and adequate housing, so that they would be more willing to make individual sacrifices for the good of society as a whole.[251] As Sean Fielding surmises, 'to become a socialist entailed a fundamental transformation in an individual's values'.[252] The model future citizens imagined by politicians and policy makers in this period were also predominantly middle-class.[253] Labour politicians still sought to instil middle-class values through welfare reforms and parentcraft teaching. As Braddock stated, 'problem families … and problem children' were people whose economic and housing issues could be 'solved' and their individual attitudes and behaviours transformed, leading to a 'lessening of juvenile delinquency or problem families'.[254]

The political drive towards improving children's lives in the present was influenced by a growing psychological investment in childhood. Child psychologist John Bowlby stressed that experiences in infancy and childhood would shape people's lives in adulthood and emphasised that all children needed to be raised in a secure, loving environment with a continuous mother-child bond, otherwise children would suffer the effects of maternal deprivation.[255] Psychologists argued that the separation of mother and child would lead to 'childhood troubles both physical and behavioural'.[256] Whilst a happy family home was believed to be essential for an ideal upbringing, an insecure one was

[250] Hendrick, *Narcissistic Parenting,* p. 94.
[251] Fielding, pp. 147–48; Hendrick, *Narcissistic Parenting*, p. 92.
[252] Fielding, p. 148.Fielding, 148.
[253] King, 'Future Citizens', p. 393.
[254] NAMCWCPIM, *Report of a Conference on Parentcraft and Homecraft* 1947, pp. 21-22.
[255] John Bowlby, *Child Care and the Growth of Love*, 2nd edn ([London(?)]: Pelican Books, 1965; repr. London: Penguin Books, 1990), p. 13.
[256] Nikolas Rose, pp. 170–71.

thought to produce children with a myriad of psychological issues that persisted throughout the life course. As Bowlby argued, experiencing poor parenting in childhood was likely to pose many significant problems later in the life, not least when they came to have children of their own: 'The difficulty for deprived children to become successful parents is perhaps the most damaging of all the effects of deprivation'.[257]

Theories about the effects of deprivation influenced government policy. The 1948 Children's Act, which put into legislation the recommendations of the 1947 Curtis Report, was concerned with the treatment of children from deprived backgrounds. As part of the Act, children were to be kept at home with their biological parents wherever possible rather than placed into foster homes or residential care, and adoption was promoted where children and parents did need to be separated.[258] The Act aspired 'to see deprived children integrated into the ideal of the welfare state', by allowing them to form a bond with their biological parents and benefit from new state provisions designed to enable families to give children the best start in life.[259]

While Rose argues that 'those who rallied around the cause of motherhood and deprived children considered themselves progressive and humanitarian … understanding troubles rather than condemning them', policy makers and politicians nonetheless promoted a standard of parenting that was not achievable for poorer families.[260] It was widely believed that mothers should remain at home with their young children to provide a constant sense of emotional security.[261] This standard was not realistic for many working-class mothers, or for women who had recently immigrated to England from the Caribbean,

[257] Bowlby, *Child Care*, p. 34.
[258] Hendrick, *Child Welfare*, pp. 136–37.
[259] Hendrick, *Child Welfare*, p. 138.
[260] Nikolas Rose, p. 180.
[261] Smith Wilson, pp. 210–12.

West Africa and South Asia. These women needed to work out of economic necessity, and therefore had to leave their children in the care of others.[262]

It must be acknowledged here that although the Labour government of 1945 to 1951 aspired to guarantee every child a good start in life through the creation of the welfare state and widespread structural improvements to the material conditions in which families were living, these ambitions only benefited some, and definitely not all, children. The welfare state excluded those who immigrated to England from the former Empire. Wendy Webster argues that black women's 'main role in the post-war welfare state was to subsidize it through their labour', rather than make use of it for themselves and their children.[263] As will be shown later in this chapter, post-war governments and parentcraft advocates often made assumptions of whiteness and so the children of migrant families were often not thought of as potential future parents.

Furthermore, despite government promises to instigate a largescale housebuilding programme and build more council homes, the reality fell short. The Labour government failed to establish the Ministry of Housing that had been promised in the 1945 election manifesto and, as Charlie Johnstone states, 'the provision of adequate, affordable rented accommodation was not an inevitable development of the post-war welfare state'.[264] The government's failure to make structural changes to working-class family life meant that health professionals and parentcraft advocates continued to promote education as the best means for improving parenting practices. In response to Braddock's comments at the 1947 NAMCWCPIM conference, Housden, the parentcraft sub-committee's president, stated that while he was 'all for better housing and better living wages for all workers, at the same time there should always be the effort to enable people to make the best of the

[262] Davis, *Modern Motherhood*, pp. 153–54; Bailkin, pp. 189–94; Webster, pp. 141, 146–47.
[263] Webster, pp. 122, 127.
[264] Charlie Johnstone, 'Housing and Class Struggles in Post-War Glasgow', in *Class Struggle and Social Welfare*, ed. by Michael Lavalette and Gerry Mooney (London: Routledge, 2000), pp. 139–54 (p. 147).

conditions in which they found themselves. People should be enabled to help themselves while at the same time being helped to have better housing'.[265]

This approach was about building mental resilience in working-class children and raising the standard of parentcraft amongst the next generation of parents through school education, by teaching them how to best raise children in challenging material circumstances. This approach can be seen in other post-war social projects. At the 1966 NAMCW conference, T. Scott Wilson, Principal Medical Officer for the School Health Education Service in Glasgow was invited to speak about the Glasgow health teaching project. Wilson outlined how, following the introduction of Mental Health Act in Scotland in 1960, after its earlier introduction in England, 'it was determined that the Health and Welfare Department should attempt to prevent the increasing breakdown in physical and, in particular, mental health seen within the community'.[266] Mental health became a central concern for policy makers and other voluntary associations after the end of the Second World War, as men, women and children attempted to adjust to post-war life.[267]

To address concerns about mental health, Wilson reported that 'The School Health Service group decided that by means of health teaching it should be possible to prepare the child to meet and overcome the stresses and strains of growing up'.[268] This again reveals the prominence of psychological ideas that adult health was predetermined by childhood experiences in influencing social practice. The School Health Service set up a pilot scheme in secondary schools in Glasgow, which is an interesting case to consider. Compared to cities in England, including Manchester, London and Liverpool, Glasgow

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[265] NAMCWCPIM, *Report of a Conference on Parentcraft and Homecraft*, p. 27.
[266] British Library, 1082.290000 53rd 1966, NAMCW, *The Promotion of Education in the Field of Maternal and Child Welfare, 53rd Annual Conference Report (*London: National Association for Maternal and Child Welfare Annual, 1966), p. 38.
[267] Pamela Richards, 'From War to Peace: Families Adapting to Change', in *Stress in Post-War Britain*, ed. by Mark Jackson (London: Routledge, 2015), pp. 17–29 (pp. 17–18, 24–25).
[268] NAMCW, *The Promotion of Education*, p. 38.

had a particularly poor housing situation. The 1951 census showed that 24.4% of Glasgow's population lived at more than 2 people per room, and 50.1% of households did not have a fixed bath. Moreover, 44.2% of the city's housing was judged to be overcrowded.[269] Johnstone argues that the Labour government failed to address the housing problems faced by the city's working classes and, while the Conservative government elected in 1951 built more council homes than Labour overall, it prioritised building houses that were designed to be sold rather than rented.[270]

Glasgow's housing issues perhaps explains why Wilson wanted to focus on improving the mental health and resilience of working-class children, as many families continued to live in overcrowded, inadequate housing. The School Health Service recruited children from four schools. While all pupils came from the same social background, two schools had pupils with an indoor toilet, bath and running hot water at home, and two schools had pupils with no access to such facilities, of which Wilson noted 'we still have quite a few areas of this nature left'.[271] The Scottish Education Department had already made provisions for teaching students about personal hygiene, cookery, laundrywork and practical baby care through its 1951 'Homecraft' syllabus for secondary schools.[272] However, Wilson seemingly believed it was necessary to provide more teaching for schoolchildren in Glasgow. The programme involved health visitors going into schools to facilitate group discussions on personal hygiene for younger children, as well as a course on Mothercraft with teaching on 'Care of the Baby, Pregnancy, [and] Infant Feeding' for older pupils.[273]

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[269] Johnstone, p. 140 (table 8.1), 141.
[270] Johnstone, pp. 147–48.
[271] NAMCW, *The Promotion of Education*, pp. 38-39.
[272] Scottish Education Department, *Homecraft in Secondary Schools* (Edinburgh: His Majesty's Stationary Office, 1951), pp. 5-6, 13-14.
[273] NAMCW, *The Promotion of Education*, pp. 38-39.

A somewhat condescending tone towards the working-class pupils involved in Glasgow's School Heath Service scheme is evident in Wilson's report, which stated that 'health visitors made the necessary allowance for the social background of the child. It has to be remembered that many of the young people taking part in these group discussions lived in single apartment houses with no modern facilities'. In addition, Wilson reported that the schoolgirls had 'made some attempt to improve, especially with the care of teeth and with the endeavour to stop nail-biting'.[274] Health officials involved in this 1960s School Health Service scheme appeared to believe that the best route to improving working-class parenting practices lay in encouraging pupils to take more responsibility for personal and domestic hygiene, echoing expert attitudes towards working-class motherhood earlier in the century.[275] This focus on the body supports Webster's arguments that hygiene remained a central preoccupation when addressing issues associated with 'problem families' in the post-war period, despite politicians' increased focus on emotional deprivation, revealing a continuation in the way some health professionals attempted to address supposed poor parenting across the century.[276]

There was also some continuation in thinking about eugenics. At the 1956 NAMCW conference on 'Safeguarding the Family', J. Stevenson Logan, Medical Officer of Health for Southend-on-Sea, gave a paper on 'The Insecure Family'. Logan stated that 'the high grade irresponsible woman defective is a menace … because, except in the most favourable circumstances, she is certain to be an incapable mother'. The risk of poor parenting was, in Logan's views, severe enough to warrant that 'the sterilisation of certain women defectives … not for genetic reasons but for social reasons'.[277] In response to Logan's paper, the Deputy Medical Officer for Glamorgan County Council suggested that

[274] NAMCW, *The Promotion of Education*, 39.
[275] Jane Lewis, 'The Social History', p. 465.
[276] Webster, pp. 94–95.
[277] NAMCW, *Safeguarding the Family: Annual Conference Report* (London: National Association for Maternal and Child Welfare, 1956), p. 61.

'Problem families can be the result of sheer overweight of responsibility … Family planning has its part to play in the prevention of problem families'.[278]

As Webster shows, recommendations for the extension of family planning services in the 1960s formed part of attempts to control the fertility of certain sections of society, including 'problem' parents, unmarried women, and migrant families. The eugenic approach was aimed at reducing black women's fertility. In the post-war period, race became a particular concern, as there were growing worries that black women were having too many children and overusing health services.[279] The Ministry of Health itself began to use the language of 'problem families' in the 1950s and 1960s, but eugenic ideas were less influential amongst policy makers and politicians than health professionals in this period.[280] The lack of influence that eugenic ideas had on policy was partly to do with the shifting ways in which politicians were seeking to tackle poverty and poor parenting in the post-war period, namely by means of increased provisions and a greater regulation of family life through the welfare state.[281]

For Logan, as well as other health professionals in attendance at the 1956 NAMCW conference, the issues posed by 'problem families' could also be mitigated through education programmes. Logan argued that 'Too little regard is paid to preparation for parenthood', and that schools should play a role in instilling family values in their pupils. In particular, Logan suggested that 'successful home-making [should be] held up as a laudable and desirable ambition for girls'.[282] The focus on girls shows that experts continued to conflate parenting with motherhood and believed that the best way to improve parenting practices lay in educating mothers-to-be at school. An attendee from the Royal College of Nursing was reported as having 'welcomed mention by Dr Logan

[278] NAMCW, *Safeguarding the Family*, p. 64.
[279] Webster, p. 123.
[280] Welshman, *Underclass*, p. 73.
[281] Hendrick, *Child Welfare*, pp. 136–38.
[282] NAMCW, *Safeguarding the Family*, p. 62.

of the need for teaching parentcraft in schools. Education may be regarded as preparation for living: it should therefore be regarded as leading to the ability to accept responsibility'.[283] This approach was intended to stop future families from becoming 'problem families' by rolling out parentcraft education in schools. It effectively suggested that issues of poor health, poor housing and poor parenting could be educated away. This foreshadowed later developments in political thinking in the 1970s, when apportioning blame for poverty to individual problem families rose in prominence again with the election of a Conservative government and a swing towards the right in mainstream political thought.[284] As will be seen, parentcraft education in schools became a prominent policy recommendation in the 1970s, to specifically address the cyclical reproduction of 'problem families'.

1.1.3 1970-1980

In the early 1970s, the idea that there were recurring cycles of issues within 'problem families' gained widespread attention due to a programme of policy research commissioned by Sir Keith Joseph, the Secretary of State for Social Services in Edward Heath's Conservative government. Welshman argues that the idea of the 'problem family' in the 1950s and 1960s was a 'conceptual stepping stone' towards the notion of a 'cycle of deprivation', which characterised the way Conservative politicians in the 1970s approached supposedly repeating patterns of poverty.[285] Joseph was influenced by eugenic ideas and believed that social problems were concentrated in families of 'low income and low intelligence, with more than the average number of children' and that '[a] cycle was created and repeated, whereby broken homes and bad parents were

[283] NAMCW, *Safeguarding the Family*, p. 71.
[284] Welshman, *Underclass*, p. 69.
[285] Welshman, *Underclass*, p. 69.

reproduced'.[286] The Department of Health and Social Security (DHSS) believed that cycles of deprivation could be tackled through better parenting education. Joseph and the then Secretary of State for Education Margaret Thatcher undertook a series of consultations with organisations working with socially deprived families, the results of which were published in 1972 in a report entitled 'Preparation for Parenthood'.[287] The DHSS also arranged a seminar for academics to discuss the potential for policy measures aimed at 'breaking' this supposed cycle of deprivation, and papers from this seminar were published in the 1974 report 'Dimensions of Parenthood'.[288]

The 1970s saw the balance of focus in parentcraft recommendations from politicians shifting back towards a more explicit interest in the welfare of future generations of children, rather than improving the welfare of parents-to-be. This shift reflected changes in the political landscape, with the rise of New Right thinking in the late 1960s and 1970s, a political ideology which championed 'economic freedom' as well as 'social and moral authoritarianism'.[289] The New Right influenced political thinking and social policy across different political parties in the latter decades of the twentieth century.[290] The New Right tended to blame parents for recurring cycles of poverty, low attainment and delinquency.[291] Senior Conservative politicians believed that the 1950s and 1960s, with the creation of the welfare state and liberal policies advocating greater intervention in family life, had eroded parental responsibility, leading to a rise in juvenile delinquency, crime and a disrespect for authority.[292] Politicians and policy makers believed that

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[286] John Welshman, 'Ideology, Social Science, and Public Policy: The Debate Over Transmitted Deprivation.', *Twentieth Century British History*, 16.3 (2005), 306–41 (pp. 315–16); Smith, pp. 13–14; Thomson, p. 180.
[287] DHSS, *Preparation for Parenthood*.
[288] DHSS, *The Family in Society: Dimensions of Parenthood, A Report of a Conference held at All Souls College, Oxford 10-13 April 1973* (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1974).
[289] Jane Pilcher and Stephen Wagg, 'Introduction: Thatcher's Children?', in *Thatcher's Children?: Politics, Childhood And Society In The 1980s And 1990s*, ed. by Jane Pilcher and Stephen Wagg (London: Falmer Press, 1996), pp. 1–7 (p. 3); Barker, p. 230.
[290] Barker, pp. 272, 276–79.
[291] Hendrick, *Narcissistic Parenting*, pp. 228–29.
[292] Winter and Connolly, pp. 31–32; Hendrick, *Narcissistic Parenting*, p. 244.

changes in attitudes and behaviour, and in particular greater parental discipline, were needed to instil a respect for authority and reinforce moral values. As Hendrick points out, the focus on parental discipline in political discourse reflected and contributed to a growing interest in behaviourist childcare theories, which began to be influential in health and education services.[293] Politicians believed that children and young people could be prepared for parenthood, which was invested with greater societal importance under New Right ideology, through education.[294]

Joseph acknowledged that there were complex causes of poverty and suggested the government should invest more in welfare programmes to tackle issues of 'low income and poor housing'. Nevertheless, he thought that parenting played a significant role in recurring cycles of low educational achievement, unemployment and poor health.[295] In his introduction to the 1972 'Preparation for Parenthood' report, Joseph explained that 'we might make an impact on the extent of social, emotional and intellectual deprivation among young children, and so reduce its later consequences' by '[helping] parents understand their children's emotional and intellectual needs'. [296] The aim of 'preparing people better for parenthood' reflected the party's focus in this period on promoting men's breadwinning and women's childrearing roles, as well as their hostility towards different forms of family life such as single motherhood, which has been highlighted by Pat Thane and Tanya Evans.[297] Defending tradition from social change – whether in relation to family life, community or national identity - were also at the heart of the Conservatives' educational policies in the latter decades of the century.[298]

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[293] Hendrick, *Narcissistic Parenting,* pp. 247–53.
[294] DHSS, *Preparation for Parenthood,* pp. 7, 12-13.
[295] DHSS, *Preparation for Parenthood,* pp. 5-7; see also Welshman, 'Ideology, Social Science, and Public Policy', p. 109.
[296] DHSS, *Preparation for Parenthood,* pp. 5-8, 12-13.
[297] Barker, pp. 230, 232–33; Thane and Evans, pp. 169–70.
[298] Jones, pp. 119–20.

The NAMCW was similarly concerned with how 'stable family life' could be preserved. At its 1970 conference 'Parents of the Future', the Chairman of the Association stated that:

> Early maturity, early marriage – or even not marriage – is producing tremendous problems for the young people, and many organisations and individuals are extremely concerned about the way in which family life can be maintained.[299]

Some academics disagreed with parentcraft initiatives, suggesting that education should centre on the current needs of children, rather than teaching them skills for future parenthood. An academic from the University of Manchester, who was asked to speak at the 1970 NAMCW conference, believed that the 'best parents of the future … are the best adolescents of today' and that schools should be thinking about their pupils as the children they were, 'not as mums or dads-to-be'.[300] However, the DHSS's 'Preparation for Parenthood' report showed that amongst organisations working with young people, this was a minority view. It reported that 'most regarded work with adolescents as essential' as 'intervention at the time of marriage and the first baby was not soon enough … what was done after school would not be effective unless a basis had been laid during school years which made people more receptive to help later on'.[301] While the organisations consulted by the DHSS had argued that parents needed to be better supported, and that issues such as 'isolation, poor housing [and] an unsympathetic reception by social agencies' needed to be addressed in order for a parentcraft initiative to be successful, organisations nevertheless believed that childhood was an important stage in life for preparing young people for parenthood.[302] The consultations suggested that it would be crucial for organisations to maintain contact with pupils as they grew older to 'reinforce

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[299] NAMCW, *Parents of the Future: 57th Annual Conference Report* (London: National Association for Maternal and Child Welfare, 1970), p. 5.
[300] NAMCW, *Parents of the Future*, p. 24.
[301] DHSS, *Preparation for Parenthood,* p. 19.
[302] DHSS, *Preparation for Parenthood,* p. 8.

what had been achieved earlier', but that this was especially important for those who were '"at risk" and deprived'.[303]

The report recommended that teaching on existing subjects in schools, such as home economics, health education and other social studies could be modified 'to bring home their relevance to the responsibility the children would have as parents'. It stated that:

> although much that is relevant to preparation for parenthood was already taking place in school (eg courses on personal relationships, sex education and civics) work in this general area only rarely focused on the developmental needs of children and the part parents play in meeting them.[304]

Pilcher argues that in the 1970s, policy makers began to see children's bodies as 'sexual and reproductive' in their own right, as sex education became an important part of suggested health education syllabuses.[305] Focusing specifically on parentcraft rather than health education in general, however, shows that in this area of schooling, experts firmly viewed children through the lens of the parents they would become, and on the responsibilities which they would have to their children's psychological health.

A key reason for this focus on children as future parents was the re-surfacing of eugenically-influenced ideas in the 1970s and 1980s.[306] Such ideas were apparent in a report of a 1979 conference jointly sponsored by the Department of Education and Science, the DHSS and the National Children's Bureau, which set out to address the question of 'What action should be taken by public authorities, voluntary organisations and others to help raise standards of parenting in this country?' At the conference, Mia Kellmer Pringle, Director of the National Children's Bureau, stated that a preparation for

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[303] DHSS, *Preparation for Parenthood,* p. 20.
[304] DHSS, *Preparation for Parenthood,* pp. 47-48.
[305] Pilcher, 'Body Work', p. 227.
[306] Welshman, 'Ideology, Social Science, and Public Policy', p. 318.

parenthood scheme would help individuals gain a 'realistic appreciation of the demands of parenthood … [to] enable them better to make a deliberate choice of lifestyle'. This 'deliberate choice of lifestyle' was of whether to have children in the first place, as she believed that:

> In future, raising children could become a deliberately chosen life style, freely adopted by couples … who willingly undertake [children's] care despite its demands in terms of financial and emotional commitment and sacrifice.[307]

This reference to family planning is interesting, and suggests that the National Children's Bureau, the Department of Education and Science and DHSS had strong ideas about what attributes individuals had to have before they considered becoming parents. Pringle appeared to be concerned with turning individuals who might not meet the expected standard away from the idea of having children, by stressing the responsibility involved. Pringle emphasised that it would be 'selfish and irresponsible' to have children for the wrong reasons, such as a desire for 'self-fulfilment', or to simply bring 'into the world unwanted human beings'.[308] The importance placed on parental responsibility and understanding the demands of childrearing appeared to be implicitly referring to working-class families. Health professionals and some politicians had long believed that 'problem families' were characterised by a refusal to take responsibility for their children's physical and emotional development and not taking steps to limit family size to make sure that they could provide for their offspring.[309]

The 1978 edition of 'Young Students' Book of Child Care' similarly emphasised the challenges adolescents would face in parenthood:

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[307] Mia Kellmer Pringle, 'Aims and Future Directions', in *Preparation for Parenthood: Some Current Initiatives and Thinking* ed. by Gillian Pugh (London: National Children's Bureau, 1980), pp. 54-61 (pp. 59-61), Reproduced with permission of The Licensor through PLSclear.
[308] Pringle, p. 61, Reproduced with permission of The Licensor through PLSclear.
[309] For example, NAMCW, *Safeguarding the Family,* p. 64; Welshman, 'Ideology, Social Science, and Public Policy', pp. 315–16.

> The parents should have the ability, the determination and the wish to set an example in their own behaviour. It is easy to have a baby but not at all a simple matter to guide and mould the child into a worthwhile person. Parents have to strive for that. It does not simply happen.[310]

The focus on parental responsibility reflected mainstream political thought and later developments in legislation. In the mid-to-late 1970s, senior Labour politicians were increasingly turning away from progressive ideals. Influenced by public support for the Conservative Party's aims to restore authority to families and a broader respect for law and order, Labour too stressed that children needed discipline at home and at school.[311] The 1989 Children's Act, which was brought in under Thatcher, sought to bolster parenting by stressing that the family was the best place for children to be raised, and limit state intervention by raising the threshold of when involvement by social services would be considered necessary.[312] The ideology of the New Right was concerned with preparing individuals for the challenges of childrearing and to accept greater responsibility for maintaining the welfare of and authority over offspring, revealing a firm shift back to focusing on the child as a future parent rather than improving their lives in the present.

1.2. Ideas about class and intelligence in parentcraft education

As has already been seen, mothercraft in the early-twentieth century was predominantly aimed at improving working-class motherhood by changing attitudes and behaviours and instilling middle-class moral values.[313] Nonetheless, education in infant care was something that advocates believed all girls, no matter their class background, would

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[310] Pitcairn, *Young Students' Book of Child Care*, p. 85, Reproduced with permission of The Licensor through PLSclear.
[311] Hendrick, *Narcissistic Parenting*, pp. 236–38.
[312] Winter and Connolly, pp. 36–37.
[313] Jane Lewis, *The Politics of Motherhood*, pp. 89–92.

benefit from. In 1937, the NAMCWCPIM's newly formed mothercraft teaching sub-committee declared that:

> every girl should receive suitable instruction in the fundamental principles of Mothercraft and that this instruction should be provided in all secondary schools, both public and private, and in elementary schools.[314]

The Board of Education similarly stressed that both elementary and secondary schoolgirls required lessons in infant care:

> there can be no question that the adolescent girl, whatever her social position, needs sound and wise information not only as to the care of her own health, but also, under suitable limitations, as to the care of infants and little children … the more well-to-do mother is often almost as ill-informed as her poorer sister in the suitable management of babies.[315]

A key reason for this was concerns about infant mortality and the desire to safeguard the health of the Empire's future citizens. In 1915, C.W. Saleeby (who later went on to become the Chairman of the National Birth Rate Commission) wrote that 'we have endless room for more population – we own, indeed, an almost empty Empire. The best thing to do under the circumstances is to take care of all the babies we have, and also to care for all the mothers that are and all healthy mothers-that-may-be'.[316] In 1931, Saleeby defined taking equal care of all mothers and babies as 'preventative eugenics', which consisted of protecting parents and infants from 'racial poisons' such as illnesses which were indiscriminate (although in reality infant mortality rates were higher in poorer

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[314] NAMCW, *Annual Report 1937* (London: National Association of Maternity and Child Welfare and for the Prevention of Infant Mortality, 1937), p. 7.
[315] Board of Education, p. 12.
[316] British Library, 7583.aaa.69, C.W. Saleeby, 'The Problem of the Future', in *Mothercraft: A Course of Lectures Delivered Under the Auspices of the National Association for the Prevention of Infant Mortality at the Royal Society of Medicine and the Charing Cross Hospital Medical School October to December, 1914* (London: The National League for Physical Education and Improvement, 1915), pp. 1-9, (p. 4).

areas).[317] This challenged the idea that babies who became ill should be allowed to die as they were not from strong 'stock':

> The stock might have been the noblest and most perfect on both sides that ever was, and a little parasite, such as that of syphilis, may enter the young creature, with its superb heredity and prospects, and will turn it into ruin.[318]

The dangers that 'racial poisons' posed to all babies demonstrates why mothercraft experts believed it was imperative for both working- and middle-class girls to receive instruction in infant care, so as to improve the health of every future child of the Empire.[319] Suggestions for topics to be covered by secondary schools, which were more likely to be attended by middle-class girls and those on scholarships, and elementary schools were largely similar. Suggested topics included teaching the reasons for maintaining domestic hygiene standards and creating a 'healthy environment' for a baby, as well as instruction on feeding and clothing.[320]

There were, however, some notable distinctions in methods of teaching. The Board stressed that infant care classes for public elementary school pupils 'should include simple teaching in the general management of infants and little children and the way in which they should be bathed, clothed and fed', with demonstrations so that girls could 'see whenever possible the methods they have been taught demonstrated upon a real baby'. Furthermore, the recommendations stated that mothercraft lessons ought to be 'simple … avoiding technical terms that would not be understood', with '[t]he cost of everything … clearly explained and emphasis laid on the fact that it is not necessary to

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[317] 7583.aaa.69, C.W. Saleeby, 'Beginning at the Beginning: Hereditary and Ante-Natal Environment', in *Mothercraft: A Selection from Courses of Lectures Delivered Under the Auspices of the National Association for the Prevention of Infant Mortality*, 6th edn (London: The Association of Maternity and Child Welfare Centres, 1931), pp. 1-11 (p. 9). There was a great deal of variation in the infant mortality rate even within towns, suggesting that the rate was higher amongst poorer communities, see Hendrick, *Child Welfare*, p. 98.
[318] Saleeby, 'Beginning at the Beginning', p. 6.
[319] Jane Lewis, *The Politics of Motherhood*, pp. 91–94.
[320] Board of Education, pp. 7-13.

spend much money in order to provide everything needful for an infant's health'.[321] Teaching for working-class girls was intended to be as straightforward, relatable and as useful as possible. As potential poor mothers themselves, they would need to rely on their skill alone to protect their children from illness. They would not have the economic reserves available to middle-class women, which experts believed allowed them to more easily create a clean and nurturing environment.[322]

In teaching secondary school girls, meanwhile, the Board stated that 'The subject should be treated on broader lines, possibly as part of a course in hygiene and housecraft and with less direct concentration on the actual care of the baby'.[323] It believed that by investing the subject with 'scientific pretensions', through focusing on the theory behind domestic hygiene and housecraft rather than practical baby care skills, the subject would appeal to secondary school teachers and provide a way for it to be included on their more academic syllabuses.[324] As Jane Lewis states, some middle-class mothercraft advocates believed that lessons in infant care management would also be beneficial in training girls for domestic service, which made secondary schools wary of including it on their educational programmes.[325]

A further reason as to why mothercraft advocates and policy makers sought to reach middle-class mothers-to-be was to encourage them to have more children.[326] Fertility rates declined in the early twentieth century, but decreased faster amongst the middle than the working classes.[327] Policy makers were therefore anxious to encourage middle- and upper-class women to see motherhood as a worthwhile occupation, particularly as it was becoming more acceptable for women to have economic independence without

[321] Board of Education, 'The Teaching of Infant Care', pp. 7-8.
[322] Davin, 'Imperialism and Motherhood', p. 32.
[323] Board of Education, p. 12.
[324] Board, p. 12; Jane Lewis, *The Politics of Motherhood*, p. 93.
[325] Jane Lewis, *The Politics of Motherhood*, pp. 93-94.
[326] Davin, 'Imperialism and Motherhood', p. 14.
[327] Coleman, 'Population and Family', pp. 37-38 (table 2.4 (a)); Finch and Summerfield, p. 5.

marrying.[328] Whereas some commentators and politicians believed that 'mental defectives' had to be sterilised to prevent them reproducing, middle-class women had to be encouraged to have more children to improve the nation's racial efficiency.[329] Encouraging middle-class women to start families was considered to be especially important as working-class people tended to have more children than their middle-class counterparts.[330] A wish to promote motherhood amongst middle-class schoolgirls can be seen in the Board's reasoning for teaching secondary school girls about how to deal with common infant complaints, which it felt would contribute towards these girls' 'health and happiness' in motherhood.[331] This focus on girls' future experiences may have formed part of an attempt to promote motherhood as a life choice amongst more academically ambitious students.

While mothercraft advocates thought it was crucial that all girls received training for motherhood, anxieties about working-class ignorance played an important role in recommendations for the expansion of mothercraft teaching. The Board believed that it was imperative for secondary schools to teach some form of mothercraft because 'a large and increasing number of girls [attending secondary school] is drawn from elementary schools'.[332] This may have been overstated as, although secondary school scholarships for children from public elementary schools were available, they required children to pass a competitive qualification exam.[333] However, the perception that working-class girls were moving up the social scale but taking with them the domestic and baby care practices learnt from their own mothers was clearly a concern. This was especially so as working-class girls would have started secondary school at age eleven, missing the mothercraft

[328] Davin, 'Imperialism and Motherhood', p. 20.
[329] Davin, 'Imperialism and Motherhood', p. 22; MacMaster, p. 44.
[330] Welshman, 45, 56; MacMaster, 44.
[331] Board of Education, p. 15.
[332] Board of Education, p. 12.
[333] Royle, pp. 425–26.

teaching offered to final year pupils in elementary schools, and so health professionals would lose the opportunity to override the influence of working-class mothers. The physical health of all future citizens, regardless of class, was of primary concern to policy makers in this period, but perceptions of working-class women's ignorance remained powerful, influencing calls for mothercraft education to be rolled out more widely.

The post-war period saw a narrowing focus in terms of the target groups for parentcraft education. Advocates of parentcraft continued to suggest that all students would benefit, but less academic pupils, those likely to marry at a young age, and pupils from 'insecure' homes were prioritised. This was to do with the increasing focus on 'problem families' in wartime and the subsequent post-war era, as well as politicians' increasing ambition to regulate society through family relationships.[334] As stated earlier, the 1948 Children's Act stated that deprived children should remain at home with their biological parents wherever possible.[335] Children from disadvantaged backgrounds, therefore, needed to be given as much help as possible to overcome the difficulties of their childhoods and become successful parents themselves. Leonora Pitcairn's parentcraft manual, which was produced for the NAMCW in the 1960s, suggested: 'Where home backgrounds are good, what has been absorbed only needs clarifying and implementing; where they have been bad, much more is needed'.[336]

It was not only those from disadvantaged backgrounds who were thought to be in specific need of parentcraft education. Pupils classed as being 'less academic [and] less intellectual' by parentcraft advocates and educationalists were also considered to be in greater need of teaching in this area. After the Second World War, infants' needs were thought about more in terms of their emotional ones rather than their physical ones, due

[334] Nikolas Rose, pp. 171–73.
[335] Hendrick, *Child Welfare*, pp. 138–40.
[336] Pitcairn, *Parentcraft Education*, p. 13.

to the influence of theories about children's psychological development on policy makers and health professionals.[337] It was these emotional needs which educationalists such as Pitcairn believed that less academic girls would struggle to grasp. 'Girls in this group are usually tremendously interested in the care of babies and children', Pitcairn explained, 'and if their interest can be aroused in behavioural problems, emotional needs, and character training as well as the simple bathing, dressing and feeding skills, good work will indeed have been done'. This implies that although these girls may have understood how to care physically for babies and infants, teachers would find it harder to instil the importance of children's developmental needs, a perception which shaped Pitcairn's advice for teachers: 'there has to be more definite guidance and teaching as there may not be the will nor the ability for constructive thought … this [teaching] will have to be done more thoroughly, *taught* more directly rather than *shown* as it can be with the higher intelligence group'.[338]

By contrast, 'intelligent young people' would require less direct teaching, and as their motivation to learn was taken to mean that they would be able to make sense of these concepts with relative ease.[339] Growing understandings of childhood development, which affected the content of parentcraft lessons, also influenced their style. Pupils who were deemed to be less academic were felt to need a more comprehensive but simple course in childcare.[340] Experts believed that children deemed to be less intellectually and emotionally mature needed extra help to develop into responsible parents, to be able to meet their children's emotional needs. This reveals the way the link between generations was conceptualised in the post-war period. As infants were thought to need the care of a mother who was sensitive to their emotional needs, experts believed that the students who

[337] Nikolas Rose, pp. 170-171.
[338] Pitcairn, *Parentcraft Education*, p. 15.
[339] Pitcairn, *Parentcraft Education*, p. 14.
[340] Pitcairn, *Parentcraft Education*, p. 15.

required extra help to get to that point should spend more time in their *own* youth learning about children's psychological needs, to benefit their offspring later in life.

These differentiations between groups of students were presented along lines of intelligence, but these references to intelligence also alluded to class difference. Perceptions of culture and academic ability frequently informed middle-class people's sense of social status in this period.[341] The intertwinement of culture and class in public consciousness pervaded societal structures, including the education system. As Ken Jones argues, the presumed 'relationship between class and academic success and failure' permeated 'educational research, media commentary and teachers' practice'.[342] Social researchers argued that the introduction of the tripartite system of secondary schooling with the 1944 Education Act worked to deepen these social divisions.[343]

Schools in the tripartite system and state comprehensives, as they had before the 1944 educational reforms, made assumptions about the intellect, ability and social background of their pupils.[344] Expert attitudes towards working-class family life influenced parentcraft provisions for 'less academic, less intellectual' pupils. Professionals continued to perceive working-class mothers' ignorance as a major barrier to improving general levels of physical and mental health.[345] This notion of working-class indifference to health advice arguably played a significant role in Pitcairn's suggestions for a more in-depth and demonstrative course for less academic pupils, to instil the fundamentals of good childcare practice – encompassing physical and emotional needs – instead of just a theoretical discussion about childhood development that was recommended for higher

[341] James Hinton, '"The 'Class' Complex": Mass-Observation and Cultural Distinction in Pre-War Britain', *Past & Present*, 199.1 (2008), 207–36 (pp. 214–16).
[342] Jones, p. 57.
[343] Jones, p. 58; Stephanie Spencer, *Gender, Work and Education in Britain in the 1950s* (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), p. 64.
[344] Ibid., pp. 21, 57-58, 84.
[345] Webster, pp. 92, 117.

ability pupils.[346] This shows again that perceptions of 'good' parenting were framed around middle-class ideals. Higher ability middle-class pupils supposedly needed less parenting education, as they would have already seen models of good parenthood in practice at home. Less academic working-class pupils, meanwhile, needed more instruction at school to instil a greater understanding of the parents' role and raise the standard of their future childrearing.

A key way in which class and cultural distinctions affected educational practice was in the assumptions that were made about what pupils of different academic ability would go on to do after school, and therefore the level of parentcraft education that it was thought appropriate for them to receive. Although the NAMCW believed that less academic students or those from disadvantaged backgrounds generally needed more preparation for parenthood, the school system itself played a large role in determining the amount of parenting education that pupils received. At the NAMCW's 1966 conference, Miss O.E.J. Lawrence, the headmistress of Clacton Secondary School for Girls gave a talk entitled 'Homemakers of the Future'. Lawrence described the provisions the school made for girls in gaining practical experience in homemaking tasks, from preparing meals and budgeting family finances, to how to decorate the home.[347] In the girls' final year, the school introduced subjects on 'home nursing and first aid, infant care and parentcraft'. Lawrence believed that 'There is no more popular or interesting topic for girls than the home', and hoped that 'when our girls leave school they will plan their own homes to be centres of beauty and harmony, as well as hives of interesting activity'.[348] As the title of this paper suggests, the school saw its students first and foremost as mothers and 'homemakers', showing how perceptions of academic ability affected not only students' educational experiences but also expectations for their future roles in life. As Stephanie Spencer

[346] Pitcairn, *Parentcraft Education*, pp. 9, 13-15.
[347] NAMCW, *The Promotion of Education*, p. 46.
[348] NAMCW, *The Promotion of Education*, pp. 47-48.

argues, secondary modern schools concentrated on preparing schoolgirls for their future lives as housewives and mothers.[349]

Lawrence did not state whether her school was a secondary modern, technical or comprehensive, but it prioritised its pupils learning in ways that were as 'practical as possible'. This differed from grammar schools and teaching for higher ability pupils in this period as, in the discussion following this paper, it was noted that 'parentcraft classes were largely limited to C and D streams, and in grammar schools the pressure of examinations tended to crowd out health education'. A representative from the Association of Headmistresses clarified that grammar schools did not have the time or facilities for practical lessons in cookery or domesticity, but that:

> grammar school headmistresses, in spite of pressures on their timetables, were aware of the need for health education and tried to meet it by many of their specialist teachers relating their subjects to the teaching of the whole person.[350]

This reference to teachers 'relating their subjects to the teaching of the whole person' suggests that lessons in parentcraft and health education for grammar schoolgirls were more theoretical. Although parentcraft advocates placed more attention on children's developmental rather than physical needs, classes for less academic students continued to deliver these lessons in a hands-on format.[351] This was due to the fact that less academic working-class students were often thought of as future mothers more often than their more academically successful middle-class counterparts, as it was presumed that less academic girls would tend to marry and have children sooner.[352] It was believed to be therefore

[349] Spencer, pp. 59–60.
[350] NAMCW, *The Promotion of Education*, pp. 50-51.
[351] Pitcairn, *Parentcraft Education*, p. 15.
[352] Spencer, pp. 73-75.

imperative that schools made sure that less academic girls understood how best to care for and meet their infants' needs.

That working-class girls were predominantly thought of as future mothers rather than workers in the post-war period reflected a shift in how the need for mothercraft teaching was conceptualised across the century. In the interwar period, middle-class women were prevented from pursuing careers once they became wives due to the marriage bar.[353] Working-class mothers, meanwhile, were more likely to continue working after marrying and having children due to economic necessity, and many did so through informal means.[354] Health professionals in the early twentieth century tried to convince working-class mothers not to take up paid work, as it was believed that mothers working had a detrimental effect on infants' health.[355] After the Second World War, women's participation in the workforce increased and the point at which women were expected to stop working shifted from marriage to the birth of their first child (though many resumed work once their children were older).[356] Middle-class women tended to have children slightly later than their working-class counterparts, especially if they attained a university degree.[357] That middle-class women were already presumed to be intellectually mature demonstrates why teachers focused on giving them a more academic introduction to childhood development than their working-class peers.

Young parenthood became an increasing concern for policy makers and other organisations in the 1960s and 1970s. The DHSS 'Preparation for Parenthood' report highlighted that 'the raising of the school leaving age and the lower age of marriage had

[353] Kate Murphy, 'A Marriage Bar of Convenience? The BBC and Married Women's Work 1923–39', *Twentieth Century British History*, 25.4 (2014), 533–61 (pp. 538–39).
[354] Roberts, *A Woman's Place*, pp. 136–37.
[355] Dyhouse, pp. 92–95.
[356] B. Jane Elliott, 'Demographic Trends in Domestic Life, 1945-87', in *Marriage, Domestic Life and Social Change: Writings for Jacqueline Burgoyne, 1944-88*, ed. by David Clark (London: Routledge, 1991), pp. 71–91 (p. 86).
[357] Spencer, pp. 1–2.

narrowed the gap between school age and parenthood'. Rates of marriage amongst men and women in their early twenties increased significantly in the post-war period. By 1971, 60% of women in their early twenties had married, compared with only a quarter of women this age in the interwar period.[358] The growing rates of marriages amongst younger people made it seem all the more necessary to develop parentcraft programmes in schools as the DHSS consultations revealed a common anxiety amongst organisations that 'it was notoriously difficult to influence young people who had left school'.[359] A 1966 report by the Royal College of Midwives on 'Preparation for Parenthood' revealed that 'a large number of young women approach maturity relatively unprepared for the physical and psychological implications of childbearing'.[360]

Women's lowering age on marriage and childbirth, and their relative unpreparedness for the emotional and physical strains of parenthood was seen as a serious social issue. The emphasis on practical skills in parenting education was most evident in cases where schoolgirls were thought to want to marry swiftly after leaving school. In her parentcraft manual, Pitcairn warned that 'In some areas girls marry very soon after leaving school and for them the need [for education] is urgent indeed. They may become mothers before they have any experience of life to help them'.[361] Pitcairn suggested that these girls should undertake an intensive course to learn how to prepare for the arrival of a baby. The aim of such a course was to give these girls 'a feeling of security and confidence' in childrearing. Young motherhood represented a concern because of growing understandings about the role parents played in securing their child's healthy mental development in the first few years of life, a role perceived to be particularly challenging

[358] Coleman, 'Population and Family', p. 58.
[359] DHSS, *Preparation for Parenthood*, p. 46.
[360] The Royal College of Midwives, *Preparation for Parenthood* (London: The Royal College of Midwives 1966), p. 15.
[361] Pitcairn, *Parentcraft Education*, p. 6.

for young parents.[362] The idea that infants needed to be raised by confident, competent parents influenced the perceived educational needs of students in the present. School was thought to be the optimum place to encourage children to think about the responsibilities of parenthood. This especially so for those who would become very young mothers, and so the needs of current and future children fused to shape educational provisions.

Whilst Pitcairn's parentcraft manual suggests that only a minority of students might need such an intensive course, teachers and providers of childcare courses believed that *all* pupils of these subjects needed to be prepared for early marriage and parenthood. The Catholic Marriage Advisory Council for example, believed that as 'many senior school students became parents within a couple of years of leaving school for 16 year olds some theoretical understanding of the psychological need for young children should be given in the school'.[363] Similarly, a 1983 study carried out for the Department of Education and Science examined the extent to which secondary schools focused on preparation for parenthood in their syllabuses. The study found that teachers of Family and Child subjects, the main aim of which was to teach students about childcare and childhood development, believed most of their students would have children very soon after leaving school.[364] Smith argues that girls who were more interested in having children than pursuing a career were more likely to opt for childcare courses than their more academic peers.[365] Schools themselves, though, were also proactive in introducing these subjects to the meet the perceived 'needs' of these pupils.

Of course, it should be noted that it was not only the age at which women were having children that concerned politicians and health professionals, but also the perception that

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[362] NAMCW, *Parents of the Future*, pp. 5, 41, 58-59.
[363] DHSS, *Preparation for Parenthood*, pp. 48-49.
[364] British Library, 85/10146, Tessa Grafton, Leslie Smith, Martin Vegoda and Richard Whitfield, *Preparation for Parenthood in the Secondary School Curriculum: A Study Carried out for the Department of Education and Science* (The University of Aston in Birmingham: Department of Educational Enquiry, 1983), pp. 101-102.
[365] Smith, p. 26.

young mothers were more likely to be unmarried or seek abortions than their older counterparts. At the 1970 NAMCW conference, a Consultant Obstetrician gave a paper entitled 'Immature Mothers', in which they noted a rise in pregnancy amongst teenagers since the Second World War, an increase in illegitimate pregnancies in this age group, as well as a trend towards unmarried young women seeking abortions since the introduction of the 1967 Abortion Act.[366] In the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s the Conservative Party promoted moral family values to root out single motherhood, cohabitation and teenage pregnancy which politicians believed were symptomatic of an erosion in personal and parental responsibility.[367] Educational programmes aimed at educating young working-class mothers-to-be can be read as part of this attempt to promote traditional family values and foster a new generation of responsible parents with the 'right' moral attitudes.

1.3. Ideas about race in parentcraft education

Parenting ideals promoted in the twentieth century were middle class, but they were also white and distinctly Eurocentric. Policy makers and health professionals in the mid-century not only criticised working-class parents, but also those who had recently emigrated from the Caribbean, West Africa and South Asia to England.[368] Jordanna Bailkin argues that after the Second World War, social workers criticised West African, South Asian and Caribbean families. These families were criticised due to the fact that they did not meet white, middle-class Bowlby-inspired standards of parenting, as they relied on childminders and foster parents to care for younger children while mothers were working. The Commonwealth Immigrants Act allowed children to accompany or join their parents who had immigrated to the United Kingdom, but not older relatives who could have cared for them.[369] This, combined with a tendency for parents to emigrate

[366] NAMCW, *Parents of the Future*, pp. 58-59.
[367] Thane and Evans, pp. 169–70; Barker, p. 230.
[368] Bailkin, pp. 189–95.
[369] Bailkin, pp. 177–78, 189–92; Thomson, pp. 101–2.

alone and leave children in the care of relatives, and a well-established system of intergenerational caregiving in Caribbean families, led policymakers and state agencies to claim that parents were putting their children at risk of maternal deprivation.[370]

Helen McCarthy demonstrates that some post-war social researchers argued that the poor social conditions faced by black families, such as cramped, over-crowded housing and low wages were stopping women from enjoying an 'active and emotionally-engaged motherhood'.[371] Other health professionals expressed similar concerns about the effect that social conditions were having on father-child relationships in migrant communities in latter decades of the century. At the NAMCW's 1970 conference, the Chairman of the Health Education Council stated that 'most young parents are completely unprepared psychologically, socially and emotionally for the advent of a baby', which needed to be addressed in school. However, they argued that 'when talking about social and emotional problems, I do not think we ought to forget the economic'. This comment was seemingly directed at less academically ambitious pupils, as they stated that vocational guidance needed to be improved in schools to enable students to escape 'dead-end [jobs]', as this was 'not only an economic bar to marriage but can be a very depressing and frustrating start for many youngsters'. They believed similar problems faced black, Asian and minority ethnic families:

> A further aspect of parenthood that we cannot ignore today is the increasing number of second generation of immigrants who were born here and educated here, and who still find it difficult to obtain jobs equal to their abilities because their skins are black.[372]

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[370] Chamberlain, p. 154.
[371] Helen McCarthy, 'Pearl Jephcott and the Politics of Gender, Class and Race in Post-War Britain', *Women's History Review*, 28.5 (2019), 779–93 (p. 787).
[372] NAMCW, *Parents of the Future*, pp. 15-16.

The Chairman suggested that economic issues were a serious barrier to working-class, black, Asian and minority ethnic families achieving a warm family environment, as low paid jobs prevented fathers from enjoying fulfilling father-child relationships. Expected standards of fathering were based around white middle-class ideals, which the Chairman suggested, excluded poorer and black, Asian and minority ethnic men.

The Chairman's comments about race at the 1970 NAMCW conference seemed to be rather rare in this period. Children from migrant families were not generally envisaged as future parents in parentcraft literature or in recommendations for parenting education in schools. This is interesting, as children from other supposed 'problem' families were identified as needing additional support to become successful parents later in life. Working-class children, those from disadvantaged backgrounds and less academic pupils were specifically addressed in this literature.[373] The lack of reference to children from migrant families may have been due to the fact that, when imagining future parents, parentcraft advocates and politicians made assumptions of whiteness. Webster argues that black women were excluded from the post-war 'mother mandate' as unlike their married white English counterparts, black women were not thought of as mothers or potential mothers-to-be, and there was very little representation of black motherhood in the press. In the post-war period policy makers perceived the role of black women in terms of their supporting white families through working in the NHS, rather than as mothers raising families of their own. [374] It follows, then, that the children of migrant families were not often seen as future parents either, as migrant groups were predominantly conceptualised as workers. Their potential parenthood was also regarded as problematic in a number of ways, not least because of fears about inter-racial marriage.[375]

[373] Pitcairn, *Parentcraft Education*, p. 13; DHSS, *Preparation for Parenthood*, p. 20.
[374] Webster, pp. 121-122.
[375] Ibid., pp. 127.

Rather than being seen as future parents, migrant children were instead picked out in parentcraft literature to draw attention to their own parents' supposedly insufficient attempts at meeting their offspring's physical and emotional needs. The DHSS's 'Preparation for Parenthood' report brought attention to migrant families as a group 'specially in need of help'. 'Immigrant families in particular' it stated, 'need help in their new environment'. In discussing the work that could be done with adolescents aged thirteen to eighteen to prepare them for parenthood, the report stated that 'a number of organisations expressed concern at the plight of some immigrant children'.[376] A need for schools and other organisations to foster in parents a greater understanding of children's psychological development was the over-all emphasis of the DHSS's 'Preparation for Parenthood' report. There was, however, widespread concern amongst social researchers about the poor conditions in which migrant families were living. Those who emigrated from West Africa and the Caribbean struggled to find decent housing in England, especially if they had children.[377]

Health officials invited to speak at NAMCW conferences stressed concerns about the housing conditions migrant families faced. At the 1966 NAMCW conference on health education, E.L.M Millar, Medical Officer of Health and Principal School Medical Officer for Birmingham, discussed growing rates of stillbirths and infant mortalities in inner-city areas, which tended to have higher rates of migrant residents living in over-crowded housing. Millar explained that in the city as a whole, rates of mortality amongst infants in the first week of life were lowest amongst children born to 'European' parents, at 11 per 1,000, whilst rates amongst infants born to parents, or one parent from the Caribbean and West Africa was 15 per 1,000, and 15.9 per 1,000 if infants were born to parents, or one parent from India or Pakistan.[378] Similarly, at the 1985 NAMCW conference

[376] DHSS, *Preparation for Parenthood*, pp. 14-15, 55-56.
[377] Webster, 126.
[378] NAMCW, *The Promotion of Education*, pp. 12-13.

exploring the issues faced by black, Asian and minority ethnic families, Veena Bahil, the Director of the Asian Mother and Baby Campaign, drew attention to high rates of perinatal mortality among mothers born in Pakistan, which was double that of women born in the UK.[379]

While there was a growing focus on children's psychological development in the post-war period, Webster argues that domestic hygiene remained prominent in discussions about the 'problem family' in the post-war period. Issues of domestic hygiene were used to criticise 'problem families', through claims that parents made no effort to improve their family's health.[380] Millar and Bahil's papers also used the issue of hygiene and infant mortality, but not to criticise migrant families. Rather, they drew attention to structural problems migrant families faced, to call for sustained state intervention in the lives of parents and children from black, Asian and minority ethnic communities. Bahil called for the health service to work more closely with Asian communities and take account of language barriers, for instance. Millar, meanwhile, used the stark statistics about infant mortality in Birmingham to attempt to provoke the government into improving housing conditions, by comparing the situation with that of the high levels of infant mortality that existed in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries. Millar stated that: 'It must surely still be obvious now as it was years ago that the lowest standards of child care are closely associated with the poorest living conditions', as these conditions prevented families from maintaining 'a better standard of housekeeping' which, Millar argued led to 'a better standard of child care'. Indeed, Millar argued that the health service's efforts to help migrant parents through education from health visitors were virtually ineffective,

[379] British Library, 1082.459000 72nd 1985, NAMCW, *"Ethnic Minorities" "Between Two Cultures": A Study of Issues Affecting Ethnic Minority Families, Conference Report, 1985* (London: National Association of Maternity and Child Welfare, 1985), p. 23.
[380] Webster, pp. 92, 94-95.

as those 'without basic domestic comfort will be unlikely to profit satisfactorily from health education'. [381]

Focusing on race here reveals a common tension in debates about health education, between those who argued that education on its own was an effective tool to bring about change, and those who argued that wider structural issues also needed to be addressed.[382] Millar noted that: 'One of the extraordinary features of public health in the last thirty years has been the very great interest which medial officers have shown in the development of the personal health services, rather to the neglect of interest in the environmental services'.[383] Politicians' and health professionals' continued focus on *current* parents from West Africa, the Caribbean and South Asia, and the general absence of children from migrant communities in parentcraft literature, implies that children from these families were not often thought of as future parents in their own right. The analysis presented here, then, supports Webster's claim that migrant communities were excluded from the 'mother mandate' in the post-war period.[384]

1.4. Ideas about gender in parentcraft education

As historians have noted, future citizens in the twentieth century were mostly thought of as middle-class, white and male.[385] When it came to future *parents*, however, policy makers in the early twentieth century concentrated specifically on girls and women and educating them for motherhood, as reflected in the term 'mothercraft'. Before all women gained the vote, women were thought of primarily as the mothers of future soldiers, workers and citizens of the Empire. Their role in society was that of the 'production and rearing of healthy sons'.[386] Boys were not mentioned in this literature because, as far as

[381] NAMCW, *The Promotion of Education*, pp. 13-14.
[382] This had been a long running debate, see Davin, 'Imperialism and Motherhood', p. 26.
[383] NAMCW, *The Promotion of Education*, p. 13.
[384] Webster, pp. 121-2.
[385] Davin, 'Imperialism and Motherhood', p. 26; King, 'Future Citizens', p. 393.
[386] Davin, 'Imperialism and Motherhood', p. 26.

the Board of Education, NAMCW and Infant Welfare Movement were concerned, women were responsible for the health of their babies and infants, and infant mortality was blamed specifically on maternal ignorance.[387] Mothers and mothers-to-be were therefore seen as the ones who needed to be targeted by education campaigns. As the NAMCW's Mothercraft Teaching Subcommittee stated in 1938, the 'aim of this course is to ensure that a girl when she marries will have sufficient useful knowledge to help her manage a baby of her own'.[388]

In the 1920s and 1930s the Infant Welfare Movement expanded its remit by attempting to not only better educate working-class mothers but also fathers. The fathercraft movement, through the establishment of Fathers' Councils at Infant Welfare Clinics, sought to educate men in the practical knowhow of baby and childcare and encourage them take a more active role in the upbringing of their children, without challenging the widely accepted view that baby care was the responsibility of mothers.[389] Advocates felt that this education would make working-class fathers more accepting of health visitors and the work of infant welfare clinics, as well as promoting a more involved role for men in family life.

This work, though, did not feed into school mothercraft schemes, which focused on the relationship between mothers and their babies, and women's responsibility for creating a healthy and moral home environment for their child. This was not only because mothers were presumed to be the most important parent in safeguarding their child's health, but also because schoolgirls were seen as the obvious target for parenting education. As seen earlier, the Board of Education thought that the subject of mothercraft was already a 'matter of every-day familiarity' for working-class girls involved in helping their

[387] Dyhouse, p. 92.
[388] NAMCWCPIM, Annual Report 1938 (London: National Association of Maternity and Child Welfare and for the Prevention of Infant Mortality, 1938), p. 11.
[389] Fisher, pp. 443–44, 450–51.

mothers with childcare.[390] Boyhood was not as closely associated with domestic or caregiving work as girlhood, even though sons' contributions to family life could be relied upon just as much as their sisters' in larger families.[391] The Infant Welfare Movement wanted their work to be worthwhile, and so perhaps felt that men's interests in baby care could be more successfully roused once they had a children of their own, unlike girls whose minds could supposedly be engaged in thinking about marriage and motherhood through their experiences as older sisters.

Thinking in the NAMCW began to shift in the early 1940s. In 1942, Housden stated that the 'wider scope' of parentcraft might be a better term to encompass the work of the sub-committee instead of mothercraft. He believed that 'character training' should play an equally important part in infant care teaching as training in practical baby care skills.[392] Housden's focus on character training marked a decisive turning point in the movement towards the inclusion of boys in infant care instruction. The following year, the name of the sub-committee officially changed from 'Mothercraft Teaching' to 'Parentcraft Teaching', and in the 1943 Annual Report Housden announced that a 'new syllabus: "Home-making with its relation to citizenship", was considered and prepared for the use of senior boys, mixed clubs, youth centres, and the like'.[393] In the introduction to a parentcraft manual by Australian child care expert Zoë Benjamin, which the NAMCW published in 1946, the organisation stated that it had 'not been content with mothercraft teaching only. It is clear that child rearing is a matter for both parents, and that fathercraft is equal in importance to mothercraft'.[394]

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[390] Board of Education, p. 6.
[391] Davin, *Growing Up Poor*, p. 179; Roberts, *A Woman's Place*, p. 22.
[392] P.P.1098.ccn, NAMCWCPIM, *Annual Report 1942* (London: National Association of Maternity and Child Welfare and for the Prevention of Infant Mortality, 1942), 8-9.
[393] P.P.1098.ccn, NAMCWCPIM, *Annual Report 1943* (London: National Association of Maternity and Child Welfare and for the Prevention of Infant Mortality, 1943), p. 8.
[394] British Library, 08311.ee.68, Zoë Benjamin, *Education for Parenthood* (London: National Association of Maternity and Child Welfare and for the Prevention of Infant Mortality, 1946), pp. 2-3.

Benjamin's focus on mothers *and* fathers was most probably influenced by emerging psychological ideas about the importance of a secure and loving family home for children's healthy emotional development. Against the backdrop of the Second World War, the home came to be conceptualised 'to new degrees as the space essential for well-being'. Institutions such as orphanages, hospitals and children's homes, which had previously been posited as ways of dealing with problems of family breakdown and child ill-health, were now regarded as places with the potential to cause children significant psychological harm.[395] In addition, the importance attached to the home as a space for raising responsible, engaged and thoughtful future citizens intensified.[396] At a 1947 conference organised by the Parentcraft Teaching Subcommittee on 'Parentcraft and Homecraft', The Chief Medical Officer for the Ministry of Health and Ministry of Education stated that as 'there was no better stabilising influence than a good home, homemaking was one of the prime objects of our educational system'.[397] Their reference to the 'stabilising environment' of the home reflected the increased importance that politicians in the post-war welfare state period attached to family relationships as a way to regulate and improve the conditions under which children were being raised.[398]

Fathers were considered to be as important as mothers in creating a stable home environment. Benjamin stated that:

> In any scheme of parent education it is important that the interest of the fathers should be aroused as well as that of the mothers. Little can be done to improve home conditions for the child unless both parents work in co-operation. If, for example, one parent is stern and the other too lenient, it creates a confusion in the

[395] Thomson, pp. 4–8, 82–84, 87; Hendrick, *Child Welfare*, pp. 138–40.
[396] Hendrick, *Narcissistic Parenting*, pp. 120–22.
[397] P.P.1098.ccn, NAMCWCPIM, *Annual Report 1947* (London: National Association of Maternity and Child Welfare and for the Prevention of Infant Mortality, 1947), pp. 10-11.
[398] Nikolas Rose, pp. 171–72.

> child's mind because conflicting standards are being upheld … *[Children] can develop normally only in an atmosphere of harmony and co-operation*.[399]

Father-child relationships had long been recognised as a positive influence. Freudian psychologists in the interwar era argued that fathers acted as important male role models and emotional confidantes for their older children.[400] However, these ideas were popularised by the books and radio broadcasts of prominent post-war child psychologists, and a greater importance was attached to the fathers' role in younger children's upbringings as health professionals became more aware of the notion of psychological development.[401] For the NAMCW and other parentcraft advocates, boys and future fathers became an object of increased attention due to the growing importance attached to safeguarding the health of children's minds as well as their bodies. While the majority of parentcraft teaching in schools was still aimed at girls, advocates felt that boys needed to have some level of instruction because of the prominent role fathers were expected to play in their children's psychological and character development, as well as in sustaining a loving and supportive environment. Proposed educational provisions were once again, then, shaped by notions of an ideal upbringing, which in this period was determined by the supportive presence of a father figure. Boys were not involved in practical childcare lessons however, perhaps because parentcraft advocates believed that they had more of a chance of interesting boys' attention with more 'masculine' features of family life. As Pitcairn explained:

> Certain parts of general child care can be made interesting to boys e.g. How to make a home or garden safe for small children to play in; home-made toys, their

[399] Benjamin, p. 28.
[400] Fisher, pp. 451–52.
[401] King, *Family Men*, pp. 89–90.

> uses and purpose; the part a father can play in the family; discipline for children at all ages.[402]

Making toys and discipling children were not the extent of fathering roles imagined by the NAMCW but were aspects of parenthood which the organisation believed could be made to appeal to teenage boys.

The father's role was conceived of in direct relation to the increasing significance attached the family home and built around the growing popularity of the 'companionate marriage' ideal. The notion that men and women worked together to create an emotionally warm and safe family home became more widespread in the post-war years.[403] For example, in 1965 Pitcairn explained that '[m]ore work has been done and is being done with girls than with boys' because 'girls are very ready to think of motherhood … whereas boys less often consider fatherhood until the time comes'. Boys, though, needed some education to 'foster feelings of the responsibilities of parenthood … because a man and woman make the home together'.[404]

The NAMCW's 1978 students' handbook similarly wrote that 'parents should work together to make a real home for their family' but was more explicit in demarcating the roles it felt fathers and mothers should play. It stated unambiguously that the mother 'is the most important person in a small child's life' but that men played an equally important stabilising role in family life. 'The father', it explained 'represents a strength and competence which added to the maternal love gives ever greater security'.[405] Security in childhood, as we saw earlier, was considered to be of prime importance for mental wellbeing across the life course and for avoiding later psychological issues.[406] In practice,

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[402] Pitcairn, *Parentcraft Education*, p. 17.
[403] Finch and Summerfield, p. 6.
[404] Pitcairn, *Parentcraft Education* pp. 16-17.
[405] Pitcairn, *Young Students' Book of Child Care*, pp. 85, 87, Reproduced with permission of The Licensor through PLSclear.
[406] Nikolas Rose, pp. 170–71.

King argues that despite the cultural ideals of companionate marriage and domestic masculinity, men largely became more active in the family home through their roles as fathers, rather than as husbands. Men became involved in more pleasurable aspects of their children's lives, such as playing and reading with them, whilst the associated domestic labour of childrearing remained their wives' responsibilities.[407] These manuals, however, presented wife/husband and mother/father dynamics as one and the same, giving students of parentcraft the impression that men and women should be equally important partners in the home, with complementary skills to support each other through married life and parenthood.

While the NAMCW put forward a consistent view of the role it felt fathers ought to play in family life, these ideas did not feed down into school level. The DHSS's 'Preparation for Parenthood' report stated that 'existing teaching too often neglected boys, who could benefit from preparation for fatherhood', while the 1980 National Children's Bureau report stated that whilst 'there have been substantial increases in the availability of courses – at least in child care and child development – over the last ten years … In all cases, more girls than boys were involved in lessons'.[408] The low number of boys engaging with parentcraft teaching was partly to do with the fact that boys were not opting to take courses in child care where they were offered. The National Children's Bureau found that schoolboys were more inclined to study subjects in 'personal relationships, social education and home management than in preparation for parenthood or child care', and reported that the NAMCW was planning to change the title of the course it offered to schools to 'Family and Community Studies, hoping that by playing down "Maternal" it will attract more boys'.[409]

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[407] King, *Family Men*, pp. 84, 156-157.
[408] DHSS, *Preparation for Parenthood*, p. 46; Pugh, p. 14, Reproduced with permission of The Licensor through PLSclear.
[409] Pugh, p. 16, Reproduced with permission of The Licensor through PLSclear.

The National Children's Bureau admitted, however, that encouraging schoolboys to choose such subjects would not be a simple task. The lack of male teachers interested in courses associated with child care was cited as a particularly prominent barrier, '[f]or unless men are encouraged to teach aspects of preparation for parenthood, it is difficult to see how entrenched attitudes towards parenting and child development as being a girls' job will ever change'.[410] King has shown that a family-orientated masculinity amongst fathers became prominent in post-war Britain, and that more involved fathering practices became the norm in some sections of society by the latter decades of the century.[411] These reports show, however, that while fatherhood as a masculine identity and family practice continued to change in the late-twentieth century, boys at least were not learning about evolving familial expectations of masculinity at school. In 1986 sociologist Charlie Lewis reflected on the fact that few boys were receiving education for parenthood. Lewis believed that while boys were not opting to take child care lessons in schools, it should not be assumed that boys were less interested in learning about parenting than girls.[412] Later chapters of this thesis support Lewis's assertion. Other, more informal spaces of transmission, such as family homes, communities and peer groups, were unequivocally more important in passing on ideas about familial masculinity and aiding later change in fathering practices. The importance that informal sites of learning played in shaping boys' ideas about fatherhood will be explored in chapters five and six especially.

1.5 Conclusion

Through an examination of parentcraft education, this chapter has argued that ways of examining how children's future was conceptualised in the mid-twentieth century should be extended. Previous studies have shown that childhood as a life stage was given a

[410] Pugh, p. 19, Reproduced with permission of The Licensor through PLSclear.
[411] King, *Family Men*, p. 86; Brannen and Nilsen, pp. 342–43.
[412] Charlie Lewis, *Becoming a Father* (Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1986), pp. 33–34.

greater sense of meaning in political and cultural discourses through children's imagined futures as adults, citizens, workers and parents. This chapter has shown that through explicitly focusing on the idea of future children, new ways of examining cross-generational links between children's lives in the present and future are revealed. Firstly, experts' ideas about the way children's lives in the future could be improved illuminate attitudes to poverty, class and the power of education. In the 1920s and 1930s, and later in the 1970s and 1980s, politicians and health professionals focused predominantly on future children in their proposals for parentcraft education. Teaching current children about how to create an ideal environment for a child – a clean, sanitary environment in the interwar era and a nurturing, emotionally-responsive one in the 1970s – was believed to the best way of securing the wellbeing of Britain's future citizens in their early years of life.

In the post-war period, many politicians and health officials believed that adult mental health was to a large extent determined by childhood experiences. They thought that schools should concentrate on helping children – and thereby future parents - understand their own relationships, and work towards an emotionally secure adulthood. Politicians working in the era of the introduction of the welfare state saw in Bowlby's work the potential to improve children's lives and relationships in the present, revealing how dominant contemporary political ideologies affected approaches to parentcraft teaching. Imaginations of a future childhood, however, reveal the distinctly race-based nature of these constructions. Black, Asian and minority ethnic children were excluded from representations of future parenthood and from preparation for parenthood literature.

Moreover, this chapter has illuminated the ways in which the perceived needs of infants shaped educational provisions for children in the present. Notions of an ideal upbringing were distinctly white and middle-class, and also defined by Bowlby's notions of a 'warm,

intimate, and continuous relationship' between parent and child.[413] Infants born to young, inexperienced, unmarried and less academic mothers, were perceived to be in particular danger of emotional deprivation. In the eyes of parentcraft advocates, this justified the more hands-on and intensive courses proposed for students of lower academic ability. This sheds light on the conceptual link between one generation of children to the next. Growing understandings of infants' emotional needs, and therefore the demands that parents had to meet, placed more responsibility on teachers to socialise their students in these parental expectations. In the post-war period, childhood in the present was held up as the answer to improving children's lives in the future, and so the need for adequate parentcraft provisions intensified. Cultural conceptions of an imagined future childhood, then, directly shaped proposals for children's education at the time, as the link between current and future childhood was strengthened by growing understandings of childhood psychological development.

This chapter has examined the recommendations that politicians and health officials made for teaching parentcraft in school, in the hope of influencing parenting practices in the future. It has demonstrated that recommendations for parentcraft were shaped by expert psychological childrearing advice. The schoolroom, however, was not the only medium through which children encountered professional childrearing advice. Throughout the twentieth century, childcare experts such as Frederick Truby King and Benjamin Spock published parenting manuals based on psychological theories which were designed to be bought and read by ordinary mothers and fathers.[414] Chapter two shows that the childrearing advice promoted by experts was widely reproduced in story papers and comic strips published for schoolgirls. Expert ideas about childcare arguably reached a much wider audience of schoolgirls through comics than through formal parentcraft

[413] Bowlby, *Child Care*, p. 13.
[414] Christina Hardyment, *Dream Babies: Childcare Advice from John Locke to Gina Ford*, revised 1st edn (London: Frances Lincoln, 2007), pp. 168–71, 213.

lessons in schools. The chapter moves into examining the ideas that children at the time held about childcare. It analyses girls' essays alongside stories from papers and comics, to explore how expert childrearing advice affected girls' understandings of infant and childcare.

Chapter Two: Childcare, psychology and popular culture

Chapter one explored the effect that psychological discourses had on politicians' and health officials' recommendations for parentcraft teaching in schools. This chapter, by contrast, assesses the ways in which psychological parenting advice shaped *children's* perceptions of childcare. Prescriptive childcare literature, based on psychological theories of behaviourism, psychoanalysis and developmentalism, were widely published in the twentieth century, as doctors and experts with expertise in childhood sought to educate parents on how best to raise their child. These texts were widely known about at the time. Childcare manuals by influential experts such as Frederick Truby King, Donald Winnicott and Benjamin Spock were printed as cheap paperbacks and they also wrote for parenting magazines and spoke on the radio, making their theories about childcare widely known amongst parents.[415] After the Second World War, expert theories also shaped representations of parenting and childcare in girls' papers.[416] Previous studies have examined the way professional childcare advice, and the growing psychological emphasis placed on the parent-child bond, affected mothers' and fathers' perceptions of themselves as parents.[417] This chapter builds on this literature, by examining girls' essays in which they imagined their future selves caring for infants in roles as nurses, nannies and mothers, alongside representations of childcare in girls' papers and comics. By doing so, the chapter explores the mediums through which children learnt about childrearing advice, shedding greater light on the relationship between prescription and practice and on the way attitudes towards parenting changed across the century.

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[415] Thomson, pp. 88–90; Davis, *Modern Motherhood*, p. 119.

[416] For examples of how psychological ideas about mothering shaped features in girls' papers produced by the Girl Guide Association in the 1950s see Sian Edwards, *Youth Movements, Citizenship and the English Countryside: Creating Good Citizens, 1930-1960* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), pp. 175–76.

[417] Roberts, *Women and Families*, p. 150; King, *Family Men*, pp. 96-98; Davis, *Modern Motherhood*, pp. 112-141.

The childcare advice promoted by experts developed in cycles. In the interwar period, behavioural theories dominated popular childcare literature. Behaviourists such as Truby King argued that a child's character could be moulded through habit training and the implementation of strict routines from babyhood.[418] Of course, not all child psychologists agreed with the principles of behaviourism. Psychoanalysts involved in the Child Guidance Movement were also publishing childrearing texts in the early-twentieth century, and emphasised the importance of the emotional bond between mothers and children.[419] Ideas about the importance of the mother-child relationship came to dominate childrearing advice for parents after the Second World War, through publications by Bowlby and Winnicott.[420] Spock similarly stressed the significance of the mother-child relationship but also argued that mothers should trust their own instincts when caring for infants, rather than follow structured routines.[421] Baby-led parenting manuals continued to achieve good sales into the 1970s and 1980s.[422] However, there was a growing scepticism of baby-led methods among some groups of parents, as middle-class feminists believed that the fear of causing psychological harm was trapping women at home with their infants.[423] By the end of the century, childcare experts had shifted back to promoting stricter, routine-driven childrearing methods inspired by behaviourist theories.[424]

It can be difficult for historians to trace the affect that psychological discourse had on parents at the time.[425] Pooley and Qureshi argue that parents often form 'patchy and incoherent ideas about what is – and is not – good parenthood'.[426] Nevertheless, from her interviews with women about their experiences of motherhood between 1945 and 2000,

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[418] Hendrick, *Narcissistic Parenting*, pp. 42–45.
[419] Hendrick, *Narcissistic Parenting*, pp. 45-55.
[420] Thomson, pp. 88-90.
[421] Benjamin Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, revised 3rd edn (London: Bodley Head, 1969), pp. 16-17.
[422] Hendrick, *Narcissistic Parenting*, pp. 257-258.
[423] Ibid., pp. 149-150.
[424] Hardyment, pp. 292–94.
[425] Jay Mechling, 'Advice to Historians on Advice to Mothers', *Journal of Social History*, 9.1 (1975), 44–63.
[426] Pooley and Qureshi, p. 25.

Angela Davis shows that mothers spoke about their engagement with parenting manuals. Childcare theories, which had been well-known at the time women were raising their children, had shaped some women's perceptions of their mothering practices.[427] Davis notes that women 'were turning away from Truby King's [routine-driven] guidance as the post-war period progressed', preferring a more 'relaxed experience for mother and baby'. Some women worried about their daughters' use of routines in caring for their own babies in the 1990s, while others felt that a routine-led rather than baby-led approach might have helped them when they were young mothers.[428]

This chapter examines the way cyclical changes in childcare advice affected girls' understandings of what good childcare practice looked like. Girls' ideas about childcare shifted between the 1930s and 1960s. However, their understandings did not neatly map onto the ideas promoted by childcare experts at the time or shift in line with the changes in women's attitudes identified by Davis. In the 1930s, for example, girls who wrote about infant care believed that babies should be comforted and rocked to sleep. Girls in the early 1950s, who were growing up in the aftermath of the Second World War, had rather extreme ideas about the dangers of maternal separation for young children. By contrast, in the late 1960s, girls who discussed the practicalities of infant care believed that babies should sleep and be fed within the confines of a routine, echoing the routine-driven advice promoted at the end of the century.[429] This chapter argues that girls' perceptions about childcare actively helped to drive changing cycles of parenting advice across the century. The ideas that girls formed in childhood arguably made them more receptive to baby-led or routine-driven advice when they became mothers later in life.

[427] Davis, *Modern Motherhood*, pp. 112-141.
[428] Ibid., pp. 117-119, 135-136.
[429] Harydment, pp. 292-294.

It should be noted that this chapter is largely concerned with *girls'* ideas about childcare. Generally, only girls wrote about future occupations which involved looking after children, and girls' papers and comics presented their female protagonists in caring roles.[430] Children mostly imagined themselves as parents in essays written for the NCDS in 1969, the reasons for which will be explored in chapter six. However, even when envisaging themselves as parents, girls rather than boys predominantly discussed the practicalities of baby care. Fisher and King have shown that fatherhood was invested with a greater psychological significance from the interwar period.[431] The nature of children's responses to essay questions about their future lives means, though, that this chapter focuses largely on girls' ideas about motherhood. Of course, not all girls talked about infant care in their essays. Girls only talked about infant care when they imagined themselves working as nannies, orphanage matrons and nurses, or when envisaging themselves as mothers. Analysing the writings of those who did talk about infant care, however, reveals a shift in girls' understandings of good childcare practice over time, illuminating changing attitudes across three generations of future mothers.

2.1 Behaviourism and routines

Truby King, a prominent childcare expert in interwar England, was inspired by behaviourism. He argued that babies should not be fed on demand and urged parents not to excessively fuss over their infants when they cried.[432] He encouraged disciplined patterns of feeding and sleeping and believed that failing to follow a strict routine would have disastrous consequences for an infant's emotional development in later childhood. Truby King's childcare manual *Feeding and Care of Baby* was first published in 1913, but was regularly reprinted throughout the interwar period. In his manual he wrote that 'a

[430] Tinkler, pp. 199–124.
[431] Fisher, p. 456; King, *Family Men*, pp. 89–90.
[432] On the influence of Truby King see Tate, pp. 116–17.

normal baby whose habits have been properly regulated day and night […] should be happy, good-tempered, and a joy in the home – not a source of anxiety and worry. But any baby can be easily spoiled'.[433]

Hendrick argues that between the wars 'there was a passive form of behaviourism at work' in English society and that 'Truby King's widely dispersed advice on feeding and infant care exerted considerable influence, particularly at the level of everyday nursing and health visiting'.[434] As well as stressing the importance of habit training, behaviourist ideas also helped to set standards of hygiene in baby care. Behaviourists urged women to breastfeed rather than rely on artificial milk, and many health professionals believed that encouraging women to breastfeed as part of a regular routine would further reduce rates of infant mortality.[435] As we saw in chapter one, experts were particularly concerned about working-class women using unclean instruments to feed their babies artificial milk, which had been linked to the spread of fatal diseases.[436]

While this suggests that Truby King was influential amongst middle-class health professionals and philanthropists, it can be difficult to ascertain the extent to which parents were aware of his advice or tried to follow his methods. It is important to note that behaviourists were not alone in promoting strict forms of childcare but experts such as Truby King gave these methods 'the authority of medical science'.[437] A strict routine of feeding and sleeping with little physical attention claimed to produce healthy, well-adjusted children, and Jane Lewis suggests that middle-class women took these recommendations and their sense of imperial maternal duty seriously.[438] Davis shows, though, that both middle- and working-class women in the early-twentieth century used

[433] Frederick Truby King, *Feeding and Care of Baby* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1913; repr. 1928), pp. 2, 98.
[434] Hendrick, *Narcissistic Parenting,* p. 42.
[435] Hardyment, pp. 168-170.
[436] Jane Lewis, 'The Social History', pp. 468–70.
[437] Hendrick, *Narcissistic Parenting,* p. 45.
[438] Jane Lewis, *The Politics of Motherhood,* p. 101.

strict routines of feeding and sleeping with their babies.[439] Trudy Tate argues that the wish to follow a routine may have reflected some parents' desire to gain a degree of control over their lives following the emotional disruption of the First World War.[440] Truby King's ideas continued to be well-known among parents into the 1940s and 1950s.[441]

It is interesting, then, that working-class Bolton schoolgirls rarely discussed routines in their essays. In 1938 Ivy Williams wrote, 'When I grow up, and make my mind up properly, I should like to be a maid where the people have a baby. I love minding babies, and taking them walks in their prams. I also love rocking them to sleep'.[442] Ivy imagined a caring role for herself in which she would comfort and actively rock a child to sleep, practices which Truby King disapproved of. In his manual, he warned that 'fond and foolish over-indulgence, mismanagement or "spoiling"' of a baby should be avoided, as the mother who 'weakly gratifies every whim of herself and the child' by '[pacifying] an infant with a "comforter", or with food given at wrong times … may … ruin the child in the first month of life, making him a delicate, fretful, irritable, nervous, dyspeptic little tyrant who will yell and scream, day or night, if not soothed and cuddled without delay'.[443]

Truby King believed that instinctively tending to a baby when it cried would lead the child to develop bad habits and poor behaviour, an association which children did not seem to make in this period.[444] Mary Goodwin imagined her future self as a children's nurse and believed that it would be important for infants to be comforted throughout the

[439] Davis, *Modern Motherhood*, pp. 115, 117.
[440] Tate, pp. 122–23.
[441] Davis, *Modern Motherhood*, pp. 115-119.
[442] MOA, TC 59, Children and Education, 1937-1952, TC59/5/D, Ivy Williams, 'When I Grow Up', fol. 76.
[443] Truby King, p. 2.
[444] Truby King, p. 149.

night: ‘Sometimes you have to sit up all night looking after the babies, and children’.[445] Truby King discouraged parents from feeding or cuddling their babies overnight to ‘[ensure] an undisturbed night’s rest to the mother, and [establish] the baby in its proper rhythm’.[446]

It is perhaps not surprising, however, that these working-class girls talked about comforting babies, especially at night. Ross shows that crying babies could be an issue for working-class families living in overcrowded housing in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, as they disturbed other family members’ sleep, and that of other families living in close proximity. Women were therefore more likely to pick their babies up to stop them crying, cuddle them until they fell asleep and give them milk and other supplements in an attempt to keep them quiet.[447] These were practices that Truby King disagreed with and which health visitors attempted to convince women to stop doing.[448] Moreover, older daughters in working-class homes were regularly entrusted with looking after younger siblings while their mothers were busy and many were also called on to watch infants for other women in their communities.[449] Girls often enjoyed looking after infants. As Ivy explained, she hoped to be a maid because ‘I love minding babies’.[450]

These girls’ views on infant care were informed by their own experiences of caring for babies and possibly also by observing the working-class mothering practices seen around them. It is interesting, however, that their ideas also broadly mirrored representations of childcare in girls’ papers in this period. *Girls’ Crystal* featured continuing serials about young women working as teachers, nurses, seamstresses and rally car drivers, and the

[445] MOA, TC59/5/D, Mary Goodwin, ‘When I Grow Up’, fol. 65.
[446] Truby King, pp. 35, 98.
[447] Ross, pp. 138-39.
[448] Ross, pp. 138–39; Hendrick, *Narcissistic Parenting*, p. 44.
[449] Roberts, *A Woman’s Place*, pp. 23–25.
[450] MOA, TC59/5/D, Ivy Williams, ‘When I Grow Up’, fol. 76.

female protagonists were sometimes tasked with looking after a small child.[451] Penny Tinkler's study of girls' papers that were published between 1920 to 1950 shows that schoolgirl papers in the interwar period were moving away from representing girls in the family home and increasingly depicted them living 'relatively autonomous, lively and empowering' lives. However, these papers emphasised their female characters' nurturing qualities to '[signal] their future contentment with the roles of wife and mother', perhaps explaining why stories revolving around childcare still featured in *Girls' Crystal*.[452]

Importantly, stories in girls' papers showed their protagonists to be affectionate, warm and emotionally responsive in their caregiving. For example, in a 1936 edition of 'The Madcap Form Mistress', Miss Desmond finds a little boy named Chappie who has run away from abusive guardians. When explaining how terrified he is, the writer describes how: 'Tears welled into [Chappie's] eyes, and impulsively Miss Desmond's arms went round the little boy'. She '[lifted] the little fellow in her arms' and found him a soft toy to play with.[453] Similarly, in 1934, *Schoolgirls' Own*, another popular interwar girls' paper, published a story in which Delia, a dancer at a theatre company, finds a young girl named Louise who has seemingly been abandoned.[454] Delia takes the child into her care but Louise is soon kidnapped. In searching for her, Delia sings a lullaby, described as a 'sweetly pretty thing that often crooned Louise to sleep' which attracts the young girl's attention and enables Delia to rescue her.[455]

It is noteworthy that these stories emphasised their protagonist's kindness through their emotional affection for infants, and their singing lullabies to sleeping children, practices

[451] For example, Gail Western, 'The Speed Girl in America', *Girl's Crystal*, 16 May 1936, pp. 3-6; see also Phyllis Draycot, 'Little Miss Twinkletoes', *Schoolgirls' Own*, 15 September 1934, n.p.; Joan Inglesant, 'The Circus Wanderer', *Schoolgirls' Own*, 11 August 1934, n.p.; Marjorie Stanton, 'Their Peril on the Pass', *Schoolgirl's Own*, 25 August 1934, n.p.
[452] Tinkler, p. 74.
[453] Jean Vernon, 'The Madcap Form Mistress', *Girls' Crystal*, 27 June 1936, pp. 25-28.
[454] Phyllis Draycot, 'Little Miss Twinkletoes', *Schoolgirls' Own*, 6 October 1934, n.p.; On the popularity of *Schoolgirls' Own* see McAleer, p. 140.
[455] Phyllis Draycot, 'Little Miss Twinkletoes', *Schoolgirls' Own*, 6 October 1934, n.p.

which behaviourists discouraged.[456] Instead, these stories seemingly reflected psychoanalytical ideas about childrearing which became more widely circulated in the 1930s. Psychoanalytically-informed childcare advice stemmed from Freudian theories and were promoted by professionals working in the Child Guidance Movement in the 1920s and 1930s. While not disputing the need to encourage good behaviour, psychoanalysts argued that parents should be less strict and more aware of their child's emotional state.[457] Miss Desmond in particular understands Chappie's distress and his desperate need for comfort and physical affection. Although these stories were reflecting something of the child-centred ideal which rose to prominence in parenting manuals after the end of the Second World War, the influence of the Child Guidance Movement in the interwar era was largely limited to progressive middle-class parents.[458]

Indeed, these papers seemed to draw more inspiration from stories that had been popular the late-nineteenth century. In *Girls' Crystal*, female protagonists cared for vulnerable infants who were destitute or had been orphaned, abused or abandoned.[459] These storylines were similar to waif stories written for children decades earlier, which also centred upon poor children who had been orphaned or sometimes mistreated by their families.[460] Children received kindness from the people they met over the course of their fictional journeys and substitute parents gave them much needed affection, took them off the streets or rescued them from their abusive homes.[461] Campaigners in this period argued that poor children needed to be housed in family-like cottage homes, rather than in institutions, so that they would receive attention for their individual needs and

[456] Truby King, pp. 2, 98.
[457] Hendrick, *Narcissistic Parenting,* pp. 45-51; Hardyment, pp. 204-209.
[458] Hendrick, *Narcissistic Parenting,* pp. 42, 50, 53.
[459] For example, Gail Western 'The Speed Girl in America', *Girl's Crystal*, 13 June 1936, pp. 3-6; 'Susie Comes to London', *Girl's Crystal*, 10 April 1937, pp. 7-10; Elsie Probyn, 'Susie Among the Orphans', *Girl's Crystal*, 17 July 1937, pp. 13-16.
[460] Anna Davin, 'Waif Stories in Late Nineteenth-Century England', *History Workshop Journal*, 52, 2001, 67–98 (p. 69).
[461] Davin, 'Waif Stories', p. 86.

development.[462] Adoption narratives also formed part of a wider literary trend in the mid-to-late Victorian period. Adoption was a common trope in representations of soldiering, for example, as stories depicted servicemen adopting children they found on the battlefield, demonstrating their Christian compassion.[463] Davin shows that waif stories were made available to children through Sunday Schools and suggests that they were read by boys and girls.[464] It is therefore possible that children's fiction writers in the interwar period reflected on the stories that they had read themselves as children when writing stories for girls' papers. Indeed, Tinkler shows that there were similarities between representations of 'heroines' in the Victorian period with those in girls' papers in the 1920s.[465]

While narratives in *Girls' Crystal* in the interwar period echoed nineteenth-century literary tropes, these stories also represented something of an overlap between older and emerging ideas about childcare. *Girls' Crystal's* depiction of emotionally sensitive caregiving, particularly for distressed children, reflected ideas that were being promoted by the Child Guidance Movement, and which would become prominent in public discourse after the Second World War.[466] Truby King did not have much of an influence in *Girls' Crystal*, but this might have been because expert opinion was moving towards this child-centred ideal. It is difficult to determine what influence girls' stories had on children's ideas about infant care, as their own experiences as daughters in working-class communities were probably more important in shaping their views. Nevertheless, it is significant that these girls' ideas about what good childcare practice looked like would have been reflected back to them in the papers that they read. The rise of child-centred

[462] Lydia Murdoch, *Imagined Orphans: Poor Families, Child Welfare, and Contested Citizenship in London* (London: Rutgers University Press, 2006), pp. 58–60, 65.
[463] Holly Furneaux, *Military Men of Feeling: Emotion, Touch, and Masculinity in the Crimean War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), pp. 88, 110–11.
[464] Davin, 'Waif Stories', pp. 69, 73.
[465] Tinkler, pp. 73–74.
[466] Hendrick, *Narcissistic Parenting*, pp. 45–55, 119–22.

infant care advice after the Second World War may, therefore, have been shaped by children's experiences and the girls' papers produced in 1930s. Mothers bringing up offspring in the 1960s, the height of child-centred advice literature's influence, had already internalised the importance of sensitive and emotionally-responsive childcare as children.[467]

2.2 The mother-child bond

Girls' attitudes to baby care remained similar following the end of the Second World War. Writing for the 1952 Camberwell essay competition about what they hoped to do when they left school, some girls aspired to be nurses and, much like their counterparts in 1938, they stressed the importance of comforting crying babies. It is striking, though, that more girls in 1952 talked explicitly about cuddling and fussing over babies. Ten-year-old Pamela Knight wrote that, 'I would like to look after the baby's about five months old. At night I would go round and see if any children were awake. If they were I would cuddle them till they were asleep'.[468] Similarly, Catherine Hill stated that she 'would cuddle the children if they cried', while three other girls thought it was important to 'make a lot of fuss' over new-borns.[469]

These essays show the continued, but more explicit, importance that girls attached to affectionate baby care after the Second World War, probably because the post-war period marked a definite shift towards child-centred advice. The 1940s and 1950s saw the publication of parenting advice manuals by Winnicott and Spock which rejected Truby King's routine-driven methods. Instead, they stressed a baby's inherent need for love and security. Spock's *Baby and Child Care*, which was first published as *The Common Sense Book of Baby and Child Care* in 1946, advised mothers to rely on their own instincts

[467] On the influence of child-centred ideas in the 1960s see Tisdall, p. 36.
[468] MS. Opie 35, Pamela Knight, 'What I want to be when I leave school', fol. 107.
[469] MS. Opie 35, Catherine Hill, 'What I want to be when I leave school', fol. 135; Lois Dawson, fols 137^{v}-138^{r}; Jane Goodson, fol. 140; Caroline Smith, fol. 172.

when caring for their babies and not to take too much notice of the opinions of experts or other parents around them. He urged mothers not be afraid of cuddling their babies or comforting them when they cried, if they felt that affection is what their baby needed:

> Don't be afraid to love [your baby] and enjoy him. Every baby needs to be smiled at, talked to, played with, fondled – gently and lovingly – just as much as he needs vitamins and calories … When he cries in the early weeks, it's because he's uncomfortable for some reason or other … Being held, rocked, or walked may be what he needs.[470]

The post-war period did, however, mark a more significant and notable shift in girls' ideas, as they talked about the importance of a *parent's* love and care for their children. Girls discussed children in hospital and orphanages who had either been separated from their parents or had lost them completely. They spoke about the emotional trauma children in these circumstances were likely to suffer, reflecting Bowlby's ideas about maternal deprivation. Twelve-year-old Louise Devon, for example, wrote:

> The reason I would like to be a nurse is that I should see the little children, and perhaps I would be able to comfort some who miss their parents, for I think young children betweened the age of 6 months to 4 years miss their mother and father more than others.[471]

Girls' discussions about the distress infants would feel at being separated from their parents may be explained by the growing attention paid to children's psychological development after the Second World War, even if girls hadn't heard of Bowlby, Winnicott or Spock themselves. Child psychologists had long been examining children's emotional development and exploring the importance that the parent-child bond played in this.

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[470] Spock, p. 21.
[471] MS. Opie 35, Louise Devon, 'What I want to be when I leave school', fol. 50.

However, evacuation and the use of residential and day nurseries in wartime England, as well as the problem of homelessness among children in Europe, gave psychologists the opportunity to examine how children were affected by parental (and specifically maternal) deprivation on a much wider scale.[472] Concerns about maternal deprivation filtered into the press, women's magazines and children's fiction, and girls' writings were also imbued with this kind of thinking.[473]

The World Health Organisation asked Bowlby to assess the mental health of children in Europe who had been made homeless by the war, and the report was published in 1951.[474] In 1953, Bowlby published a book *Childcare and the Growth of Love*, which was based on his research. In his book Bowlby stated that 'what is believed to be essential for mental health is that an infant and young child should experience a warm, intimate, and continuous relationship with his mother (or permanent mother-substitute – one person who steadily 'mothers' him)'.[475] Davis argues that this emphasis on the mother-child bond represented a significant development in thinking about children's mental health as it suggested that 'the mere physical separation from the mother was a pathogenic factor in its own right'.[476]

Louise's essay is particularly striking as she not only believed that children in hospital would miss their parents, but that babies, infants and young children would suffer most. Her belief that children under the age of four would 'miss their parents most' bears close resemblance to Bowlby's writing. He argued that a continuous mother-infant relationship was particularly important for children in their early years and advised that mothers

[472] Nikolas Rose, pp. 162–63; Hardyment, p. 227.
[473]Smith Wilson, pp. 212–15; Ann Alston, *The Family in English Children's Literature* (Oxon: Routledge, 2008), pp. 54–57.
[474] John Bowlby, Maternal Care and Mental health: A Report Prepared on Behalf of the World Health Organization as a Contribution to the United Nations Programme for the Welfare of Homeless Children (Geneva: World Health Organisation, 1951).
[475] Bowlby, *Child Care*, p. 13.
[476] Davis, *Modern Motherhood*, p. 122.

should not leave children under the age of three even for a short time unless it was absolutely necessary. Even then, Bowlby stressed that the child's separation from their mother had to be carefully planned and managed.[477] Other experts agreed that parents should avoid leaving their young infants in the care of other people. Spock stressed the importance of the mother-baby bond. In his book, he urged women not to go out to work when their child was under three years old:

> The important thing for a mother to realise is that the younger the child the more necessary it is for him to have to a steady, loving person taking care of him. In most cases, the mother is the best one to give this feeling of "belonging", safely and securely.[478]

We do not know about Louise's social background or whether she had younger siblings of her own, which might have shaped her view on the emotional needs of young children. However, her belief that children in hospital suffered from being separated from their parents was also voiced by other girls who entered the essay competition in 1952. A ten-year-old girl wrote that 'I am trying to save enough money for some toys for children in hospitals. It must be very disappointing for the children not to go home for xmas'.[479] Other girls, such as this eleven-year-old, talked about the emotional trauma that orphans growing up in residential institutions would have suffered:

> When I leave school I would like to work in an orphanage where I can look after all the poor little orphans. I feel very sorry for the poor children who have no parents, and I would like to try to make it up to them. I know that if my parents died I would die of sorrow too.[480]

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[477] Bowlby, *Child Care*, pp. 18-20.
[478] Spock, pp. 575-576; see also Hardyment, p. 227.
[479] MS. Opie 35, Geraldine Smith, 'What I want to be when I leave school', fol. 208.
[480] MS. Opie 35, Rebecca Simmons, 'What I want to be when I leave school', fol. 16.

Similarly, another girl wrote that she wanted to give toys to children at an orphanage who had no parents.[481] In 1955 for her essay 'Who I would like to be, and why' twelve-year-old Kathleen Hardy aspired to be an orphanage matron specifically for children from overseas. She felt that they were more vulnerable than orphaned children in England, as they 'are near to starvation and with only rags to put on their backs'. She hoped to become an orphanage matron 'simply because I want to try and make the five out of every ten without parents as happy as the other five with parents'.[482] Children in the 1930s Mass Observation sample also discussed their hopes to work in orphanages, but girls writing after the war paid more attention to children's emotional distress as a result of their growing up without parents.[483] These essays reflected well-known elements of Bowlby's work. His 1951 report was based specifically on homeless children in war-torn Europe. He criticised the conditions and level of care provided to children in residential institutions as well as to those who were in hospital for significant lengths of time. He argued that 'a child is deprived if for any reason he is removed from his mother's care' but a child could suffer '"complete deprivation" … in institutions, residential nurseries, and hospitals, where a child has no *one* person who cares for him in a personal way and with whom he may feel secure'.[484]

The fate of orphaned and homeless children in Europe was widely publicised in the English press in the post-war period. Concerns about these children, as well as those in England who had been evacuated or separated from their families, were influential amongst policy makers.[485] Bowlby's ideas were used in the development of post-war social policies, such as the 1948 Children's Act.[486] The Act supported the idea that a

[481] MS. Opie 35, Rose Arnold, 'What I want to be when I leave school', fol. 92.
[482] MS. Opie 41, Kathleen Hardy, 'Who I would like to be, and why', fols 156-157.
[483] For example, MOA, TC59/6/B, Gail Bridges, 'What I would like to do', fols 52-53.
[484] Bowlby, *Child Care*, p. 14.
[485] Thomson, pp. 73–76.
[486] Hendrick, *Child Welfare*, pp. 138–40.

family, even one which did not meet middle-class standards, was a better environment for a child to grow up in than an institution.

The idea that children growing up in orphanages or spending months or even years in hospital were emotionally deprived was reflected in the children's page of the *Daily Mirror* in the mid-to-late 1940s. In December 1946, thirteen-year-old Pat Creed wrote in, to encourage other readers to donate toys and books '"to an orphanage or the blind or crippled to cheer them up at Christmas"'. A *Children's Mirror* writer agreed, saying 'take a tip from Pat, turn out those old cupboards and send what you find to your nearest children's hospital'.[487] Similarly, in 1948, the *Children's Mirror* ran a feature on children's hospitals.[488] Its reporter asked children who had been in hospital for a number of months what they most looked forward to. Two children replied that their favourite time of day was receiving letters in the post, whilst another said that they enjoyed visiting hours the most as they had the chance to see family and friends but noted that '"tearful[ness]"' could follow. The children also remarked on how nurses made them feel loved and comforted. One boy said that his favourite time of day was '"when my favourite nurses gives me a good-night kiss"', while in a feature printed the following week on nurses, children talked about their nurses giving them '"encouragement"' and being '"so nice"'.[489] These comments bear a striking resemblance to girls' essay writing in the 1950s, as those who aspired to be nurses or work in orphanages hoped to be able to 'comfort some [children] who miss their parents' and 'make it up to them'.[490]

[487] *Daily Mirror*, 'World Post Box', 21 December 1946, p. 11.
[488] *Daily Mirror*, 'Children's Mirror Tours the Hospitals', 6 March 1948, p. 7.
[489] *Daily Mirror*, 'Children's Mirror Tours the Hospitals', 6 March 1948, p. 7; *Children's Mirror*, 'Letters from Readers in Hospital: Nurses Will Blush', 13 March 1948, p. 7.
[490] MS. Opie 35, Louise Devon, 'What I want to be when I leave school', fol. 50; Rebecca Simmons, fol. 16.

Girls' views on childrearing largely supported dominant psychological theories at the time, particularly around the need for a secure and loving home environment.[491] This is not surprising given that most of these girls, who were aged between ten and twelve in 1952, would have been born in wartime London and grown up in the aftermath of bombing, evacuation and familial separation.[492] Prominent child psychologists spoke about the emotional damage that children would likely have suffered from living through the war. Winnicott, for example, spoke on the radio from 1944 about the delicate way in which evacuees returning home would need to be handled by parents.[493] Winnicott continued to talk on the radio after the war and published paperback books about similar issues in the 1950s, reaching a wide audience of parents.[494] Even though these girls would have been unlikely to remember much of the war themselves, the emotional distress it had caused was very much a part of public consciousness during their childhoods. Children's books, for example, told stories about boys and girls who had been separated from their parents.[495]

From 1958, *Girls' Crystal* also published continuing serials with similar plotlines about heroines trying to reunite lost children with their parents. 'Their Wartime Task' was a serial which ran for several months and centres on Trudy, a young woman stranded in Norway with her young brother and sister Eric and Brita, after the invasion of German forces in 1940. The serial focusses on Trudy's efforts to reunite her young brother and sister with their parents in England, with the help of a British pilot called Peter. Towards the end of the serial, Peter and Trudy plan to use a boat stolen from German troops to travel back to England when it is safe to do so, but young Brita is keen to leave as soon

[491] The need for children to be raised in a loving family home was strongly stressed, see Bowlby, *Child Care*, pp. 13-14, 18; D.W. Winnicott, *The Child, the Family and the Outside World*, (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1964), pp. 104, 189-90.
[492] Camberwell was badly affected by wartime bombing, see Carter, p. 162.
[493] Thomson, pp. 66-69.
[494] Winnicott; Thomson, pp. 64-66; Davis, *Modern Motherhood*, pp. 119.
[495] Alston, pp. 54-57.

as possible. She is pictured holding her doll and crying, 'Oh, Uncle Peter. Why aren't we going in the boat tonight? I – I want to go home to Mummy and Daddy'. [496] This serial drew on anxieties about evacuation and child refugees, as young Brita struggles with being separated from her parents.

Girls made sense of ideas about the importance of parental love through the lens of anxieties about long-term separation. This differed from the way many mothers at the time understood Bowlby's claims about maternal deprivation. While Bowlby's research was based on the experiences of children growing up in residential institutions, his theories were widely discussed in the press in relation to ordinary mothers and children.[497] For example, Bowlby's research was commonly cited in debates about whether mothers should go out to work or stay at home with their children.[498] Davis shows that women worried about the effect that going out to work and using childminders and nurseries might have on their children, particularly when they were young.[499] Similarly, in a sociological study of motherhood in the mid-1960s, Hannah Garvon reported that the main reason that both working- and middle- class women gave for not returning to work when their children were young was that they felt it was wrong to leave them in the care of other people.[500]

It is essential to take note of the differences in opinion between girls and women in the post-war period. Girls' accounts show that their experiences of growing up in wartime and the immediate post-war years shaped their views of parenting and about the importance of the home to young children. Girls developed different, more extreme, opinions on the significance of the parent-child bond to adult women. Thomson argues

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[496] *Girls' Crystal*, 'Their Wartime Task', 6 September 1958, p. 16; for a serial with similar themes see *Girls' Crystal*, 'Peggy of the Golden West', 13 June 1959, p. 14.
[497] Thomson, pp. 84-87.
[498] Smith Wilson, pp. 210–11.
[499] Davis, *Modern Motherhood*, pp. 122-128.
[500] Hannah Garvon, *The Captive Wife: Conflicts of Housebound Mothers* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1966), pp. 110, 116-117.

that the war had a profound effect on children, which adults at the time found difficult to comprehend, as children's feelings were often overlooked. He shows that it was 'difficult for adults to appreciate that even though children might not appear to understand or even know about the public war, they could still be deeply affected by their experience'.[501]

It is important to think about the implications of children's war-born anxieties for family life in later decades of century. Christina Hardyment speculates that 'Perhaps it was the experience of evacuation that opened the minds of the next generation of mothers to the ideas of the Freudians about "separation anxiety"'.[502] It is not possible to know how these girls went on to feel about motherhood. However, the experiences of children growing up in the aftermath of war, with their anxieties about parental separation, may help to explain the enduring appeal of child-centred parenting manuals into the 1980s, when these girls would have been raising families of their own. Penelope Leach's *Baby and Child Care*, first published 1977, sold over two million copies and remained popular over the next thirty years.[503] The book encouraged mothers to see the world from their baby's perspective and make efforts to understand their emotional state.[504] She argued that babies could not be spoilt by physical affection and so encouraged parents to hold and carry their babies for as long as they wanted to. This approach may have appealed to parents who, as children, worried about parental separation, a view which was reinforced by the popular press and children's books and comics at the time they were growing up.

2.3 Child-centred parenting

As seen above, the post-war period saw the child-centred approach promoted by an influential group of child psychologists being taken seriously by policy makers and health

[501] Thomson, p. 57.
[502] Hardyment, p. 226.
[503] Hendrick, *Narcissitc Parenting*, pp. 257-258.
[504] Davis, *Modern Motherhood*, p. 132; Hardyment, pp. 257-258.

professionals.[505] These childrearing ideas continued to dominate expert opinion and parenting advice manuals in the decades following the Second World War. Spock's parenting manual was the most well-known amongst Davis's sample of post-war mothers and it was a bestseller.[506] The book sold 100,000 copies in its first few years of publication but by the time Spock died in 1998, it had sold more than 50 million copies.[507] Spock stressed that mothers should follow their own instincts when caring for their babies, which he believed was better for both mother and baby, rather than keeping to a strict routine. Spock challenged the wisdom of the interwar period that picking babies up or feeding them when they cried would somehow spoil them. He argued that a more flexible approach to childrearing would be beneficial for children in the long run:

> Doctors who used to conscientiously warn young parents against spoiling are now encouraging them to meet their baby's needs, not only for food, but for comforting and loving. These discoveries and changes of attitudes and methods have benefitted most children and parents. There are fewer tense ones, more happy ones.[508]

However, children who imagined their future lives as parents in 1969 and detailed the practicalities of baby care espoused ideas reminiscent of Truby King, as they spoke of caring for babies within a set feeding and sleeping routine. A working-class girl envisaged her life as a housewife and mother and described the details of her domestic routine:

> There was a pile of washing waiting to be done in the laundry basket for me to wash … Just as I had the water in the washer I heard my five month old baby

[505] Hendrick, *Narcissistic Parenting,* pp. 82-84.
[506] Davis, *Modern Motherhood,* pp. 128-132
[507] Hardyment, p. 213; Davis, *Modern Motherhood*, p. 128.
[508] Spock, p. 22.

> crying in her pram outside. It was her bottle time I have to leave every thing to get her bottle ready.[509]

It is interesting that she describes leaving her baby to sleep in its pram outside and having set feeding times, as both these practices were advocated by Truby King. He believed it was important for babies to be out in the fresh air and this practice also enabled mothers to ignore their baby's cries until the prescribed feeding time.[510] This girl's discussion of routine-led methods points to processes of intergenerational transmission in working-class communities. As Davis suggests, working-class women were more likely to follow their own mothers' advice, which often revolved around older childcare techniques, than trust new parenting literature.[511] However, this girl imagined using a routine simply to cope with the demands of motherhood. When trying to juggle baby care with domestic work, she wrote that she would just have to make her husband a sandwich for his midday dinner 'so I could get the washing done quicker'. Children's beliefs about the demands of motherhood in the 1960s will be returned to in chapter six. It is important to note here, though, that that while some children discussed routine-driven childrearing methods in their essays, it was not always because they felt them to be good for babies.

Routines were mentioned by both working- and middle-class children. A working-class girl who envisaged her life as a housewife described how, after her husband and older children had left for the day, she would 'put the small one out in the varanda for a little while in the pram and [then] do the housework'.[512] Much like the girl above, this writer suggested that she would leave her baby outside so that she could get on with doing domestic chores. A girl with no father figure (and therefore no recorded class background)

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[509] CLS, NCDS, SN: 5790, N10014T, girl, manual father.
[510] Truby King, pp. 64-65; Tate, p. 117.
[511] Davis, *Modern Motherhood,* p. 117.
[512] CLS, NCDS, SN: 5790, N26932D, girl, manual father.

described in more detail her child's feeding and sleeping patterns. She imagined life after the birth of her second child:

> I am coming out of hospital today I have called the baby Paul. He is a good baby and sleeps 10 hours and then wakes me up … The baby is 8 months and can nearly walk. The baby has 5 bottles a day.[513]

Similarly, a middle-class girl described the sleeping routine of her one-year-old son, 'he [goes] to bed in the morning and in the afternoon he is a good baby he [does] not wake up in the night he gets me up in the morning'.[514] That both these girls used the term 'good' to describe the way their babies slept through the night, and also had regular timeslots for feeding and sleeping during the day, reveals that they saw routines as a way of instilling desirable habits in their infants.

Indeed, one working-class girl spoke of her frustration at her baby crying at night:

> My children's names are [Julie] and [Sophia]. [Julie] is one year of age and [Sophia] is ten monthes old. When I am in bed at night and asleep suddenly [Sophia] begins to cry and cry This makes me and my husdband very annoyed. But we finely calm her down. [Julie] is no trouble at all. But really that's how all babies' cry.[515]

This is a rather adult-centred view of childrearing more reminiscent of Truby King's advice than Spock's, as these girls believed that getting babies to sleep through the night was beneficial for allowing mothers to be well rested.[516] Spock, meanwhile, encouraged mothers to respond willingly to their baby's cries as he attempted to dispel the belief that babies 'come into the world determined to get their parents under their thumb by hook or

[513] CLS, NCDS, SN: 5790, N24897K, girl, no father figure.
[514] CLS, NCDS, SN: 5790, N15449N, girl, non-manual father.
[515] CLS, NCDS, SN: 5790, N26941E, girl, manual father.
[516] Truby King, p. 35.

by crook'. He wrote that when a baby cries 'it's for a good reason – maybe it's hunger, or wetness, or indigestion, or just because he's on edge and needs soothing. His cry is there to call you'.[517] In contrast, some children writing in 1969 saw a baby's lack of crying as a positive trait. A middle-class boy remarked that 'my child is fourteen month old … he does not cry as much as the person's next door, and the person's next door is two years old', signifying that he felt he and his wife had raised their child better than the neighbours had raised theirs. Later in his essay, he described how he and his wife 'put the [baby] in its pram out side the pool for it to sleep in the sun', again echoing Truby King's recommendations for fresh air. [518]

It is intriguing that children in the late 1960s mentioned routines. Bowlby and Spock's methods were increasingly being challenged, particularly by middle-class feminist groups.[519] However, historians have argued that the extent to which women felt trapped by motherhood was exaggerated at the time by some sections of the media.[520] The oral testimonies of both middle- and working-class women who raised children between the 1940s and 1960s show that they believed motherhood to be the most important role in their lives. They often valued child-centred advice, which encouraged them to trust their instincts, rather than implement strict routines.[521]

These essays show, however, that both working- and middle-class children talked about routines. Children's penchant for routines may well have reflected the way that they were interpreting adult baby care practices. Decreasing family sizes and changing expectations of childhood in the post-war period meant that children were less involved in caring for

[517] Spock, p. 18.
[518] CLS, NCDS, SN: 5790, N25702M, boy, non-manual father.
[519] Davin, *Modern Motherhood*, 148.
[520] Hendrick, pp. 148-150.
[521] Ali Hagget, 'Housewives, Neuroses, and the Domestic Environment in Britain, 1945-70', in *Health and the Modern Home*, ed. by Mark Jackson (London: Routledge, 2007), pp. 84–110 (pp. 93–94); Davis, *Modern Motherhood*, pp. 123–24, 129.

baby siblings than their counterparts had been in the interwar period.[522] Children's attitudes towards baby care in the late 1960s, then, would probably have been shaped by watching their parents or other adults taking care of infants, as children had less experience of their own to draw on. John Newson and Elizabeth Newson's study of the childcare practices of 700 mothers with one-year olds in the late 1950s and early 1960s sheds light on mothering practices in this period. Their study reveals that 53% of women were following demand-led feeding whereas only 6% were feeding their babies in accordance with a strict routine.[523]

With sleep and crying, mothers had a wide variety of opinions about what they believed was best, but many still felt 'torn' when it came to deciding how to deal with a crying baby. If a baby continued to cry after being put into its cot at bedtime or woke in the night then, more often than not, mothers would end up tending to them. Some women reported feeling guilty for leaving a baby to cry for too long or worried that excessive crying might do their babies harm. The Newsons found that there was 'widespread preference for indulgence rather than discipline'.[524] Mothers' attitudes often reflected the child-centred advice offered by Spock. Children, though, may well have observed their parents' handling of a baby and concluded that establishing a firm routine would be best when they came to have a baby of their own, to avoid the stress that they observed in their own parents.

Children in the late 1960s were also confronted with a confusing mixture of references to older stricter methods of childcare and newer child-centred ones in comics. One such example of this is the continuing serial 'Little Mum' which ran in *Bunty* in the late 1960s and centred around Wendy, a thirteen-year-old orphan, who acts as a mother figure for

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[522] Roberts, *Women and Families*, pp. 33–35; Jackson, pp. 22–24.
[523] John Newson and Elizabeth Newson, *Patterns of Infant Care in an Urban Community* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1963; repr. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1966), p. 52.
[524] Newson and Newson, *Patterns of Infant Care*, pp. 94, 87-93, 75, 79.

younger children at her orphanage. In a story from 1968, Wendy helps to look after three-year-old Valerie who has a nightmare. Wendy cuddles her to sleep and sits by her bed in case she has any more disturbing dreams. The Sisters at the orphanage are horrified when they realise, as they follow strict forms of childcare. The Matron, on her evening round, exclaims, 'Wendy! You surely don't let Valerie cling to you all night?' 'Oh, no Matron', Wendy replies, 'When she's really asleep, her grip relaxes and I can slip away'.[525] The Matron's and Wendy's differing views may have intended to juxtapose older Truby King style and newer Spock style methods of childrearing, to show how far ideas about childcare had developed. Nevertheless, it shows that children at the time were exposed to a range of ideas, including the importance of routines, habit training and of not comforting babies and young children too much.

These factors help to reshape our understandings of how parental attitudes shifted over the latter decades of the century. Routine-driven methods were strongly promoted again by experts and policy makers in the 1990s and women raising children later in the century increasingly believed that it was good for them and their infants to have a routine.[526] However, these essays reveal that some children in the late 1960s, who would go on to be the parents of this generation, already felt that routines would be an inevitable part of their lives as parents. People's experiences as children were therefore as important in determining later parental attitudes as the social climate in which they raised their offspring.

While this analysis of children's writings from the NCDS has so far related to infant care, child-centred advice literature published in the post-war period also discussed the care of older children. In the 1969 edition of *Baby and Child Care*, Spock clarified his position on child-centred caregiving. He wrote that although parents should consider 'all the needs

[525] *Bunty*, 'Little Mum', 28 January 1968, pp. 13-15.
[526] Hendrick, *Narcissistic Parenting*, pp. 274-278; Davis, *Modern Motherhood*, pp. 134-136.

that children have – for love, for understanding, for patience, for consistency, for firmness, for protection, for comradeship, for calories and vitamins', parents should not be afraid to set boundaries and rules for their children as they grew older, to allow children to flourish into responsible, well-rounded citizens. He stated that the 'child-centred, psychological approach can leave parents in the lurch unless it is backed up by a moral sense' and encouraged parents to use their own 'good sense' by giving children small chores to do around the home and disciplining them when they were naughty.[527] Spock stressed that parents should not strive to meet their child's *every* need as they grew older, as that could lead children to develop selfish tendencies.

Interestingly, *Bunty* presented less nuanced representations of childcare. The comic featured stories which dealt with issues around spoiling children, but suggested that most of the time, a child's bad behaviour was caused by a lack of understanding from caregivers, rather than parents not setting appropriate boundaries. In a 1967 edition of 'Little Mum', for example, a boy named Johnny arrives at the orphanage after his parents die, but constantly misbehaves. Wendy takes him to see a doctor who believes that 'Johnny must have been spoiled and used to getting his own way all the time' and says to Wendy 'I'm afraid he'll just have to learn he can't get everything his own way now as he used to'. Through spending more time with Johnny, Wendy comes to the conclusion that it is in fact his grief for his parents that is causing Johnny's tantrums. Wendy thinks to herself: 'He's not spoiled, he's just desperately lonely without his mother and father'.[528] Wendy's attitude to Johnny's behaviour strongly echoes Bowlby's maternal deprivation theories and promoted the view that children could not be spoilt by parental love and affection, contradicting Spock's more tempered advice.

[527] Spock, pp. 31, 26-37
[528] *Bunty*, 'Little Mum', 21 January 1967, pp. 24-25.

An optimistic child-centred attitude was prevalent among both working- and middle-class essayists in 1969. For example, a middle-class boy imagined having two children and stated that he would 'give them anything they wanted', while a working-class boy wrote that when 'I am not working I go out with my wife and children in the car. The years … will [be] plasant for me as my children grow up'.[529] Similarly, a working-class girl wrote 'I hope my children hav a good time when they grow up'.[530] These children envisioned a future in which they believed it important to strive to make their children happy and thought they would enjoy devoting time to them, aligning with child-centred ideals promoted in *Bunty*.

Writers in *Bunty* were more concerned about *material* spoiling. In a 1970 instalment of the continuing story 'The Young Visitor', protagonist Pam Peterson encounters a young girl called Barbara who is described as being 'thoroughly spoilt'. Barbara has been 'spoilt' by her mother who chooses to have her home schooled and buys her expensive toys and clothes. Barbara is unkind to her nanny and unappreciative of her array of toys. Pam thinks to herself 'if [Barbara] wasn't so badly spoilt she'd be a nice little girl. I wish I could find a way to cure her'. While her mother's intentions had been good, Barbara had turned out to be a selfish and unpleasant child. Pam takes her to an orphanage to play with other children. At first, Barbara tries to keep the toys to herself but once she learns the value of sharing, she becomes a far more considerate child.[531]

The supposed dangers of spoiling children by buying them too many things resonated with middle-class girls in particular. In her essay, a middle-class girl wrote 'I'd like to be married with three girls and three boys. I'd give them nice clothes to wear and keep them tidy but not spoil them'.[532] Similarly, another female essayist from a middle-class

[529] CLS, NCDS, SN: 5790, N18085F, boy, non-manual father; N12080M, boy, manual father.
[530] CLS, NCDS, SN: 5790, N12156Q, girl, manual father.
[531] *Bunty*, 'The Young Visitor', 5 September 1970, pp. 22-23.
[532] CLS, NCDS, SN: 5790, N23286J, girl, non-manual father.

background wrote, 'I would like to have two children a girl and a boy … I would let people take them out walks as long as they watch them. I would not let them show off or anything they would live happy with us together'.[533] Laura Tisdall notes that middle-class children were likely to have been raised on a more restrained child-centred model compared to their working-class counterparts. Middle-class parents had been juggling affluence with the recommendations of child-centred experts, such as from psychoanalysts in the Child Guidance Movement, since the interwar period. Middle-class mothers may have been more aware of the apparent perils of material spoiling, as reflected in these girls' imaginations of future motherhood.[534] Working-class parents bringing up families in the relatively prosperous post-war period, by contrast, believed it important to express their love in material ways by giving their children the opportunity to enjoy the toys that they had been denied to them earlier in the century.[535]

Children's 1969 writings illuminate a shift in their generation's attitudes towards childcare. Their essays reveal that the turn back towards adult-centred managerial forms of childcare in the latter decades of the century was driven by the opinions that children formed in the 1960s. Tisdall notes that in the 1960s, some parents were growing sceptical of the child-centred advice advocated experts such as Spock.[536] Tisdall draws on Newson and Newson's follow up study of 700 Nottingham families with four-year-old children. The Newsons recorded that middle- and working-class parents found it difficult to accept the 'more spirited, disrespectful child' that was the result of 'rejecting rigid authoritarianism, and choosing … a more permissive approach' to childrearing.[537] However, while parents may have been questioning child-centred methods, children from

[533] CLS, NCDS, SN: 5790, N10876H, girl, non-manual father.
[534] Tisdall, p. 32.
[535] John Newson and Elizabeth Newson, *Four Years Old in an Urban Community* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1968); Roberts, *Women and Families,* p. 143; Thomson, p. 90.
[536] Tisdall, pp. 32, 36.
[537] Newson and Newson, *Four Year Olds*, p. 523.

different class backgrounds in the 1960s already believed that structured routines would be a desirable part of their own future parenthood and middle-class children in particular thought that a degree of restraint in buying toys was sensible.

Hendrick argues that the late-twentieth century was characterised by a backlash against child-centred methods. Policy makers blamed child-centred attitudes for having produced a generation of spoilt, selfish and demanding delinquents, and introduced a more punitive criminal justice system and greater discipline in teaching practices.[538] As a result, he argues that parents have been more 'inclined to regard children as a nuisance, a hindrance, a burden and a requiring "behaviourist" and cold-hearted discipline'.[539] This is something of an overstatement, as studies of advice manuals and parents' attitudes shows that they were not as extreme as Hendrick would suggest. Gina Ford's *The Contented Little Baby Book*, which was first published in 1999, advocated routines.[540] However, Ford's routines these were far less rigid than those of the Truby King era. Ford was more sensitive to babies' need for cuddling and suggested parents ease them into a routine, rather impose it stringently.[541] As Davis argues, parents in the 1990s were often caught between the conflicting advice of Leach, who advocated a baby-led approach to parenting, and Ford, which may have tempered their views about what was best for their baby.[542] A moderate advocacy of routines and discipline was evident in children's essays from the 1960s, revealing that it was really not much of a surprise that this attitude became prominent amongst parents by the end of the century.

[538] Hendrick, *Narcissistic Parenting*, pp. 238-239, 243-244,
[539] Ibid., p. 3
[540] Davis, *Modern Motherhood*, p. 134.
[541] Hardyment, p. 294.
[542] Davis, *Modern Motherhood*, p. 136.

2.4 Conclusion

Previous studies of cyclical changes in ideas about infant and childcare have focussed almost exclusively on parental attitudes. This chapter has shown, though, that this is not a wholly effective way of assessing how ideas shifted across the century. Examining the voices of children provides a clearer view of how change happened between generations. Shifting attitudes towards infant care were clearly rooted in children's family lives, their relationships and the fiction they read. The nature of working-class family life, the effect of growing up in the aftermath of the Second World War, reducing family sizes and rising standards of living post-war all had a profound impact on children's thoughts about infant care, mirroring ideas which emerged amongst experts and parents later in the century.

Children's ideas often differed from those of parents at the time, showing that change was driven by children's *own* perceptions of what represented good childcare, gleaned from watching and helping their parents as well as the stories that they read in comics and books. Childhood was crucial stage in the life cycle for the formation of identities and attitudes.[543] It is therefore important for historians to look at change *between* generations – represented in the voices of children – as well as shifts in the attitudes and practices of adults across the century - to fully understand the mechanisms that propelled generational change.

This chapter has assessed the relationship between prescription and practice, through showing that the cyclical nature of change in childrearing advice affected girls' imaginations of themselves as future caregivers and mothers. It has also touched on how girls' experiences of caring for younger siblings shaped girls' ideas about what good childcare practice looked like. Chapters three and four develop this theme, by exploring the ways in which children learnt about mothering through the rhythms of everyday

[543] Michael Roper, 'Slipping Out of View: Subjectivity and Emotion in Gender History', *History Workshop Journal*, 59.1 (2005), 57–72 (p. 67); Davidoff and others, p. 55.

family life. These chapters move into analysing the way children, and predominantly girls, developed a maternal frame of mind through taking responsibility for housework and sibling care.

Chapter Three: Housework and motherhood

The first two chapters of this thesis explored the various means through which politicians, health officials and childcare experts sought to influence parenting practices. Chapter one examined the recommendations put forward by politicians and health professionals for teaching mothercraft, and later parentcraft, in schools to prepare children for parenthood. Politicians suggested that lessons in infant care management should complement instruction already provided in domestic education – which included cookery, laundrywork and household hygiene – to prepare working-class girls for their future roles as wives and mothers.[544] Domestic education was a particularly important part of working-class girls' schooling in the early-twentieth century. While not officially acknowledged by policy makers, it was widely believed in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries that domestic education also provided a way of training working-class girls for domestic service.[545] Elizabeth Roberts' study of working-class girlhood between 1890 and 1940, which draws on women's oral testimonies, shows that many of the women interviewed received instruction in domestic education at school. However, most women stated that the skills that proved most useful to them in marriage and motherhood later in life were those they had learnt from their own mothers at home as children, rather than those they had learnt at school.[546]

This chapter examines why girls growing up in the 1930s valued the domestic skills they learnt from their mothers. It explores how doing housework in ways their mothers had taught them affected their sense of self as daughters. Moreover, it assesses the ways in which girls' decreasing involvement in domestic labour after the Second World War

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[544] Dyhouse, pp. 81–82, 95; Jane Lewis, *The Politics of Motherhood*, p. 95.
[545] The numbers of women working in domestic service declined over the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, but in 1931 domestic service still employed 24% of women in work, see Lucy Delap, *Knowing Their Place: Domestic Service in Twentieth-Century Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), pp. 11–13; St John, p. 196; Jane Lewis, *The Politics of Motherhood*, p. 93.
[546] Roberts, *A Woman's Place*, pp. 31–34.

shaped children's perceptions of the work that motherhood involved. As set out in the introduction to this thesis, it is important not to confuse housewifery with motherhood. Domestic work became a part of motherhood when women did it to care for their children.[547] This chapter, though, seeks to examine how observing and helping their mothers with housework affected girls' ideas about femininity. Historians have previously argued that in the interwar and post-war periods, mothers provided girls with their first model of womanhood.[548] Sally Alexander states that in the 1920s and 1930s, working-class girls 'growing up in streets and houses overcrowded with dirt and noise, as well as people, watched their mothers and fathers and learned what it meant to be a woman'.[549] They were not explicitly told to do housework, but saw their mothers doing it and knew that it was something expected of women.

The analysis presented in this chapter demonstrates that girls did not just learn what was expected of *women* from helping their mothers, but that they also gained an insight into what it meant to be a mother. Girls growing up in the interwar period valued the domestic skills they learnt at home as they believed their mothers had extensive knowledge of the practices that were useful for day-to-day working-class family life and because their mothers held maternal authority over them. In doing domestic work like their mothers, girls tried to acquire some of the knowledge and authority that their mothers held, to bolster their own sense of gendered usefulness as girls and daughters. Moreover, when their mothers fell ill or were frequently away from home, girls felt an increased sense of responsibility. In this way, girls believed that learning to behave in maternal ways was integral to becoming successful young women in their own right. In the 1950s and 1960s, girls were less involved in helping their mothers with housework and, as a result, saw

[547] Oakley, *The Sociology of Housework*, pp. 171–74.
[548] Dyhouse, pp. 30–32; Davis, *Modern Motherhood*, p. 62.
[549] Alexander, pp. 262–63.

domestic labour as a distinct maternal practice that women did *for* their children, intensifying their expectations of motherhood.

This chapter explores gendered processes of socialisation. It does so in three parts. Firstly, it examines the relationship between housework, motherhood and daughterhood in the interwar period. Secondly, it assesses the way the mother-daughter relationship in relation to housework changed after the Second World War. Thirdly, it explores how children felt across the period when they had to substitute for their mother's domestic labours and examines how boys as well as girls described their role and experiences in these moments. It argues that children learnt about what it meant to be a mother in the home but the ways in which children learnt about motherhood changed across the period, as children's decreasing involvement in domestic labour ultimately worked to intensify their expectations of motherhood.

3.1 Housework and the mother-daughter relationship in the interwar period

In the early-twentieth century, the Board of Education strongly encouraged public elementary schools to give girls lessons in domestic education to prepare them for womanhood because, as we saw in chapter one, health and education officials believed that working-class girls were not receiving an adequate instruction in such matters from their own mothers.[550] As Roberts notes, provisions for domestic education in interwar schools could be 'patchy', but essayists from 1937 Bolton make clear that they received regular instruction in cookery and household management.[551] Some girls acknowledged the 'official' purposes of domestic education, such as Eileen Harrison, who wrote that 'At cookery we are taught how to cook, wash, scrub and how to become a good housewife'.[552] Most, though, talked about whether the skills they had learnt at school would be useful to

[550] Dyhouse, pp. 83–84, 93, 101–2; Pilcher, 'Body Work', pp. 219–21.
[551] Roberts, *A Woman's Place*, p. 31.
[552] MOA, TC59/6/C, Eileen Harrison, 'Things I learn at home that I don't learn at school', fol. 129.

them in their current roles at home. In essays written for the title 'Things I learn at home that I don't learn school', girls detailed the ways in which the education they received at school and home overlapped and, in some cases, contradicted each other.

Janet Davis described the conversation she had with her mother when she took home cakes she had made at school:

> I took some soda cakes home my mother said, "Why is there no egg in and you should only put ½ teaspoonful of c. of tarter and ¼ of a teaspoon of bicarbonate of soda and Miss [Reynolds] uses 1 teaspoonful of c. of tarter and ½ of bicarbonate", and she said that the biggest cakes was only 5 and I make 12 large ones and I can taste the tarter a little.[553]

Similarly, Eileen Chapman wrote, 'There are plenty of things which are said at home which are opposite to those said at school … My mother shows another way how to make the cakes I have learned at school'.[554] Historians have argued that mothers disliked their daughters being taught domestic skills at school. Some mothers believed that the time could be better used for teaching their daughters something other than the practices which many had already learned at home, while others believed that the recipes taught in schools were too elaborate and expensive to be useful in everyday life.[555] Barron argues that by the 1930s, working-class parents generally accepted their children's compulsory school attendance until the age of fourteen, as they had been through the education system themselves, and often respected the value of an academic education. Parents objected, however, to schools attempting to extend their influence beyond the classroom and into their pupil's home lives.[556]

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[553] MOA, TC59/6/C, Janet Davis, 'Things I learn at home that I don't learn at school', fols 125-126.
[554] MOA, TC59/6/C, Eileen Chapman, 'Things I learn at home that I don't learn at school', fol. 137.
[555] Dyhouse, pp. 90–91; St John, p. 197.
[556] Hester Barron, 'Parents, Teachers and Children's Wellbeing in London, 1918-1937', in *Parenting and the State in Britain and Europe, c. 1870-1950: Raising the Nation*, ed. by Hester Barron and Claudia Siebrecht (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), pp. 137–59 (p. 145).

Janet and Eileen Chapman's mothers clearly disliked the cookery methods their daughters had learned at school, and the essays in this collection show that girls themselves also placed more value on the skills they learnt at home. Mary Wallace wrote that: 'At school we are learned to [do] housework so that we can do it at home … At school we are learned how to wash cloths but our mothers teach us how they were taught so we do not learn as much at school as we do at home'.[557] Roberts argues that schools played 'a generally subordinate role … in the socialisation of the working-class child', as the women she interviewed could not remember the specifics of what they had been taught in domestic education classes or felt they had been of no practical use.[558] There is some element to this in Mary's essay, as she felt that the domestic practices she learnt at school were of less use because they were restricted by time restraints: 'at cookery we only learn how to make small dinners because we have not time but at home we are learned to make big dinners'.

However, for Mary there was a more significant reason as to why she favoured the practices she learnt from her mother compared to those she learnt from her teacher. Mary's preference for the skills she learnt at home was due to the maternal and generational authority that Mary's mother held, and Mary's desire to show that she had successfully mastered the techniques her mother had passed onto her. As Mauss argues, *habitus* can form part of people's conscious efforts to develop their skills by imitating the actions of those 'in whom he has confidence and who have authority over him'.[559] Mary favoured the techniques used by her mother, and her grandmother before her, because of the maternal authority these women held. Working-class parents in the early-twentieth century could be strict and Roberts argues that girls generally accepted 'the implicit and

[557] MOA, TC59/6/C, Mary Wallace, 'Things I learn at home that I don't learn at school', fols 159-160.
[558] Roberts, *A Woman's Place*, pp. 32-34.
[559] Mauss, p. 73.

explicit moral, social and ethical guidance which they received from their parents'.[560] In Mary's eyes, her mother had more expertise in matters of domestic life than her teacher because she practised methods honed over generations. Through mastering the techniques that her mother had taught her, Mary felt that she was embodying two generations' worth of familial female experience.

This represents a difference in the value that girls at the time and women later in life attributed to the domestic practices they learnt from their mothers. Women reflecting back on their childhoods often thought about the usefulness of the domestic skills they learnt as girls within the context of their experiences as wives and mothers later in life.[561] Girls, meanwhile, conceptualised the value of domestic practices in terms of their relationships with their mothers at the time. For instance, Clara Campbell wrote, 'My mother learned me how to make bread. She is a good cook, and makes plate pies and fancy cakes', whilst Eileen Harrison wrote that 'My mother is a very good cook, and she is teaching me how to be the same'.[562] *Habitus* works not only as an imitation of another person's actions. Rather, performing practices in the same way and in the same place as someone of prestige has the potential to create a deeper meaning for the individual attempting to master a technique.

As Carol Dyhouse argues, girls growing up in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries learnt from their mothers that '"femininity" was socially defined in terms of dependency, self-sacrifice and service'.[563] Notions of female self-sacrifice and service were reinforced in working-class homes. It was often necessary for mothers to work, especially in Lancashire where men's wages in local textile, coal and engineering

[560] Roberts, *A Woman's Place*, pp. 11.
[561] Oakley, *The Sociology of Housework*, pp. 116–17, 120.
[562] MOA, TC59/6/C, Clara Campbell , 'Things I learn at home that I don't learn at school', fol. 155; Eileen Harrison, fol. 129.
[563] Dyhouse, p. 30.

industries were lower than in other parts of the country.[564] Where mothers undertook paid work, the burden of housework still fell on them and Roberts shows that some women had to cook and clean until well into the night in order to look after their families.[565]

Working-class girls in the early-twentieth century also believed that their value within the family unit was based on their ability to perform domestic work competently and independently, which contributed to the running of the family home. Jessie Andrews, for instance, wrote that, 'At home I learn how to make the beds, & shake the pillows neatly … I mop and sweep the yard every Tuesday, Thursday, & Saturday. On Monday I clean my shoes. After every meal I wash & wipe the greasy dishes'.[566] Lillian Jones similarly provided a detailed outline of her domestic routine: 'At home I learn how to tidy the house I do the grate and blacklead it … When I have finished them I wash the pots and plates and mop the kitchen, when I have mopped the kitchen I clean the back windows … After I bake for my mother'.[567]

Girls had to develop skills that were practical and useful for day-to-day life in order to help their mothers and reduce some of the domestic burden on them, again showing why girls valued the skills they learnt from their mothers more than those they learnt at school. In her essay, Emma Atkins wrote, 'I learn most of housewifery and domestic science at the school cookery, that is scrubbing tables, towels, clothes and other various things … We learn how to cook, also'. Emma went on to write, however, that there were certain things she learnt at home which were not covered at school 'because there isn't enough time to get through it all and do it all'. She learnt at home, for example, 'to mop the house and kitchen … I have also been taught at home how to make bread and barm cakes and [a] plate of pies. I am also taught how to make a proper meal which only costs a few pence

[564] T. J. Hatton and R. E. Bailey, 'Female Labour Force Participation in Interwar Britain', *Oxford Economic Papers*, 40.4 (1988), 695–718 (pp. 697–98).
[565] Roberts, *A Woman's Place*, pp. 125-128.
[566] MOA, TC 59/6/C, Jessie Andrews, 'Things I learn at home that I do not learn at school', fol. 124.
[567] MOA, TC 59/6/C, Lillian Jones, 'Things I learn at home that I do not learn at school', fol. 140.

which is also a great boon for a large family'.[568] Whilst cookery formed part of her lessons at school, it was only at home where she felt she learnt practical skills that women and girls needed for everyday working-class life – such as juggling monetary concerns with the need to provide a filling meal for the family.

These girls appeared to admire their mothers, but it must be stated that not all mother-daughter relationships were positive and that not all girls enjoyed learning domestic skills from them. Dyhouse shows that some daughters resented the expectation that they should have to spend much of their time helping their mothers with arduous domestic work and their mothers often expected more of them than their brothers.[569] Frustration and boredom are evident features of some of these girls' essays. For instance, Daisy Young explained that:

> what I do at home is quite different work from what I do at school, for the work at school is just brain work like working [out] sums, doing history and geography. But the work at home is done by your brain and your hands. This is much harder for when you dust it makes your hands ache and also when you mop … I like my work at school best for it is much easier and nicer to do.[570]

Nevertheless, mothers provided an important model of womanhood, which girls sought to emulate in order to prove their own feminine competencies.[571] They believed that their mothers had extensive knowledge, authority and skill in domestic matters, a woman's 'natural' domain, which transferred to them through their mastery of their mother's homemaking practices. In this sense, girls conflated womanhood with motherhood. This conflation is important here, as it shows that, for working-class girls in the interwar period, their ideas about domesticity and femininity were entangled with motherhood.

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[568] MOA, TC 59/6/C, Emma Atkins, 'Things I learn at home that I do not learn at school', fols 148-149.
[569] Dyhouse, pp. 16-17.
[570] MOA, TC59/6/C, Daisy Young, 'Things I learn at home that I do not learn at school', fol. 147.
[571] On mothers providing a model of womanhood, see Alexander, pp. 262-263.

Girls with a good relationship with their mothers looked to them for an example of successful adult femininity and tried to master their domestic techniques in order to assume something of their mother's authority and knowledge for themselves. Girls wanted to be useful there and then, as daughters and sisters. For the most part, working-class girls sought to prove their value through their competence at domestic skills but performing these in a 'maternal' way added to their sense of maturity.

3.2 Housework and the mother-daughter relationship post-war

After the Second World War, working-class children were often less involved in routines of domestic work. Many working-class mothers '[regretted] that they had had to do so much housework when they were young, [and] wanted to spare their children and allow them to have a "better" time' than they had had growing up.[572] Unlike working-class girls growing up in the interwar period, who saw domestic competency as a way of achieving feminine maturity, girls in the post-war period did not generally believe that performing household chores was the route to being seen as mature or grown up. Girls' essays written for the title 'The best way to spend a winter evening' in 1952 show that they still did some work at home, such as helping their mothers to wash up after dinner or darn socks.[573] However, they tended to construe their contributions as *helping* their mothers, rather than as them doing essential daily chores that their mothers had delegated to them. In describing how she spent her winter evenings, Barbara Laurel wrote:

> On a winters night I would stay in, and read my library book, or do some knitting if I had no books. But before that I would study over my French or English … Sometimes perhaps my mother would need a help with the work and I would do it to help her.[574]

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[572] Roberts, *Women and Families*, p. 33.
[573] MS. Opie 34, Mary Walters, 'The best way to spend a winter evening', fol. 102; Jennifer Watkins, fols 179^{r}-179^{v}; Elizabeth Jenkins, fols 201^{r}-201^{v}.
[574] MS. Opie 34, Barbara Laurel, 'The best way to spend a winter evening', fol. 109.

Girls growing up in the 1950s sometimes saw labour as something they could exchange for a reward, rather than being a necessary part of household routines. In 1955, the *Junior Mirror* asked readers to participate in a survey about housework and asked children what they did at home. From the responses it gained, the *Junior Mirror* reported that children do 'Almost everything from dusting the furniture to cooking the Sunday dinner. Most of you offer to help mum with at least one little job every day'. Moreover, it stated that:

> From your answers it seems that most readers do jobs in return for their ordinary weekly pocket money. Often, however, mum shows her gratitude with some special extra treat.[575]

These references to 'one little job' and mothers rewarding their children with a 'special extra treat' minimises the importance of children's contributions and adds to the sense that mothers did not rely on their children's help in order to get all household shopping, cleaning and cooking done, or at least not to the extent that mothers did in the 1930s. *Junior Mirror's* parent paper the *Daily Mirror* was predominantly aimed at working-class readers in the mid-century and would most likely have been read by the children of regular adult readers.[576] This survey is therefore important for examining changing attitudes amongst working-class families to children's work in the home. It reveals a shift in parental expectations and the meaning of children's labour from the interwar period, supporting Roberts's assessment.

The experiences of *Junior Mirror* readers in the 1950s differed from those of schoolgirls growing up in interwar Bolton. While girls in the 1930s often received small amounts of money from relatives, they believed that it was not acceptable to regularly ask their parents for money in exchange for running errands or helping their mothers with

[575] *Junior Mirror*, 'Three out of four boys and girls say we love housework,' 16 February 1955, p. 4.
[576] Bingham and Conboy, pp. 180–83.

housework.[577] In a 1937 essay about 'What is good, what is bad', Ruth Johnson said that good 'means to run errands and help our mother without taking any money of her'.[578] The advent of regular pocket money in particular, which seemed to become more common in the post-war period with rising wages and decreasing family sizes, made children growing up in the post-war period think of their household chores as irregular childhood jobs, rather than as regular practices they shared with their mothers.[579]

In discussing the trend towards children helping their mothers less with housework, Roberts states that: 'Their mothers' insistence that school work and "having a good time" should be put before the carrying out of household duties tended to give them a different set of values to those of their parents … Some girls and boys grew up with ambivalent views, not at all sure if domestic work was of value'.[580] Children's essays and writings from the late 1940s and 1950s question Roberts's assessment. Children were less involved in housework, but they were certainly not ambivalent about it. In 1950 the *Children's Mirror* posed this question to its readers: 'Do you hate running errands, too?' in response to a letter the editors had received from a girl who 'disliked shopping for her mother'. Some readers suggested ways of making shopping more interesting, such as going on roller skates, but twelve-year-old Carole said, '"Think of all the things your mother does for you – and make up your mind to do your shopping gladly"', showing that girls still valued domestic work even when they were less involved in time-consuming labours themselves.[581] Instead, they saw regular time-consuming routines of domestic work as something that their mothers did *for them*.

[577] Children described received small amounts of money from their parents and relatives as a treat or on Easter Sunday, see MOA, TC59/6/B, No name, 'How I spent Saturday and Sunday', fols 290-291; MOA, WC 49 Children's Essays; Observations in Schools, WC49/E, Anne Walsh, 'How I spent my Easter Holidays', fol. 39.
[578] MOA, TC59/6/A, Ruth Johnson, 'What is good, what is bad', fols 2-3.
[579] On rising standards of living post-war see Langhamer, *Women's Leisure,* p. 138.
[580] Roberts, *Women and Families,* p. 35.
[581] *Daily Mirror*, 'Do you hate running errands, too?', 23 December 1950, p. 4.

Not being regularly involved in housework changed the meaning of domestic labour for girls growing up in the post-war period and had noticeable effects on the activities that they associated with motherhood. Girls writing for the NCDS in 1969 tended to see regular domestic work as something that was distinctly maternal rather than an anticipated part of childhood. Girls' perceptions that domestic work was a mother's responsibility is not surprising, given that John and Elizabeth Newson's study of the lives of 700 eleven-year-olds growing in up Nottingham between the late 1960s and early 1970s shows that children were mostly involved only in light domestic work. The Newsons investigated the lives of eleven-year-olds by interviewing their parents and found that both middle- and working-class children, but especially girls, were expected to help with laying the table for dinner, washing and drying up, vacuuming, dusting and running errands. However, children were rarely asked to do 'any real cooking or major chores such as washing and ironing', unlike the girls growing up in the interwar period discussed above.[582]

Changing expectations of children were reflected in girls' imaginations of their future lives for the NCDS. Girls believed that as mothers they, and sometimes their husbands, would be responsible for undertaking domestic labours whereas their children would only be expected to help out occasionally.[583] One working-class girl, for instance, wrote 'The number of children I think I'll have is one, or two, or three, four or five kindly children and try to teach them in some subjects and they won't get any money if they don't work some odd jobs about the house'.[584] Parents' expectations for children's contributions to housework were increasingly framed in terms of teaching them values, rather than relying on their domestic labours to keep the home running.

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[582] John Newson and Elizabeth Newson, *Childhood into Adolescence: Growing up in the 1970s*, ed. by Peter Barnes and Susan Gregory (Oxon: Routledge, 2019), pp. 46-47 (table 4.3).
[583] CLS, NCDS, SN: 5790 N22381C, girl, manual father; N12156Q, girl, manual father.
[584] CLS, NCDS, SN: 5790, N13255W, girl, manual father.

A similar attitude can also be seen amongst middle-class girls in this 1969 sample. One girl described herself as a 'hardworking housewife'.[585] Another imagined that she would be a wife, mother and also working as a child welfare officer. Although working, she still believed that she would be doing most of the housework herself as she wrote that she would spend much of her time 'cooking meals, washing clothes and tidying the house'.[586] The similar attitudes amongst working- and middle-class girls can be attributed to the decline in domestic service after the Second World War. Middle-class mothers had to do the majority of housework themselves in the post-war period, rather than rely on help from paid servants, as many women from this social class had done earlier in the century.[587] The decline in domestic service meant that there was a 'convergence between working- and middle-class women in the amount of time spent doing housework'.[588]

Children from both working- and middle-class homes were unlikely to be involved in these time-consuming routines of domestic work.[589] Of course, those from larger families or who grew up in a single parent household would have more often contributed to housework.[590] On the whole, though, ideas about childhood as a time for emotional development were growing in the post-war decades and many mothers did not want to place too many burdens on their children.[591] Rather than being '[unsure] if domestic work was of value', these essays show that girls in this period recognised how arduous it was. Not being involved in it regularly themselves heightened their sense of gratitude towards their mothers and increased their expectations of the practices that motherhood entailed, shaping their ideas about their own future lives as mothers.

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[585] CLS, NCDS, SN: 5790, N10534N, girl, non-manual father.
[586] CLS, NCDS, SN: 5790, N10757B, girl, non-manual father.
[587] Davis, *Modern Motherhood*, p. 149.
[588] Zweiniger-Bargielowska, pp. 160, 162.
[589] Newson and Newson, *Childhood into Adolescence*, pp. 46-47.
[590] Rosalind Edwards and Val Gillies, '"Where Are the Parents": Changing Parenting Responsibilities Between the 1960s and 2010s', in *Parenting in Global Perspective: Negotiating Ideologies of Kinship, Self and Politics*, ed. by Charlotte Faircloth, Diane M. Hoffman, and Linda L. Layne (London: Routledge, 2013), pp. 21–35 (pp. 27–29).
[591] Roberts, *Women and Families*, pp. 33, 143.

3.3 Girls' and boys' responsibilities and their overlaps with motherhood:

This chapter has so far examined girls' relationships with their mothers and domestic work. It must be noted, though, that it was not only girls who helped their mothers with household chores. Both working-class boys and girls in the interwar period had many regular responsibilities around the home. Errands were a common job for both boys and girls to do.[592] Children's essays for the title 'How I spend Saturday and Sunday' in 1937 describe doing the shopping, paying bills and running other errands for their mothers and sometimes other family members too. One boy, for instance, wrote:

> Early on Saturday morning I went the errands. First of all, when I was going to the butchers, I called at a shop … I went on my way to the butchers and I wanted a pound of shoulders steak. When I reached home my mother chopped up the steak and boiled it up in the oven. I went to the coal mans house for two dozen eggs which cost two shillings.[593]

As well as doing these chores, he also read a children's annual and went to Sunday School, showing that running errands were a usual part of his weekend activities. There were, though, differences in the types of chores parents expected their sons and daughters to do. In larger families with multiple children, it was more common for girls to be asked to help their mothers with cooking and cleaning, while boys were often charged with helping their fathers with outdoor jobs.[594] As noted above, children saw these jobs as their own, as the regularity with which working-class children were expected to do certain chores around the home meant that they formed part of their childhood routines. They took ownership of them, even though they sometimes disliked having to do them.

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[592] MOA, TC59/6/B, Neil Andrews, 'How I spend Saturday and Sunday' fols 293-294; MOA, TC59/6/B, Peter Lloyd, 'From School to Bed', fols 201-202; MOA, TC59/6/B, May Jenkins, 'How I spend Saturday and Sunday', fol. 261; Davin, *Growing Up Poor*, pp. 180–87.
[593] MOA, TC59/6/B, Dennis Potter, 'How I spent Saturday and Sunday', fol. 257.
[594] Roberts, *A Woman's Place*, pp. 22-3.

Where boys and girls assisted their mothers, they were helping with distinctly female forms of labour, as mothers were responsible for the domestic work and childcare.[595] In some cases, children developed something of a maternal mindset through performing regular domestic jobs. This can be seen in Emma Atkin's essay. In her account of what she did when the school closed to mark Ascension Day in May 1937, Emma provided a detailed description of her domestic routine:

> When I got up on Thursday morning I washed and dressed my little brother, gave him his breakfast and sent him out to play. Then I washed myself and scrubbed the floor and dusted the dresser, chairs and table. Then I mopped the kitchen and swept the upstairs and made the beds. Then I found out it was dinner time so I cooked egg and bacon for four, then we had our dinner. Afterwards I cleared the table and swept up the crumbs. Then I sat down and read, nearly a whole book. Then it was tea-time so I set the table for tea and we had it. Later on I cooked my brother's and dad's tea. Then I went out to play till they came home from work, then I gave them their teas.[596]

Emma's essay gives the impression that she was left in charge of the house and was looking after the family in her mother's absence. Mass Observation notes about the family backgrounds of the children at this elementary school in Bolton state that Emma's 'mother has had to work'. It is clear that Emma was regularly involved in home life as it was noted that she was one of approximately five children and left school on the day of the observation at '11.45 to get dinner ready'.[597] It was fairly common in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries for working-class parents to keep children, and especially girls, at home out of necessity to help with childcare, domestic labour and/or wage-earning, and their help was particularly crucial in larger families. Some schools allowed

[595] Langhamer, *Women's Leisure*, pp. 144–46, 156–59.
[596] MOA, WC49/E, Emma Atkins, 'What I did on my Thursday Holiday', fol. 13.
[597] MOA, TC59/1/B, fol. 13.

children to attend on a part-time basis, or to occasionally take time off, which became a more common practice by the 1930s.[598]

Through regularly doing motherly domestic work at home in place of her mother, Emma developed something of a maternal mindset. Emma's description of careful time management echoes the accounts of daily life provided by women in response to a Mass Observation study in the 1950s, which were framed around a tight schedule of caring for infants, shopping, cleaning, cooking, and tidying, which left little time for leisure or relaxation.[599] In an analysis of these women's accounts for a study of women's leisure between 1920 and 1960, Langhamer argues that mothers' days across this period were filled with domestic work and childcare, and they often felt overwhelmed by the sheer amount of daily domestic labour they had to manage, from which they rarely had any meaningful break.[600]

There are similar maternal sentiments in Emma's account, such as the way she scheduled her day around housework and the needs of her family members. In a study of adolescent girls' views of leisure time in interwar Germany, Christina Benninghaus argues that girls believed youth was a life stage in which they should enjoy leisure activities, as they thought that they would have few opportunities for this once they married, as in their view 'married women were not entitled to free time'.[601] Domestic burdens on women increased when they had children, further limiting their chances for leisure.[602] However, Emma may have tried to emphasise the time she devoted to the home, family and her younger brother, to make herself appear mature and grown up, much like a mother. When regularly standing in for their mothers, girls believed that their regular and essential domestic

[598] Davin, *Growing Up Poor*, p. 98; Barron, pp. 150–51.
[599] Langhamer, *Women's Leisure*, pp. 31-33.
[600] Ibid., pp. 31-33.
[601] Christina Benninghaus, 'Mothers' Toil and Daughters' Leisure: Working-Class Girls and Time in 1920s Germany', *History Workshop Journal*, 50.50 (2000), 45–72 (p. 56).
[602] Langhamer, *Women's Leisure*, pp. 156-58.

contributions elevated to their status in family life to somewhere between daughterhood and motherhood.

Some of the work that Emma was doing at home overlapped with maternal forms of labour. Emma was preparing meals for her younger and older brothers. As she presented herself as doing these tasks independently, seemingly in her mothers' absence, these responsibilities heightened the sense of domestic authority Emma felt. She also specified at the start of her essay that she sent her younger brother out to play while she cleaned the house, showing that Emma valued his leisure time above her own. A strong sense of maternal self-sacrifice and duty formed a part of how Emma saw herself and her own role in family life. While self-sacrifice had been a prominent part of societal expectations and lived experiences of motherhood in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, it became increasingly important after the Second World War, as mothers no longer relied so heavily on their children's labours and were expected instead to put their children's needs ahead their own.[603] Something of this attitude developed in the interwar period among older girls who, while still being expected to do large amounts of domestic work themselves, hoped to spare their younger siblings a similar fate.

Emma's example shows how some girls developed maternal ways of thinking through regularly performing housework when their mothers were busy or out of the house. However, it must also be considered how children felt in circumstances when they had to do jobs that were not usually expected of them. From time to time, children had to substitute their mother's labours when they were ill. In these situations, extra housework was added to children's regular chores, and this meant that children were effectively performing their mothers' usual jobs *as mothers*, rather than as children. A sense of

[603]Zweiniger-Bargielowska, pp. 159–60; Roberts, *Women and Families*, pp. 33, 150, 158–59.

maternal responsibility comes across in Lillian Davis's account of what she did on Ascension Day in 1937:

> On Thursday morning I got up, I had my breakfast. After that I washed the pots and pans and put them neatly away. My mother has sore eyes, and she asked me to do the housewifery. I did everything except the fireplace, because she told me not to touch it. My mother went to the doctor with her eyes, and I went errands with my sister.
>
> In the afternoon I pealed the potatoes for a potato pie. My mother told me what to do with the meat. Later in the afternoon I made the crust and put it on the pie, and at tea time it turned out very nice.[604]

Lillian cleaned and cooked in place of her mother while she was ill. Although it seems that Lilian normally carried out domestic chores around the home, on this day she was clearly entrusted with a greater level of responsibility than she was normally as she did all the housework, expect for the fireplace, and was proud that the pie she made had 'turned out very nice'. The fact that her mother was ill and unable to do much herself increased the significance of the domestic labour that Lillian undertook. The unexpected and occasional nature of this extra work contributed to Lilian's sense that what she was doing in this moment was special. Again, this supports Mauss's assertion that *habitus* is not a purely subconscious process, and challenges Qureshi's assessment that it was only after a baby of their own that women imitated their own mothers actions in order develop specifically maternal practices.[605] Here, Lilian took direct instruction from her mother while she was ill to do the cooking and cleaning as she would have done. She deliberately tried to do household work as her mother had instructed her to in order to effectively substitute for her missing labours.

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[604] MOA, WC49/E, Lilian Davies, 'What I did on my Thursday Holiday', fol. 23.
[605] Mauss, p. 73; Qureshi, pp. 169–70.

As noted above, children were less involved in routines of housework after the Second World War, though most children still did some household chores. In the late 1940s one boy recorded the errands he ran for his mother over the course of a year and wrote in to tell the *Children's Mirror* that he had done over a thousand errands, 'nearly three a day'.[606] Much like in the interwar period, though, there were differences in the type of work that sons and daughters did, and in the kinds of the jobs that some boys felt comfortable in doing.[607] In writing about how they would spend a winter evening, boys tended to describe doing errands while more girls talked about helping their mothers with cleaning and washing up.[608] As one boy wrote, 'I like going on errands in the snow ... Mother[s] are sometimes glad when their children go out to play for they can do the housework in peace'.[609] Boys, even more so than girls in the post-war period, viewed domestic work as something that mothers did for them. This can be seen in Ron Aaronson's 1955 essay about what he wanted to do when he grew up, in which he detailed his ambition to be a sailor:

> To be a sailor you have to work hard and do such jobs as scrubbing the deck, peeling potatoes or you could work down in the engine room … When I am old enough I hope to go to a Nautical School, and learn about the sea. When you are a sailor you learn to look after yourself that is, I think, what a young boy should do. After all you don't have your mother all your life, do you?[610]

For Ron, learning to look after himself in preparation for a future career, rather than depending on his mother, signified a level of responsibleness. Ron's view on domestic

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[606] *Daily Mirror*, 'Other People's Diaries', 2 July 1949, p. 4.
[607] See discussions in the children's page of the *Daily Mirror* and *Junior Mirror* about gender and chores, for example *Daily Mirror*, 'One Girl Wants to Know Do Boys Get the Best of Everything', 10 June 1950, p. 4; *Junior Mirror*, 19th January 1955, 'You – and the Housework', p. 2.
[608] For example, MS. Opie 34, John Marshall 'The best way to spend a winter evening', fol. 106; MS. Opie 34, Eliza Stewart, 'The best way to spend a winter evening', fols 152r-152v.
[609] MS. Opie 34, 'The best way to spend a winter evening', fols 225r-225v.
[610] MS. Opie 40, Ron Aaronson, 'What I would like to be, and why', fols 565r-565v.

work represented a stark difference from working-class girls' independence in the interwar period, as girls used their contributions to housework to prove their usefulness as daughters. Ron's perception, then, that boys should learn to look after themselves in preparation for adulthood, rather than to help their mothers in the present, was a result of the combination of his gendered experiences and changing expectations of children post-war.

This had an interesting effect on the way boys thought about what they were doing when asked to occasionally take on household responsibilities. After the Second World War, mothers still relied on their children to do domestic work on their behalf when they fell ill, as shown in a letter eleven-year-old Robert sent to the *Children's Mirror* in 1949:

> For a week I stopped at home and helped mother, who was ill. The first day I thought it was easy and enjoyed the holiday, but by Friday I was fed up and realised a mother's job means more than washing up and going errands.[611]

Robert conflated housework with motherhood, as he viewed domestic work as a 'mother's job'. This again suggests that as working-class children, and especially boys, became less involved in housework, domestic labour entwined in children's minds with their conceptions of motherhood. The irregularity with which Robert was usually involved in housework contrasted with working-class girls in the interwar period, who were already involved in routines of domestic work. Completing housework in their mother's place, when they were ill or out of the house, on a regular basis made girls feel more important but didn't necessarily transform them into mothers. In this situation, though, Robert had no choice but to carry out time- and labour-intensive domestic work that was outside of his usual experience, and the demanding nature of these unexpected

[611] *Daily Mirror*, 'World Post Box', 19 February 1949, p. 4.

jobs made Robert feel that he inhabited his mother's role through doing household work on her behalf.

Robert's writing shows in practice how *habitus* worked when children were deliberately trying to behave like their mothers by substituting their labours for a short period, and the effect this had on children's sense of what they were doing. By taking over the domestic work that he saw his mother do on a daily basis, Robert believed that he was effectively being a mother by completing these tasks in her place. In the process, he came to understand what it *meant* to be a mother. He gained an appreciation of the 'social meanings and values' attached to domestic work when it was performed in the course of motherhood, and of the emotional and physical demands placed on women with children, which made Robert realise that 'a mother's job means more than washing up and going errands'.[612]

3.4 Conclusion

This chapter has examined how children learnt about mothering through watching and helping with housework in the mid-century. It is of course important not to conflate housewifery (or general household chores) with motherhood. Nevertheless, this chapter has shown that working-class girls in the 1930s felt it was important to try and do household jobs, such as cooking and washing, in ways their mothers had taught them to. Working-class girls who were heavily involved in household routines understood their worth in terms of their usefulness in family life and learnt from their mothers that domesticity and family duty were expected of adult women.[613] In their eyes, their mothers had expertise in domestic matters which they sought to try and master themselves, showing how motherhood shaped girls' sense of what successful adult womanhood looked like. In the 1950s and 1960s, the relationship between housework and mothering

[612] Bourdieu, p. 87.
[613] Dyhouse, p. 30; Alexander, pp. 262-63.

was clearer. Expectations of motherhood and childhood changed after the Second World War, as mothers were expected to do more for their offspring and not place too many burdens on them.[614] As children saw their mothers doing domestic work and were not involved in these labours themselves, they came to see time-consuming routines of housework as a maternal practice which increased their expectations of motherhood and childrearing. As a result, when temporarily taking over their mother's domestic jobs in the 1950s and 1960s, some children growing up in this period believed that they were effectively transformed into them.

This is important for considering processes of learning and transmission. Academics have argued that childhood is an important life stage, as the values learnt can shape the way individuals go on to approach parenthood when they have children of their own later in life.[615] Examining these processes through the eyes of children sheds new light on these processes, as children thought about the value of homemaking skills not for their future lives as spouses and parents, but in terms of their use to them in the present. Through seeking to master homemaking practices and do them in a mother-like way, children were imitating and, in some cases, inhabiting a maternal role. In various ways, children learnt about, developed skills for and sometimes tangibly performed the work of motherhood. Having examined housework here, the next chapter moves onto to examine sibling care, another key area of overlap between parenting and childhood work.

[614] Roberts, *Women and Families*, pp. 143, 153.
[615] Davis, 'Generational Change and Continuity', pp. 212–18; Punita Chowbey and Sarah Salway, 'I Feel My Dad Every Moment!: Memory, Emotion and Embodiment in British South Asian Fathering Practices', in *Parenthood between Generations*, ed. by Pooley and Qureshi, pp. 229–52 (pp. 240–42, 244–45).

Chapter Four: Sibling care and 'parenting'

This chapter continues to examine the way children thought about their familial responsibilities and the extent to which they developed a parental mindset as a result of the roles they performed at home. It explicitly examines older siblings' caregiving responsibilities. Middle- and working-class children with younger siblings in the late-nineteenth and twentieth centuries were often tasked with looking after them. This involved providing practical care, such as feeding, bathing or dressing them, minding and entertaining or keeping them out of mischief.[616] This chapter makes a significant contribution to the history of siblinghood by examining sibling relationships in childhood in the mid-century. The most significant historical study of siblinghood in England is Leonore Davidoff's research of sibling relationships between 1780 and 1920. She explores how gender, age and birth order affected the relationships between middle-class brothers and sisters, both in childhood and later in the life course, by examining the ways in which power and control were exercised and care was provided.[617]

Davidoff's work, however, is mostly concerned with how siblinghood worked in 'long' families 'with multiple children and usually a large age gap between the older and younger children of the family'. Older children formed an 'intermediate generation' between parents and the youngest children, and often assumed caring responsibilities for the younger ones.[618] The 'long' family had become less common by the 1920s and 1930s.[619] Studies of childhood in the late-nineteenth and twentieth centuries have touched on sibling relationships, but not explored them in depth, while other works have explored relationships between siblings in adulthood in the mid-twentieth century.[620] This chapter

[616] Davidoff, pp. 112–33; Dyhouse, pp. 11–12.
[617] Davidoff, pp. 94-5; 250-81.
[618] Davidoff, p. 82.
[619] Michael Anderson, 'Highly Restricted Fertility: Very Small Families in the British Fertility Decline', *Population Studies*, 52.2 (1998), 177–99 (p. 178).
[620] Davin, *Growing Up Poor*, pp. 88–89; Roberts, *A Woman's Place*, pp. 22–24; Jane Hamlett, '"Tiresome Trips Downstairs": Middle-Class Domestic Space and Family Relationships in England, 1850-1910', in *The Politics of Domestic Authority*, ed. by Delap, Griffin, and Wills, pp. 111–31 (pp. 123–

contributes to these studies by exploring how decreasing family sizes affected the roles that older siblings played in caring for their younger brothers and sisters in childhood.

This chapter also examines the way children *felt* about their responsibilities. Historians have tended to refer to older siblings, and older daughters especially, as mother 'substitutes', without interrogating how children actually felt about their roles.[621] This chapter contributes to historical studies of siblinghood by assessing when older children believed they were looking after younger brothers and sisters as siblings, the kinds of situations in which children thought they were caring for younger siblings *as parents*, and the times where sibling care fell somewhere between the two. The key to understanding how far older children in the mid-century felt like parents depended on whether their responsibilities for caring for younger brothers and sisters formed a regular part of children's routines or whether it was something unusual.

In the 1930s older working-class girls and some boys routinely washed, dressed and fed younger siblings.[622] This chapter will show that older girls in this period felt a sense of shared mother/child responsibility for their younger siblings' care. This sense of shared practice elevated these individuals' perceptions of their status in family life from an older sibling to something of a proxy parent. Generally, older children were expected to contribute to the practical care of younger siblings less after the Second World War, and their relationships with younger brothers and sisters in the post-war period consisted mostly of play and games. This meant that older children saw less of an overlap between their roles as older siblings and parenthood, as parents rather than older children mostly took charge of the practical aspects of childrearing. Siblings in the post-war period

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25); Stephen Humphries, *Hooligans or Rebels?: Oral History of Working Class Childhood and Youth, 1889-1939* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1981; repr. 1995: Wiley-Blackwell, 1981), p. 153. For a study of sibling relationships in adulthood see Melanie Tebbutt, 'Imagined Families and Vanished Communities: Memories of a Working-Class Life in Northampton', *History Workshop Journal*, 73.1 (2012), 144–69.

[621] Davidoff, p. 92; Roberts, *A Woman's Place*, p. 23; Dyhouse, p. 20.

[622] Roberts, *A Woman's Place*, pp. 22-24.

therefore felt more like children than parents when minding younger siblings day-to-day. When occasionally tasked with taking over the practical aspects of their siblings' care in family emergencies, however, children often felt a pronounced sense of parental responsibility.

Thinking about when older siblings were looking after younger brothers and sisters as siblings, and when they cared for them more as parents, allows this chapter to consider the skills and mindset that children developed as a result of the responsibilities they were entrusted with. Sociologists Anne Oakley and Charlie Lewis, in their studies of motherhood in 1979 and fatherhood in 1986 respectively, argue that caring for a younger sibling in childhood was important preparation for parenthood. Siblinghood gave boys and girls experience with handling a young child, thereby increasing their confidence with their own infants later in life, though sociologists worried that too few men and women had had such opportunities to interact with infants.[623] Importantly, Oakley and Lewis, along with other scholars, suggest that older siblinghood only gave individuals practical experience with infants and did not prepare them for the emotional responsibilities of parenthood.[624] This chapter argues, however, that having a younger brother or sister not only gave children practical experience with an infant, but that by looking after them, children developed parental ways of thinking and feeling. Psychoanalyst Juliet Mitchell rightly stresses that parent-child and sibling relationships are fundamentally different. According to Mitchell, love and authority in parent-child relationships flow along a 'vertical' axis while sibling relationships flow along a separate, although interacting, 'lateral' axis.[625] This chapter agrees with Mitchell's assessment, but shows that some children actively presented their caring roles in a parental light, to illustrate the authority

[623] Oakley, *Becoming a Mother*, p. 67; Charlie Lewis, pp. 33–34.
[624] Qureshi, pp. 161–62; Suissa, pp. 69–70.
[625] Mitchell, pp. 1–2, 168.

they felt they held over younger siblings and to demonstrate their importance in family life.

This chapter examines siblinghood across four sections. Firstly, the chapter explores representations of siblinghood in children's contemporary literature. While there have been few studies of the experiences of siblinghood in the mid-century, historians have examined representations of these relationships in print.[626] When groups of children went on adventures without their parents, or when parents had to temporarily leave the family home, authors depicted older daughters as substitute mothers and older sons as substitute fathers. Secondly, the chapter moves on to examine the lived experiences of older siblings, demonstrating that children's sibling roles were more complicated than cultural representations presumed. It explores the practical caring roles that siblings undertook and the way these changed across the period. The chapter then examines how children *thought* about their responsibilities. It explores the way older siblings described their regular, day-to-day caring roles, before assessing the way children thought about the irregular, unexpected caring responsibilities that they had to undertake during family emergencies, and how parent-like children felt in these situations.

4.1 Family life in the mid-century

Before moving into this chapter's analysis, it is important to outline the ways in which family life changed over the mid-century. Family size and the age gaps between siblings determined the nature of the responsibilities entrusted to individual children. As noted in the introduction, average family sizes decreased over the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries. At the same time, larger numbers of children were concentrated in smaller numbers of families. In the 1870s 51.6 per cent of marriages had six or more children whereas by 1925 only 6.7 per cent of marriages had this number of offspring.[627]

[626] For example Alston, pp. 47–57; Tinkler, pp. 119–28.
[627] Anderson, p. 178.

Smaller family sizes reduced some of the burden of domestic work and childcare on mothers and, by extension, their older children, as mothers tended to rely on them less.[628]

Families with two or three children increasingly became the norm through the early to mid-decades of the twentieth century, while larger families became less common. Among a sample of a thousand women for the 1971 census who had married between 1921 and 1925, 384 had either two or three children, whereas only 186 had four or more children. For women who married between 1941 and 1945, 498 had two or three children and 147 had four or more, while among women who married between 1951 and 1955, 531 had two or three children and 178 had four or more. [629]

In addition to decreasing family sizes, the post-Second World War period marked other important trends in fertility. The 1950s to the late 1960s saw a post-war baby boom. Total fertility rates rose from 1.80 between 1931 and 1935 to 2.80 at the height of the boom between 1961 and 1965.[630] This did not have too much impact on average family sizes. The completed family sizes of those who married from the 1920s onwards hovered at around 2 individuals throughout the mid-century. However, average completed family sizes rose from a low of 1.97 individuals for those who married between 1936 and 1940 to 2.29 individuals for couples who married between 1951 and 1955.[631]

Spacing between births also decreased in the mid-twentieth century. For those who married between 1931 and 1935 and had two children there was an average gap of 6.0 years between their first and last birth, and 9.8 years for those who had three children. These figures steadily decreased across the period. For those who married between 1941 and 1945 and had two children, there was an average gap of 4.6 years between their first

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[628] Holden, p. 139; Todd, p. 797.
[629] David Coleman, 'Population', in *British Social Trends since 1900: A Guide to the Changing Social Structure of Britain*, ed. by A. H. Halsey, 2nd edn (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 1988), pp. 36–134 (p. 56 (table 2.11)).
[630] Coleman, 'Population', p. 49.
[631] Coleman, 'Population and Family', p. 36 (table 2.3).

and last birth and 8.4 for those with three children, and these figures were 4.0 and 7.4 years respectively for those who married between 1951 and 1955.[632] This meant that it became increasingly unlikely for children to have siblings significantly older or younger than them. The implications of shorter birth spacing on the responsibilities entrusted to older siblings and the kinds of care that children provided will be explored in this chapter.

Of course, not every woman had multiple children. From the start of the fertility decline in the 1870s, families with just one child increased in number, and they continued to rise into the twentieth century. 5.3% of couples who married in the 1870s had just one child and this increased to 25.2% of couples who married in 1925.[633] One child families had become relatively common by the interwar period, but decreased slightly over the mid-century.[634] This means that this chapter only analyses the experiences of a sub-section of children as it excludes only children.[635] Sibling relationships are still important to explore, however, because as indicated above, historians and sociologists assumed that through caring for an infant sibling, children learnt important practical skills for parenthood.[636]

4.2 The language of parenting in representations of siblinghood

Representations of siblinghood in books and weekly papers written for children in the mid-twentieth century were often inflected with the language and tropes of parenthood. Stories regularly took children out of their usual environments and away from parental supervision. Older children were therefore usually framed as parents, as they had to take on far more responsibility for the younger ones than they normally would. As Ann Alston shows, *Swallows and Amazons* by Arthur Ransome, which was first published in 1930,

[632] Coleman, 'Population and Family', p. 44 (table 2.7).
[633] Anderson, p. 178.
[634] Coleman, 'Population', pp. 54–56.
[635] For a study of the experiences of only children see Alice Violett, 'The Public Perceptions and Personal Experiences of Only Children Growing Up in Britain, c. 1850-1950' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Essex, 2018).
[636] Oakley, *Becoming a Mother*, p. 67; Davis, 'Generational Change and Continuity', pp. 212–13.

cast older siblings in traditionally maternal or paternal roles when its young characters went off on adventures without their parents.[637] The eldest son John takes on the fatherly role by taking charge of the *Swallow*, the children's sailing boat, and enacting instructions passed on from their father. The second eldest Susan becomes a mother figure, keeping the younger children fed and safe. Alston argues that the roles John and Susan adopted were a direct result of their ages and their place in sibling hierarchies. As the eldest children, they took on positions of responsibility to leave their younger siblings 'free to dream and … play'.[638]

Ransome details the care with which Susan looked after her siblings at their makeshift camp:

> She put the frying-pan on the ground, and gave everyone a spoon. The captain, mate, and the crew of the *Swallow* squatted round the frying-pan, and began eating as soon as the scrambled eggs, which were very hot, would let them. Mate Susan had already cut four huge slices of brown bread and butter to eat with the eggs. Then she poured out four mugs of tea and filled them up with milk from a bottle.[639]

The children's mother also passed on advice to Susan about how she might best provide for her siblings whilst they were away from home. She wrote her a letter:

> saying that she must ask Mrs Dixon for some lettuces, because if they tried to do without vegetables the crew might get scurvy. Also mother gave them a bag of peas. "Tell Susan just to boil them with some salt, and then put a pat of butter on them".[640]

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[637] Alston, p. 51.
[638] Alston, p. 51.
[639] Arthur Ransome, *Swallows and Amazons* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1932; repr. Harmondsworth: Puffin Books, 1962), pp. 52-53.
[640] Ransome, p. 71.

This passing on of caregiving advice from mother to daughter demonstrates how Susan became a direct maternal substitute, by performing the expected female tasks of cooking for her siblings and cleaning the camp. However, these depictions of siblinghood also point to the similarities between the familial expectations put upon women and girls in this period, and the sense that women were inherently best placed to tend to the physical and emotional needs of husbands and children.[641] In an analysis of girls' story papers published between the 1920s and 1950s, Tinkler shows that, in stories centred around girls' home lives, 'the responsibilities of daughters often dovetailed with those of the mother'.[642]

Interestingly, not all children's literature in the 1930s and 1940s assumed that older girls should automatically undertake a caring role. In the *Famous Five* series, the first of which was published in 1942, Leisel Coetzee argues that Enid Blyton presented two distinct forms of female character. The stories focus on the adventures of Julian, Dick, George and Anne, and dog Timmy, during the children's summer holidays. George, the eldest girl and cousin of the three other main characters, preferred to be treated as a boy and accompanied them on their daring adventures.[643] Meanwhile Anne, the youngest of the children, adopts a typically feminine role by ensuring that the other children are warm, well fed and comfortable.[644]

Coetzee argues that both girls are to some extent 'emancipated', as they are free to choose what they would like to do. Anne often decides to stay at the camp, a choice which the other characters respect.[645] However, it should be acknowledged that George was probably only able to take her active role because Anne stayed at home, thereby relieving

[641] Dyhouse, pp. 10-11, 30; Langhamer, *Women's Leisure*, p. 146.
[642] Tinkler, p. 124.
[643] Liesel Coetzee, 'Empowering Girls? The Portrayal of Anne and George in Enid Blyton's Famous Five Series', *English Academy Review*, 28.1 (2011), 85–98 (p. 91).
[644] Coetzee, p. 88.
[645] Coetzee, p. 95.

George of the domestic responsibilities that often fell on girls. Indeed, historians have shown that in families with multiple children, girls were more likely to be delegated responsibilities for domestic work and childcare than their brothers.[646]

This degree of choice in deciding what role they wanted to take in sibling care appeared less prominently in the post-war period. As Alston argues, this had to do with the shifting themes that children's writers tackled in their novels. Books reflected the familial dislocation brought about by the Second World War with experiences of 'evacuation, separation and loss of homes'.[647] In Gumble's Yard, published in 1961, children Kevin and Sarah are abandoned by their carers and have to negotiate caring for their younger cousins. Sarah takes on a caring, maternal role but Alston shows that this was invested with more significance as she did not choose it. Unlike in works such as *Swallows and Amazons* there was no 'playful aspect' to Sarah's responsibilities, as they were 'thrust' upon her.[648] This was not an enjoyable holiday but rather their new reality.

The heightened importance placed upon a daughter's substitution for a mothering role in stories involving familial separation can also be seen in editions of *Girls' Crystal* from 1960. The continuing serial 'Cherry and the Children' began in January 1960 and focused on adolescent Cherry, her mother and child brother Tim and baby sister Sue. In the first edition, Cherry's mother is taken into hospital. There is no mention of their father and when the children's aunt, who lives far away, does not respond to a letter from social services asking her to come and help take care of them, it falls to Cherry to look after her young brother and sister.[649] Cherry assumes responsibility for feeding and bathing the children, doing the housework and the shopping, jobs she is described as taking 'pride' in. She sees herself as fulfilling her mother's role, as Cherry says, 'It's wonderful in a

[646] Roberts, *A Woman's Place*, pp. 22.
[647] Alston, p. 56.
[648] Ibid., pp. 57-58.
[649] *Girls' Crystal*, 'Cherry and the Children', 16 January 1960, pp. 1-2.

way knowing how much Timmy and baby Sue depend on me, I'm going to make them a lovely lunch, just like Mum would'.[650]

Cherry's comments point to the level of responsibility that she is entrusted with, as in the absence of a family support network, she is left to cope alone. This serial reflected changing community structures in the mid-to-late twentieth century. The demolition of inner-city slums, and the construction of new housing developments in the interwar and post-war periods, meant that working-class families were less likely to live within a close distance of relatives who could have offered support, although Davis questions how much support women derived from their relatives in earlier decades.[651] 'Cherry and the Children' also reflected the impact of decreasing family sizes, as Cherry had no other siblings of an appropriate age to share the burdens of responsibility with. Depictions of siblinghood across the mid-century assumed that when children ended up in situations without adults, they would be transformed into substitute parents, and it was only when they were left to their own devices that older siblings *felt* like parents. While this may have been how adult authors interpreted sibling relationships, the following analysis will demonstrate that in reality, children's identities were more complicated and depended on family size, class and the regularity of their caring responsibilities.

4.3 Siblings' physical care practices

The essays written by schoolchildren with younger siblings reveal the roles they played in their siblings' care on a regular basis in the mid-century. Schoolgirls growing up in late 1930s Bolton stressed the practical nature of their responsibilities, by emphasising their roles in bathing, dressing and feeding. Dora Thomson, for example, wrote that at home, 'I am taught to wash and look after my mother's baby'.[652] Caring for infants was not only

[650] *Girls' Crystal*, 'Cherry and the Children', 30 January 1960, p. 2.
[651] Davis, *Modern Motherhood,* p. 28.
[652] MOA, TC59/6/C, Dora Thomson, 'Things I learn at home that I don't learn at school', fol. 135.

predicated on having younger siblings in the early-twentieth century. Working-class girls could also be called upon to look after the younger children of their neighbours when they were not at home, which could sometimes also involve washing and dressing the children in their care.[653] Susan Baines described how 'I went for a little baby which I mind, her name is called [Paula]. When she was washed and I put her a clean frock on I took her to the park and we were there all morning'.[654]

Occasionally minding an infant, however, was a very different experience from having a younger brother or sister, as childcare was a routine part of older siblings' day-to-day lives. One nine-year-old child wrote that 'I learn to wash our Mavis at school times and afternoon and night'.[655] Other children showed that they undertook small, regular caring tasks which did not otherwise interfere much with their daily lives. In describing what she did on a day off from school, Maureen Taylor's responsibilities formed only a small part of her morning: 'When I got up it was 10.30am so I got dressed and had my morning meal. When I had finished I dressed my little sister and went out to play for a while'.[656] Similarly, Emily Birch wrote that: 'We learn how to get out younger sisters ready for school and given them their breakfast and to see if they come to school safely'.[657]

It should be made clear that these girls were not just stepping in for their parents when they were busy, but that these tasks were very much *their* responsibilities as older siblings and were forms of care that they regularly provided for younger brothers and sisters. These might have been small tasks, such as getting a younger sibling dressed in the mornings or sorting out their breakfast for them, but they were nevertheless theirs. The time-consuming nature of domestic work and the need for some women to undertake paid work, which was especially common in Lancashire mill towns such as Bolton, meant that

[653] Dyhouse, pp. 9–11.
[654] MOA, WC49/E, Susan Baines, 'What I did on my Thursday Holiday', fol. 34.
[655] MOA, TC 59/6/C, No name, 'Things I learn at home that I don't learn at school', fol. 182.
[656] MOA, WC49/E, Maureen Taylor, 'What I did on my Thursday Holiday', fol. 2.
[657] MOA, TC59/6/C, Emily Birch, 'Things I learn at home that I don't learn at school', f. 127.

women may not have had the opportunity to spend much time minding their children throughout the day. They therefore relied on networks of support, including their older children, for practical help with childcare.[658]

Older daughters were frequently the most convenient and reliable sources of help with childcare. While some fathers were spending more time at home during the interwar period, due to a decrease in average working hours, they were not often available to help with the practical care of younger infants. During the First World War, the working week was reduced to 48 hours and declined further in the 1920s and 1930s.[659] Despite this, children's essays make clear that older siblings remained mothers' first port of call when they needed help with infant care, perhaps because children spent more of the day at home than working men. The decline in men's average working hours did not take account of overtime, which would have been taken advantage of by some working-class men.[660] Moreover, the practicality of caring for infants, including dressing, feeding and bathing, were widely seen as roles for women and girls rather than men.[661]

Sibling care in this period did, of course, go beyond physical practices of dressing, feeding and washing, and extended into play and helping with homework, especially when younger siblings were no longer infants. A nine-year-old child wrote, 'I learn to make little writing books to write in and I play school with it with my brother and I learn him to say his tables up to five times'.[662] Play was an important feature of relationships, and particularly with older brothers. In her essay about what she learnt at home, Anne Walsh described how her brother 'shows me how to get a piece of string, and fix it on my

[658] Roberts, *A Woman's Place*, p. 141.
[659] Joanna Bourke, *Working Class Cultures in Britain, 1890-1960: Gender, Class and Ethnicity* (London; New York: Routledge, 1994), pp. 12, 81.
[660] Bourke, p. 12.
[661] Fisher, pp. 452–53; King, *Family Men*, p. 78.
[662] MO, TC59/6/C, no name, 'Things I learn at home that I don't learn at school', fol. 175; see also MOA, 59/6/B, Jane David, 'From school to bed', fols 217-218.

finger'.[663] Similarly Jennifer Atkins wrote about an evening at home with her three brothers and said that they had a 'lovley play', while Tim Carter described how he played a game with his brother which 'I wone twise and my [brother] woon twise'.[664]

Girls tended to talk more about their physical sibling care practices than boys. The discrepancy in children's accounts may be partly due to the nature of the essay topics posed to girls and boys. The essay 'Things I learn at school that I don't learn at home' in which children specifically detailed the skills they learnt at home, including how to care for infants, was answered mostly by girls. Davin's study of schoolchildren's essays written in 1906 on the topic 'What I did last Saturday' reveals, though, that some boys were also charged with minding babies.[665] Other essay titles, such as 'From School to Bed' did ask boys about their home lives. While they discussed sibling play and running errands, physical sibling care was not mentioned.[666] Elizabeth Roberts suggests that girls in interwar homes were generally expected to help their mothers with childcare and housework while boys 'were more likely to be out of the house, doing the shopping [or] helping with the allotment'.[667] The essays in this collection appear to support this, though it must be considered that boys may have been less likely to admit to helping with childcare than their female counterparts as this was generally seen as a more feminine task.

Children's essays written in 1951 for the title 'The best way to spend a winter evening' reveal a shift in the nature of sibling relationships post-war. The title asks specifically about winter, a time when most children were not allowed, or did not want to play outside, as this child made clear: 'the night gets very dark now so mother does not like me to go

[663] MOA, TC59/6/C, Anne Walsh, 'Things I learn at home that I don't learn at school', fol. 157.
[664] MOA, TC59/6/B, Jennifer Atkins, 'From school to bed', fols 174-5; Tim Carter, fols 225-26; see also MOA WC 59 Children, WC/59/E, Jack Dawson, 'What I did on my holiday', fol. 92.
[665] Davin, *Growing Up Poor,* p. 179.
[666] For example MOA, TC 59/6/B, Peter Lloyd, 'From School to Bed', fols 201-202.
[667] Roberts, *A Woman's Place,* pp. 22-3; Roberts, *Women and Families,* pp. 33-5.

out'.[668] Their essays therefore paint an intimate picture of the evenings children spent at home with their families. Interestingly, though, practical sibling care practices such as dressing, washing and feeding featured far less prominently than in essays written in 1937. Instead, their relationships centred more prominently around play than care.

Children's writings from this essay set reveal that expectations on older children were changing in this period. While working-class girls in 1937 had regular responsibilities for looking after their younger siblings, in 1951 children suggest there was little expectation for them to even spend time with theirs. Their essays imply that they usually spent time with younger siblings when they got bored during long evenings at home. Twelve-year-old Angela Bryan, for example, recalled that 'about three months ago, a big gale came up and we could not go out, and so I had to play with my sister at ludo and I quite liked it … Soon it got quite cold so we sat by the fire and had a game of I spy with my little eye and my sister kept on winning all the time. After that my sister went to bed and I had no one to play with'.[669] While Angela does not state her sister's age, the fact that she went to bed before her suggests that she was probably younger.

Similarly, twelve-year-old Nancy Emmerson wrote:

> On a cold winters evening I stop in by the fire. I have a little sister who I have a little fun with when I have not anything to do. I sit by the fire and teach her nursery rhymes. When I get fed up with playing with my sister I find bits and [pieces] of odd wool and sit down and knit. Out of odd wool I have made quite a few things such as iron holders, bonnets and patch work mattresses for my sisters pram.[670]

Nancy makes clear that playing with her younger sister was a choice rather than an expectation that she should spend time minding her. Boys also had similar relationships

[668] MS. Opie 34, 'The best way to spend a winter evening', Rebecca Arnold, fol. 200.
[669] MS. Opie 34, 'The best way to spend a winter evening', Angela Bryan, fol. 162.
[670] MS. Opie 34, Nancy Emmerson, 'The best way to spend a winter evening', fol. 112.

with their siblings, as Jack Davis shows in his list of suggestions for how a child could occupy themselves on a winter evening: 'Read book after book until it gets tiring. After that play with your younger brother with his toys and bricks until bedtime comes'.[671]

Children writing in 1951 made it clear that they spent time with their younger siblings because they enjoyed it, rather than because it was their responsibility to. Thirteen-year-old Verity Smith read to her younger sister and even though she only did this when she got bored, she shows that both she and her sister found it entertaining:

> When December comes and all the snow is on the ground I sit on the mat making little dolls and putting pretty coloured paper dresses … When the kitten began to get sleepy, I get me new book called Enid Blyton's Fireside Book and started reading it to my little sister, when I came to a funny bit my sister laughs till her cheeks are as red as beetroots.[672]

Similarly, ten-year-old Lucy Arnold wrote about how she made toys for her sister: 'I often make paper dolls out of newspapers for my little sister. This is a very amusing game because, if the dolls are not cut correctly they look very odd. They can be painted various colours'.[673] These descriptions of sibling care echo King's assessment of fatherhood in the mid-century. She argues that parenting in this period can be seen as both 'labour and leisure', with fathers most often enjoying the more pleasurable aspects of childcare whereas mothers predominantly remained responsible for the labour-intensive aspects of childrearing.[674] Indeed, children's essays written for the titles 'The best way to spend a winter evening', 'What I did on November 5th' in 1951 and 'My camping holiday' in 1956 show that children enjoyed spending leisure time with their fathers.[675]

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[671] MS. Opie 34, Jack Davis, 'The best way to spend a winter evening', fol. 204v.
[672] MS. Opie 34, Verity Smith, 'The best way to spend a winters evening', fol. 150.
[673] MS. Opie 34, Lucy Arnold, 'The best way to spend a winters evening', fol. 203v.
[674] King, 'Hidden Fathers?', pp. 35–36.
[675] For example MS. Opie 34, Harriet Johnson, 'The best way to spend a winters evening', fols 168r-168v; MS. Opie 34, Gillian Wells, 'What I did on November 5th, fols 9r-9v; Elsie Johnson, fol. 18; Jack Watson,

The examples presented here, however, develop on King's argument, as they show that the category of 'leisure' also increasingly applied to older sisterhood. Much like fathers, girls were choosing to engage with their younger siblings because they found it entertaining. This reveals a tangible shift in some girls' experiences of sibling care over the mid-century, from girls' involvement in the labours of childrearing in earlier decades to their enjoyment of more pleasurable aspects of childcare post-war, due to decreases in family size and birth spacing, and changing expectations of children in the home. The changes in girls' sisterly roles appeared to be most apparent in smaller families. Sociological studies from the 1960s show that older siblings remained important sources of practical help for working-class mothers in families with larger numbers of children, in lone-mother families or where mothers had to work outside of school hours.[676]

Relationships between older sisters and their siblings in smaller families increasingly mirrored those with older brothers. Older brotherhood was often defined more by play than care in the interwar period, and this continued post-war.[677] Children who wrote about older brothers in essays for the Camberwell Public Libraries Essay Competition tended to describe their playful nature.[678] Similarly, in response to a *Children's Mirror* feature about 'What makes a good brother?' in 1950 one girl described how her brother, who had been learning jui-jitsu, 'throws me over his shoulder and whirls me up. But the best of all is when he picks up Dad and rocks him like a baby'.[679] Some younger children enjoyed the physical side of play with older brothers, but both sisters and brothers were mentioned as sources of fun and entertainment by children in the early 1950s.[680]

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fol. 41; MS. Opie 40, Barbara Willis, 'My camping holiday', fol. 476; Will Neilson, fol. 289; MS Opie 42, Jimmy Dawson, fols. 390^{r}-391^{v}.

[676] Edwards and Gillies, pp. 28–29.

[677] Davidoff, p. 112-14.

[678] For instance, MS. Opie 37, Charlotte Newsom, 'My friends and why I like them', fol. 16; MS. Opie 34, Matthew Sterry, 'The best way to spend a winters evening', 147^{r}-147^{v}.

[679] *Children's Mirror*, 'What makes a good brother?', 7 January 1950, p. 4.

[680] MS. Opie 34, Jonathan Barclay, 'The best way to spend a winters evening', fol. 134; Michael Watkins, fols 220^{r}-220^{v}.

This analysis has so far presented a convergence in the roles played by fathers and older siblings in post-war homes, whereby fathers and older children enjoyed entertaining younger children. However, the changes in older daughters' responsibilities also seemed to stem from some fathers' increasing involvement in helping mothers with infant care. Working- and middle-class men had long enjoyed affectionate relationships with their children, but a greater cultural significance was placed on fathers' involvement in their children's upbringings post-war, meaning that men of all classes more openly embraced their fathering roles.[681] Men did not generally participate in the labours of childcare, such as feeding or changing nappies, but reading to them and putting them to bed were a common part of men's routines.[682]

Some essays demonstrate their father's involvement in younger children's care. Edward Barnes, for example, described an evening at home painting which his younger brothers interrupted:

> I painted three of four pictures. When my two younger brothers came and disturbed me to play hide in seek [David] who is five hid a pencil sharpener while [Michael] and I hid our eyes in the corner … Then they both had to go to bed dady washed [David] and Mummy washed [Michael].[683]

Of course, this was by no means a universal picture. Where fathers could not be home at a suitable time to help look after younger children in the evenings, older children sometimes remained responsible for caring for them. Fourteen-year-old Caroline Roberts described how she put her younger brother to bed and told him a story, all before her father got home from work.[684]

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[681] Strange, pp. 96–98; King, *Family Men*, pp. 155–56.
[682] King, *Family Men*, p. 84; Newson and Newson, *Patterns of Infant Care*, p. 140.
[683] MS. Opie 34, Edward Barnes, 'The best way to spend a winter evening', fols 141^{r}-141^{v}.
[684] MS. Opie 34, Caroline Roberts, 'The best way to spend a winters evening', fols 241^{r}-241^{v}.

Nevertheless, sociological studies of parenting in the 1960s and 1970s suggest that older siblings were being relied on less to help with childcare. Brian Jackson's study of fathering practices in the mid-1970s examined data about the fathers of nearly 12,000 five-year-olds born in 1970. The study shows that when their mothers were at work, 12.4% of five-year-olds were looked after by their fathers and 4.7% were cared for by an adult relative. In comparison, just 1.9% were looked after by an older brother or sister after school, and 0.4% were cared for by an older brother or sister on their own. Jackson concludes that fathers were increasingly taking up the position of 'basic back-up' carer by the 1970s.[685] This means that some fathers were effectively taking over the childcare roles that had been performed by older daughters earlier in the century, reducing the responsibilities on siblings.[686] The next section of this chapter will examine how these changes affected the way children made sense of their roles in family life.

4.4 Regular responsibility

The language children used in their essays provides some indication of the responsibility they felt when looking after younger siblings. As made clear above, sibling care formed a regular part of older girls' day-to-day routines in the interwar period. In an analysis of sibling relationships in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, Anna Davin argues that despite the label of 'little mother' which was commonly used by middle-class commentators, working-class girls did not see their caregiving as motherly: 'such children were not taking over their mother's jobs, nor anticipating their own future. They were doing a job which belonged to them'.[687] This chapter argues that while physical caring practices were a normal part of older siblinghood, the way children writing for Mass

[685] Jackson, pp. 24-25; see also Newson and Newson, *Patterns of Infant Care*, pp. 136-38.
[686] On siblings' roles earlier in the century see Roberts, *A Woman's Place*, pp. 22-24.
[687] Davin, *Growing up Poor*, pp. 88.

Observation *felt* about them shows that their sense of responsibility was more complex than Davin suggests, at least by the interwar period.

Through regular responsibility for younger siblings' care, girls in the late 1930s were developing something of a joint child/mother identity based on shared practices with their mothers. Eileen Chapman wrote: 'my mother shows me how to wash our baby's night dress … and her vest and binder, she shows me how to nurse and wash baby's hands and face'.[688] Mass Observer notes about Eileen state: 'Mother just had baby. 12 yrs difference'.[689] The age difference between Eileen and her sibling meant that she was able to take on a practical caregiving role for the newborn baby. Describing her younger sibling as 'our baby' reveals that some working-class children believed that childcare was something that both mothers *and* sisters shared responsibility for. Her description of her role again speaks to Mauss's ideas about *habitation* as a conscious process of development, as Eileen deliberately tried to emulate her mother's practices when caring for her baby sibling.[690] Other girls, such as Dora Thompson mentioned above, referred to looking after 'my mother's baby'.[691] This language evokes a similar sense of shared practice, as Dora emphasised the trust her mother had placed in her to care for the baby.

The responsibility that their mothers entrusted them with often elevated girls' feelings of maturity. From their recent research with siblings, sociologists Julia Branner, Ellen Heptinsall, and Kalwant Bhopal show that older children 'presented themselves as speaking from positions of responsibility and privilege'.[692] A feeling of responsibility is evident in children's essays from the interwar period. Being an older sister was something that girls took pride in. Violet Johnson wrote, 'we are taught to keep out clothes tidy and

[688] MOA, TC59/6/C, Eileen Chapman, 'Things I learn at home that I don't learn at school', fol. 161.
[689] MOA, TC59/1/B, fol. 13.
[690] Mauss, p. 73.
[691] MOA, TC59/6/C, Dora Thomson, 'Things I learn at home that I don't learn at school', fol. 135.
[692] Kalwant Bhopal, Julia Brannen, and Ellen Heptinstall, *Connecting Children: Care and Family Life in Later Childhood* (London: Routledge, 2000), pp. 124–26.

our drawers straight and show small ones [example]'.[693] Even when not tasked with caring responsibilities, Violet understood that she had been trusted to keep her belongings neat in order to show the 'small ones', whether her own younger siblings or other young children in the family, how to behave.

Children's sense of their own importance was most obvious in the essays written by those who regularly looked after infant siblings. Older children believed that their contributions to family life were particularly significant as their family had an infant dependant on being fed, changed, washed and soothed, tasks which they took often charge of. One nine-year-old child, who did not include their name on their essay, wrote: 'I [learn] to mind the baby and wash him and my little sister [Rose] for my mother'.[694] Their reference to washing their brother and sister 'for my mother' indicates the authority they believed their mother had bestowed on them to take charge of younger infants independently.

Other girls felt more keenly that they were stepping in for their mothers when they were ill or busy. Emily Birch wrote that 'if mother is ill we learn how to look after her and go her errands. Also if mother is busy and she has a baby we learn how to nurse it'.[695] Emily felt that she was integral to the smooth running of the household, as she had learnt to look after her baby siblings, thereby freeing up her mother to perform other important domestic work or rest when she was ill. Carol Dyhouse argues that many daughters in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries believed that they had to effectively '"stand in"' for their mothers when they were ill, which could make the domestic and childcare work they did feel more distinctly motherly than sisterly.[696]

Dyhouse's claim that girls thought they were standing in for their mothers partly applies here. However, Emily may well have been purposefully trying to emphasise her

[693] MOA, TC59/6/C, Violet Johnson, 'Things I learn at home that I don't learn at school', fol. 141.
[694] MOA, TC59/6/C, no name, 'Things I learn at home that I don't learn at school', fol. 200.
[695] MOA, TC59/6/C, Emily Birch, 'Things I learn at home that I don't learn at school', f. 127.
[696] Dyhouse, p. 20.

importance in the home, by describing the kinds of indispensable childrearing tasks that her mother had trusted her to do independently, to prove her own value to the family unit. In describing the vital role she played at home, Emily seemed to be depicting her family position as something which fell somewhere *between* childhood and motherhood, rather than these responsibilities being distinctly maternal ones that she was temporarily taking over. This relates to Scheer's theory of 'emotional practices' which sees the body and emotions as inherently connected.[697] By physically sharing and imitating her mother's childcare practices, Emily also tangibly developed maternal feelings of authority and responsibility.

It is important to note here that girls' identification with their mothers may have been something new in the interwar years, due to decreasing family sizes. Davin stresses that in larger working-class families in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, older children did not 'simply take [younger siblings] out of mother's way when she was busy' but were often given sole responsibility for caring for babies and younger siblings, including dressing, washing, feeding, comforting and putting them to bed.[698] As Ross makes clear, working-class mothers often believed that their priorities lay in domestic work and wage earning rather than infant care, a task that could easily be delegated to older siblings.[699] Children in larger late-nineteenth century families with significant age gaps between the oldest and youngest were therefore seemingly more likely to see infant and child care as something that older siblings predominantly took charge of, rather than as something shared with mothers.

There, therefore, appeared to be a shift in the way older siblings thought about childcare and their role in family life by the interwar period, as average family sizes grew smaller.

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[697] Scheer, p. 205.
[698] Davin, pp. 88-89.
[699] Ross, pp. 195-96, 213.

It is difficult to ascertain whether working-class women were doing more childrearing work themselves as a result of having fewer children, but Holden argues that 'during the interwar years very few married women were in paid employment and most saw their primary task as caring for a smaller number of children than a generation previously'.[700] Holden's assessment does not entirely apply to Lancashire textile towns which had a high proportion of women in work.[701] It does seem, however, that in families where older children had just one, two or three siblings, family sizes which were more common in the interwar period, they felt an affinity with their mothers. They also developed strong feelings of maternal authority as a result of their childcare responsibilities and a sense of the importance of the mothering role that they shared.

Historians have argued that understandings of the importance of the mother-child bond intensified post-war due to the influence of child psychology.[702] Roberts suggests that an 'over-simplified version' of Bowlby's ideas 'about the importance of good mothering, was absorbed by many women'.[703] The analysis presented here, however, shows that older sisters in the interwar period already had a strong bond with their own mothers and transferred these feelings into their physical and affective sibling care practices. In an analysis of women's oral testimonies about their experiences of growing up in the mid-century, Davis argues that girls 'witnessed what it meant to be a mother' through watching and helping their mothers with the practical care of younger siblings.[704] Essays written by girls in the interwar period, however, suggest that they were not learning about what mothers were expected to do. Rather, mothering was an identity which became a part of girls' childhood subjectivities and intermingled with their sense of self as older sisters.

[700] Holden, p. 139.
[701] Hinton, *The Mass Observers*, p. 18.
[702] Thom, pp. 263, 269.
[703] Roberts, *Women and Families*, p. 154.
[704] Davis, 'Generational Change and Continuity', p. 212.

It must also be considered that older children in working-class homes did not often have a choice about whether to look after their younger siblings. Where mothers had to work, were busy with time consuming housework or ill, older children were often the most convenient and closest source of help.[705] For instance, Daisy Brown wrote: 'Some girls mind their baby and take it to the park or wheel it round the streets, till their mother has finished her work'.[706] She does not specify whether this 'work' was domestic labour or paid work, but this nevertheless shows that mothers relied on their older children when managing the care of younger children with other domestic or wage-earning demands.

Some children did not look favourably upon these tasks, an attitude which was most pronounced when children were asked to do more than was usually expected of them, as responsibilities for childcare could prevent them from doing other things they enjoyed. In talking about the day of the school holiday she liked best, Susan Richards wrote that 'The day I did not like much was when I had to stay in to mind my sister for she had been sick and my mother was cleaning upstairs. But soon she came down and I had to go to the shops for our tea, then after I had a bit of play from seven o'clock till eight, I went to bed'.[707] Susan implies here that because her sister, who was four-years-old, was sick, she was not able to go out and play as she would have liked. In some circumstances, sibling care could be restrictive for older children. Stressing their importance in family life, though, conceivably offered these essayists a way to take ownership of these tasks by allowing them to demonstrate the sense of power they gained from being entrusted with childcare.

Older daughters continued to be relied upon for help with childcare after the Second World War, particularly in larger families. While families with four or more children were

[705] Davin, *Growing Up Poor*, pp. 88-89.
[706] MOA, TC59/6/C, Daisy Brown, 'Things I learn at home that I don't learn at school', fol. 153; for other examples of older sisters helping to look after a baby brother or sister see TC59/4/D, Ruth Johnson, 'Spring', fols 40-41; TC59/4/B, Alice Newby, 'Coronation Day', fols 53-54.
[707] MOA, 59/6/B, Susan Richards, 'The day I like best', fols 156-157.

becoming less common, they did not disappear. In response to the 1954 essay title ‘My friends and why I like them’, eleven-year-old Julie Farmer described the older sister of her friend:

> Next door lives a lady and gentlemen who have six children. [Karen] is aged 13, [Paul] is 12, [Annie] is ten, [Martha] is 7, [John] is 4 and [Susanne] who is 2 … [Karen] is very helpful to her mother with the younger children … [Karen] is very kind and sensible and she is a good friend.[708]

It is noteworthy that Karen was described as ‘kind and sensible’, while Annie was described as being ‘good at sport’ and someone who ‘always shares her sweets’, and Paul as being ‘good at thinking up games’. That Karen was depicted as ‘sensible’ was probably due to the fact that she helped to care for her younger siblings. Other older children in larger families also tried to portray themselves as being responsible for helping their mothers. In 1951, fourteen-year-old Frances Berry wrote about the best way to spend a winter evening:

> The best way my family would spend a winters evening would be to buy some chestnuts on the way home from work, and then put some coke on the fire … While the coke was burning through we would go downstairs to have some tea. After tea my mother and I would clear the table and then wash up. While we were doing the washing up my father would be getting a tin from the garden to cook the nuts on. All this time my sister would be getting my two younger brothers ready for bed. When we were all together we would say goodnight to the two younger one’s and then my mother would put them to bed … When my mother

[708] MS. Opie 37, Julie Farmer ‘My friends and why I like them’, fols 202-204.

> came down she would sit in an armchair one side of the fire and my father the other, while my sister and I would sit on the sofa.[709]

Frances presented herself as a mature and useful member of the family alongside her mother, father and sister by helping her mother with washing up. Older siblinghood was a key way through which Frances signalled her maturity, as she distinguished herself from her two younger brothers who had to go to bed, while she and her sister stayed up and joined in with the grown up evening activities of eating nuts and playing games. Frances was not directly responsible for looking after her two younger brothers, as this caregiving role was shared between her sister and mother. Nevertheless, Frances still demonstrated her importance in family life by aligning herself with her mother through domestic work, and indeed she later used housework in her essay to illustrate her level of maturity over that of her sister. She wrote:

> We would sit by the fire for about two hours and then my mother would ask us, "Who is going to help with supper", I would usually say I will as my sister would pretend to be asleep when my mother says that. "Alright", she says, "and [Margaret]", that is my sisters name, "will get some more coal for the fire, wont you [Margaret]", she lets out a moan, and we all have to laugh at the way she stiffly gets off the sofa.[710]

Frances does not specify whether she or Margaret was older, but this shows that in larger families a sense of shared mother/daughter practice, whether that be with domestic work or childcare, helped children to illustrate their greater importance over their other siblings. Aligning themselves with their mothers and comparing their maturity and usefulness to that of their siblings was an easy way for girls to feel more grown up. It contributed to

[709] MS. Opie 34, Frances Berry, 'The best way to spend a winter evening', fols 242^{r}-242^{v}.
[710] MS. Opie 34, Frances Berry, 'The best way to spend a winters evening', fols 242^{r}-242^{v}.

their sense that as older sisters, they occupied a significant position in family life that was in many ways equal to the position occupied by their mothers.

Children in larger families continued to feel a sense of shared responsibility with their mothers in latter decades of the century. In an essay written in 1969 in which she imagined her life in her early twenties, a working-class girl wrote a story about how she would put her responsibilities for sibling care above her relationship with her boyfriend. She wrote:

> When I was twenty years old, I was going out with my Boyfriend, He was 21 years old we were thincking of getting married, and have children but on night I was suppose to have a date I never went because I was minding the children at home, For my mum.[711]

The essayist describes how after she and her future boyfriend had an argument, she broke off the engagement and said to her mother: 'I will stay single and help you at home'. For this girl, her duty to her mother and younger siblings was more important than the potential for marriage in this instance.

In general, though, families with two or three children were increasingly the norm in the post-war period.[712] Children in smaller families in the post-war period tended to see less of an overlap between their own roles as older siblings and motherhood. This had to do with the fact that their relationships with younger brothers and sisters revolved around play more than regular physical care. These older siblings still felt a keen sense of authority, but this came from being an older child in charge of younger ones, rather than from a sense of shared motherly/daughterly responsibility. An article in the *Children's Mirror* from 1949 entitled 'Our street and what we get up to' featured a letter from fourteen-year-old Kathleen Savage. She wrote that she and her younger brother regularly

[711] CLS, NCDS, SN: 5790, N14925R, girl, manual father.
[712] Coleman, 'Family and Population', p. 36 (table 2.3).

played with the children who lived on their street in Bradford and that she usually took charge: '"On our street all the children seem to band together. Being the eldest, it falls to me to keep them occupied'".[713]

This is not to say that there was nothing maternal about their responsibilities. As sociologists have suggested, older siblings' authority was endorsed by their parents.[714] In 1950, a boy wrote into the *Children's Mirror* in response to a feature entitled 'Girls who'd much rather be boys!' to claim that he would in fact much rather be a girl than a boy: '"I have always wanted to be a girl. Why? Because a mother allows older sisters to boss young brothers"'.[715] This boy clearly felt that mothers unfairly allowed their older daughters to exercise power over younger siblings, and believed that his mother and sister shared similar levels of authority. For children such as Kathleen, though, while their position of authority was often endorsed by mothers, these feelings were more distinctly *sisterly* than motherly. They derived a sense of importance from occupying younger siblings in play or bossing them around rather than from regularly assisting their mother in routines of caregiving, representing a distinct shift from sibling relationships earlier in the century.

Some girls derived power from choosing *not* to spend time with their younger brothers or sisters. June Baker described an evening she spent at home doing some Christmas knitting, which was disturbed by her younger sister: 'I … sat down by the fire and began [my knitting]. "Two plain, two purl" I chanted to myself monotonously. "[June], could you ..." began my younger sister. "No" I shouted "can't you see I'm busy." She slammed the door and disappeared'.[716] Girls growing up in smaller families in the mid-twentieth century tended to assume that the labours of childrearing, such as feeding, bathing,

[713] *Daily Mirror*, 'Our street and what we get up to', 22 January 1949, p. 4.
[714] Bhopal, Brannen, and Heptinstall, p. 126; Punch, p. 29.
[715] *Daily Mirror*, 'Girls who'd much rather be boys!', 17 June 1950, p. 4.
[716] MS. Opie 34, June Baker, 'The best way to spend a winters evening', fols 110^{r}-110^{v}.

washing and dressing, was something done by adults and predominantly mothers. Unlike their counterparts growing up in interwar period, childcare was something outside of their normal experience.

Children's essays from the late 1960s, in which they imagined their future lives as mothers, illustrate the effect of reducing family sizes and changing familial norms on girls' conceptualisations of their future family lives. Girls describing their future roles as mothers also tended to see childcare as something that mothers predominantly took responsibility for. They rarely mentioned relying on an older child to help look after younger ones. Instead, some essayists imagined sharing childcare duties with their future husbands. One middle-class girl wrote about how she would work in a factory and split the responsibility for looking after her young daughter with her husband: 'When I'm working my husband dresses Sally and takes her to play school and at 1.30 in the afternoon I come from work and fetch Sally from play school and get her dinner'.[717] This is quite an unusual example, as girls predominantly saw the labours of childrearing as a maternal responsibility which fathers sometimes helped with, and this will be explored in more depth in chapter six.[718] Other girls wrote about how they would like to find time away from their children to go to the cinema or out for a meal with their husbands, and spoke about how they would rely on their own mothers or babysitters to care for their offspring, rather than delegating that responsibility to an older child.[719]

Moreover, many girls in this sample implied that they would have a small number of children close together, and so it would not be practically possible, or even necessary, to leave a younger child in the care of an older one. One child with no father figure, for instance, said that she would have two children and would try to find a job only once they

[717] CLS, NCDS, SN: 5790, N12691J, girl, non-manual father.
[718] CLS, NCDS, SN: 5790, N26721U, female, non-manual father.
[719] For instance, CLS, NCDS, SN: 5790, N14443C, girl, manual father; N16537R, girl, manual father.

were 'old enough to look after themselves'.[720] She expected her children to be sensible enough to leave at home on their own and, without a large age gap between them, it would not be necessary to have to ask an older sibling to take care of an infant or small child in her absence. Máire Ní Bhrolcháin has examined trends in women's employment alongside patterns of fertility in the post-war period, and argued that women having children between the 1940s and 1960s might have chosen to have their children closer together to facilitate a faster return to work.[721] It was relatively rare for women in this period to return to work between having children.[722] Changing family structures affected the ways in which children thought about family responsibility for childcare. They saw childcare as something that was distinctly *motherly*, thereby increasing their expectations of motherhood in the post-war period.

4.5 Irregular responsibility

Historians of childhood in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century have shown that there were usually times in older children's lives where they were asked to take on more caregiving responsibilities than normal, such as when mothers were ill or had to be away from home. Davidoff's research of middle-class siblinghood in the long-nineteenth century argues that in these situations, older children became surrogate mothers, as they were expected to provide a greater level of care to their younger siblings than they usually did when their mothers were present.[723] This was not an experience confined to these decades. Children growing up in the mid-century also had to take on extra caring responsibilities during family emergencies.

[720] CLS, NCDS, SN: 5790, N16612K, girl, no father figure.
[721] Máire Ní Bhrolcháin, 'Women's Paid Work and the Timing of Births', *European Journal of Population*, 2.1 (1986), 43–70 (p. 62).
[722] Ibid., p. 48.
[723] Davidoff, pp. 95-96; see also Dyhouse, p. 20.

In 1955 the *Junior Mirror* printed a front-page story about fourteen-year-old Mary Clarke entitled 'Being "Mother"'.[724] When Mary's mother was ordered to rest in bed whilst waiting to go into hospital, Mary, with the permission of her school, assumed the full-time care of the home and her six younger siblings. Mary took charge of all the housework and shopping, as well as the physical and emotional care of her younger siblings – she cooked them food, bathed them and read to them at bedtime. The writer states that even though she found it exhausting, 'Mary loves being "mother"'.[725] Interestingly, the title of 'mother' was put onto Mary by the paper itself and was seemingly not language that she used herself. Mary, though, may well have felt more like a mother, as she had to assume all domestic and caregiving responsibilities in her mother's stead.

What constituted mothering differed for children depending on family size and their usual responsibilities. Children in smaller families in the 1950s were less involved in practical day-to-day childcare tasks, but when they *were* asked to take care of younger brothers or sisters, they experienced a pronounced feeling of maternal responsibility. Thirteen-year-old Helen Patterson wrote about an evening when she was left to look after her younger siblings when her parents were called away from home. She wrote:

> "Goodnight!" There, the last one's abed! Its amazing how tiring two little children can be. My mother and father had gone to visit my grandmother who was ill, and here I was acting as mother. All day I had rushed around, and had been looking forward to a quiet peaceful evening.[726]

The way Helen described her caring responsibility is revealing, as she saw herself as a mother. The effect of reducing family sizes is evident in Helen's case, as her perception of what constituted mothering differed from those more regularly involved in infant care,

[724] *Junior Mirror*, 'Being Mum', 26 January 1955, p. 1.
[725] *Junior Mirror*, 'Being Mum', 26 January 1955, p. 10.
[726] MS. Opie 34, Helen Patterson 'The best way to spend a winters evening', fols 302-304.

such as Mary and the interwar Bolton schoolgirls. Her amazement at how exhausting it was to care for young children suggests that Helen was not used to being left to look after her siblings on her own and, for her, simply putting younger siblings to bed was constitutive of mothering. For children who were less involved in sibling care in the mid-century, the threshold at which they believed the care they were providing was motherly was lower than for working-class children in the interwar period and those growing up in larger families in the mid-century.

It was not just girls who were temporarily called on to provide care in their mother's absence. The boys' paper *Eagle*, which launched in 1950 and was targeted at a middle-class readership. *Eagle* regularly featured examples of its readers' efforts to help their families and local communities, in an ambition to promote morally responsible behaviour amongst its readers.[727] Alan Jacques, for example, was praised for stepping in to care for his baby brother when his mother was taken into hospital. The family 'faced a big problem', *Eagle* reported, as 'Alan's father, as a bus driver, was working shifts varying from 4 a.m. to very late at night, consequently he was not able to take care of the young baby. Alan did not hesitate. He at once said he could take over the complete care of his small brother and proceeded to do so with great efficiency'. The writer described how Alan 'bathed and dressed the baby, looked after his feeding and cared for him in every way', which was 'especially commendable as he previously had had very little to do with looking after babies'.[728]

The writer makes clear that Alan only stepped in because his father's work commitments prevented him from being able to care for the baby himself. In the post-war period, there was a growing expectation that fathers would take over full responsibility for their

[727] For more on *Eagle's* readership and ethos see Chapman, pp. 57-58.
[728] *Eagle*, 13 October 1950, 'Eagle Club', p. 11.

children's care if their wife was ill.[729] Practically, however, this example shows that men's working patterns meant that they were sometimes unable to help in ways expected of them, and so these caring responsibilities continued to fall to older children. Alan's example also shows that as family sizes grew smaller, older children regardless of gender were being expected to help look after younger siblings during family emergencies. This *Eagle* article does not give us an insight into how Alan actually felt about his caregiving role, as boys had to be nominated for a mention in the comic by a parent, teacher or youth group leader. Writers only reported on the commendable actions that the nominees had undertaken and did not include quotations from the boys themselves. However, it is clear that in this case, Alan had temporarily taken on a *maternal* role as he performed the physical baby care practices that mothers usually undertook. As Alan 'previously had had very little to do with looking after babies', it seems likely that the baby care practices he performed would have seemed distinctly maternal to him, much like Helen above.

Of course, there were situations in which children were transformed into parents in the long term, such as when a parent died or left the family home. In 1940, the *Daily Mirror* featured a piece about two brothers, thirteen-year-old Tommy and seventeen-year-old Alec. Their mother and grandmother had been killed in an air raid and their father was away serving with the navy. They had two younger sisters aged three-years-old and eight months, who they had previously helped their mother to look after. The boys made clear that until their father returned from service, they would have to care for them as parents, rather than as siblings. Tommy said, 'While Daddy's at sea and Mummy isn't here, Alec and I will have to look after the babies' and Alec added, 'Till then, me and Tommy are head of the family we'll do our best'.[730]

[729] King, *Family Men*, pp. 79-82.
[730] *Daily Mirror*, 'The Smiths are a Family Again', 16 November 1940, pp. 6-7; for a similar example see *Daily Mirror*, 'The Army gives George time off – for cooking', 20 August 1955, p. 5.

In some cases, older siblings unambiguously referred to themselves as parents. This can be seen in a 1954 *Junior Mirror* article written by fifteen-year-old Audrey Boddy.[731] Audrey's mother died, leaving Audrey, her father, her eleven-year-old brother and week-old baby sister Irene. The extended family and local welfare clinic had suggested that Irene be placed with an adoptive family, as 'she would need a proper mother'. Audrey decided that 'I would be baby's new mother – and I wouldn't let ANYONE take her away'. These examples serve to demonstrate the moments in which children felt that they were performing childcare work as parents, rather than as older siblings. In family emergencies, when mothers had to be away from home or were ill, children felt that their status was elevated as they were temporarily *being* their mothers, until their mothers came home or returned to full health. Where a parent had died, this feeling was far more extreme. While children's reactions to increased levels of responsibility depended on class, family size and parental expectation, they show unequivocally when 'vertical' parental care and 'lateral' sibling care intertwined.[732]

4.6 Conclusion

Relationships with younger brothers and sisters were an important medium through which children learnt about parenting. Older daughters in working-class homes in the interwar period were often tasked with caring for their younger siblings in practical ways. Reducing family sizes in the 1920s and 1930s meant that they tended to see these practices as something that they shared with their mothers. They developed something of a maternal identity and way of thinking due to the trust and authority their mothers placed in them. The overlap between childhood and parenting work shaped children's identity and place within the family unit. This shared practice elevated children's sense of status

[731] *Junior Mirror*, '… and Audrey, the 'little mother', tells a brave story here', 1 September 1954, p. 4.
[732] Mitchell, pp. 1-2.

above that of their younger siblings, making them feel more like a parent and therefore a more important member of the family.

In the 1950s and 1960s, working-class children were expected to help with the care of younger siblings less than their counterparts in the interwar period, and this was especially the case in smaller families. Children often *chose* to care for younger siblings of their own volition, and this revolved more around play than physical care. The decreasing overlap between parenting and sibling's work in this period meant that children were likely to see childcare as distinctly parental, rather than as something that older siblings and parents played an equal role in.

Of course, parenting and older sibling roles continued to overlap later in the century during family emergencies. Children's reactions to these situations reveal what level of responsibility they believed transformed them into parents, the point at which they were no longer performing caring duties as siblings. For those in larger families who were already involved in caring for siblings, this point was more likely to be when they were expected to take over the full care of younger siblings and running the household when their mothers were absent – either temporarily or permanently. For those in smaller families, feelings of maternal responsibility could be unlocked by simply being left in sole charge of younger siblings for a few hours.

This complicates the arguments put forward by scholars relying on adult oral testimony, who argue that sibling relationships in childhood only gave individuals practical experience with infants. This chapter has shown that through their caring roles, and the level of overlap between their caring work and that of their parents, children developed parental ways of thinking and feeling. These grew out of both regular and irregular responsibilities. Moreover, children's changing perceptions of who in the family was responsible for childcare contributed to the intensification of motherhood and fatherhood,

as from early in the life course children in the post-war period identified practical childcare tasks as work that mothers and fathers did.

This chapter has explored the way children talked about their practical roles in everyday family life, and the extent to which they felt like mothers when performing childcare tasks. Chapter five, by contrast, examines the way children described *pretending* to be parents in play. It explores the role that dolls, toy domestic appliances and games of 'mothers and fathers' played in shaping children's ideas about parenting practices. Descriptions of play reveal a very different perspective on children's ideas about parenting than can be gained from their accounts of everyday life. Play enabled children to take on different identities, test the boundaries of parent-child relationships and grant themselves autonomy within the context of their fictional worlds. Exploring children's imaginary worlds allows the chapter to move beyond examining how children used parenting identities to make themselves feel more important. Instead, it assesses the way children experimented with parent-child relationships in play and created new shared norms with their friends about what they expected of mothers and fathers, contributing to changing attitudes about gendered childrearing roles.

Chapter Five: Parenting in children's play and imagination

From the early-twentieth century, toy manufacturers produced dolls, prams and cots as well as toy cookers and irons that were specifically designed to rouse a 'maternal instinct' in girls and psychologically prepare them for their future roles as mothers and housewives.[733] In a discussion of American girlhood between 1830 and 1930, Miriam Forman-Brunell argues that producing dolls for the purpose of developing girls' nurturing qualities emerged in the early decades of the century. Doll manufacturers felt threatened by an expanding toy market and sought to impress upon mothers the importance of buying dolls to 'teach etiquette to their young daughters' while also reinforcing 'traditional gender roles'.[734] The gendering of toys became prominent in the interwar period, as boys' toys were designed to encourage boisterousness, to ward off any 'effeminate' tendencies and help boys develop into emotionally balanced heterosexual men.[735] Prominent child psychologist Donald Winnicott wrote in the 1960s that playing at 'mothers and fathers' was important psychological preparation for parenthood. He wrote: 'Let us see what happens when healthy small children play at fathers and mothers … One can see in their games that they are building a home, arranging the house, taking joint responsibility for the children … We know that is healthy; if children can play together like this they will not need later on to be taught how to build a home'.[736]

While this represents the views of toy manufacturers and psychologists, historians and sociologists have discussed how toys and play shaped children's socialisation into culturally accepted gender roles. In a study of housework in the early 1970s, for example, Oakley argues that women's early socialisation into the 'housewife role' was driven through observing and helping their mothers with housework, the gendered segregation

[733] Forman-Brunell, pp. 162–63, 180.
[734] Ibid., pp. 162-163.
[735] Julia Grant, 'A "Real Boy" and Not a Sissy: Gender, Childhood, and Masculinity, 1890-1940', *Journal of Social History*, 37.4 (2004), 829–51 (pp. 831, 837–38).
[736] Winnicott, pp. 103-04.

of play, and girls' play with toy ovens and washing machines.[737] Oakley draws on Ruth Hartley's model of sex-role identification which states that, 'Children are often socially rewarded for playing with toys of the appropriate gender, and this process lays down the basis of future adult pleasure in relation to similar objects – full-size washing machines, cookers'.[738] In her study of first-time motherhood in the late 1970s, Oakley similarly argues that 'doll play, a feminine par excellence, is most women's only apprenticeship for child-rearing'. One woman she interviewed thought that dolls could inspire a maternal instinct in children, while another woman remembered caring for her doll in the same way she saw her mother looking after her baby sibling.[739]

Of course, children's relationships with their toys were often more complicated than this. Forman-Brunell notes that many girls did not play with their dolls in ways that their parents expected them to and attached their own meanings to their toys and play.[740] In order to understand what children learnt about parenting from their games, it is necessary to examine the wider context of play and understand what children used play for. Girls and boys did not simply imitate the adult world they saw around them in role play games. Rather, as scholars of play have shown, they used games of 'mothers and fathers' to test the boundaries of parent-child relationships and to temporarily put themselves in a position of power by assuming a parental role.[741]

This chapter is divided into two sections, which each make a key contribution to the existing literature on play. The first section examines girls' writings about dolls and toy

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[737] Oakley, *The Sociology of Housework*, pp. 113–14.
[738] Ruth E. Hartley, 'A Developmental View of Female Sex-Role Identification', in *Role Theory: Concepts and Research*, ed. by Bruce J. Biddle and Edwin John Thomas (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1966), pp. 354–60.
[739] Oakley, *Becoming a Mother*, pp. 69–70.
[740] Forman-Brunell, pp. 5-6.
[741] Iona Opie and Peter Opie, *Children's Games in Street and Playground: Chasing, Catching, Seeking, Hunting, Racing, Duelling, Extering, Daring, Guessing, Acting, Pretending* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969), p. 331; Allison James, *Childhood Identities: Self and Social Relationships in the Experience of the Child* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1993), p. 193.

domestic appliances, and their games of 'mothers and fathers'. It examines girls' writings in particular, as domestically orientated toys were designed for them and girls also predominantly talked about playing with such toys in their essays. This focus on girls does not mean to suggest that boys did not play with dolls and toy cookers and irons too, but that children often described playing in ways that adults might have deemed appropriate for their gender, the reasons for which will be explored in this chapter.

This first section supports Forman-Brunell's assertion that the meanings girls ascribed to their toys was often more complicated than adults assumed. However, it contributes to understandings of girls' perceptions of dolls and toys domestic appliances, by demonstrating that girls' relationship with their toys changed over the mid-century. In the interwar period, working-class girls wanted dolls or toy cookers and washing sets to play with, but their wish for such toys was often aspirational. Girls wished to escape from dull childhood jobs such as housework and baby care and *play* at these tasks instead, as middle-class girls were more able to do.[742] After the Second World War, girls of all classes were generally less involved in childcare and their mothers' domestic work. This caused a shift in the meanings girls attributed to their toys. Girls tended to associate dolls and toy domestic appliances with the 'real' babies and appliances that mothers cared for or used. In the 1950s and 1960s, then, play became a more important medium through which skills and values related to motherhood were transmitted between generations, demonstrating the importance of situating play in the wider context of children's lives.

The second half of this chapter broadens out to examine the way both girls and boys characterised maternal and paternal roles in the games of 'babies', 'house' and 'mothers and fathers' they played with their friends and siblings. This section partly supports the assessments that Allison James puts forward in her sociological study of play. James

[742] On the differences between working- and middle-class girlhood see Dyhouse, pp. 9-11; on working- and middle-class children's play see Forman-Brunell, pp. 166-69.

argues that the conservative nature of children's peer play leads them to reproduce stereotypical gender roles, as children often adopt exaggerated versions of mother and father characters in their games.[743] However, this chapter shows that children in the mid-century did not just assume traditional homemaking and breadwinning roles in their games. It argues that pretend play offered children the opportunity to experiment with gender roles and create new shared norms with their friends about what mothers and fathers could do within the realms of their imaginative play. The roles that maternal and paternal characters took on in children's games shed light on the processes through which change and continuity in ideas about parenting developed across generations.

5.1 Play, reality and the housewife/mother role

Girls' essays from the late 1930s show that many aspired to have dolls and toy domestic appliances to play with. In response to the essay question 'What I would like to do', Gail Bridges wrote:

> There is one thing that pleases me most and that is to do one or two odd jobs, such as polishing the doors and knobs. I am not so struck on play as much as I am on work, because mother says work is healthy … I would also like a washing-set, so that when I grow up I shall be able to handle washing instead of sending it to the laundery.[744]

Gail's essay formed part of a set of essays sent to Mass Observation from a school in Salford. While not seeing housework as a distinct maternal practice, she still viewed a strong work ethic as a mark of good working-class womanhood and motherhood. Working-class women often went to great efforts in keeping their homes tidy and their children looking neat as a show of respectability.[745] While it is important not to conflate

[743] James, p. 186.
[744] MOA, TC59/6/B, Gail Bridges, 'What I would like to do', fols 52-53.
[745] Roberts, *A Woman's Place*, pp. 130-34.

housewifery and motherhood, Gail's essay again shows that her ideas about adult femininity the value of housework were shaped by her mother's example.

Gail wished to have a toy laundry set so that she could prepare for her future *adult* responsibilities, rather than help her mother with washing at home, as she stated that she liked doing just 'one or two odd jobs'. She believed that arduous domestic chores such as washing should be the preserve of adult women, rather than something she was expected to do in girlhood. Claire Langhamer shows that once working-class girls left school, they used their status as wage-earners to claim free time away from the home and housework as 'paid labour framed women's own perceptions of their right to leisure'.[746] Younger school-aged girls had less leverage to claim free time for themselves. Mothers often relied on them to help with time-consuming routines of housework.[747] This is not to say that working-class girls were consumed by domestic work whenever they were not at school. Essays written by schoolgirls in Bolton for the titles 'What I did on Saturday and Sunday' and 'What I did on my Thursday Holiday' show that girls spent much of their time playing, which they fit around domestic and sibling care responsibilities.[748] Some girls did, though, find their household chores dull and Gail's essay implies that she wished childhood could be a stage in life reserved for play and preparing for the responsibilities of adulthood.[749]

Indeed, her desire for a washing set was rather aspirational. Laundry sets were on sale at this time and one which was available to buy in the children's toy store Hamleys in August 1940 was advertised as a 'complete washing set with wringer, clothes horse, bath,

[746] Langhamer, *Women's Leisure*, pp. 50, 133; Todd, pp. 795–97.
[747] Todd, 797; Roberts, *A Woman's Place,* p. 23.
[748] For example, MOA, TC59/6/B, Annie Walshaw, 'What I did on Saturday and Sunday', fols 269-297; MOA, WC49/E, Maureen Taylor, 'What I did on my Thursday Holiday', fol. 2; MOA, WC49/E, Eileen Harrison, fol. 6; MOA, WC49/E, Margaret Holland, fol. 8.
[749] On girls' dislike of housework see for example MOA, TC59/6/C, Daisy Young, 'Things I learn at home that I don't learn at school', fol. 147.

pail and scrubbing board'.[750] It cost 17 shillings and 2 pence, which would have been expensive for many working-class families, as the average weekly wage for industrial workers in the 1930s was £3, but those employed in skilled trades could earn closer to £4.[751] Essays from the Worktown collection show that working-class children had a strong awareness of the importance of money, and why parents had to be careful about not giving too much to children. In an essay about money, one schoolgirl wrote: 'When children are always having pennies money soon goes and then you haven't enough to live on through the week'.[752]

It seems, then, that Gail wrote about the washing set as something she aspired to have, rather than as a toy she realistically hoped would be bought for her. Middle-class girls, whose families would have been more likely to be able to afford such a toy, were generally less involved in housework. These families often employed one or two domestic servants in this period to do arduous domestic work, a class dynamic which Gail may have been all too aware of.[753] In the interwar period working-class girls' perceptions of toy domestic appliances were bound up with their feelings about their own responsibilities as daughters, and in particular their wish to escape from boring childhood jobs, rather than a wish to imitate their mothers' domestic practices.

The aspirational nature of dolls and toy domestic appliances is apparent in other girls' essays. In writing about what she would buy if she had a lot of money, Mary Smith wrote:

> When we go on our holadays we take most of the money with us to spened. While I was on my holdays I would buy [a] little doll for I am very fond of dolls. I would buy clothes for it and even a little dumy tite for it to [suck] and one wat you could put milk in a give it him when he was tirsty. When it was dirty I would wash it. I

[750] MOA, TC 41, Games and Jigsaws 1937-1941, TC41/1/B, 'Hamleys' brochure, 25 August 1940, p. 6.
[751] Stevenson and Cook, p. 25.
[752] MOA, WC49/A, Marjorie Allan, 'Money and its uses', fol. 59.
[753] Dyhouse, p. 11; Davis, 'Generational Change and Continuity', p. 212.

> would put it some clean clothes on and take it out for a walk. If I had some money left I would buy a bicycle and ride and it [home] instead of waiting for the train.[754]

The detail with which Mary described caring for a doll she wished she had is interesting here. Baby and childcare were frequent features of girls' essays, as many regularly looked after their younger siblings or the infants of other women in their communities.[755] Girls sometimes felt frustrated by having to look after infants, especially if this caring work limited their opportunities to play. May Jenkins detailed her responsibilities for looking after a baby in her neighbourhood:

> On a Saturday morning I go my mothers errands. Then I play at ball and hop-scoth with my friends. We have lots of fun. There is a baby called [Rosie] and she has red hair. She always wants me to take her out in her pram. If I do not wheel her she cries … She would not give over crying till I took her down the fields and then when I came back with her she wanted to go again. But I wanted to play with the other children.[756]

Where childminding tasks could not be avoided, some children combined play with caregiving. One child, who did not put their name on their essay, wrote:

> On Saturday morning when I had finished my breakfast I went with my mother to do the shopping. Then I had my dinner. After I had my dinner I went to play with [Louise Evans] at running after. At night I went to play in a yard at house. While I was playing I was minding a little baby boy and we took him out in the pram ... On Sunday morning I stopped in the house and played at school. Then I came out for a bit of fresh air. In the afternoon I and [Milly West] were minding

[754] MOA, 49/A, Mary Smith, 'Money and its uses', fols 29-30.
[755] For example, MOA, TC59/6/B, Eliza Simmonds, 'How I spend Saturday and Sunday', fol. 273; MOA, WC49/E, Susan Baines, 'What I did on my Thursday Holiday', fol. 34.
[756] MOA, TC59/6/B, May Jenkins, 'How I spend Saturday and Sunday', fol. 261.

> a baby and we got a cornet. Then we played at rounders. In the evening I went in a house next door to us and we played at house. There were five of us and one was a servant.[757]

It is noteworthy that this child combined taking a baby for a walk in a pram with a game of 'house', another name commonly used for 'mothers and fathers'. As children, whose lives were lived in context of generational hierarchies and 'adult control', they probably did not have much choice in whether to accept the job of minding a baby for a few hours.[758] Mothers relied on family and neighbours to mind their infants when they went out or had to work, and these examples show that local children also provided valuable forms of care.[759] Playing a game of 'house', and presumably pretending to a be mother whilst minding a baby, may well have given them a feeling of maternal authority while doing a dull childhood job. Play enabled children to temporarily escape the weight of their own duties by pushing responsibility for childcare back onto the 'mother' characters in their games.

As Iona and Peter Opie argue: 'the 6-year-old child who plays 'Mothers and Fathers' re-enacts the common incidents of his everyday life with what seems tedious exactness, until one realizes that there is a thrilling difference: he had promoted himself, he is no longer the protesting offspring being scolded for not getting into the bath'.[760] The wish to escape from dull jobs can also be seen in the description of this child's later game of 'house'. The fact that this game had five characters including a servant indicates that domestic jobs would be assigned to them, as was done in middle-class homes.[761] Using pretend play to place themselves in a position of adult authority can also be seen in children's

[757] MOA, TC59/6/B, no name, 'How I spent Saturday and Sunday', fols 286-287.
[758] On adult-child relationships see Seymour and McNamee, p. 103.
[759] Roberts, *A Woman's Place*, pp. 144-145; Dyhouse, p. 11.
[760] Opie and Opie, p. 331.
[761] Dyhouse, p. 11.

descriptions of their games of 'school', where girls promoted themselves to the role of the teacher by setting assignments for pupils.[762]

This strategy of pretend play continued to be used by children with childcare responsibilities after the Second World War to alleviate boredom. In 1949 the *Children's Mirror* ran an article entitled 'To put a kick into taking the baby out'. It centred on a letter from a reader who asked 'How can I make "taking the baby out" less boring?' Some children suggested that readers count flowers or take a friend along with them. Fourteen-year-old Elizabeth, though, advised readers to '"pretend you are the baby's mother and are going shopping. It's amusing looking in windows and pretending to buy something"'.[763] Taking a baby out for a walk in the pram was a routine childhood job, as it gave mothers a chance for rest or time or get on with other domestic tasks.[764] Here, however, Elizabeth used her imagination to transform this childhood job into a maternal one. She granted herself generational authority, by imagining that she was a mother with the power to make decisions about how to spend money for the family, to escape from the reality of being a child saddled with responsibility for a baby.

Samantha Punch's study of childhood in rural Bolivia argues that incorporating responsibilities with play was a common way children made their jobs more interesting.[765] Elizabeth's example shows that girls were not only trying to make their tasks more interesting but to change the context of them altogether by placing themselves in the position of a powerful maternal figure. In this sense, pretending to be a mother served an important purpose for girls with regular childhood chores as it allowed them to assume some form of agency over their young lives. Similarly, Valerie Cooper stated when she took a baby out, she pretended the baby was Prince Charles: '"just imagine you

[762] For example, MOA, TC 59/6/B, Josie Wright, 'From School to Bed', fols 196-197.
[763] *Daily Mirror*, 'To put a kick into taking the baby out', 18 June 1949, p. 4.
[764] Langhamer, *Women's Lesiure*, p. 142.
[765] Punch, p. 30.

have been chosen from all the people in London to take him out"'.[766] While not pretending to be a mother, she nonetheless adopted an invented persona to give to her a greater sense of power and purpose when carrying out her usual responsibilities.

Pretending to be a mother and playing with dolls or toy domestic appliances had a different meaning for girls growing up in smaller families in the 1950s and 1960s. In describing the games she enjoyed playing when she was younger, fourteen-year-old Ellen Mayer from County Durham described how:

> When I was an infant 5-9 years one of my favourite games was playing "houses" with my friends … the ones who were playing the mothers would dress the dolls which to us were babies, put them in their prams and then go for a walk or they would do their babies washing in a toy washing machine, then iron with a toy iron or anything else they could think of what they could do.[767]

In this game, Ellen associated the physical care of a baby and the domestic labours of childrearing, such as washing a baby's clothes, with motherhood. Ellen had a baby sister but made clear that she was not involved in her care. Part of the game involved dressing up like mothers in their make-up and clothes. In explaining how she would take her mother's make up from the house without her knowing, Ellen explained that she would:

> tell my mother that my little sister was crying, because then my little sister was just a baby and she lay in her pram nearly all day … My mother didn't trust me with the baby so usually she would stop what she was doing and go and see what was the matter with my sister. While she was doing this I would sneak out of the back-door.

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[766] *Daily Mirror*, 'To put a kick into taking the baby out', 18 June 1949, p. 4.
[767] MS. Opie. 92, Make Believe I, Ellen Mayer, 'The Games and Crazes of School Children: An Infant Pastime', fols 82a^{r}-82a^{v}.

Ellen's assertion that her mother 'didn't trust me with the baby' marked a shift in parental expectations of daughters from the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries.[768] As chapters three and four showed, children growing up after the Second World War were more likely to see domestic and childcare work as something that their mothers did for them, rather than as tasks they were regularly expected to help with.

These shifting parental expectations changed the meaning of pretend play for girls growing up in this period. Girls still aspired to have miniature domestic appliances as well as dolls and toy prams, but they were more likely see the real versions of these objects as belonging to adult women, rather than as objects that they would regularly have to use themselves.[769] For instance, Martha Cheswick wrote 'My favourite game with my friends is when we play house, we play this very often. I am usually mother and our house is on the balcony of my house … every girl who was a mother had a doll for it's baby. And for the house furniture we have two stools, a wooden table, an old piece of mat for the carpet, a tea set, a toy cooker, an ironing board, a pram and a cot'.[770]

Martha believed that these toys were essential to the act of pretending to be a mother, shedding further light on processes of habituation.[771] When temporarily tasked with taking over their mother's domestic or childcare work, children developed an understanding of what it felt like to perform these practices as a mother rather than as a child. In much the same way, through *imitating* the way mothers used equipment such as prams, irons and cookers girls were not actually learning how to use these domestic and childrearing tools. Rather, they were learning about the societal value attached to these practices when they were performed by mothers. The feeling of being a mother in play

[768] Roberts, *Women and Families*, pp. 33-35, 143.
[769] On girls' desire to buy dolls and prams see MS Opie 40, Annie Clifton, 'One Pound and how I would spend it', Jill Barker, fol. 575.
[770] MS. Opie 43, Martha Cheswick, 'The games I play with my friends', fol. 186; see also Lily Brown, fol. 410.
[771] Bourdieu, p. 87.

was greater for children in smaller post-war families who tended to only be occasionally asked to help with shopping or light housework.[772] Their experiences differed from working-class girls in the interwar period, where there was significant overlap between daughters' and mothers' domestic roles, and from those growing up in larger families post-war.[773]

Essays written for the NCDS reveal some of the implications of these changing experiences on girls' ideas about motherhood. In imagining their future lives, many believed that housework and childrearing would be an integral part of their mothering roles.[774] Some felt that homemaking practices would make them good mothers, a view most common amongst middle-class girls. One girl, who stated that she enjoyed helping with housework when she got home from school, wrote that in the future 'I would like to keep my home as clean as I could. I would like to have two children as well as to keep my house tidy. I would be hoovering and be doing ironing most of the day. I also would like to keep as tidy as I could. Then I would have well brought up children'.[775] It is revealing that they saw hoovering and ironing, and the cleanliness they brought about, as the route to having well-brought up children. Another middle-class girl attributed similar value to housekeeping: 'I hope I will be a good mother and wife and will keep the house well for in this house I want there to be two happy children and a contended satisfied husband'.[776]

These girls saw a dedication to housework as a means of achieving happiness as a mother in later life. Their emphasis upon specific housekeeping practices suggests that through playing with toys such as irons, hoovers and cookers and watching and helping their own

[772] Newson and Newson, *Childhood into Adolescence*, pp. 46-47.
[773] Roberts, *A Woman's Place*, pp. 22-24; Edwards and Gillies, pp. 27-29.
[774] For example, CLS, NCDS, SN: 5790, N22381C, female, manual father; N12156Q, girl, manual father; N10534N, girl, non-manual fathers; N10757B, girl, non-manual father.
[775] CLS, NCDS, SN: 5790, N27019H, girl, non-manual father.
[776] CLS, NCDS, SN:5790, N19995B, girl, non-manual father.

mothers at home, their conceptions of motherhood became bound up with these physical objects. In this way, theories about processes of gendered socialisation, through which girls are praised for playing with dolls and toy domestic appliances and internalise maternal values a result, is more applicable to girls growing up in the 1950s and 1960s.[777] There was not as much of an overlap between the work that parents and children did around the home and for girls in these later decades, play was less about escaping their own dull childhood jobs and more about putting themselves in a position of maternal power.

It is interesting that middle-class girls had a particularly positive view of domestic work, as middle-class mothers often resented having to do it. Many middle-class women believed that housework prevented them from spending time with their children and had grown up seeing their own mothers relying on help from domestic servants.[778] These girls' views about domestic labour highlight the importance of examining generational change through children's voices. Middle-class girls, who had grown up watching their mothers doing housework themselves in the 1960s accepted it as a practice that mothers did for their children. This represents a difference in attitudes between middle-class women and girls and shows that working- and middle-class girls' views were becoming markedly similar, as both observed their mothers' homemaking practices and formed similar ideas about motherhood. It is important to note, though, that not all girls looked positively on domestic work. Some wrote of the stress they would feel as mothers juggling housework with caring for young children.[779]

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[777] Oakley, *The Sociology of Housework*, pp. 113–16; Oakley, *Becoming a Mother*, pp. 69–70; Chodorow, *The Reproduction of Mothering*, pp. 31–33; Carol J. Boyd, 'Mothers and Daughters: A Discussion of Theory and Research', *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 51.2 (1989), 291–301 (pp. 291–301).
[778] Oakley, *The Sociology of Housework*, pp. 171-174; Davis, *Modern Motherhood*, pp. 147-148.
[779] For example, CLS, NCDS, SN: 5790, N10014T, girl, manual father; N12633Y, girl, non-manual father.

Indeed, while girls were often less involved in their mother's housework post-war, there was still a strong element of trying to escape from dull routines of domestic labour in their games. For instance, Ellen wrote that games of 'houses' would begin with:

> [sorting] out who was the mother, eldest daughters, youngest daughters, aunts etc … When we were already our gang would start by the daughters going out to work one of us usually was a secretary and others would have jobs like bus-conductress, shop-assistants. While some of us were at work … the ones who were mothers would dust our make believe furniture and then they would usually make believe that they were going to the shops.[780]

Here, Ellen and her friends were differentiating between future versions of themselves. As mentioned earlier, mothers across the period expected to devote their time to caring for their families while older daughters could escape from domestic work due to their status as wage-earners.[781] Ellen and her friends were attempting to contain responsibility for domestic work and childcare to motherhood. They were trying to find routes for some players to escape from a future version of womanhood which demanded self-sacrifice and family service, by pretending to be the adult daughters who were free to go to work and leave the domestic duties to the mother characters.

5.2 Expressions of gender in games of 'mothers and fathers'

Girls did not only use pretend games of 'mothers and fathers' to explore the overlaps between mothering and childhood work. They also used these games to make sense of gendered family practices and their own emerging gender identities. Most girls' games of 'Houses' or 'Mothers and Fathers' began with groups of children deciding amongst themselves who would play the different characters, such as the mother, father and baby.

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[780] MS. Opie 92, Make Believe 1, Ellen Mayer, fols. 82^{r}-82^{v}, 82a^{r}-82a^{v}.
[781] Langhamer, *Women's Leisure*, pp. 50, 133, 156-157.

Some games had a long list of potential characters, presumably to accommodate for larger groups of friends.

Children had clear expectations about the kinds of practices each family member in their game ought to perform. In 1960, Denise Smith described how 'when I play brides I pretend to be married I have to make my husbands tea and put my children to bed'.[782] Another girl explained that when playing with their friends, they would have a mother and a father. The father would only be at home at weekends whilst the mother 'takes the children to the shop and going to visit other [people]'.[783] Mothers and fathers was a game predominantly played by girls, but boys were sometimes permitted to join in.[784] When they did, they often took on breadwinning and domestically uninvolved roles. Clara Edmonds from Bishop Auckland explained that: 'Sometimes boys play and pretend to go to work there gone about 2 minutes and they say its tea time'.[785]

Girls tended to associate motherhood with domesticity, childcare and housework, and fatherhood with paid work. This is rather striking as these parental roles would not necessarily have matched the reality of children's home lives. In particular, the lack of reference to mothers' paid employment is of interest here. Before the Second World War, working-class mothers had always been more likely to work, though this was usually through casual means, such as by taking in washing or minding children for other women.[786] In the 1950s and 1960s, it became more commonplace for working- and middle-class mothers to return to the workplace once their youngest child was had started school.[787] Moreover, King shows that as the mid-century progressed, men talked more

[782] MS. Opie 43, Denise Smith, 'The games I play with my friends', fol. 3.
[783] MS. Opie 92, Make Believe 1, no name, 'Small House', no folio number.
[784] For a further example of girls excluding boys from games of mothers and fathers see MS. Opie 92, Make Believe 1, Tracey Edmunds, no essay title, fol. 50.
[785] MS. Opie 92, Make Believe 1, Clara Edmonds, 'A game I dislike: Houses', fol. 185^{r}-185^{v}.
[786] Roberts, *A Woman's Place*, p. 136.
[787] The percentage of married women working rose from 10.0% in 1931 to 21.7% by 1951 and 45.4% by 1961, see Smith Wilson, p. 209; Davis, *Modern Motherhood*, pp. 144–45.

about taking responsibility for enjoyable aspects of their children's care.[788] Working mothers were often still expected to do the majority of domestic and childrearing work around their employment commitments and men were expected to be the main wage-earners.[789] However, it still noteworthy that in their games of 'mothers and fathers', children adopted strict ideas of motherly and fatherly work, and they did not take account of shifts in parenting behaviours in their play.[790]

In making sense of this, this chapter draws upon James' sociological analysis of children's play. James notes that children engaging in pretend play in the 1980s and 1990s tended to 'adhere to stereotypical gender roles' despite 'changing family structures and parental roles' in the latter decades of the century. She argues that the 'culture of childhood itself may, through its transmission from child to child, act as an influential and conservative force in shaping children's consciousness'. In this sense, while children may 'perceive alternative gender models in their parents' behaviour … [in] public, before their friends, they may acquiesce to the roles and models which seem more commonplace and culturally appropriate'.[791]

James's assessment partly applies here. Although working mothers were becoming more visible and commonplace post-war, Dolly Smith Wilson shows that women faced a great deal of criticism from the popular press who used psychological theories of maternal deprivation to argue that working mothers were emotionally damaging their children.[792] Women often had to justify their paid work by showing that their wages materially

[788] King, *Family Men*, pp. 81-84.
[789] Zweiniger-Bargielowska, pp. 160–61; Langhamer, *Women's Leisure*, p. 133.
[790] Girls continuing to think that women predominantly did housewifery and childrearing roles despite women's increased participation in the workforce has been noted in other studies, for example Tessa Blackstone, '"The Education of Girls Today"', in *The Rights and Wrongs of Women*, ed. by Juliet Mitchell and Ann Oakley (Middlesex: Penguin, 1976; repr. 1986), pp. 199–216 (pp. 209–10).
[791] James, p. 186.
[792] Smith Wilson, pp. 210-216.

benefitted their children by affording them a better quality of life.[793] Moreover, representations of mothers in children's papers such as the *Dandy* tended to depict them doing domestic work at home or caring for children.[794] Therefore, while their own mothers may have worked on a part-time basis, groups of girls may have emphasised and exaggerated the practices they associated most with motherhood and fatherhood in their play.

Children's reproduction of typically masculine and feminine parenting practices in their games is due to the nature of children's group play, which strongly hinges on ideas about gender. Gender is central to the way children perceive themselves and make sense of their relationships with others, affecting the organisation of play.[795] Studies of children's folklore show that girls and boys tended to play separately at different types of role play games, and this was reflected in children's descriptions of their games for the 1961 Camberwell Public Libraries Essay Competition title 'The games I like to play with my friends'.[796] In their pretend games, girls assumed roles of mothers, teachers, nurses, shopkeepers and customers, while groups of boys tended to opt for more boisterous role play games centred on masculine themes.[797] Nigel Foster wrote: 'I used to play soldiers with my friends and we had boats, and bricks and we had tanks and cars and kanens but I liked knights and cowboys and runouts'.[798]

James argues that younger children, typically between the ages of four and five, express their ideas about gender in play in terms of their 'future identities as men and women,

[793] Smith Wilson, pp. 217–18; Helen McCarthy, 'Women, Marriage and Paid Work in Post-War Britain', *Women's History Review*, 26.1 (2017), 46–61 (p. 54).
[794] For example, *Dandy*, 'Rusty', 17 May 1952, n.p.
[795] James, pp. 186-188-9, 192; Dawson, p. 262.
[796] June Factor, *Captain Cook Chased a Chook: Children's Folklore in Australia* (Victoria: Penguin Books Australia, 1988), pp. 136–38; James, pp. 190–93.
[797] On girls' pretend play see MS. Opie 43, Mary Turner, 'The games I play with my friends', fol. 4; Sandra Burton, fol. 202; Linda Barker, fols. 47; Anne Mitchell, fols 6^{r} – 66^{v}; on gender-segregated play see Richard Stevens, fols. 20-21.
[798] MS. Opie. 43, Nigel Foster, 'The games I play with my friends', f. 142.

rather than their present identities as boys and girls'.[799] In this 1961 sample of children's essays, similar expressions of gender identity through future adult roles were prevalent amongst girls up to the ages of eight or nine. For instance, one eight-year-old girl wrote 'I can play at mothers and fathers it is like this a girl has to be the mother a boy is father'.[800] Games of 'mothers and fathers' did not necessarily reflect the practices children thought parents ought to adopt in reality. Rather, their exaggeration of maternal and paternal qualities reflected the importance that gender played within children's own sense of self. The mother and father figures they assumed were extensions of themselves, and the exaggerated gendered practices that they expected of those playing reflected the ways in which they understood their own place in the world as *children*.[801] These distinct maternal and paternal characters represented the differences that girls observed between themselves and boys, and helped them to work through what made them as girls, and future women, distinct from the boys they went to school with.

Children's understandings of their own gender identities mapped onto the adult characters they played in their games. This can be seen in an essay by seven-year-old John Richards. John wrote:

> My school friends are called [Joel] and [Jack] my friend at home is called [Andrew] I play with [Andrew] at cowboys and Indians and we have lots of fun. My other friend is called [Melanie]. [Melanie] has a dog. [Melanie] lives in a garage sometimes with [Melanie] I play cars … I drive because I am the Daddy and [Melanie] is the Mother.[802]

John played different types of with boys and girls. While with Andrew, John played Cowboys and Indians, a game largely played by groups of boys; with his friend Melanie

[799] James, 187.
[800] MS. Opie 43, Julie Simmons, 'The games I play with my friends', fol. 251.
[801] James, pp. 184-93; Dawson, pp. 263-66.
[802] MS. Opie 43, John Richards, 'The games I play with my friends', fol. 304.

he played a game resembling 'mothers and fathers'. June Factor argues that the gendered segregation of play was strongest on the school playground, and that boys and girls tended to mix and play together far more freely in 'out-of-school situations'.[803] The pressure to act in appropriately gendered ways may have been felt less keenly by children when playing with a friend at home as opposed to at school. However, this example shows that John and Melanie nonetheless adhered to gendered roles. That John justified that he should be doing the driving 'because I am the Daddy' shows how the differences that John and Melanie observed between them played out in their pretend game. Children used role play games such as mothers and fathers to make sense of their own place in the world as boys and girls, and the differences between adult men and women.[804]

John's clarification that he played the father in this game may have also served to justify his participation in such a game to the competition judges, and possibly also the teacher reading his essay. *Dandy* featured stories about young boys who were chastised by their peers for being seen playing 'hospitals' with girls or wheeling prams.[805] In the continuing serial 'Little Angel Face', a girl gets cross with her friend Tommy Green who refuses to play hospitals with her. After pushing him into a lake she tricks him into wearing dolls' clothes and sitting in her pram, which she then wheels into the local boys' gang hut. On seeing Tommy, the other boys taunt him 'Ho-ho-ho diddums, want to come and play with us big boys?'[806] Child psychologists believed boys were at risk of developing effeminate tendencies through spending too much time with their mothers or expressing interests in feminine pursuits.[807] Comic strips such as these appeared to reflect these concerns, as they reinforced dominant perceptions about the types of games that were appropriate for

[803] Factor, p. 139.
[804] James, pp. 184-93.
[805] *Dandy*, 'Little Angel Face', 22 October 1955, n.p.; *Dandy*, 'Dirty Dick', 30 August 1969, n.p.
[806] *Dandy*, 'Little Angel Face', 21 May 1955, n.p.
[807] Melanie Tebbutt, *Being Boys: Youth, Leisure and Identity in the Inter-War Years* (Manchester University Press, 2014), p. 87; Grant, p. 831.

girls and boys to engage with and the importance of adhering to gendered roles when playing games with the opposite sex.

Children's play is important for thinking about how gender roles were reproduced across the mid-century. Roberts discusses why husbands and wives often adopted clear, differentiated breadwinning and domestic roles in early-twentieth century working-class marriages. She argues that 'the early conditioning children of both sexes received about men's and women's roles within the home and family must have affected their later adult roles'.[808] Historians have shown that women and men continued to play similar roles in marriage and parenting through to the latter decades of the century, with women being considered predominantly responsible for housework and childrearing.[809] Of course, practical considerations such as a lack of paternity leave for fathers perpetuated the belief that mothers were somehow naturally more suited to nurturing and caring roles.[810] Children's essays show, though, that the conservative nature of children's play played a significant role in the continuation of these ideas about gendered family practices.

So far, then, this supports James' assessment that group play tended to reinforce stereotypical ideas about gender. However, children's peer play cannot be characterised solely as 'conservative'. Children's folklorists stress that play was both 'inherited and improvised'.[811] This element of improvisation therefore afforded some groups of children the space to invent their own shared norms and contribute to changing attitudes about parenting roles. For instance, there was an aspirational undertone to some girls' imitation of parenting. In describing the games that she played in 1960, six-year-old Ann Rowley wrote: 'I play mothers and fathers with my friends I am mother and my little sister is [the]

[808] Roberts, *A Woman's Place*, p. 117.
[809] Zweiniger-Bargielowska, pp. 160–61.
[810] King and Davis, pp. 81-83.
[811] Factor, pp. 7–8; Rosemary Levy Zumwalt, 'The Complexity of Children's Folklore', in *Children's Folklore: A Source Book*, ed. by Brian Sutton-Smith and others (New York: Routledge, 1995), pp. 23–48 (pp. 42–44).

little girl and we are going on holiday we are going on a train and we are playing on the sand'.[812]

Ann's game with her sister revolved around their mother and child characters pretending to go to the beach, rather than on a mother's confinement to the home with responsibility for housework and childcare, as other girls' games did. The fact that she was describing the content of a game she played with her sister, rather than her friends, is important here in accounting for this difference. Together, Ann and her sister may have been reflecting on what they hoped to do with their own mother or re-enacting a trip they had recently taken. Reducing family sizes and increasing wages had made family leisure attractive and accessible for most working- and middle-class families by the 1960s.[813] Of course, Langhamer shows that it fell to mothers to facilitate their children's access to leisure, whether that be taking them to the park or organising a holiday, and that this often represented work rather than leisure for women.[814] Here, though, Ann believed that a holiday and playing on the sand was something that both the mother and child would take pleasure in, and shows that some girls felt mothers were entitled to enjoy opportunities for family leisure.

Similarly, ten-year-old Carol Finchley described the games she played with her friends:

> We play skipping and sometimes we play Kings and Queens … When we play Kings and Queens I am the King and [Andrea] is the queen. [May] is our daughter. I ride her to school on my horse so that she doesn't get lost and I ride her home. In the evening when we put her to bed and she is fast asleep we go out for a ride in the dark.[815]

[812] MS. Opie 43, Ann Rowley, 'The games I play with my friends', fol. 5.
[813] Langhamer, *Women's Leisure*, p. 138.
[814] Langhamer, *Women's Leisure*, p. 140.
[815] MS. Opie 43, Carol Finchley, 'The games I play with my friends', fol. 106.

In playing Kings and Queens, it is clear that Carol and her friends were acting out maternal and paternal roles. It is noteworthy that Carol took on a fatherly character in their game, as it shows that play also enabled children to go beyond their own gender identities by temporarily becoming a mother *or* a father. Carol cast her paternal figure as protective, caring for their child outside the home and helping in putting them to bed. Her descriptions of the parental characters in their game differed from those presented in other children's essays mentioned above. Gender was still important to the organisation of Carol's play, as the mother and father characters took on defined roles, but what those roles looked like differed to those of children adhering to more stereotypical ideas.

These differences in games of 'mothers and fathers' were perhaps because, as ten-year-olds, Carol and her friends were slightly older and therefore more experimental with their characters. As Frank Mort argues, imagination offers 'different scenarios for the living out of subjectivity'. In a retrospective study of his childhood relationship with his father in the 1950s, Mort recalls that his father was emotionally distant. As a child, he used the historic and fantasy worlds that he read about in books to make better sense of his relationship with his father. He cast himself and his father as different characters, to explore the dynamics of their relationship in alternative contexts and scenarios.[816] In a similar way, Carol and her friends imagined ways of fathering that differed from the distant breadwinning model enacted by other children in their games. Her essay reveals that play could be taken to opposite ends of the spectrum, by both emphasising stereotypical mothering and fathering roles *and* embellishing shared parenting practices.

The content of children's games may point to their perceptions of adult masculinity, such as in Carol's ideas about the King riding his young daughter to school. The notion that fathers acted as mediators between the private family space and the outside world was

[816] Frank Mort, 'Social and Symbolic Fathers and Sons in Postwar Britain', *Journal of British Studies,* 38.3 (1999), 353–84 (pp. 378–79).

important to conceptions and experiences of masculinity, particularly in the first half of the century.[817] This shifted slightly after the Second World War as the association between masculinity, work and the public sphere became less distinct as more women returned to the workplace after having children.[818] Nevertheless, the expectation that men should act as the protectors of children retained symbolic importance due to a heightened significance placed upon the sanctuary of the family home both during and after the war.[819]

The image of men as protective and mobile, and caring of their children, was a recurring trope of stories in *Wizard* from the interwar period but became particularly prevalent in *Dandy* in the 1950s, alongside representations of whole family adventures.[820] A pertinent example of this is 'Young Drake', a recurring serial from 1954 which focuses on the life of the young Sir Francis Drake. Drake's father is represented as a strong and brave man who saves his children from dangerous situations and affectionately comforts his young infant.[821] Popular culture influenced children's play patterns and the way they thought about the world. Barron and Langhamer argue that it is in children's 'imaginative spaces' that 'the most obvious evidence of cultural scripts can be seen'.[822] The prevalence of these representations in *Dandy* suggest that the editors wanted to provide positive examples of a heroic family-orientated fatherhood for the girls and boys who read the comic. Carol's game demonstrates that these kinds of masculine ideals were shaping both girls' and boys' ideas about fatherhood.

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[817] John Tosh, 'What Should Historians Do with Masculinity? Reflections on Nineteenth-Century Britain', *History Workshop*, 38, 1994, 179–202 (pp. 185–86); King, *Family Men*, pp. 163–64.
[818] Brooke, pp. 778–81.
[819] King, *Family Men*, pp. 163–64; Thomson, pp. 5–6.
[820] For example, *Wizard*, 'The Six-Gun Guardian', 19 June 1937, pp. 310-313; *Dandy*, 'Lion Boy', 25 February 1950, n.p.; *Dandy*, 'Long Tom's Treasure', 26 August 1950, n.p; *Dandy*, 'Cat's-Eye Kelly', 7 November 1959, n.p; *Dandy*, 'The Purple Cloud', 8 April 1961, n.p.; *Dandy*, 'Iron Hands', 19 August 1961', n.p.
[821] *Dandy*, 'Young Drake' 27 March 1954, n.p.; 17 April 1954, n.p.
[822] Barron and Langhamer, 'Feeling through Practice', pp. 110–11.

Representations of family-orientated masculinity in the *Dandy* differed from those aimed at adult men in the 1950s. Martin Francis argues that while there were growing cultural representations of fathering masculinities after the Second World War, many ex-servicemen wanted to relive the male comradeship they had experienced in wartime. War stories and films such as *Scott of the Antarctic* catered to this desire, showing that books and films presented men with varied masculine ideals.[823] Unisex comics such as *Dandy* presented a heroic fathering masculinity in its depiction of adult male characters and, as will be shown in chapter six, through the 1950s and 1960s representations of a distinctly home-centred fatherhood became more prominent.[824] *Dandy's* depictions of family-oriented masculinity might have been due to the fact that the comic was aimed at both girls and boys and tried to cater to both their interests in its stories. It was the one of the best-selling children's comics of the period, suggesting that these representations helped to create a younger generation who were more open-minded to a distinctly family- and home-orientated masculinity than their own parents were at the time.[825] In this sense, peer play *contributed* to the increasing societal acceptance of involved fathering practices in later decades of the century, when these children grew up and went onto become parents themselves.

5.3 Conclusion

This chapter has examined how toys and pretend play helped children to make sense of gendered parenting practices. The first section explored girls' socialisation into housewife and mother roles. It revealed that while girls often wanted to have dolls and toy domestic appliances to play with and imitated mothering and fathering behaviours in their games, the meanings they attached to these depended on their subjective experiences as children.

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[823] Martin Francis, 'A Flight from Commitment? Domesticity, Adventure and the Masculine Imaginary in Britain after the Second World War', *Gender & History*, 19.1 (2007), 163–85 (p. 177).
[824] *Dandy*, 'Black Bob', 1 September 1956, n.p; *Dandy*, 'Black Bob', 10 June 1961, n.p.; *Dandy*, 'Spunky and his Spider, 29 March 1968, n.p; *Dandy*, 'Spunky and his Spider', 2 August 1968, n.p.
[825] On Dandy's popularity see Chapman, p. 108.

In the interwar period, working-class girls wanted to play with dolls and toy washing sets and took on maternal identities when performing their routine chores, but this pretend play reflected their desire to escape from their own dull childhood jobs. In the 1950s and 1960s girls were less routinely involved in domestic and childrearing work, meaning that they saw cots, prams and dolls as well as toy cookers and irons as important objects in their imitation of mothering practices. Girls still played at 'mothers and fathers' in order to test the boundaries of parent-child relationships, but when playing with these toys in their games, they formed understandings of the value attached to these objects when used by mothers in real life.

Similarly, exaggerating maternal and paternal behaviours in their games served a specific purpose for boys and girls, as it allowed them to make sense of their own emerging gender identities. In play, children did not just adhere to gender stereotypes as the very nature of pretending allowed them to be inventive and explore different forms of parent-child relationships. In this sense, the nature of children's conservative and inventive play practices can help historians to make sense of change and continuity across generations. Expectations of both mothering and fathering intensified in the post-war period and new values of involved fathering practices, especially with regards to time spent with older children, had become prominent amongst some groups by the end of the century. However, fathers were still regarded as the main wage earners and mothers were seen as responsible for the intimacies of infant care.[826] Play, more so than children's accounts of their everyday experiences, shows that they were proactive in creating their own ideas and meanings about what parenting involved. Children's play shows us how ideas about gendered parenting practices were created, shared and normalised amongst groups of

[826] Chowbey and Salway, 244-245; Brannen and Nilsen, 342-344; Davis and King, 81-83.

boys and girls, contributing to changes and continuities in attitudes towards parenting roles through the latter decades of the century.

Chapter six continues to explore boys' and girls' imaginative worlds but does so by examining essays in which children envisaged their own future lives as parents. The chapter uses these essays to track children's shifting attitudes towards mothering and fathering roles across the mid-century. Much like chapter five, it argues that children's *imaginations* of parenthood were instrumental in driving the wider changes in ideas about gendered parenting practices which emerged later in the century.

Chapter Six: Looking towards the future: work and parenting in children's imaginations of their adult lives

Chapter five explored the way children described pretending to be parents in play. It showed that children assumed mother and father characters to challenge parental authority, examine their own place in the world as girls and boys and explore possibilities for different kinds of parent-child relationships. This chapter continues to explore children's imaginative worlds, by examining essays from Mass Observation, the Camberwell collection and the NCDS in which children were asked to write about their future selves. Creative exercises are important for revealing how children prioritised different aspects of their adult lives, including work and childrearing. Both girls and boys in the 1930s and 1950s predominantly believed that their future value lay in their chosen occupational paths. Children's tendency to discuss their occupations may have had something to do with the way the essay questions were phrased. In 1937, boys at a high school in Middlesbrough were asked to write an essay for the title 'When I leave school'; in 1938 elementary schoolgirls in Bolton were asked to compose an essay on the theme 'When I grow up' and both boys and girls in Camberwell in 1952 wrote essays for the title 'What I want to be when I leave school'. Only a handful of children mentioned the possibility of becoming parents in the future. This was perhaps due to the fact that these titles lent themselves to children discussing their post-school work plans rather than their longer-term imaginations of how their family lives might unfold. However, this chapter argues that children in these periods often focussed on their careers because both girls and boys believed their value lay first and foremost in paid work.

By 1969, children's priorities had changed. Rather than framing their future lives exclusively around a career, more boys and girls imagined themselves as both workers *and* parents. Again, this might have been due to the way the title was phrased. Children participating in the NCDS were asked specifically to write about 'your interests, your

home life and your work at the age of 25'. The mention of home and work in the question reveals why some children chose to talk about both a job and parenting. However, it is important to note that this was not a universal trend. Just under half of the 495 NCDS essayists, 48.1%, mentioned having children in the future and, of these essayists, 3.8% explicitly stated that they would not want to start a family of their own. In contrast, the other half made no mention of children.[827] The half who *did* mention having children represents a substantial change in children's aspirations over the mid-century. This chapter argues that this shift was due to the fact that children came to see parenthood as a significant adult identity in its own right.

Children's changing priorities help us to understand how attitudes towards work and parenting shifted across the century. Where boys mentioned fatherhood in 1937 and 1952, they made clear that their wages or occupational skills would be their most significant contribution to family life. By 1969, boys believed that emotionally involved and active father-child relationships would be an important part of their futures, with some deliberately choosing jobs that would afford them the opportunity to spend more time with their children. While a new family-orientated masculinity had emerged in the 1950s, this period marked a tentative shift in expectations and experiences of fatherhood. It was not until the latter decades of the century when some groups of men were able to be more fully involved in their children's upbringings.[828] However, boys' 1969 essays reveal that a far more certain family-orientated masculinity was developing amongst those growing up in the post-war period.

Girls' 1969 essays reveal a different trajectory in terms of their ideas about work and motherhood. In the decades following the Second World War, women made up a greater percentage of the workforce, with the most significant rises in employment rates taking

[827] Elliott and Morrow, pp. 17–18; see also Jane Elliott, p. 1081 (table 2).
[828] King, *Family Men*, p. 190.

place from the 1970s onwards.[829] Part-time work amongst women with dependent children rose from 36% in 1977 to 42% in 1996.[830] Girls writing in 1969 continued to believe that their future value lay in paid work, but assumed that they would be able to combine work with motherhood. In this sense, the attitudes of girls growing up in the 1960s and 1970s, at a time when it was becoming more common for working- and middle-class mothers to return to the workforce, accelerated this shift in thinking about the value of working mothers.[831]

This chapter argues that children's experiences in the late 1960s bridge the gap between parenting in the post-war period and the different parenting identities which had emerged by the 1990s and early 2000s. They were already growing up in a time of change with a lowering age of marriage, a championing of nuclear family life and shifting cultural ideas about mothering and fathering.[832] However, children's experiences accelerated a generational shift in attitudes. Children formed their own ideas about parenting and work from interpreting the examples seen around them, and aspired to models of childrearing that their own parents might not have had the resources of time or money to fully realise.

This chapter examines children's shifting aspirations in two parts. Firstly, it examines the roles that fatherhood played in boys' imaginations of their future lives. Secondly, it considers the relationship between work and motherhood in girls' essays. Interestingly, work and motherhood did appear together in girls' 1938 and 1952 essays, but in relation to one particular occupation - dressmaking. This chapter will consider why that is, before examining girls' more expansive discussions of work and motherhood in 1969.

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[829] B. Jane Elliott, p. 85.
[830] Zweiniger-Bargielowska, p. 158.
[831] On changes in married women's employment post-war see McCarthy, 'Women, Marriage and Paid Work', pp. 53, 58.
[832] Finch and Summerfield, pp. 6–7; Davidoff and others, pp. 200–201.

6.1 Work and fatherhood

In writing about their future lives, boys at Middlesbrough High School in 1937 set out their imagined lives from leaving school to retirement. In their analysis of this same set of essays, Barron and Langhamer argue that these narrative trajectories reflect the optimism boys held for the future, as they believed they would find satisfaction not only in their careers but also in their domestic lives and retirement too.[833] As well as discussing their homes lives more generally, a handful of boys also imagined potential fatherhood. Tellingly, however, this aspect of life was usually reserved for after their working lives had ended and retirement had begun. This can be seen in the way that Edward Lewis mapped out his future:

> When I leave school I will get a job somewhere … I will realise the school is a thing of the past, and I must do my work, and use my brains, and think about the future, with many years of work ahead of me. Perhaps I might get promotion if I work hard, and I could think about retiring, with a steady income, in my own house, and think about my children going to school. [834]

Edward manipulated stages of the life course as he envisaged, perhaps unrealistically, that he would be a father with young children only once he had retired from work. Edward understood his future value in terms of paid employment and regarded a sufficient income and home ownership as a reward for a life of 'hard work'.[835] He regarded money and a nice home as essential if he were to able to support his own children, showing why he divided his future life up in this way.

Similar themes can be seen in an essay by Charles Donaldson. He also imagined what his life might be like as a father and portioned his essay up into stages of the life course.

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[833] Barron and Langhamer, 'Children, Class, and the Search for Security', pp. 384–87.
[834] MOA, TC59/5/A, Edward Lewis, 'When I leave school', fols 134-135.
[835] Barron and Langhamer, 'Children, Class, and the Search for Security', p. 385.

Interestingly, he did not imagine that fatherhood was something that would follow work. Instead, he believed that the trajectory of his working life would determine the *kind* of relationships he would have with his wife and children:

> If I got any children I would let them go to a school where there was no homework. If I could afford the money I would pay for a tutor for some of my children … Then if I had no children I would enjoy myself with my wife … I would take her to places like Venice and Switzerland if I could afford the money. I would not allow my wife to work except for house-work … When I retire I should take my wife and children, if any, and settle down in a cottage at Bridlington. There I hope we would live in many more years of happiness and live to see our children all happily married.[836]

Charles' essay is dominated by monetary concerns, as his ability to be a good husband and father was conditional on his being able to earn a sufficient income. For instance, Charles felt that his success as a husband would be based on his ability to keep his wife out of work. In the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, it was widely accepted amongst the middle classes that married women should not work. This ideal also shaped working-class men and women's views about paid work, particularly in their desire for fathers to appear able to financially support their families.[837] Similarly, Charles hoped to earn enough to support his children's education. Boys attending Middlesbrough High School were likely to have been from working- or lower-middle-class families and, while scholarships were available, many described the financial sacrifices their parents made to enable them to pursue their education.[838] In this way, work and fatherhood complemented each other unlike paid work and motherhood which, as will be shown below, had a more

[836] MOA, TC59/5/A, Charles Donaldson, 'When I leave school', fols 199-200.
[837] Roberts, *A Woman's Place*, p. 136.
[838] Barron and Langhamer, 'Children, Class, and the Search for Security', pp. 371, 381.

complicated relationship. For this reason, parenting featured in boys' essays more explicitly than in girls'. Girls also believed that their future value lay in paid employment, but some boys thought that work would enhance their roles as fathers.[839] Essays written by high school students in Middlesbrough for the title 'The finest person who ever lived' reveal that they believed that money was an important part of a father's provision for their family. One fourteen-year-old stated that their father was the finest person who had ever lived because: 'He is just an ordinary man working to keep himself and his family alive. There are many such men, all of whom are looked on as fine persons by their children'.[840]

Charles and Edward effectively placed their paternal responsibilities in order of importance, as they saw earning money as their most pertinent task. This is not to say that boys did not see fathers spending time with their children as significant. One boy judged that a job working on the railways would be good as it would allow him to see his father before his father went to work, while other children described how their fathers played sport with them and took them to the cinema and to football matches.[841] Rather, boys believed breadwinning to be the most important aspect of their adult male identities, at least while of working age, in order to support their families.

On retirement, however, boys' priorities changed. As they had already fulfilled their breadwinning obligations, they believed they would be free to enjoy domestic life, fatherhood and potentially also grandfatherhood. Charles was able to imagine life unhindered by financial concerns after finishing work, spent in the company of his wife and children. Indeed, masculine ideals could also shift with age. Once older men were no longer in regular work and their masculinity was not so heavily tied to their breadwinner status, it was sometimes more acceptable for them to take on visible caring roles, or to

[839] See also MOA, TC59/5/A, Ron Norman, 'When I leave school', fols 407-408.
[840] MOA, TC59/4/F, R. Murton, 'The finest person who ever lived, fols 165-166.
[841] MOA, TC59/5/A, J. Smith, 'When I leave school', fols 214-216; MOA, TC59/4/F, C. Lowe, 'The finest person who ever lived', fol. 28; MOA, TC59/4/F, T. Spencer, 'The finest person who ever lived', fol. 158.

mind young grandchildren to enable their adult children to work.[842] Shifting from providing economically to spending time with their children reflected boys' understandings of the changing nature of familial masculinity across the life course. They believed they would be able to take up a different kind of father-child relationship once they had finished work.

The relationship between work and fathering in boys' essays remained similar after the Second World War. Even when thinking about fatherhood, boys continued to believe that men's occupational status remained the most important aspect of adult masculinity. John Neilson, for example, hoped to have a career as a lorry driver because 'you see the country and go to Oxford and pass famous places like Tower Bridge … [and] you can take your son to the country for a ride'.[843] Here John was perhaps referring to his own experiences of joining his father on long drives, or saw the ability to take a child along as a perk of the job. Manual work such as driving occasionally enabled men to take their children with them. In 1947, the children's page of the *Daily Mirror* printed a letter from twelve-year-old Alistair Ralson who described how his father, who worked at a butcher's shop, 'used to take me in the van while he delivered the meat'. While John and Alistair saw their fathers' job as a way to spend time together, this was within the context of work rather than leisure. Alistair described how he built on his experiences of delivering meat with his father to develop his own work-orientated identity:

> When I was four I helped him, and at five I took meat to the houses near the shop. Mummy made me a nice little butcher's apron, and I had a small basket for the meat. Now I am twelve years old and do a round on my own. [844]

[842] Laura King, '"Now You See a Great Many Men Pushing Their Pram Proudly"', *Cultural and Sociasl History*, 10.4 (2013), 599–617 (p. 605); Siân Pooley, '"Grandfathers, Grandmothers and the Inheritance of Parenthood in England, c. 1850-1914"', in *Parenthood between Generations*, ed. by Pooley and Qureshi, pp. 135–59 (pp. 143–44).
[843] MS. Opie 35, John Neilson, 'What I want to be when I leave school', fol. 202.
[844] *Daily Mirror*, 'World Post Box', 15 February 1947, p. 7.

Strange argues that adolescence marked a transition in father-child relationships in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries. At this age working-class boys joined their fathers in the workplace, facilitating the transmission of a work-based values and skills.[845] John and Alistair's writings reveal that into the mid-twentieth century, boys continued to regard occupational status as the most important part of fathering, and more broadly adult masculine, identity.

Some boys who entered Camberwell's 1952 essay competition framed their career choices around their father's, or sometimes their uncle's, example.[846] For instance, Andrew Carter wrote:

> When I leave school I want to be a carpenter and joiner … I want to be a carpenter because I want to follow my fathers footsteps. Another reason is that I would be able to make my own chairs and tables and things like that. My father does that now in his spare time.[847]

Andrew thought about the domestic applicability of his father's and his own potential carpentry skills. Men spent much of their time at home in the mid-century engaged in DIY projects, such as building and mending furniture as well as making toys for their children.[848] Many men took pride in doing practical jobs in the home and garden and believed that their DIY skills were an important medium through which they provided for their children alongside their wages.[849] Interestingly, however, Andrew did not choose a career in carpentry because it would make him useful at home in the future. Instead, this

[845] Strange, pp. 39–40. Strange, *Fatherhood and the British Working Class,* 39-40.
[846] For example MS. Opie 35, Lee Evans, 'What I want to be when I leave school', fol. 19; Sam Carter, fol. 20; Michael Davies, fol. 73; Ron Barker, fol. 78; Brian Johnson, fol. 129.
[847] MS. Opie 35, Andrew Carter 'What I want to be when I leave school', fols 21^{r}-21^{v}.
[848] Roberts, *Women and Families,* pp. 40-41.
[849] Bourke, pp. 89–90.

was merely an extra benefit to the job which he picked primarily to follow in his father's *occupational* footsteps.

Other boys chose their career paths based on theirs and their father's shared interests. Peter Arnold wrote:

> When I leave school I want to be in the RAF as an engineer. I want to be an engineer because my dad was an engineer. When I went to the Festival of Britain we went to the place where the planes were because my dad knew about the planes and he could show me the interesting things about them. He told me what engines he worked on and what planes he flew in … My dad was an engineer during the war.[850]

Peter's essay reflected his experiences of growing up in wartime and having a father in the forces. Sonya Rose argues that boys growing up in wartime were eager to join the forces themselves to prove their own masculine vigour.[851] Peter's essay demonstrates that those growing up post-war felt the same desire to follow their fathers into dangerous but ultimately worthwhile occupations to demonstrate their own bravery and heroism. Peter's essay, along with many others from the Camberwell collection, demonstrate that boys enjoyed spending leisure time with their fathers, such as going to the park, seeing their football team play or playing board games in the evenings.[852] When it came to envisaging their own futures, however, boys clearly believed that their careers would be the most important part of adulthood. Boys' ideas about masculinity, work and fatherhood, and

[850] MS. Opie 35, Peter Arnold, 'What I want to be when I leave school', fol. 76; see also David Newman, fol. 81.
[851] Sonya O. Rose, *Which People's War?: National Identity and Citizenship in Wartime Britain 1939-1945* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), p. 160; James Greenhalgh, pp. 173–75.
[852] For example MS. Opie 34, Christopher Wallis, 'The best way to spend a winter evening', fol. 137; Larry Hunter, fols 220^{r}-220^{v}; Phillip Cooper, fols 297^{r}-297^{v}.

their priorities for their lives, remained rather static between the interwar and immediate post-war years.

Boys writing in the late 1960s had different conceptions of fathers' family roles, which were reflected in their ambitions for the future. Alongside describing their careers, many boys also devoted time to imagining their lives with a wife and children. One working-class boy wrote:

> My work is football. I am getting on quite well as a footballer. I have quite abit of money in the bank. I have two children and a wife. We are all very happy in my house. My oldest child is 8 years of age. He wants to be a footballer just like myself. My youngest child is two. She wants to play Tennis when she is older. We mostly watch Tennis games and football games when I am not at work. I usually get up very early for training. I sometimes take my son with me I think he has a good time. When I come home from work I mostly take my wife out to the Cinema. I hardly ever stay at home. When I do I mostly have a rest. At all other time I'm mostly giving my son football practice and my daughter some tennis practice.[853]

This boy attached a great significance to his occupational identity as a footballer, which he believed would be a source of inspiration for his son and would give the family financial stability. While he thought that work would consume most of his time, he also regarded leisure as an enjoyable part of fatherhood. Another working-class boy similarly envisaged himself as a father and wrote, 'I am leading a life of being a shop assistant, and my interests are getting full pay, [and] playing "footing" football with my children',

[853] CLS, NCDS, SN: 5790, N11064H, boy, manual father.

showing how work and fatherhood sat alongside each other as his two main preoccupations in adulthood.[854]

Some essayists even thought that fatherhood and leisure time spent with children would be their main focus in life. One middle-class boy chose his career as a postman specifically so that he could spend more time with his wife and children:

> I want to be a postman so that I will see more of my famely when it is done homelife is that I will not sit in the house i will doe some wood work at home to make some thing like a chair or a table for us to have food and in sper time I willl take my falmay out to the [park].[855]

Another middle-class boy felt that, while a good career was important to 'earn enough money to keep a family going', his relationship with his children would be his main priority:

> At home I would still watch television, play the guitar and most of all I would give my children [a] good education, I would always help them in difficulties and if they ever wanted any help with anything I would help … if I was to split my life up 60% would go towards my children 30% for work and 10% for pleasure.[856]

Prioritising the pleasurable aspects of fatherhood above the financial was more common amongst middle-class boys than their working-class counterparts. One working-class boy wrote ‘with my wages I will pay bills for my house and I will look after my wife and children’.[857] Nevertheless, having ample opportunity to spend with their children around

[854] CLS, NCDS, SN: 5790, N26329Q, boy, manual father.
[855] CLS, NCDS, SN: 5790, N26881K, boy, non-manual.
[856] CLS, NCDS, N25372P, boy, non-manual father.
[857] CLS, NCDS, N13992Y, boy, manual father.

work was important to both middle- and working-class boys' conceptions of themselves as fathers in this period.[858]

Cultural expectations of fatherhood shifted and expanded across the mid-century and particularly after the Second World War. Improving housing conditions and reducing family sizes afforded fathers and children more space to spend time playing together, and rising wages also enabled families to engage in leisure activities outside the home.[859] In this way, time became an increasingly important part of men's provision for their families alongside money.[860] Data from the NCDS about the cohort of eleven-year-old children in 1969 shows that 62% of mothers reported that fathers played 'an equal role in managing the child'.[861] However, historians and sociologists have shown many factors could prevent fathers from spending *significant* amounts of time with their children in this period, such as the continued need for some men to work overtime.[862] Why, then, did many boys in this 1969 sample aspire to an ambitious model of fatherhood and a future in which work and time spent with children played equally important roles?

A central reason for boys' aspirations was that fathers and children measured involvement differently. King argues, for instance, that fathers invested a wealth of emotional significance in small moments spent with their young children, moments which adult children reflecting back on their early years did not often remember. This meant that while fathers believed that they had been involved in their children's lives, their offspring sometimes contested this claim.[863] Boys growing up in 1969 similarly wanted to be active

[858] For example, CLS, NCDS, SN: 5790, N25571U, boy, non-manual father; N16123X, boy, non-manual father; N11409N, boy, manual father; N12080M, boy, manual father.
[859] Newson and Newson, *Childhood into Adolescence*, pp. 61-62 (table 4.4); Roberts, *Women and Families*, pp. 154–56; Bourke, p. 85; Langhamer, 'The Meanings of Home', pp. 352, 355; Langhamer, *Women's Leisure*, pp. 36–38, 138.
[860] King, *Family Men*, p. 17.
[861] Jane Elliott, p. 1080.
[862] Davis and King, pp. 81-82; Newson and Newson, *Seven Years Old*, p. 276.
[863] King, *Family Men*, pp. 101, 187-88.

in their children's lives but believed that involvement required something more than their own fathers would probably have been able to achieve at the time.

In a study of contemporary fathering practices among South Asian men in Britain, Punita Chowbey and Sarah Salway argue that men recognised that their father's involvement in their own upbringing had been restricted by to their family's migration to Britain. These men valued the 'limited time spent together' with their fathers as children but recalled these memories 'with a deep longing for greater physical and emotional intimacy' and detailed the ways in which they were trying to be more involved in their own children's lives.[864] Chowbey and Salway suggest that having children prompted men to think more deeply about their relationships with fathers. Boys' 1969 essays show, however, that they did not need to wait to become fathers before thinking about the kind of upbringing they would want to provide for their own children later in life. For boys, *imagining* their lives as fathers offered a powerful tool for reflection, long before actually having children. As Dawson argues, 'masculinities are lived out in the flesh, but fashioned in the imagination' and these boys' imagined fathering identities were responses to their 'real social relations'.[865]

Boys' aspirations for involved fatherhood mapped onto changing representations of father-child relationships presented in children's comics in the 1960s and 1970s. Stories about fathers and sons spending time together at home featured in *Wizard* in the 1930s and *Dandy* in the 1950s, but fathers and sons were often depicted teasing one another. 'Softie Simpkins' was a picture strip which ran in *Wizard* in the late 1930s. The strip followed the adventures of Softie and his interactions with his family, friends and neighbours. The stories were frequently set in the Simpkins's living room and explored

[864] Chowbey and Salway, pp. 236–38, 240–46.
[865] Dawson, pp. 1, 261.

the relationship between Softie and his father.[866] In a 1939 edition of the strip, Softie's father is changing the time on their clock in the living room and asks Softie to go and check the time on the clock on the corner of the road. His father gets annoyed when Softie is gone for a while and when he returns, Softie claims that there is an issue with his glasses, as he can't read the time. His father goes to check the clock on the corner himself, only to find that the hands have been taken off while it is being repaired. He shouts at Softie: '"Chump! The clock's under repair! There are no hands on it!"' and hits him.[867]

Similar stories appeared in *Dandy* in the 1950s. 'The Tricks of Screwy Driver' was a recurring comic strip which featured from the mid-1950s and focused on young Screwy's attempts to help his father and grandfather with DIY projects around the house. In most stories, Screwy gets things wrong, leading to his father or grandfather being injured and Screwy ending up in trouble as a result. In a 1955 edition, Screwy makes himself a pair of roller skates by taking the casters off the back legs of an armchair. Screwy's father and grandfather are out collecting apples and, when they return, Screwy's father sits in the armchair and topples backwards, hurting his head. Screwy's father exclaims, 'I'll bet that was Screwy's doing! Wait till I lay my hands on him!'[868]

Both *Wizard* and *Dandy* featured a range of father figures. In adventure stories set away from the home, men are often depicted as heroic and family-focused, saving their wives and children from danger, as demonstrated in chapter five.[869] In domestic stories such as 'Softie Simpkins' and the 'The Tricks of Screwy Driver', however, there is frequently an uneasy tension between fathers and sons, as the son might end up in trouble at any

[866] *Wizard,* 'Softie Simpkins', 27 April 1935, n.p.; 13 July 1935, n.p.; 17 August 1935, n.p.; 13 March 1937, n.p.
[867] *Wizard*, 'Softie Simpkins', 7 January 1939, n.p.
[868] *Dandy*, 'The Tricks of Screwy Driver', 3 December 1955, n.p.
[869] For example, *Wizard*, 'The Six-Gun Guardian', 19 June 1937, pp. 310-313; *Dandy,* 'Lion Boy', 25th February 1950, n.p.; *Dandy*, 'Long Tom's Treasure', 26th August 1950, n.p; *Dandy*, 'Cat's-Eye Kelly', 7 November 1959, n.p; *Dandy*, 'The Purple Cloud', 8 April 1961, n.p.; *Dandy*, 'Iron Hands', 19 August 1961', n.p.

moment. A key reason for the differences in these representations of father-son relationships was because stories set in the home were intended to be funny, slapstick depictions of family relationships.

The mid-1960s marked a shift in representations of father-son relationships in *Dandy* in continuing serials, such as 'Spunky and his Spider' and 'Dirty Dick'. In these comic strip stories, fathers were more often depicted spending time at home with their families. A pertinent example of this is 'Spunky and his Spider', about schoolboy Spunky and his pet spider Scamper. Spunky's father is a regular and prominent feature of these stories. Spunky and his father spend time together in the home doing gardening, DIY projects or helping Spunky's mother with jobs around the house, and also enjoy days out to the circus, berry picking, sledging, camping and fishing.[870] Importantly, they are portrayed as friendly and helpful to one another. In a story from March 1968, for example, Spunky takes the day off school and his father takes the day off work and they go fishing together. In August 1968, Spunky and his father go berry picking. His father says '"It's a nice day for berry-picking, Spunky"' and he replies '"Sure is Dad"'.[871] Basher, the father from the family living next door to Spunky, often tries to ruin their fun activities. Spunky and his father plot together to counteract Basher's unwanted interruptions.[872]

Similarly, a 1970 story from the continuing serial 'Dirty Dick' sees schoolboy Dick ending up in trouble with his mother for making a mess. Dick's mother sends him to his room without any tea, but his father later sneaks up to see him: "'Psst! Dick! It's Dad – I've brought you some tea!"' However, Dick and his father end up in further trouble when they accidently cause more damage, and his mother bars them both from the house: '"It's all your fault Dick! It'll be safer if you go and play football – and take Dad with you!"'[873]

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[870] *The Dandy*, 'Spunky and his Spider', 10 June 1967, n.p.; 24 August 1968, n.p.; 20 March 1969, n.p.; 10 January 1970, n.p.; 7 February 1970, n.p.; 8 August 1970, n.p.
[871] *Dandy*, 'Spunky and his Spider', 24th August 1968, n.p.
[872] For example, *Dandy*, 'Spunky and his Spider', 16 August 1969, n.p.; 11 October 1969, n.p.
[873] *Dandy*, 'Dirty Dick', 17 October 1970, n.p.

The fathers and sons in these serials are depicted as combinable co-conspirators and there is little tension between them, unlike in serials from the 1930s and 1950s. There were some stories in *Dandy* in the early 1950s which showed fathers and sons enjoying each other's company. In the comic strip 'Rusty', for example, schoolboy Rusty and his father do gardening together and watch the cricket.[874] Representations of these types of father-son relationships, however, appeared to become more common in the 1960s.

This shift in representations of masculinity in the 1960s is not surprising. The importance of father-son relationships for boys' emotional development was increasingly being stressed by psychologists and social commentators in the post-war period.[875] At the same time, organisations such as the Boy Scouts were trying to create a home-focussed ideal of masculinity for its young members, to prepare boys for their future familial and societal responsibilities in peacetime England.[876] Stories in which fathers got angry with their sons still appeared in *Dandy*. 'The Tricks of Screwy Driver' continued to feature in *Dandy* into the 1970s, in which Screwy's father gets cross with him for his DIY mishaps and turns to corporal punishment.[877] However, the increasing representations of friendly father-son relationships are significant.

These shifting representations are important for understanding boys' ambitious plans for future fatherhood in 1969. The stories created a family-orientated and home-centred model of fatherhood for boys growing up at this time, one where fathers and sons spent significant amounts of time together engaged in fun leisure activities at home and away from it. It was unlikely that many men in this period would have had the time to deliver this model of fatherhood themselves. Newson and Newson's study of the home lives of

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[874] *Dandy*, 'Rusty', 6 September 1952, n.p.; 6 December 1952, n.p.
[875] King, *Family Men*, pp. 117-121.
[876] Sarah Mills, 'Youth on Streets and Bob-a-Job Week: Urban Geographies of Masculinity, Risk, and Home in Postwar Britain', *Environment and Planning A*, 46.1 (2014), 112–28 (pp. 120–22); Abigail Wills, 'Delinquency, Masculinity and Citizenship in England 1950–1970', *Past & Present*, 187.1 (2005), 157–85 (pp. 168–73).
[877] For example *Dandy*, 'The Tricks of Screwy Driver', 1 May 1971, n.p.; 27 November 1971, n.p.

seven-year-olds in the mid-1960s found that while fathers expressed affection towards their children and shared interests with them, it could be difficult for both working- and middle-class fathers to find large amounts of time to be with their children. Fathers with manual occupations, for example, could be too tired to engage much with their children after a day at work. Men with professional occupations sometimes continued working into the evenings or brought work home with them.[878] Brian Jackson's study of fathering practices in the mid-1970s similarly shows that while many men were more active in their children's lives than fathers in the 1950s had been, 'half the fathers in Britain seldom see their young child, except over a busy breakfast, a complicated weekend or a welcome holiday' as 40% of fathers 'came home to a five-year-old who was already fast asleep [and] … 11% were not there at the weekends either'.[879] The data from these studies reveal that family life in the post-war period was complicated and the time fathers had to spend with their children was often limited.

Cultural depictions of father-son relationships in comics such as *Dandy* may have enabled boys to envisage a future with their own children that was more involved than the relationships they currently had with their own fathers. Of course, as John Tosh argues, the relationship between cultural constructions and lived experiences of masculinity is difficult to ascertain. The approach that Tosh advocates is a 'culturally inflected social history' which sets everyday practice within the context 'of the considerable weight of contemporary discourse'.[880] Taking this approach here suggests that representations of fatherhood could, in some cases, be more important in shaping boys' aspirations than their lived relationships with their fathers at the time. One boy with no father figure wrote

[878] John Newson and Elizabeth Newson, *Seven Years Old in the Home Environment* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1976; repr. London: Routledge, 2018), pp. 272-78.
[879] Jackson, *Fatherhood*, pp. 21-22.
[880] John Tosh, 'The History of Masculinity: An Outdated Concept?', in *What Is Masculinity?: Historical Dynamics from Antiquity to the Contemporary World*, ed. by John H. Arnold and Sean Brady (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), pp. 17–34 (pp. 25, 29, 31).

that 'I would like my children to [be] happy and I would like to be able to take them out to places. I would [like] to have a car and be able to take the children abroad'.[881] This boy was perhaps hoping for an active relationship with his future children that he had not experienced himself.

Of course, when the boys writing in 1969 came to have children in later life, they would have come up against many of the same barriers that had prevented their own fathers from spending much time with them when they were young, such as having to work long hours.[882] However, by the end of the century, attitudes were shifting as it became more acceptable for fathers to take an active role in their children's upbringing. In their study of fatherhood across four generations, Julia Brannen and Ann Nilsen note that at the turn of the twenty-first century fathers were increasingly "'child-orientated'", as they 'placed priority on relationships with their *children* as well as upon family life'.[883] A small minority of fathers were also taking steps to change their working patterns in order to share caring responsibilities with mothers on a more equal basis.[884] Boys' essays reveal that changing attitudes towards fathering by the end of the century were rooted in and accelerated by the childhoods of those growing up in the 1960s.

King argues that the post-war years acted as an 'intermediate period between an earlier time in which father's involvement was limited by a number of different factors, and the latter decades of the twentieth century, in which fully involved fathering practices became increasingly common amongst at least amongst some social groups'.[885] This chapter agrees that the post-war period marked a shift in fathering identities. However, the analysis presented here illustrates that it was the experiences of children *born* in the 1950s rather than the experiences of adult men, that were more important in driving changing

[881] CLS, NCDS, SN 5970, N15012M, boy, no father figure.
[882] Davis and King, pp. 81-83; Chowbey and Salway, p. 243.
[883] Brannen and Nilsen, pp. 339–41 (emphasis in the original).
[884] Davis and King, pp. 83-85.
[885] King, *Family Men*, p. 86.

attitudes towards fatherhood. As King shows, the 1950s were marked by the emergence of a 'fragile' family-orientated masculinity, whereas a far more certain one developed amongst their sons.[886]

While boys in 1969 were keen to spend *time* with their future children, it should be noted that they were less certain about their abilities to *care* for them, especially when their wives were not present. One boy imagined his life as a father with a baby and believed that he would have difficulties looking after the infant on his own. He wrote: 'I have to feed the baby while my [wife] goes shopping … When my wife comes home I get shouted at because I didn't feed the baby properly'.[887] Similarly, another boy envisaged marriage and fatherhood: 'If we have some children I will take them to the park and it take a ball aswell so we could play football. When I am 25 it will be hard work for me to keep the children in good order when my wife is out'.[888]

Davis and King argue that until the end of the century, it was widely assumed that 'men were less able to care for babies (as opposed to older children)' than women.[889] Boys' essays reveal that they had doubts about their abilities to care for children of any age. Children's comics reinforced ideas about gendered childcare practices. Boys were not often depicted caring for babies or younger children but on occasions when they were, they usually did a poor job of it.[890] In a 1969 edition of the continuing serial 'Bodger the Bookworm' in *Dandy*, schoolboy Bodger is asked by his mother to look after a group of small children while she and the children's mothers attend a meeting. Bodger tries to read the children 'Gulliver's Travels' but they end up running riot, tying Bodger down on the floor, raiding the pantry and generally causing havoc, until Bodger restores order by

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[886] King, *Family Men*, p. 190.
[887] CLS, NCDS, SN: 5790, N20897T, boy, non-manual father.
[888] CLS, NCDS, SN: 5790, N12611S, boy, non-manual father.
[889] Davis and King, 82.
[890] *Wizard*, 'Softie Simpkins', 17 August 1935, n.p.; Wizard, 'Softie Simpkins', 7 September 1935, n.p.; *Dandy*, 'The Smasher', 26 October 1968, n.p.

trapping the children in a playpen.[891] By comparison, *Girls' Crystal* and *Bunty* regularly featured stories in which girls were tasked with looking after infants. They have no problems with looking after their young charges and are depicted as being naturally suited to the role.[892] These representations presented baby and childcare as a job more naturally suited to girls than boys. While boys in 1969 hoped to be able to achieve a degree of flexibility in their working lives in order to spend time with their children, this time centred primarily on *leisure* activities rather than practical caring duties.

6.2 Work and motherhood

Much like their male counterparts, working-class girls in Bolton in 1938 framed their future life narratives around practical occupations. For the most part, they tended to imagine themselves as young women in their late teens and early twenties who, while living in the family home, had jobs and a degree of social independence. Girls wrote about their future selves as hairdressers, nurses, teachers, shop assistants and secretaries, while one or two even dreamt of life as a film star.[893] Their focus on pursuing occupations is not surprising, given that between the ages of fourteen and twenty-five (the average age at which women married in the 1930s), working-class women had the opportunity to work, earn a degree of financial and economic autonomy and enjoy leisure time before getting married.[894] Girls were not generally thinking about marriage or motherhood, as this part of their lives seemed a long way off, as Anne Cooper made clear: 'I might get married & then again I might not I shall have to wait quite a long time yet'.[895] Indeed, *Girls' Crystal* featured stories about young women pursuing careers in the late interwar

[891] *Dandy*, 'Bodger the Bookworm', 22 February 1969, n.p.
[892] *Girls' Crystal*, 'When the Floods came to St Lynn's', 14 March 1959, pp. 1-3; *Girls' Crystal*, 'Cherry and the Children', 23 January 1960, pp. 1-2; *Bunty*, 'Little Mum', 21 January 1967, pp. 24-25.
[893] MOA, TC59/5/D, Mary Wallace, 'When I grow up', , fol. 56; Tess Hawkins, fol. 60; Rebecca Bird, fol. 72.
[894] Langhamer, *The English in Love*, pp. 5-6; Langhamer, *Women's Leisure*, pp. 51-57; Davies, p. 86; Todd, pp. 802-04; Alexander, p. 249.
[895] MOA, TC59/5/D, 'When I grow up', Anne Cooper, fol. 71.

years, with serials about teachers, nurses, seamstresses, as well as film stars and rally car drivers, which created a picture of independent womanhood for its young readers.[896]

Generally, though, girls growing up in this period did not strive for the adventurous careers depicted in the pages of girls' comics. Instead, girls' aspirations for womanhood were rooted in their immediate locale and intimately tied their perceptions of life around them. A pressing concern for girls in this essay set was avoiding having to work in the local textile mill. This was the case for one nine-year-old child who envisaged their life as a dressmaker:

> When I grow up I should like to be a dressmaker. I have chosen this because it is not as bad being in a hot mill all day and then coming out into the cold streets. Or if you work in a shop you cannot go out till after eight o clock, and on Saturday when all young people like going out it is late when you are free, for on Saturday the shops are open till nine o clock. In a dressmakers shop you go home early each day and you are not rushed too much. Dressmaking teaches you to sew properly by hand at machine. It makes you useful at home for you can make clothes for the family, and it is useful for when you get older and want to run a shop of your own.[897]

This child did not write their name on their essay, but the fact that they chose a career in dressmaking suggests that the writer was a girl. Taking up an apprenticeship to train to as a dressmaker or tailoress was a common ambition amongst working-class girls leaving school in the early-twentieth century.[898] As well as allowing her to escape working in a hot and stuffy mill, she believed that dressmaking would allow her to enjoy a satisfying

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[896] Audrey Nicholls, 'Nurse Rosemary', *Girls' Crystal*, 26 October 1935, pp. 22-24; Gail Western, 'Tony the Speed Girl', *Girls' Crystal*, 2 November 1935, p. 7; Pearl Fairland, 'Film Struck Fay', *Girls' Crystal*, 9 November 1935, pp. 23-35; see also Tinkler, p. 74.
[897] MOA, TC/59/5/D, no name, 'When I grow up', fols 74-75.
[898] Roberts, *A Woman's Place*, p. 53.

social life, unlike her peers whose working hours as shop assistants might restrict their leisure time. Young unmarried working-class women with a wage in the mid-1930s were able to engage in the expanding leisure opportunities of the interwar period, such as cinemas and dancehalls.[899]

She also reflected on how her sewing skills would prove useful at home. Interestingly, this was a secondary thought as it came at the end of her essay. Todd argues that the lives of young unmarried working-class women were still largely subject to parental control. Parents decided how late their daughters could stay out in the evenings and how much of their wages they should contribute to the household budget.[900] Many girls were also expected to help their mothers with domestic work and childcare, which could impinge on their leisure time.[901] Examining the writings of girls in which they looked forward to their lives as young adults, rather those of older women reflecting back on youth, reveals that girls did not necessarily see family obligation as a hallmark of their futures. References to helping their families appeared relatively rarely in this particular set of essays, showing that girls felt that their future value lay predominately in paid work, rather than in domestic life. Indeed, this child's reference to being 'useful at home' was arguably only mentioned because their occupational skill as a dressmaker would allow them to be so, and it was not a major factor in their decision making.

This attitude can also be seen in an essay written by Emily Birch, who similarly envisaged her life as a dressmaker. She wrote:

[899] Todd, pp. 802-05.
[900] Todd, pp. 796-97.
[901] Langhamer, *Women's Leisure*, pp. 94-96.

> I think I should be happy if I could be a dressmaker. I like it because people would rather have their clothes made by someone whom they know. Also you can make [clothes] for yourself and the family and it would be a lot cheaper for me.[902]

Emily chose dressmaking because she believed it would make her 'happy', while the inclusion of the phrase 'also' suggests that the ability to make clothes for her family was an additional perk of the job, rather than the main selling point. Being able to make clothes for their families was a skill which girls thought was more useful for mothers rather than young unmarried women. For example, Linda Jackson hoped to work in a tailoring shop, a job which her mother had once done. She chose this career as, '[sewing] is the only thing I can do very neatly … At first I thought I would like to cook but I found myself better at sewing'. Linda thought about how else her sewing skills might be useful: 'I can make my own clothes later on and at night you can sew and make money. My mother used to work in a tailor's shop and she makes all my clothes'.[903]

The ability to make clothes was a useful money-saving skill for working-class mothers, especially in industrial mill towns.[904] Working-class mothers often had to find some means of earning money to contribute to the household budget, and forms of homeworking such as taking in washing or sewing were popular choices, as they allowed women to fit paid work around their domestic and childcare responsibilities.[905] Drawing on women's oral testimonies, Roberts argues that women did not look positively on their having had to work as young mothers in the interwar years and stressed that they only did so in times of 'family need'. When wives worked, this was often taken as a sign that men were unable to provide for their families.[906] Linda's writing shows, however, that she was

[902] MOA, TC/59/5/D, Emily Birch, 'When I grow up', fol. 68.
[903] MOA, TC/59/5/D, Linda Jackson, 'When I grow up', fol. 90.
[904] Roberts, *A Woman's Place*, p. 162.
[905] Roberts, *A Woman's Place*, p. 136.
[906] Roberts, *A Woman's Place*, p. 136.

proud that her mother was able to use her occupational skills for the benefit of her children.

These girls' essays provide a different perspective on the paid work that mothers did to those of adult women. Girls did not see women using their dressmaking skills to save and earn money for their families as an unavoidable solution to family poverty. Rather, they saw this as a positive advantage to having a talent for sewing. Girls viewed resourcefulness as crucial for working-class womanhood, and because of the value they saw in paid work for their *own* futures, girls were freer than married women to talk about the sense of achievement they believed the women around them felt at being able to provide for their families in their own ways. Historians have shown that older women were often hesitant to admit that they worked when they were young mothers or attempted to minimise the importance of their own wages in comparison to their husband's, due to dominant cultural ideals of breadwinning masculinity.[907] Girls' essays provide a different generational insight and show that, as children, they were proud of their mothers using their occupational skills at home. While not a major factor in determining their occupational choices, their mothers' examples nevertheless inspired them in thinking about the domestic applicability of their skills.

In 1952, girls imagined an array of potential careers for themselves, including as teachers, nurses, typists and vets.[908] Much like their 1938 counterparts, girls only imagined themselves as future mothers in relation to a career in dressmaking. Jane Withers wrote: 'When I am old enough I would like to be a dress designer … My mummy is a dress maker herself, I often sit and watch her, making dresses for me and herself. While I am watching I think how nice it will be to be able to learn how to make all these things

[907] Smith Wilson, pp. 207-08; Davis, *Modern Motherhood*, p. 146.
[908] Ms. Opie 35, Jean Dawes, 'What I want to be when I leave school', fol. 33; Annie Sawyer, fol. 38; Marion Hughes, fol. 47; Caroline Johnson, fol. 49.

myself'.[909] For most girls, their mothers' working in this occupation was not often the main reason for them wanting to be dressmakers. Much like their 1938 counterparts, girls' career choices were based around what they felt they were good at and what they would enjoy. Louise Robbins hoped to be a dressmaker 'because I see so many lovely dresses in the shops'. She went on to write that 'Dress-making comes handy when you have got some children of your own because you can make their own clothes. My friend's mother makes all her coats, hats and dresses. She is making me a dress for Christmas'.[910] The collective 'you' in her sentence 'when you have got some children' suggests that Louise was not explicitly thinking about her own potential motherhood, but rather reflecting on the patterns of maternal work she saw around her.[911] This can also be seen in an essay by Ann Stevens who wrote:

> When I grow up I would make every dress that I wear. My mother is a dressmaker and makes my clothes with a machine and sometimes by hand. [If] I had some children I will make their clothes like my mother does to me. I would knit their cardegans and jumpers and in the winter I will knit their hats and scarfs.[912]

Ann talked about the explicit benefits she gained from her mother's work as a dressmaker, a benefit which she planned to use in turn if ever she had children. When these girls thought about motherhood, however, they did so through the lens of a career as the birth of children was not a defining feature of their narratives. Rather, much like their 1938 counterparts, girls prioritised finding an occupation that they would be good at, which might also happen to prove 'handy' if ever they had children.

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[909] MS. Opie 35, Jane Withers, 'What I want to be when I leave school', fols 3^{r} - f.3^{v}.
[910] MS. Opie 35, Louise Robbins, 'What I want to be when I leave school', fols 131^{r} – 131^{v}.
[911] For an examination of the use of collective pronouns in personal testimony, see Hall, 'The Emotional Lives and Legacies', pp. 63-64.
[912] MS. Opie 35, Ann Stevens, 'What I want to be when I leave school', fol. 110.

In 1969, significantly more girls than in 1938 or 1952 imagined themselves as mothers. As we saw in chapter one, rates of marriage amongst women in their early twenties had increased significantly by the early 1970s.[913] Marriage and motherhood would therefore have seemed inevitable for children asked to write about their lives at age twenty-five. As in the 1938 and 1952 essay sets most girls continued to see paid work as their main priority. Those who envisaged themselves as mothers often believed that motherhood was something that they would be able to combine unproblematically with a career. One working-class girl wrote:

> I am fully grown up now and I have a job as a vet sergon … When the day is over I go home and start cooking for my children and husband.[914]

Another working-class girl imagined that she and her future husband would both be working as teachers while their three-year-old daughter went to nursery school. She wrote: 'I enjoy being a teacher and a mother'.[915] A similar view was prevalent amongst middle-class girls. One girl, for instance, imagined, 'I am now a vet, I'm married with one child. My husband is also a vet, we work together … I like my job very much'.[916] This represented a shift in attitudes towards working motherhood over the mid-century. Joyce Joseph surveyed the opinions of 600 adolescent girls in 1956 towards work and marriage. The girls were asked 'will you continue to work after you are married', and 61% answered yes and 39% answered no. They were then asked 'will you take up work again when your children are old enough to be left?' 50% answered yes and 50% answered no.[917] After the Second World War, the point at which women were expected

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[913] Coleman, 'Population and Family', p. 58.
[914] CLS, NCDS, SN: 5790, N26823Z, girl, manual father.
[915] CLS, NCDS, SN: 5790, N15368N, girl, manual father.
[916] CLS, NCDS, SN: 5790, N10555T, girl, non-manual father.
[917] Joyce Joseph, 'A Research Note on Attitudes to Work and Marriage of Six Hundred Adolescent Girls', *The British Journal of Sociology*, 12.2 (1961), 176–83 (pp. 178-179 (tables 2 and 3)).Joyce Joseph, 'A Research Note on Attitudes to Work and Marriage of Six Hundred Adolescent Girls', *The British Journal of Sociology*, 12.2 (1961), 176-183 (p. 178-9 (tables 2 and 3)).

to stop work shifted from when they married (as had been common in the interwar period) to when they had their first baby.[918] Joseph concluded that girls' ideas reflected women's employment situations at the time, as it was 'easier for a married woman to continue in her job after marriage than to re-enter the labour market after a long period at home'.[919]

Some girls writing for the NCDS in 1969 said they would give up work after having children or imagined themselves being full-time mothers.[920] However, many girls who envisaged themselves with children in 1969 described how they would combine work with motherhood or return to work once their children were slightly older.[921] The essays written by these eleven-year-old girls shows that a significant shift in opinions towards working motherhood occurred in the 1960s. The ideas that girls expressed in 1969 would probably have been shaped by changes in women's employment patterns after the Second World War. In the post-war period it became more common for mothers to return to the workforce, although it was only generally deemed acceptable for women to work again once their youngest child was in school, and this trend was made possible by a rise in opportunities for part-time work.[922] Working-class mothers had always worked when necessary and they were generally the first to return to the workplace in a part-time capacity in the 1940s and 1950s.[923] Davis suggests that in the 1960s, middle-class mothers also increasingly returned to work and that women with professional careers attempted to continue with them after having children.[924] The percentage of women working also rose from 21.7% in 1951 to 45.4% in 1961 and 51.3% in 1971.[925] Much like their counterparts

[918] B. Jane Elliott, p. 86.
[919] Joseph, p. 180.
[920] For example CLS, NCDS, SN: 5790, N22765Q, girl, non-manual father; N23358H, girl, manual father; N10876H, girl, non-manual father; N12633Y, girl, non-manual; N13168Y, female, no father figure; N19168Y, girl, manual father; N22100D, girl, manual father; N28280Y, girl, non-manual father.
[921] For example, CLS, NCDS, SN: 5790, N16612K, girl, no father figure; N17496D, girl, no father figure; N17872H, girl, non-manual father; N18348W, girl, non-manual father.
[922] B. Jane Elliott, p. 208.
[923] Smith Wilson, pp. 208-209.
[924] Davis, *Modern Motherhood*, pp. 145, 161.
[925] Smith Wilson, p. 209 (table 1).

in 1938 and 1952, girls continued to believe their future value lay in paid work. Arguably, many girls in 1969 only mentioned children because the growing visibility of working motherhood made them believe that the two could be easily combined, even though the reality was often much harder for women at the time.[926]

Girls' 1969 writings not only reflected changes in women's lives but also represented the beginnings of a significant generational shift in attitudes towards mothers working, particularly when they had young children. Angela Davis's interviews with women who were born in the 1940s and had children between the late 1960s and 1980s were wary about the growing tendency for mothers in the 2000s to combine the care of children with a full-time profession. They believed that women ended up missing out on important years in their children's lives.[927] By comparison, in 1969 girls imagined themselves working in a range of occupations, including as vets, teachers, nurses, managers, shop assistants and factory workers, all while having very young children.[928] One working-class girl wrote 'I am married and I have three children, all under the age of five years old. I take my children to day nursery while working … I work on a book sewing machine'.[929] Ina Zweiniger-Bargielowska shows that 'dramatic changes' took place in the employment patterns of women with young children in latter decades of the century. Those working full-time with children under five years of age rose from 5% in 1977 to 18% in 1996 and 22% to 36% for those working part-time respectively, with the rise in full-time work mostly accounting for women returning to professional careers rather than unskilled work.[930] Again, changing attitudes towards working motherhood amongst those

[926] Davis, *Modern Motherhood*, pp. 161–64; Zweiniger-Bargielowska, pp. 160–61.
[927] Davis, *Modern Motherhood*, pp. 167-169.
[928] For example, CLS, NCDS, SN: 5790, N12691J, girl, non-manual father; N15368N, girl, manual father; N17282R, girl, manual father; N22381C, girl, manual father.
[929] CLS, NCDS, SN: 5790, N11988U, female, manual father.
[930] Zweiniger-Bargielowska, p. 158.

who would go on to have children in the 1990s were driven first and foremost by their girlhood aspirations.

The continued importance of paid work to girls' adult identities is palpable in essays where girls imagined *having* to give up work on having a child. One working-class girl imagined her life as a mother to two children aged one and five. She explained 'I have no time for a job really so I make do without one because my husband works and has a good job so I'm not expected to work', but was keen to find a job once her youngest child turned five. She described the emotional and time-consuming labour she felt raising an infant would involve:

> Every morning, I make the breakfast and send my five year old child off to school. Then I have the task of looking after my other child, and this is quite difficult, because he is rather mischevous …When I say my child is mischevous I mean it, because when I take him into a supermarket he goes perfectly wild and grabs anything he can get his hands on to which is usually tin foods. I have'nt much time for anything else, but one thing I do like is dressmaking because is it relaxes my mind a bit from the normal life I lead.[931]

The frustrations of childrearing are evident here. By the 1960s and 1970s middle-class feminists were trying to raise awareness of the challenges of being a full-time mother and encourage women to speak about them. Davis argues that disillusionment with motherhood was more common amongst educated middle-class women, whose own mothers had had the help of domestic servants and nannies, but working-class women also found their mothering roles difficult.[932]

[931] CLS, NCDS, SN: 5790, N14443C, girl, manual father.
[932] Davis, *Modern Motherhood*, pp. 148-149.

In 1969, both middle- and working-class girls talked about juggling work with the different tasks expected of them as mothers, including childcare, cooking and cleaning.[933] Working-class girls, however, were more likely to comment on the challenges of motherhood than their middle-class counterparts.[934] Another working-class girl, whose essay we first saw in chapter two in relation to children's perceived value of routine-led methods of baby care, depicted her life as a full-time housewife with a young baby. She described struggling to juggle housework with baby care:

> When I up to make the beds I saw a pile of washing on the bedroom chair … The washing will have to wait until tomorrow I said to myself because the tea still have to be done. Soon we were sitting down to tea eating a cooked meal. After tea the day was not over there was a baby to be put to be bed and bathed.

Her sense of the exhaustion mothers felt in comparison to children is made clear in her phrase: 'Oh how I wish I was young I thought to myself'.[935] The frustration in this essay perhaps reflected these girls' perceptions of their own mothers' lives. Smith Wilson shows that working mothers were often not from the poorest families, but 'from families where the husbands were skilled manual or lower-white collar workers'.[936] Poorer mothers struggled to afford childcare and so the hours that they had available for work was restricted, especially if their children had not yet started school.[937] These working-class girls' mothers may, then, have had less opportunity to work than their middle-class counterparts. As Smith Wilson shows, work could be important for breaking up women's domestic lives and giving them a sense of autonomy.[938] Hannah Garvon's interviews with the mothers of young children living in London in the early 1960s showed that working-

[933] CLS, NCDS, SN: 5790, N10757B, girl, non-manual father; N26823Z, girl, manual father; N12691J, girl, non-manual father.
[934] For example, CLS, NCDS, SN: 5790, N10014t, girl, manual father.
[935] CLS, NCDS, SN: 5790, N10014T, girl, manual father.
[936] Smith Wilson, p. 217.
[937] Garvon, pp. 79-80.
[938] Smith Wilson, pp. 220-221; McCarthy, 'Marriage, Women and Paid Work', p. 53.

class mothers felt more isolated than their middle-class counterparts. They often lived in flats with limited access to outside space for their children to play in and working-class mothers reported going out in the evenings less than middle-class mothers.[939]

In addition, there was a belief amongst these essayists that motherhood was a demanding job in and of itself. For example, one working-class girl imagined her life as mother with two children and showed that her life would revolve around them. She wrote:

> I am 25 years old and I have two children. I like to take my children swimming and skateing … I see my children off to school before I go to work. I work at a factory which makes raido's. It is very intresting work. I see them every night and when they have their tea after they go to play with some freinds. That is the only time I get any rest in any day. Sunday I am baking all afternoon and standing up make's my legs ache … [I] like to get partys for [my] younger ones. They invite their [friends] and they all have an intresting time they play lots of games. When it is time to go they give my children presents as I flop back on the chair excausted. My children help me to do the washing up. and then I get them off to bed. I sit down and watch the television. I hope my children hav a good time when they grow up'.[940]

While making it clear that she enjoyed her life, she discussed the effort that childrearing would entail. While she was still able to pursue an interesting job in a factory, she believed that doing this alongside looking after children would be extremely tiring. The effect of children's decreasing involvement in domestic work, which was outlined in chapter three, can be seen here. Although her children would help with the washing up after a party, she imagined doing most of the housework herself. The burden of housework on working-

[939] Garvon, pp. 80-81, 119.
[940] CLS, NCDS, SN: 5790, N12156Q, girl, manual father.

and middle-class women not only increased as a result of children's declining involvement, but also their return to the workplace. When working- and middle-class mothers took up paid work in greater numbers in the post-war period, men did not contribute significantly more to routines of domestic labour, meaning that mothers had to juggle their jobs with housework.[941] Taking responsibility for housework also fed into this girl's belief that as a mother, she would be responsible for organising her children's leisure activities and ensuring that they had an enjoyable childhood. Her descriptions of motherhood reflected psychological understandings about the importance of childhood as a life stage for play and development in the post-war period, as well as a cultural expectation on mothers to put their children's needs ahead of their own.[942]

In an analysis of a fictional story about a family co-written by four eight-year-old working-class girls in the mid-1970s, Carolyn Steedman identified a similar belief amongst the girls that motherhood was exhausting. She argues that an overriding theme in the girls' story was the 'ambivalence of motherhood' and, in particular, the mothers' resentment towards their children for preventing them from enjoying their own lives.[943] Steedman sees this 'ambivalence' as a general feature of working-class girls' writing, in comparison to autobiographies written by working-class men which often paint their mothers as loving and devoted. The comparison of girls' writing across the mid-century presented here, however, suggests that this 'ambivalence' only became prominent amongst working-class girls in the 1960s. Arguably, this was in response to the lowering age of marriage which made motherhood seem an inevitable part of these girls' near futures, the growing expectation for mothers to do more and more for their children, and

[941] Zweiniger-Bargielowska, pp. 161–62.
[942] Roberts, *Women and Families,* p. 143; Langhamer, *Women's Leisure,* pp. 157-159.
[943] Steedman, *The Tidy House*, pp. 20-21, 34-35.

the social isolation felt keenly by working-class mothers, which led some girls to believe that motherhood might prevent them from pursuing an interesting career of their own.[944]

Girls' 1969 writings therefore mirror the 'intensification' of motherhood in the post-war period.[945] They also provide an insight into the attitudes of those who would become parents in the 1990s and 2000s. Chapter two showed that children in this 1969 sample favoured routines when they imagined caring for babies and the analysis of essays presented here shows that some working-class girls believed that motherhood was an exhausting role. The changing conditions in which girls were growing up in the 1960s meant that they believed childrearing was more challenging than those in the 1930s and 1950s, and shows why many of those who would become mothers in the 1990s and 2000s supported the managerial, routine-led baby care advice promoted by experts such as Ford.[946]

6.3 Conclusion

Through analysing children's essays in which they imagined their future selves, this chapter has shed new light on the relationship between work and parenting. It has shown that the 1960s marked a shift in children's ideas as they began to increasingly frame their future life narratives around parenthood. From the 1930s to the 1960s, children predominantly believed that their future value lay in paid work but, in 1969, they imagined new ways of combining a job with raising young children. This was because of changes in the lives of parents that children observed around them. For example, in the 1960s it was becoming more common for mothers to return to the workplace and men were trying to do more with their young children than fathers had in previous decades. However, this chapter has shown that the attitudes of these children more closely mirrored

[944] Roberts, p. 143; Garvon, pp. 79-80.
[945] Davis, *Modern Motherhood*, pp. 134-36; Hendricks, *Narcissistic Parenting*, pp. 247-53.
[946] Harydment, p. 294.

those of parents in the 1990s and 2000s than those of parents at the time they were growing up in the 1960s.

In this sense, it has been argued that children were not just a physical link between their parents' attitudes to childrearing and those held by parents later in the century. Instead, children's experiences of growing up in the 1960s *created* generational change. Girls' observations of working motherhood made them optimistic about combining childrearing with a career and representations of involved and companionable father-child relationships helped boys to envisage a future in which they could spend large amounts of time with their children around work. Paying attention to individuals' attitudes towards childrearing long before they started families of their own has shown that shifts in thinking about work and parenting that emerged at the end of the century were rooted in and fundamentally driven by the ideas they formed as children.

Conclusion

This thesis has examined the intergenerational transmission of values, ideas and skills related to childrearing and explored the formation of parenting identities from the perspective of children growing up in England between the 1930s and 1960s. The thesis has made three major contributions to the history of parenting. Firstly, it has reshaped our understandings of the mechanisms that drove generational changes in parenting identities as well as attitudes towards maternal and paternal roles across the mid-century. This period was marked by significant changes in expectations and experiences of parenting, as understandings about what parenthood entailed expanded. Mothers and fathers were increasingly able to do the bulk of childrearing work themselves as the century progressed, rather than rely on older children or other relatives, and parents were told about the psychological importance of their relationships with their young children.[947]

In previous studies, historians have suggested that changes in parents' identities, attitudes and practices were shaped by adults and the experience of having a child. According to Roberts, King and Davis, having a child prompted adults to reflect on memories of their own upbringing, as well as current cultural ideas about childrearing, when thinking about what kind of parent they hoped to be.[948] By drawing on children's rather than adults' accounts, however, this thesis has demonstrated that shifts in parenting identities were rooted much earlier in the life course and earlier in the century than has been previously recognised. Children had different ideas about parenting and childcare to those of adults at the time they were growing up, and these ideas actively created later changes in parenting identities and practices, when children went on to start families of their own in later life.

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[947] Holden, p. 139; King, *Family Men,* 89-90; Roberts, *Women and Families*, pp. 143, 153.
[948] King, *Family Men,* pp. 100-01; Roberts, *Women and Families*, p. 143; Davis, 'Generational Change and Continuity', pp. 216-24.

The methodological approach employed in this thesis can give social historians of the twentieth century a more nuanced way of examining how experiences and attitudes changed over time. In a study of married women's work in the 1950s and 1960s, McCarthy argues that the rise of married women's employment 'links the 1950s to later periods of change in British women's lives'. Experiences of paid work in the post-war period gave wives some escape 'from economic and psychological dependency in marriage' and these feelings of autonomy would become particularly important for women in later decades who were more likely to be single parents or have husbands out of work.[949] Similarly, King argues that the 1950s represented an important period of transition in experiences and expectations of fatherhood, which paved the way for some men's greater involvement in their children's care later in the century.[950]

Examining children's writings provides a far fuller picture of the way experiences in the mid-century led to changes in attitudes and behaviours in later periods. As chapters two, five and six showed, the parent-child relationships that children created in their play and imaginary worlds mirrored ideas about childrearing that emerged in later decades, when these children became parents themselves. Girls growing up in the 1950s worried about the effect of long-term parent and child separation due to their experiences of growing up in the aftermath of war, potentially driving the continued popularity of demand-led and child-centred parenting manuals, such as that by Penelope Leach. Girls in the 1960s, a time when married women were increasingly returning to the workforce, aspired to combine fulfilling careers with motherhood.[951] Similarly, boys in the late 1960s hoped to have active and involved relationships with their children, mirroring the rise of '"child-orientated"' fathering by the end of the century.[952] Children's voices not only serve as a

[949] McCarthy, 'Women, Marriage and Paid Work', p. 58.
[950] King, *Family Men,* p. 86.
[951] Zweiniger-Bargielowska, p. 158; Davis, *Modern Motherhood*, pp. 145, 161.
[952] Brannen and Nilsen, pp. 339-41.

conceptual link between their parents' attitudes and those they would exhibit as adults later in the century. Rather, experiences *as* children actively created and drove these changes.

Secondly, this thesis made a conceptual contribution to the history of parenting. It proposed that historians and scholars in other fields separate 'parenting' from the physical act of *having* a child and instead analyse parenting as a relationship, a way of thinking and feeling, as well as a position of authority. By examining parenting in this way, this thesis demonstrated that children developed affective feelings of parental authority long before having offspring of their own. This analysis drew on and developed Scheer's theory of 'emotional practices'. For Scheer, the body and emotions are intrinsically connected as people learn how to think and feel in the world around them through habituation.[953] A sense of maternal authority established itself as a part of older daughters' and sisters' developing subjectivities in the interwar period. This was because they attempted to *do* housework and childcare in the ways that their mothers did, to prove their feminine worth and take on some of their mother's authority. After the Second World War, girls and boys not regularly involved in their mother's familial work experienced a strong sense of maternal responsibility when occasionally charged with caring for younger siblings or housework in family emergencies. These responsibilities were outside their normal experience and they therefore tangibly *felt* like mothers, as they carried the weight of performing their mother's familial practices in her stead.

In this way, this thesis contributes to the developing field of the history of emotions. It supports Barron and Langhamer's argument that historians of childhood and emotion need to pay attention to 'how children themselves understood their emotional experiences and relationships with others', rather than interpret children's emotions through the lens

[953] Scheer, p. 205.

of the adult expectations at the time.[954] This thesis has furthered this point, by arguing that adults' retrospective reflection on their childhood experiences should not colour historians' views of children's emotions. Scholars drawing on the testimonies of adults tend to assume that parental identities and emotions only emerge after the birth of a child.[955] This thesis has argued, however, that children growing up in the mid-century *felt* like parents when caring for younger siblings, as well as in play and creative writing. These processes enabled children to develop and shape parenting identities of their own and think about what it felt like to care for a child as a parent. This approach has implications beyond the history of childhood and parenting. Listening to how people made sense of their own emotional experiences, rather than viewing them through the lens of societal expectation, can help historians build a more nuanced view of the way people felt about their lives and relationships in the past, as Roper demonstrates in his study of the emotional experiences of First World War officers.[956]

Thirdly, this thesis made a broader methodological contribution to the history of parenting. It has highlighted the methodological importance of using children's voices to explore processes of intergenerational transmission. Pooley and Qureshi define the passing on of parenthood as the ways in which 'men and women choose aspects of themselves to pass on to their children … while simultaneously receiving, reinterpreting or rejecting aspects of others' lives'.[957] By focussing on the experiences of parents or adults on the cusp of having children, as Pooley and Qureshi do, scholars lose sight of the processes of emulation, evaluation and challenging that goes on in the time of childhood. While historians have shown that parents frequently looked back on their memories of childhood to make sense of their experiences, these memories are narrated from the

[954] Barron and Langhamer, 'Feeling through Practice', p. 105.
[955] Oakley, *Becoming a Mother*, p. 167; Qureshi, pp. 161-162, 169; Brannen, Moss, and Mooney, p. 39.
[956] Roper, *The Secret Battle*, pp. 163-64.
[957] Pooley and Qureshi, p. 1.

perspective of parenthood.[958] As historians of childhood have shown, children's contemporaneous writings are a unique source which reveal what it felt like to *be* a child growing up in the past, which are emotions and experiences that cannot be recreated through retrospective oral testimony.[959] By using children's writings to examine parenting identities and attitudes, this thesis has shown that children in the mid-century chose 'aspects of themselves to pass on' through pretend play and imaginative writing. Children '[received], [reinterpreted] or [rejected] aspects of others' lives' in ways that were very different to how adults later remembered learning about parenting in childhood.

Chapter three, for example, showed that older girls in the interwar period emulated their mothers' domestic and caregiving practices to access some of their mothers' power and authority for themselves. This sheds light on the processes through which cultures of care were transmitted and changed across generations. Chapter two demonstrated that girls in the late 1960s, who were growing up at the height of demand- and baby-led advice literature's influence, wanted to practice different forms of baby care to those used by mothers at the time. Girls aspired to use feeding and sleeping routines when they had babies later in life, in order to retain some control over their lives as mothers. This thesis has revealed that through the rhythms of everyday life and imagination, children were consciously emulating as well as rejecting the cultures of care which they participated in and observed around them. Parenting was an identity that children embodied, shaped, and experimented with. In this way, examining the voices of children reveals the perceptions, emotions and practices that individuals built up over the course of childhood and youth, which fundamentally transforms our understandings of the way cross-generational influences shaped parenting identities in the twentieth century.

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[958] Alexander, pp. 262-63; King, *Family Men*, pp. 99-101; Davis, 'Generational Change and Continuity', pp. 216-24.
[959] Halstead, p. 94, 99; Barron and Langhamer, 'Feeling through Practice', p. 105.

Chapter one showed that policy makers and middle-class health professionals believed that schools were the best place to equip pupils with skills for parenthood, as they thought schooling could override the influence of the working-class home and eradicate cycles of poverty.[960] Parentcraft advocates believed that it was imperative to begin preparing people for parenthood while they were still at school, as politicians and health professionals feared it would be too late to change parents' attitudes and behaviours once they had had a baby. Schooling, therefore, was considered to be the optimum time and place to mould working-class pupils into thinking like middle-class parents. Chapters two to six revealed that children's learning was far more complex than parentcraft advocates assumed, as children did not learn through direct instruction in the classroom. Children's relationships with their parents, siblings and friends, as well as their play and imaginative writing were far more important in shaping their ideas about parenting than formal parentcraft lessons. In this way, this thesis supports Jane Lewis's assertion that parentcraft lessons in school were of little practical use to girls at the time.[961] These chapters demonstrate that it is important to pay attention to the ways in which children made sense of their experiences and their parents' behaviour for themselves, rather than concentrate on what adults sought to teach them.

Chapter two continued to examine the ways in which experts sought to shape intimate family practices, by examining the parenting manuals published by childcare professionals, and the way ideas from these books were represented in girls' story papers and comics. It explored how revolving cycles of childcare advice affected girls' imaginations of themselves as future nannies, nurses and teachers. Girls, who were often caught in the middle of changing cycles of advice, had strong beliefs about the sort of care children required from parents and caregivers, beliefs that mirrored dominant ideas

[960] Dyhouse, pp. 101-02; Jane Lewis, *The Social History*, pp. 478-79.
[961] Jane Lewis, 'The Social History', pp. 487-88.

about childrearing that emerged later in the century. In this way, children's imaginations better inform our understandings of why certain attitudes towards childrearing rose to prominence again in subsequent decades.

This chapter is important for reassessing the relationship between prescription and practice. It can be extremely difficult to understand what effect prescriptive childcare advice had on parents' lived experiences.[962] This chapter shed further light on how prescription and practice interacted in everyday life. It showed that girls' experiences of looking after infants, of growing up in wartime and evaluating the way adults cared for babies profoundly shaped their ideas about what good infant care practice looked like, ideas which girls would have found support for in the papers and comics they read. Experiences in childhood arguably made individuals more receptive to certain types of parenting advice, or favourable to certain methods of baby care, when they had offspring of their own later in life. The relationship between prescription and practice was one which was informed by childhood experiences, which can help us better understand what how professional advice shaped parents' perceptions of their childrearing practices.

Chapters three and four explored what children learnt about mothering through the course of everyday family life and their relationships with parents and siblings. These chapters showed that there were moments in which children were tangibly *being* and *feeling* like mothers. Feelings of maternal responsibility intensified after the Second World War, as girls and boys not usually involved in labour-intensive routines of domestic work and childcare believed that they had to *be* mothers in family emergencies, by temporarily stepping into their mother's shoes. These chapters contribute to histories of gender relations in the twentieth century. Historians speculate that children growing up in the twentieth century 'internalised' ideas about men and women's separate childrearing roles,

[962] Tosh, 'The History of Masculinity: An Outdated Concept?', pp. 29–31; Pooley and Qureshi, pp. 24–25.

which consciously and subconsciously shaped their own approach to parenting in later life.[963] These chapters revealed *how* these processes of internalisation happened. Girls did not passively absorb ideas and values from their parents, but actively sought to do housework and childcare in maternal ways.[964] In the process, they developed a sense of the importance of feminine self-sacrifice and duty.

These chapters shed light on the way mothering was reproduced in boys. After the Second World War, boys were charged with occasionally fulfilling their mother's domestic and infant care labours in family emergencies. Through doing this work, boys in the post-war period learnt about what it meant and felt like to be a mother. These experiences cemented their ideas that housework and childcare was something that mothers did *for their children*, thereby reproducing patterns of gendered childrearing practices in future families and contributing to intensifying expectations of motherhood. Children's first identities are shaped by and constructed in relation to their families.[965] This thesis has revealed the complex processes through which both boys' and girls' first ideas about gender were formed not only by watching their parents but, in some cases, by actually *becoming* mothers. Uncovering the processes through which boys and girls learnt about gendered labour has important implications for thinking about gender relations more broadly, such as in the continued expectation for women to prioritise childcare and housework above a career. [966]

These chapters also contribute to understandings of the way social class shaped personal relationships. Historians have noted that after the Second World War, parenting identities and practices amongst working- and middle-class families became similar, because improved housing conditions and rising standards of living 'could enable closer

[963] Davis and King, p. 82; Roberts, *A Woman's Place*, p. 117.
[964] Steedman, *The Tidy House*, pp. 31.
[965] Davidoff and others, p. 55.
[966] Spencer, pp. 174-75.

relationships'.[967] The analysis presented in this thesis shows, however, that historians have missed an important step which contributed to change in parenting practices. By the 1950s and 1960s, both working- and middle-class children were learning about mothering in similar ways, by observing their mothers' domestic and childcare labours and occasionally performing them on her behalf. These childhood experiences increased expectations of motherhood in both working- and middle-class communities in similar ways, contributing to the converging patterns of childrearing practices which emerged in different sections of society from the mid-century.

Chapters five and six continued to examine children's family lives but through the lens of play and imagination. Chapter five showed that play offered children the opportunity to challenge the parental expectations placed on them, by consigning dull household and childcare jobs to parental characters in games, and experiment with new kinds of father-child relationships. Similarly, chapter six used children's imaginations of their adult selves to reveal that boys and girls tried to negotiate a future for themselves that would give them a fulfilling career and family life. Girls thought that their future value lay in paid work but, from the 1960s, believed that work could be easily combined with motherhood. Boys, meanwhile, attempted to negotiate between breadwinning obligations and family life in their essays. By the 1960s, boys believed that time spent *with* children would be as equally important as financially providing *for* them. The changes in children's 1969 essays reflected the shifting experiences of mothers and fathers in the post-war period. However, the ways in which children interpreted parents' experiences, and the ideals of parent-child relationships they encountered in the press, made them *more* ambitious than their parents' generation.

[967] King, *Family Men*, p. 101; Zweiniger-Bargielowska, pp. 161–62; Langhamer, *Women's Leisure*, p. 138.

These chapters are important for reassessing processes of transmission more broadly. Historians agree that 'parental influence and other familial factors', particularly in the early stages of life, were pivotal in shaping people's attitudes towards parenting, education, migration and work.[968] However, historians have used oral testimonies to examine cross-generational family influences, and focused on the choices that adults ultimately made over the course of their lives. Isabelle Bertaux-Wiame states that 'the speed and direction of each individual's life path is first set within the family of origin in childhood. As individuals grow into adulthood, their paths become more autonomous'.[969] This suggests that it is in adulthood where the power of intergenerational family influences can best be seen. According to Bertaux-Wiame, adulthood is where individuals attempted to negotiate autonomous identities. However, people's life paths continued to be affected by memories of their own upbringings, as well as the resources that their families were able to offer.

Using children's voices, by contrast, would allow historians working in the field to explore the active processes of reflection and evaluation that went on in childhood. Through play and imagination, children in the twentieth century placed themselves in positions of generational power and worked through what they wanted for their *own* futures. Using children's voices in historical study more widely, would allow historians to assess in *real time* the ways in which younger generations accepted, adapted and rejected their 'transgenerational inheritance' and explore the emotions and motivations that would go into people's decision making in later life.[970]

This thesis has predominantly been based on the experiences of children growing up in two-parent households and on the experiences of white English children. The field would

[968] Thompson, pp. 15, 25; Chamberlain, pp. 154, 156.
[969] Isabelle Bertaux-Wiame, 'The Pull of Family Ties: Intergenerational Relationships and Life Paths', in *Between Generations: Family Models, Myths and Memories*, ed. by Daniel Bertaux and Paul Thompson (London: Transaction Publishers, 2009), pp. 39–50 (p. 39).
[970] Thompson, p.15.

benefit from future research examining how children growing up in single parent households, where grandparents and other relatives often played a greater role in their upbringing, made sense of their place in family life.[971] This research could explore the ways in which children growing up with a single parent or as part of a step family learnt about parenting, what responsibilities they were entrusted with, the ways they derived power in their relationships, and how they experimented with parental roles through play, writing and family responsibility. There is also a need to understand how processes of intergenerational transmission between parents and young children worked in different cultures. As Mary Chamberlain shows, cultures of migration amongst Barbadian parents affected their children in profound ways. One woman interviewed by Chamberlain felt a strong emotional bond with her grandmother, who had raised her in Barbados when her mother moved to Britain for work in the 1950s. The experience of being brought up by a grandparent was common in Barbados, where there was a prominent 'migration culture'.[972] Similarly, Chowbey and Salway show that emigrating to Britain with their families from South Asia after the Second World War profoundly affected men's childhood relationships with their fathers.[973] It would be of great benefit to the field to understand how cultures of migration and intergenerational caregiving shaped children's perceptions of the importance of parenthood at the time, the ways in which children sought to assert their authority in family life, as well as their aspirations for the future.

Beyond the histories of parenting, childhood, the family and emotions, the methodology employed in this thesis contributes to the much broader fields of the social and cultural histories of twentieth-century England, and to the relationship between practice and prescription. It has highlighted that shifting generational attitudes were rooted in the

[971] On the experiences of single mothers and their children in the twentieth century see Thane and Evans, pp. 37–39, 95.
[972] Chamberlain, p. 163.
[973] Chowbey and Salway, pp. 234-37.

experiences of children growing up across the twentieth century, which were shaped by family relationships, friendships as well as popular culture. The thesis has contributed to historical understandings of subjectivity. As Roper argues: 'A focus on subjectivity means appreciating that some sources of identity are more primitive than others, and with a correspondingly more profound impact upon the emotional dispositions and ties of later life'.[974] By examining the way children experimented with and challenged their current and perceived future place in the world, historians can better understand the emotional experiences that shaped people's lives in later stages of the life course.

[974] Roper, 'Slipping Out of View', p. 67.

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Appendix

The full range of essay titles included in the three collections:

(*) Indicates the essay titles that I predominantly focused on in my research

Mass Observation Archive, University of Sussex

Essays written by schoolchildren in and around Bolton:

‘When I leave school’*

‘When I grow up’*

‘What I should like to be when I grow up’*

‘What I like best’*

‘How I spent Saturday and Sunday’*

‘What I like best’*

‘From school to bed’*

‘Things I learn at home that I don’t learn at school’*

‘The games I play’*

‘Coronation Day’*

‘Money and its uses’*

‘What is good, what is bad’*

‘What I did on my Thursday holiday’*

‘How I spent my Easter holidays’*

‘What I did on my holiday’*

‘Spring’*

‘The finest person who ever lived’

‘What I think of Blackpool in the summer’

‘A Devout Man’

‘Heaven’

‘Hell’

‘What I think of Jesus’

‘Cannibals’

‘Robin Hood’

‘God’

‘Winter and Summer’

‘The Royal Family’

‘Armistice Day’

Archive of Iona and Peter Opie, c. 1930-1999, Bodleian Libraries, University of Oxford

Camberwell Public Libraries Essay Competition, c. 1951-1961, Children’s papers and covering correspondence, c. 1947-1989

‘The best way to spend a winter evening’*

‘What I did on November 5th’*

‘What I want to be when I leave school’*

‘Why I like television’

‘Three books on a desert island’

‘My friends and why I like them’*

‘Comics’*

‘All about my neighbourhood’

‘My camping holiday’

‘Who I would like to be, and why’*

‘One Pound and how I would spend it’

‘Why I like Camberwell’

‘The country I would most like to visit’

‘A visit to the moon’*

‘My favourite hero’

‘The games I play with my friends’*

National Child Development Study: Sample of Essays (Sweep 2, Age 11), 1969, Centre for Longitudinal Studies, Institute of Education, University of London

‘Imagine you are now 25 years old. Write about the life you are leading, your interests, your home life and your work at the age of 25. (You have 30 minutes to do this).’*