

Housing Young Parents: A micro-dynamic study of the housing experiences and support needs of young mothers and fathers

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Abstract

This thesis is a qualitative longitudinal study of the housing pathways, experiences

and support needs of young mothers and fathers. Between 2015 and 2017, 22 young mothers and fathers participated in interviews and observations. Participants were tracked during a pivotal point in their lives, following their entry into parenthood. Becoming a parent changed their housing needs and aspirations and the study followed their housing pathways as they unfolded. The research is unique in bringing together the accounts of both mothers and fathers and in its detailed investigation of intra class diversity. The study found that intersecting relationships and household configurations are central to opportunities and constraints and to the potential of transformative family and gender practices. Housing was found to be a central resource in lifting some disadvantaged young parents out of their chaotic backgrounds. However, their newfound stability was often fragile. Support services played an essential role in helping young parents to attain and maintain a suitable home to parent, yet problems could materialise once support was withdrawn. Using an overarching processual ontology, this thesis ties together substantial intersecting themes of disadvantage, youth transitions, family practices and home. The findings demonstrate the intrinsic value of home for ontological security and a base for family life. Conversely, insecure and poor quality housing can leave people dealing with snowballing difficulties that curtail future aspirations and render them unable to move beyond day-to-day problems. This makes for a powerful case to see housing as a basic right and home as the heart of family life.

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List of abbreviations

TPS	Teenage Pregnancy Strategy
SEU	Social Exclusion Unit
SRS	Social Rented Sector
PRS	Private Rented Sector
FYF	Following Young Fathers
FYFF	Following Young Fathers Further

Chapter 1: Introduction

1. The young parenthood ‘problem’

Take the category of single mothers alone. The common assumption is that they are mostly young teenagers who are careless or who even deliberately get pregnant as a step to a council flat and a benefit cheque. Of course there are young women who do that – and some who follow it up by having other children by other fathers. The prospects for their children are often dire. These are all too often the children who fill the care homes or end up being abused by the peripatetic fathers. At the extreme end of this spectrum we find the Baby Peters and the Victoria Climbiés (Davis, 2010).

In the quote above, Conservative MP David Davis makes a series of claims that rely on, and perpetuate, derogatory and damaging myths around young parenthood. Teenage mothers are accused of having children in order to obtain welfare benefits and social housing, young fathers are assumed to be absent. At the extreme end of Davis’ quote, is the connection between young parents and child abusers. There is a recent history of framing young parenthood as problematic. Since the 1990s when there was a spike in rates of teenage pregnancies and young parenthood, a range of social policies were implemented that aimed to ‘tackle the problem of teenage pregnancy’ in the UK (Duncan et al., 2010; SEU, 1999). Young parenthood, with a particular focus on teenage mothers, has also received significant attention in the media. Long-running popular TV shows such as ‘Teen Mom UK’ (MTV) and ‘Underage and Pregnant’ (BBC) regularly depict young parents as ‘disgusting subjects’, ripe for classist moral judgement (Tyler, 2011). Consequently, Arai (2009 p48) argues that teenage mothers are a highly stigmatised group, suggesting that ‘the language used and imagery evoked are such as to suggest that there are few population subgroups who appear to embody so many social and moral ‘evils’.

This thesis examines the experiences of young parents in a context where deficit views about young parents dominate popular and political discourse. Throughout the

thesis, the term 'young' parent is used rather than 'teen' parent unless specifically referring to existing literature that uses 'teen' parent. This is for both ideological and operational reasons. The term 'teen' parent comes loaded with overwhelmingly negative connotations: the deluge of right-wing media stories depicting teen parents as irresponsible modern day 'folk devils' (Cohen, 1972), government rhetoric and policies which seek to prevent young parenthood and their reliance on welfare, has worked to construct 'teen parents' as 'disgusting' classed figures (Tyler, 2008; 2011). In the media, extreme cases are depicted as the norm and focus tends to be on very young teenage parents. For example, 13-year-old Alfie Patten's story dominated the media in 2009 when it was believed he had become Britain's youngest father. The story provided an ideal voyeuristic opportunity for both politicians and the public to bemoan the moral and cultural breakdown of Britain, with this highly untypical case taken as representative of the broader issues of young parenthood (Duncan et al., 2010). However, according to the statistical picture, very young parenthood is quite rare and most teenage parents are aged 18 or 19 (ONS, 2014c).

The term 'teenage' parent is therefore a contested term, that problematically encompasses all young parents regardless of their age, ethnicity, marital status and economic status, and implies that there are identical outcomes (Wilson and Huntington, 2006). In this thesis, parents under the age of 25 are classified as 'young parents', in line with age-graded social policies and welfare allowances (DWP, 2015; CPAG, 2020). Data organised and presented by the ONS tends to focus on pregnancy rates for teenage mothers, particularly those under the age of 18. Despite the overall trend that teenage pregnancy rates among young women are falling, the young parenthood 'problem' continues to be perpetuated, as shown in figure 1 below,

.

Conceptions per 1,000 women aged 15 to 17 years, 1969 to 2018, England and Wales

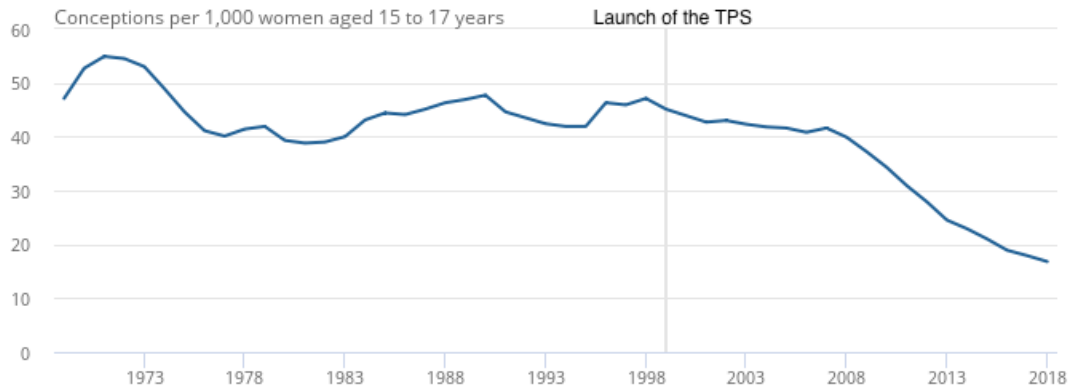


Figure 1 falling rates of teenage pregnancy (ONS, 2020a)

Figure 1 shows that the continued decrease in conception rates for women under 18 years is the longest since records began. There is also a trend towards delaying parenthood until later in life.

There is a notable gap in policy focus on births to those aged 18-25. This is problematic, because this age group are still encapsulated in the youth category and they are not entitled to the 'adult rate' of welfare benefits (DWP, 2015; CPAG, 2020). In an historical context, young parents aged 18-25 would not be considered particularly young. However, as shown in Figure 2 below, there has been a trend to delay parenthood until later in life, with an increased divergence in the age at which mothers conceive. In turn, it is interesting how, normatively, and in policy terms, those aged 25 and under are now seen as young.

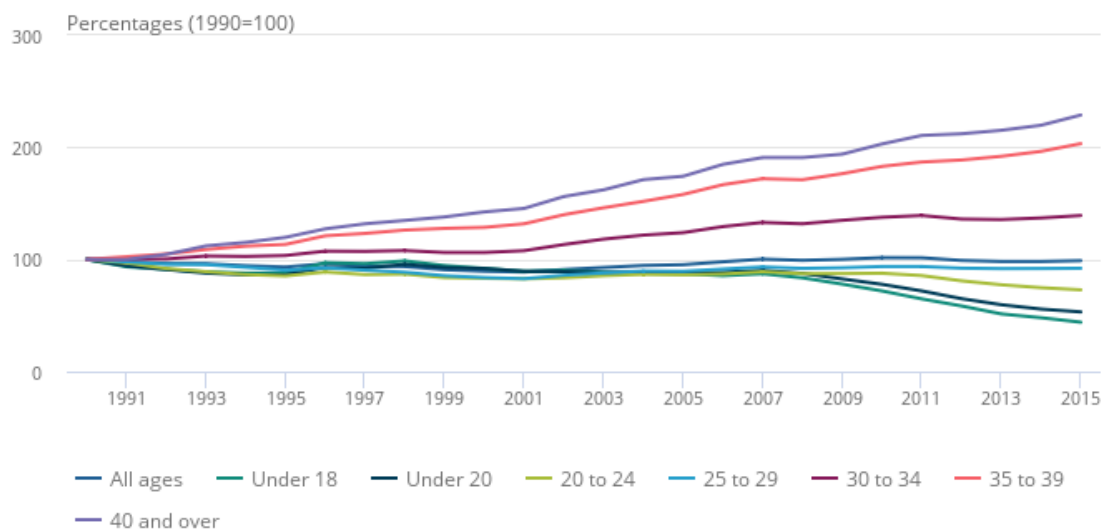


Figure 2: Relative changes in age-specific conception rates 1990 to 2015 (ONS, 2017)

Figure 2 shows that between 2014 and 2015, conception rates increased for women aged 25 years and over, and decreased for women aged 25 and under. There has been a significant divergence in the age at which women have children over the past 30 years (ONS, 2017).

Despite falling rates of teenage pregnancy, the UK has a comparatively higher rate than neighbouring European countries, a trend that is often criticised in the media (Duncan et al., 2010; Hope, 2014; Wenham, 2011). The context of lower rates of young parenthood and a trend towards delaying entering parenthood until later in life begs the questions, why has young parenthood remained a contentious issue and why are young parents so often stigmatised?

The young parenthood 'problem' is generally framed in three ways: firstly, as David Davis MP alluded to in the quote above, there is a moralising around young people's fertility and diverse family practices that do not conform to the notion of the nuclear family (Duncan, 2007). Secondly, teenage parenthood is equated with poor health outcomes for both mothers and their children (PHE, 2018; SEU, 1999). And thirdly, the link between young parenthood and disadvantage is considered problematic.

The rates of young parenthood remain high in more deprived areas. The conception rates for women aged 18 and under for example are more than twice as high in

deprived areas (ONS 2018a). Young people who have been ‘looked after’ are more likely than their peers to become teen parents (Chase et al., 2008). These young parents are less likely to have financial support from their families and their potential to work and earn money is limited by their age, parenting responsibilities and their geographical location (Neale and Davies 2016). The intersection of young parenthood with economic deprivation means that many will have some dependency on the welfare state and be in need of housing support. It is the connection of young parenthood and potential dependence on financial state benefits that appears to be at the crux of the popular demonisation of young parenthood. Conservative MP David Davis has frequently denounced young parenthood and here he turns his attention specifically to young fathers,

‘I think it's absolutely outrageous that so many young men in our society feel they can go out, get women pregnant, allow them to have children, make them bring them up by themselves often on benefits and then just disappear. It is utterly shocking and I hope that the ministers will take note of this and get hold of some of these feckless fathers, drag them off, make them work, put them in chains if necessary, make them work and make them pay back to society for the cost of bringing up the children they chose to bring into this world’ (David Davis quoted in Cornock, 2013).

The quote from David Davis was taken from a speech in the House of Commons in 2013 in a debate on Housing Policy. His argument taps directly into the ‘feckless father’ discourse with welfare benefit claims at the heart of his concern. Davis advocates forcing ‘feckless fathers’ to work by putting them ‘in chains’. While Davis views represent an extreme position, his position of authority means that this kind of rhetoric shapes the way young parents are viewed more generally. Given that data is not routinely collected about young fathers, Davis’ claims are devoid of evidence; instead he stokes the flames of popular punitiveness towards disadvantaged single parents, especially young fathers. However, recent qualitative evidence shows that far from young fathers being feckless, most young men have a strong desire to ‘be there’ for their children (Neale and Davies, 2015).

Contempt for young parents' fertility has also been heightened in the austerity context whereby dependency on the state is chastised, based on the notion that the provision of financial support for them and their children is purposeful. Young parents are castigated for making 'bad choices' at the expense of the state. There is popular support for this, which relies on the myth of young people choosing to become parents as a means of accessing welfare. This is typified in a Daily Mail article with the headline, 'Girls whose 'career' choice is pregnancy' (Hope, 2014). Within the context of neo-liberalism, life chances are considered the sole responsibility of individuals. Structural disadvantage can therefore be masked and written off as a poor life choice. Shildrick (2017 p15) argues that neo-liberalism facilitates poverty and obscures its real causes:

'Processes of individualisation in such neoliberal regimes play an important role not just in shifting responsibilities onto individuals and families away from the state, but in shaping how life chances and experiences are understood. Neoliberal capitalist regimes offer opportunities for personal advancement and fulfilment for many, but the uneven distribution of access to such benefits is never laid bare. Poverty, in such political regimes, becomes very easy to pass off as an individual failing'.

It is within this neoliberal context that disadvantaged young parents are stigmatised. Young parenthood and disadvantage are muddled together and passed off as individual responsibilities and 'failings'. As Shildrick (2017) argues, neoliberalism operates as a purposeful obfuscation that seeks to emphasise agency and personal 'choices' as causes of disadvantage, which in turn overlooks and excuses structural and political causal factors.

In contemporary British society, dominant attitudes around the 'right' life course timing of entering parenthood are shaped both by structural and historical trends as well as neoliberal attitudes of individualism (Duncan et al., 2010). Vincent and Thomas (2013) explain that 'in not conforming to current norms about the appropriate age to begin childbearing, young parents have become moral scapegoats who are seen as having the 'wrong' values, the 'wrong' aspirations and making 'wrong' choices". Greater choice in society creates greater surveillance and

scrutiny around 'choices' that do not conform to contemporary norms (Calver, 2019). This is a social class issue as norms are usually premised on middle class trajectories. Ellis-Sloan (2019) argues that surveillance around working class women and the choices they make regarding education, employment and family have intensified over time. Middle class trajectories and attitudes are axiomatically normative and this may prove challenging to working class youths with more limited resources and opportunities. The 'right' time to have a child is considered to be after education and training is completed, employment is established and independent stable housing is acquired. As this acquisition has become increasingly protracted, the timing of childbearing more generally is delayed, reinforcing young parents as taking a deviant life course decision (Neale, 2016).

This thesis is situated within a context that constructs young parents as problematic because they have deviated from a normative life course pathway. The study explores the experiences of young people following non-normative pathways, whilst raising questions about norms that are linked to local/familial experience, context, and young parents' subjective orientations. The 'problem' of young parenthood has been challenged by previous research (Duncan et al., 2010; McDermott and Graham, 2005; Phoenix, 1991; Wenham, 2016). This thesis contributes to this extant literature whilst offering novel insights into the diverse experiences of disadvantaged young parents over time, with an in-depth focus on housing.

At the crux of the young parenthood 'problem' is a concern that young parents may not have first acquired enough independent financial resources to be able to support themselves and their children without some reliance on welfare benefits. Policy makers adopt an individualising approach that assumes that the 'fix' to this welfare 'problem' lies with young parents rather than changes to welfare systems. Housing is a welfare resource and is a central facet when it comes to young parents. However, to date, housing and young parenthood has received limited focused attention.

1.2 Young parenthood and the housing 'problem'

The housing needs of young parents differ depending on age and family relationships and resources. The majority of young parents aged under 16 live with their families or continue living in care. However, most young parents are in their late teens or early 20's (ONS, 2014b), and are more likely to have housing needs. A significant cause of youth homelessness is the breakdown of family relationships and young people from disadvantaged backgrounds are the most likely to become homeless (Shaw, 2010; Quilgars et al., 2008). Cooke and Owen (2007) found that young parents required housing because of difficulties in family relationships or a breakdown in family support. Overcrowding was a particular problem. For some young parents there is an absence of family networks altogether, with a relatively high proportion young parents having been in the care system (Chase et al., 2008; Duncan et al., 2010).

The UK's current housing crisis means that when young people leave the family home, either by choice or because they are forced to, their choices are seriously constrained. The 'Right to Buy Scheme' gave council house tenants the opportunity to buy their house and significantly reduced social housing stock. The scheme started in 1980 and in a bid to 'tackle welfare dependency', Thatcher's Conservative government reduced state spending on social housing. Levels of homelessness subsequently increased (Thane, 2011). Young mothers were particularly targeted, as Thatcher attacked, 'the growing problem in the welfare state of young single girls who deliberately become pregnant in order to jump a housing queue and gain welfare benefits' (Thatcher 1988 cited in Thane, 2011: 28). This notion has become commonplace and continues to be raised as 'unfair' (Conservatives, 2015).

Writing for the Spectator in 1995, in the same article that he called the children of lone mothers 'ill-raised, ignorant, aggressive and illegitimate', current Prime Minister Boris Johnson, peddles what has now become a damaging trope; that disadvantaged young women choose to become mothers in order to receive social housing,

'There is some evidence that the prospect of more readily available housing is an enticement and it must be generally plausible that if having a baby out of

wedlock meant sure-fire destitution on a Victorian scale, young girls might indeed think twice about having a baby' (Johnson, 1995).

It is unclear exactly what evidence Johnson refers to here. No such evidence can be found to support this claim, yet the myth remains pervasive. Chapter Two of this thesis reviews the literature on the circumstances in which young parents enter into parenthood, and chapter Six draws on empirical evidence to argue that access to social security was not part of the decision making involved in becoming parents. Nevertheless, Johnson suggested swingeing cuts to welfare and 'Victorian scale' destitution as a deterrent.

Playing on the trope of the teenage mother purposefully conceiving in order to obtain a council house, the '40 Group', made up of Conservative MPs, made recommendations that teenage mothers should no longer be entitled to council housing or housing benefit:

All benefits to teenage mothers should be made on the condition of them living with their parents or in supervised hostel accommodation... teenagers will be left in no doubt that teenage motherhood will not lead to an automatic right to subsidised housing and other benefits, while the public can be assured that a teenager's motivations for having a child are not related to housing access (40Group, 2013).

While no plans materialised to implement this, it is emblematic of the disdain directed towards young parents and how housing welfare myths are perpetuated and responded to. The recommendation is reminiscent of (then Prime Minister) Gordon Brown's proposal that young mothers dependent on welfare should live in supported housing units (Brown 2009) and of Thatcher's (1988) and Johnson's (1995) comments discussed above. There is a historic cross-party consensus to discourage young parenthood by using punitive measures, and housing is a particular issue. This is indicative of how the wider political establishment peddles myths that are used to justify the privatisation and responsabilisation of parenthood and family life.

'I do think it's time to address a problem that for too long has gone unspoken, the number of children having children. For it cannot be right, for a girl of 16, to get pregnant, be given the keys to a council flat and be left on her own. From now on all 16- and 17-year-old parents who get support from the taxpayer will be placed in a network of supervised homes. These shared homes will offer not just a roof over their heads, but a new start in life where they learn responsibility and how to raise their children properly. That's better for them, better for their babies and better for us all in the long run' (Brown 2009).

Here, Gordon Brown makes explicit links between teenage pregnancy and the negative economic effects for the taxpayer by making supervised homes mandatory. Tyler and Jensen (2015) argue that this is done as a kind of common-sense language around policy that appeals to the wider population through appeals to their purse. Brown (2009) frames young parents as children, focuses solely on disadvantaged young mothers and plays up to the canard of young women becoming mothers in order to access social housing. In this proposed punitive policy, Brown makes no reference to young fathers or to young mothers who are not accessing social housing.

Mitchell and Green (2002) identified independence, autonomy and self-reflexivity, as highly important for young mothers in the transition to adulthood and in creating her own self-identity. However, Gordon Brown's strategy presumed that providing teenage mothers with their own home leaves them isolated. Further, it removes the lack of choice for young parents and perhaps infers that all teenage parents are incapable or bad parents, and in need of close supervision. Giullari and Shaw (2005) question whether the requirement for young mothers to live in supported housing is 'supporting or controlling' and criticise the strategy for supposing that autonomous living equates to isolation. They argue that the policy actually centres on welfare dependency and ignores the individualised nature of the family and the need for young parents to gain independence. This classist policy reinforces the popular punitiveness directed towards disadvantaged young parents, in making no reference to those who are not dependent on welfare.

What is striking in the discourses outlined in this chapter is the emphasis on young mothers. Fathers are obscured, therefore enhancing the feckless father discourse. Social rented sector (SRS) housing often also excludes fathers, particularly if they are separated from the mother. The non-primary carer (usually the father) is not entitled to housing that takes into account his status as a parent. This often leaves non-resident fathers without a suitable place to parent (Neale and Ladlow, 2015). The 'problem' with young parents is therefore underscored by the problem with welfare dependency and housing, despite evidence to the contrary (Cooke and Owen, 2007; Giullari and Shaw, 2005; Neale and Ladlow, 2015).

1.3 Social policies: 'tackling' the young parenthood 'problem'?

Teenage parenthood is bad for parents and children. Becoming a parent too early involves a greater risk of being poor, unemployed and isolated. The children of teenage parents grow up with the odds stacked against them (SEU, 1999 p.90)

Given the deficit/problem framing of young parenthood, successive governments have sought to reduce the incidence of young parenthood. The Teenage Pregnancy Strategy (TPS) was developed under the remit of the Social Exclusion Unit (SEU), which in turn was developed as part of New Labour's strategy to eradicate child poverty (Deacon, 2003). Underpinning the assumption that child poverty led to social exclusion, and therefore exclusion from opportunities, was the concept of intergenerational cycles of disadvantage (Deacon, 2003). The New Labour government called this the 'cycle of inequality' and claimed that, "people's life chances are determined by who their parents were rather than their own talents and efforts" (HM Treasury, 1999: 31 cited in Deacon 2003 p125). This deterministic and cultural account of poverty and family life suggests that inequality is inevitable as it is passed down the generations through poor parenting and individual behaviours ['cycles of disadvantage' is discussed further in Chapter Two].

The notion of 'cycles', or an intergenerational reproduction of disadvantage, is pervasive (Luescher and Pillemer, 1998; MacDonald et al., 2020; Coffield et al., 1981) and often associated with the ostensible existence of an 'underclass' population. Driving the notion of a cycle of disadvantage in relation to young parents is statistical evidence of the intergenerational transmission of teenage pregnancy, which illustrates that the children of young mothers have a higher chance of becoming young mothers themselves (Hobcraft and Kiernan, 2001; Ermisch, 2003), therefore perpetuating a 'cycle of disadvantage'. Previous research has found that young parenthood tends to be associated with challenging past and future life course trajectories (Easterbrooks et al., 2011). Alexander et al (2010 p.136) argue that, 'teenage mothers are seen as emblematic of an 'underclass' which is outside of mainstream British society, and which is defined through pathologised moral and cultural values, 'lifestyles and behaviour', seemingly transmitted across generations'.

There is some debate about the causes of teenage pregnancy. UNICEF's (2003) influential report, *Teenage Births in Rich Nations*, painted a bleak picture for young parents, arguing that teenage motherhood was the *cause* of social disadvantage. However, the research did consider pre-existing disadvantages and variables that may have caused early pregnancy such as social class, ethnicity, or education, for example. In contrast, Ermisch (2003) compared teenage mothers with teenagers who had miscarried and found that teenage motherhood had little impact on qualifications, employment or earnings by the age of 30. Young parenthood is, therefore, part of a reproduction of social and economic disadvantage rather than its cause (Duncan et al., 2010; Neale and Davies, 2016). In other words, young parenthood is more common in deprived areas and becoming a young parent is not a cause of disadvantage; these youths were already disadvantaged.

A range of social policies have been implemented over the years in an effort to tackle the young parenthood 'problem'. Social policies have equated teenage pregnancy with ignorance and lack of aspirations (Macvarish and Billings, 2010). As the quote above shows, the Social Exclusion Unit (SEU, 1999) conflated young parenthood with deprivation, poor life chances and low expectations. New Labour's TPS represents the most extensive policy to date. This ten-year strategy aimed to reduce

teenage pregnancy by 50% and increase teenage parents' participation in education by 60% (SEU, 1999). This target was not met and the strategy received a significant amount of attention and criticism. Research that centred the experiences of teenage mothers themselves also highlights the limitations of the TPS, showing that many of the assumptions underpinning the policy (such as cycles of disadvantage and lack of education), were at odds with 'insider accounts' (Wenham 2016) of young parents themselves (Mitchell and Green, 2002; Arai, 2003; Cater and Coleman, 2006; Neale and Davies, 2016).

After the TPS came to an end, teenage parents remained on the policy agenda. Teenage parenthood is considered an important measure of progress on child poverty and therefore there is a continued focus on preventing teen parenthood (ONS, 2014c). Under the Conservative and Liberal Democrat Coalition Government, teenage parents were highlighted as a key group in the 'Troubled Families Programme' who were seen as symptomatic of a 'broken Britain' (Wenham 2016 p131). As well as the social problem of 'troubled families', the current framing of the young parenthood 'problem' is located within health outcomes. Pregnancy in those aged under 18 is a health indicator in the Conservative government's Public Health Outcomes Framework 2019-22 (PHE, 2021), and the Teenage Pregnancy Framework (PHE, 2018) specifically targets reducing pregnancies in those aged 18 and under. Teenage motherhood is associated with a litany of poor health outcomes, such as low birth weight babies, higher infant mortality rates and poor maternal mental health (PHE, 2018). However, these outcomes could equally be attributable to factors associated with broader disadvantages such as poor housing conditions and poverty (Wenham, 2011).

The fieldwork for this study took place between 2015-2017. While much has happened since, the austerity doctrine was in full swing by this point. In 2016, following the election of a Conservative majority government, the welts of austerity deepened, with cuts to support services and a retrenchment of the welfare state that particularly affected disadvantaged youths (France et al., 2013). Following a rolling back of the welfare state under the Coalition and Conservative Governments, assessing benefit entitlement and accessing support has becoming increasingly difficult and centred on conditionality (Edmiston et al., 2017; Patrick, 2017). The

amount of financial support individuals can receive in welfare payments is hierarchically structured by age. Young parents under the age of 16 are unable to claim for themselves; their parent or guardian must claim the benefits they are entitled to receive for their own child. This is problematic for young people with chaotic family backgrounds and is based on a policy that focuses on 'the family' rather than young people as agentic. Couples receive a lower combined benefit, which may serve to discourage cohabitation. The newly implemented Universal Credit system also disadvantages young parents. Under the previous system young parents received the same personal allowance as those aged over 25, however, under the Universal Credit system they receive the same amount as those aged under 25 without children. This leaves young parents significantly worse off financially (Montemayor, 2018) and has pushed 100,000 more people into poverty than would have otherwise been the case (Royston and Davey, 2013). The reduced entitlement for young parents fails to recognise them as 'proper' parents by presuming that they either need less money to raise their children or that they will be partially dependent and financially resourced by their families. The Child Poverty Action Group (CPAG) have filed a judicial review to challenge how Universal Credit discriminates young parents (CPAG, 2020). The policy is representative of how non-standard conduct is unsupported institutionally and demonstrates an increasingly punitive stance on young parents from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Despite evidence to the contrary, the rhetoric of young parenthood as a cause of disadvantage remains stubbornly popular and influential in social policy. The SEU report and TPS gives significant weight to the notion of personal (ir)responsibility without accounting for a more complex blend of structure and agency and family diversity. The Troubled Families Programme continues to perpetuate these assumptions, while the new Universal Credit system financially discriminates against young parents. Despite repeated policy efforts to reduce rates of teenage parenthood, Arai (2003) questions the notion of young parenthood as wholly negative and problematises the policy focus on preventing teenage pregnancies by asking, 'Why should some young women not become pregnant or have children?'. This thesis contributes to literature that argues young parenthood is not the issue per se; rather it is disadvantage and poverty. If policy makers want to reduce young parenthood then poverty, disadvantage and life chances should be the target.

1.4 Research rationale and aims

Despite ongoing concerns about teenage pregnancy rates, statistical evidence suggests that rates of young parenthood have fallen and that there is a trend to delay entering parenthood until later in life (ONS, 2020a). This data tallies with dominant social attitudes and opportunities around life course timings. Broadly, the transition to adulthood is theorised as becoming increasingly protracted (Furlong et al., 2011), as discussed in detail in Chapter Two. This data also illustrates a class divide in the timings of entering parenthood, with those from disadvantaged backgrounds more likely to enter parenthood at a young age. As outlined above, the link between young parenthood and disadvantage is considered problematic and is already established in extant literature. This literature predominantly focuses on young mothers (Carabine, 2007; Wilson and Huntington, 2006) while the *Following Young Fathers (FYF)* (Neale et al 2015) and *Following Young Fathers Further (FYFF)* (Tarrant et al 2020) studies consider specific issues relating to young fathers.

Recent empirical studies (*FYF* and *FYFF*) have sought to redress the balance of literature that focuses on young mums. However, an exploration of the experiences of both young men and women is rare and there is a gap in the literature around the diverse experiences of disadvantaged young mothers *and* fathers. Furthermore, while housing is often highlighted as an issue in young parenthood research, it has received limited in depth investigation. This study is unique in drawing together accounts from both mothers and fathers and in providing extensive evidence on young parents who experience a diverse range of disadvantages.

1.4.1 Researching the housing journeys of young mothers *and* fathers

There is little existing literature on both young mothers and fathers. Neale and Patrick (2016) highlight how fathers are often reduced to a small subset in relation to

the mothers. Young mothers form the basis of most research into young parenthood. This may partly be due to the difficulties in gaining access to fathers. It is much easier to gather data on young mothers; at the very least, mothers have to interact with health care professionals, so quantitative data can be routinely gathered and qualitative researchers may be able to access participants through professionals who can act as gatekeepers. Neale and Davies (2015 p2) argue that young fathers' engagement with professional support services is hampered by a 'widespread assumption in policy and practice that they are 'hard to reach' i.e. that they are 'risky' and/or 'feckless'. The 'hard to reach' label stigmatises them and places the responsibility for engaging with services firmly with them'. Consequently, there has been a lack of research on young fathers outside of America (Nylund, 2006) until recently (Neale and Lau-Clayton, 2014; Tarrant et al., 2020) . The absence of fathers in research and policy cements their marginalised parenting role. Yet, they too are a heterogeneous population with diverse experiences and family backgrounds (Neale et al. 2015).

In this study, researching both mothers and fathers provides a dual perspective. Bringing together the perspectives of both mothers and fathers in the same study confers advantages over studies that incorporate comparative accounts through integrated reviews or secondary data analysis (for example Neale and Patrick 2016); as mothers and fathers are given equal attention throughout the research design. A direct comparison of respective mother and father accounts is useful in providing a nuanced picture of family life; revealing the contours of 'doing' family and 'doing' gender. Chapter Eight of this thesis explores gendered parenting in detail and considers to what extent young parent families are developing transformative gender practices.

There is also a gap in literature that addresses the housing pathways of disadvantaged mothers and fathers, despite evidence that gender impacts on housing experiences (Neale and Ladlow, 2015). Housing is often mentioned in young parenthood studies but it has received limited in depth focus. Existing studies on young parenthood and housing have largely focused solely on mothers (Cooke and Owen, 2007; Giullari and Shaw, 2005; Quilgars et al., 2011b), whilst housing issues for young fathers that emerged from the Following Young Fathers study,

provided impetus for this thesis (Neale and Ladlow, 2015). The Following Young Fathers study found that while the disadvantaged young fathers in the sample (15 young fathers) were highly committed to their children, they face severe challenges in developing a parental identity and role. The challenges included tenuous and volatile family and interpersonal relationships; persistent economic and environmental poverty; and a changing welfare landscape that is affecting service provision and entitlements to benefits. The intensive tracking of these young men revealed frequent transitions from one temporary abode to another (Neale and Ladlow, 2015). Housing and the search for a stable home emerged as significant issues that warrant further focussed investigation. This doctoral research therefore set out to increase understanding of housing pathways and housing support for young parents. Research into young mothers and fathers' housing pathways over time also develops a valuable contribution to our understanding of young parents' support needs with potential to inform policy and practice.

The research seeks to address three notable gaps in current knowledge: firstly, there is limited micro-dynamic evidence on young parenthood, creating gaps in understanding of the factors that shape pathways into young parenthood. Secondly, housing pathways are of vital importance as the foundation for establishing parental identities and practices, yet these are under researched. The experiences of young disadvantaged parents who receive housing support are relatively unknown. Thirdly, the way that young parenthood is currently understood has limitations – it is strongly equated with teenage un-partnered motherhood, with policy and practice tailored accordingly. This gendered construction marginalises young fathers, and may adversely affect the efforts of young couples who are seeking to establish a new family unit.

The following questions guided the project [These questions are elaborated upon in Chapter Four]:

Lived Experiences:

1. How and why do young people become parents at a young age? How do they manage this transition and its aftermath?

2. How does housing provision impact on young parents? What factors shape their housing pathways, and how are these pathways negotiated and experienced? How is 'home' understood?
3. What forms of supported housing are available for disadvantaged young parents? How do they experience this support over time?

Policy & Practice Processes:

4. How are supported housing services delivered to young parents and how have such services evolved over time?
5. To what extent are lived experiences of housing provision among young parents in tune with professional practices and expectations and with wider policy processes?
6. How do these intersecting processes evolve over time and what are the implications for the development/sustainability of effective housing policies for young parents?

To address the research questions, a qualitative longitudinal (QL) research design was used. Large-scale quantitative research is often favoured by the government and used as a source for evidence based policy (Monaghan and Ingold, 2019). Graham and McDermott (2005) argue that there is a problem with the over-reliance on quantitative reviews and the lack of value placed on qualitative studies. Indeed, they argue that qualitative research is 'conspicuous by its absence' (p21), suggesting that the focus on quantitative data overlooks the lived experience of young parents revealed in qualitative research, which challenges the axiom of young parenthood as bad for the parents, their children and society as a whole. This is perhaps conveniently ignored in favour of research that compliments successive governments' policies that have sought to prevent young pregnancy and encourage young people to conform to a life course that centres on economic independence. Qualitative research that foregrounds the voices of young parents has challenged the notion of young parenthood as problematic (Beggs Weber, 2020; Neale, B. and Davies, L., 2015). There is limited QL research on young parents in general and existing QL studies focus empirically on either mothers (Wenham, 2016) or fathers (Neale and Patrick, 2016). This thesis is novel in its methodological approach of studying both mothers and fathers over time.

1.5 Theoretical positioning

As frameworks for understanding young parents' evolving housing journeys and support needs, the research is driven by a number of substantial core themes. These are: family practices, youth transitions, disadvantage, home and ontological security. The relevant theories have a commonality that is rooted in a 'processual ontology' (Neale 2021) of fluidity; actively 'doing' practices (such as family, parenting, gender, home); and the everyday interplay of structure and agency. This section provides a brief overview of this conceptual framework, which is further elaborated upon in subsequent chapters.

Developed by David Morgan (1996, 2011) 'family practices' is a theoretical framework that changed the field of family studies by reconceptualising 'the family' conceived as a static institution to a fluid, dynamic and active concept. In shifting the construction of family from a noun to a verb, family practices emphasises the active processes that constitute families, while also connecting history, biography/structure and agency (Morgan 2011). 'Family practices' is also interchangeable with other activities such as gender practices or home practices (Morgan, 2020). As such, this concept provides a useful underpinning to explore how disadvantaged young parents 'do' family as well as how they 'do' gender and home within specific structural and policy contexts and socio-historic moments. Using the framework of family practices generated new insight and explanation about whether a new generation of young people might engender new and transformative family, gender and home practices (see Chapter Eight).

'Youth transitions' is used to conceptualise the shift from childhood to adulthood. This includes symbolic markers such as leaving the parental home and entering employment (Hockey and James, 2003). The processes involved in the pathway to adulthood are dynamic, and youth transitions are understood to be increasingly elongated and messy (Furlong and Cartmel, 2007). In a context whereby young people are living with their own parents for longer (Holdsworth and Morgan, 2005; Stone et al., 2013) and delaying entering parenthood until later in life, young parents buck this trend and could be seen as being in the 'fast lane' to adulthood (Graham

and McDermott, 2005). Chapter Two explores youth transitions in depth and the concept is utilised in the empirical chapters, particularly Chapter Six. The evidence in this thesis supports the notion of messy and non-linear transitions. However, the participants did not necessarily consider themselves to be 'young' parents. Many of the participants had experienced early responsibility and adversity, which had already signified their transition to adulthood. The problems young parents faced were associated with structural difficulties and constrained resources, rather than their age. This presents questions around how we classify 'young' and why.

The term 'disadvantage' is often used axiomatically in social sciences literature. It stands in contrast to 'advantage', and the original conceptual framing of social advantage and disadvantage can be found in notions of wealth and poverty (Dean and Platt 2016). Social advantage and disadvantage have no established definition but encompass social divisions and processes by which inequalities are created (Dean and Platt 2016). The term 'disadvantage' is often used in connection to poverty and deprivation but it also more broadly encompasses dimensions such as economic, environmental and educational structures that confer systematic disadvantage for some social groups whilst sustaining advantage for others. Social advantage and disadvantage therefore exist on a spectrum. A key aim of this thesis is to show, and explain, the diversity amongst disadvantaged youths based on their resources. While all of the participants were disadvantaged, there were significant variations in their experiences. Exploring intra class diversity, the participants' varying levels of resources, diverse relationships, housing pathways past experiences, and future aspirations, all had implications for how they made the transition to adulthood and parenthood.

Housing and home are understood to be two separate but inter-related issues. Housing is a physical, material place of shelter. It is a basic need and is the driver of focus in housing policy that often focuses on housing stock (King, 1996) . Meanings of home can be understood and cultivated along the axis of space and time and conflated with the family, the self, gender, security and the imagined or ideal home (Brueckner et al., 2010). These conceptual distinctions are expanded upon in Chapter Three, but throughout this thesis, home is understood as fundamental to our personal lives (Holdsworth and Morgan, 2005; Mallett, 2004) and housing instability

is considered to constrain parenting practices and the ability to establish a parental identity.

Ontological security is frequently used as a concept to understand home (Somerville, 1992; Dupuis and Thorns, 1998; Hiscock et al., 2001; Mee, 2007). It assumes that housing has the potential to act as a 'base' to fulfil a sense of ontological security to varying degrees. The home is a site of subjective security if it is experienced as a constant space, a setting for day-to-day routines, as a haven from surveillance and a space that enables control, and in a setting integral to identity formation (Dupuis and Thorns, 1998). 'Ontological security' is a subjective and temporal concept, adopted here to encompass homeliness, quality and safety within housing. It is intrinsic to identities and agency throughout the life course and in the practices of everyday life. The theoretical lens of ontological security is frequently used in housing studies. It is applied here in a novel way, to provide fresh insight into young parents' housing pathways and constructs of 'home'. It is employed as a conceptual frame to explore the importance of home and what conditions are conducive to establishing a stable base for parenting over time. Ontological security is not a concept that is readily used in family or youth studies. As this research sits at an intersection between housing, family and youth studies, it is therefore applied to bring a novel theoretical framing to these fields. Operationalising the concept of ontological security, the following three themes will be used to explore how young parents experience home and whether it meets the conditions for ontological security:

- **Quality:** the physical condition of the house,
- **Safety:** security of tenure, safety and the privacy to act freely through time and space,
- **Homeliness:** feelings of home and comfortableness. Often conflated with family, belonging and relationality.

Ontological security is used in this thesis to mean the sense of security and satisfaction derived from home in relation to quality, safety and homeliness over time. It is dynamic and shifts throughout the life course, pivoting on a balance between support needs and independence. It is a valuable concept in terms of

exploring different facets of home and how parenting identities and practices are constrained or enabled by their housing arrangements. It contributes a new theoretical approach to understanding young parenthood over time and it adds depth to existing literature on the ontological security of home for disadvantaged youths in contemporary society. The concept of ontological security in relation to housing is discussed in Chapter Three in more detail, and Chapter Seven deploys the concept specifically in relation to young parents' housing experiences.

1.6 Qualitative Longitudinal research design

The research was conducted using qualitative longitudinal (QL) research methods. Time, which is the key conceptual tenet of QL research, underpins the research in two crucial ways. Firstly, participants were tracked over the course of one year; and secondly, time was a conceptual hook, and underscored an examination of how biographies and the life course form part of the subject matter. This approach is conducive to generating rich and detailed knowledge about the lived experiences of young parents as they unfold (Neale, 2015a). The research aimed to generate knowledge about change and continuities in young parents' lives, their housing pathways and the support services available to them. Reflecting the ethos of coproduction, local housing support services were involved in the research, with the aim of investigating how different forms of support are allocated, or chosen, and how young parents experience these different forms of housing. In combination, the data generated insight into 'what works' and the potential implications for future housing policies for young parents. QL research is a valuable method for social policy as it can demonstrate how interventions may affect future outcomes (Corden and Millar 2007).

The research was conducted in collaboration with 'Agora', a local charity that provides floating housing support [see below for an overview of their work, Chapter Two for a discussion of different forms of housing support and Chapter Seven for an examination of how young parents experienced housing support services]. I worked closely with 'Agora', employing a method of co-production that involved gaining their input at every stage of the research. Professionals working for 'Agora' helped to identify gaps in knowledge and informed the research questions and design. Staff at 'Agora' acted as 'comprehensive gatekeepers' (Emmel et al, 2007) in helping to recruit participants.

'Comprehensive gatekeepers' are defined as having a remit to deliver specific and comprehensive services, and through their work they generally have trusting long-standing relationships with service users (Emmel et al, 2007). A reciprocal relationship was developed with 'Agora' and I spent one year volunteering and conducting participant observation at their weekly young parents' group. A second research site, housing support service 'Mosaic', was also involved in the research. Part way through the study 'Agora' and 'Mosaic' merged organisations, in response to the increasing cuts to funding.

The main housing support services that are discussed in this thesis are floating housing support and temporary housing support. 'Agora' (the project partners) provided floating housing support. This refers to workers supporting young people who had their independent own tenancy. Workers supported their clients to manage their tenancy and finances appropriately, and provided a holistic and personalised service to help young people to manage living independently. 'Mosaic' and 'Lodge' are charities located in the field site that provide similar support, however, they own and maintain their own properties. Here young people are allocated a short-term tenancy (usually up to two years) and a support worker. This provides the dual purpose of providing housing to young people in serious need as well as teaching them how to maintain their own home and supporting them in obtaining their own tenancy. The vital role of support services are discussed in more detail in Chapters Three and Seven.

Within the context of dramatic changes in social and housing policies, young parents were tracked over a period of 18 months in order to explore their housing pathways, the support available to them and their lived-experiences of this. A sample of twenty-two young parents was recruited and seventeen of these were involved in the research over time by participating in two interviews and/or participant observation. Seven were interviewed twice; twelve were involved in participant observations. Two participants had previously participated in the Following Young Fathers (FYF) study (University of Leeds 2012-2015) their data from the FYF was accessed through the Timescapes Archive and supplemented their primary interview data generated for this research. This was also supplemented by interviews with five housing support professionals, shadowing support

workers during their visits to clients' homes, and participant observation at 'Agora' and 'Mosaic'. This generated multiple perspective data (Vogl et al., 2019) and required a technique of analytical integration (Mason 2002) to allow for the generation of meaningful explanations. Interview data was coded in NVivo and analysed both cross-sectionally and longitudinally in order to analyse themes over time and make meaningful comparisons (Millar 2007; Thomson and Holland 2003). QL research poses particular ethical challenges due to sustained involvement in people's lives (Neale 2021) and this is discussed in further detail in Chapter Four.

1.7 Structure of the thesis

This introductory chapter has critically explored the young parenthood 'problem'. Ultimately, at the heart of rhetoric that young parenthood is problematic, is a linked set of concerns including social disadvantage, poverty and welfare dependency. This connection forms a basis for social policies aiming to tackle the young parenthood 'problem'. Negative rhetoric around young parenthood is used as a means to portion blame to those who are disadvantaged by emphasising their 'bad choice' to enter parenthood as the cause of disadvantage. At the same time, the neo-liberal framing around individualisation works to obfuscate the systemic, structural causes of poverty and disadvantage (Shildrick, 2017). This chapter has set out the rationale for researching disadvantaged young parents and housing. In particular, there is a clear need to interrogate diversity within disadvantage. There are some key gaps in young parenthood literature that this research seeks to address by providing a dual perspective of mothers and fathers, and an in-depth focus on housing pathways and support needs over time.

Chapter Two focuses on the theoretical underpinnings of youth transitions and family practices. It also provides a critical overview of young parenthood literature. The chapter covers specific gendered issues in relation to young mothers and fathers, showing a gap in literature that investigates both parents. Chapter Three focuses on housing, investigating the distinction between housing and home. The theoretical frameworks of housing pathways and ontological security are appraised. This chapter builds on Chapter Two, focusing on family, youth and disadvantage in

relation to housing and home. Historical developments of housing support for young parents and relevant housing policies are also discussed. Chapter Four outlines the methodology and research design that underpins this study. The chapter discusses in detail the Qualitative Longitudinal approach to the research. The methodological choices in relation to ethics, sampling and analysis are discussed. By focussing on processes and dynamics, QL research has a rich potential to provide insights into the lives of young parents that has the scope to inform policy and practice.

Chapters Five to Eight outline the empirical findings from the research, highlighting how family and housing are inextricably linked and connected to the life chances of disadvantaged young parents. Chapter Five explores the participants' backgrounds, and highlights how their resources shape their opportunities and choices. The chapter introduces the analytical framework of chaotic/stable family and housing, setting the scene for the temporal discussion that develops in subsequent chapters. Chapter Six presents strong evidence on how the participants entered parenthood and whether it was planned, anticipated or unplanned. The chapter considers how the participants idealised and constructed 'good' mother and father identities and practices. The chapter also explored how their lives have changed as a result of this transition to parenthood. This builds on both their retrospective accounts of the early years of parenthood, and on prospective data gathered in wave one and wave two. Chapter Seven draws upon accounts from both young parents and housing support worker participants. The concept of ontological security is operationalised to analyse the participants' experiences of home. Young parents' relational living arrangements are explored and the role of housing support services is discussed. The findings show that disadvantaged young parents have highly precarious housing pathways that are shaped by relationality. Chapter Eight considers themes of gender, relationships and family, investigating whether there are any indications of transformative family and gender practices. The chapter finds that there was often a mismatch between ideology and lived experiences of gender practices. The chapter shows how relational and housing instability intersected and shaped education and employment pathways and life chances. Chapter nine concludes the thesis with a summary of the main arguments. The chapter makes policy recommendations and draws out the theoretical and methodological contribution of the thesis. The chapter argues that housing support services are vital for disadvantaged young parents.

Chapter 2: Youth transitions, family practices and young parenthood: literature review

2.1 Introduction

In this first of two literature reviews, young parenthood research and relevant theories are appraised. The aims of this chapter are twofold. Firstly relevant core theories are critically examined; namely, youth transitions, and family and gender practices. Secondly, the young parenthood research landscape is charted, focusing specifically on themes addressed in extant young motherhood and young fatherhood literature. Youth transitions and family practices are key overlapping themes that provide the central theoretical scaffolding for this thesis. Critically examining these themes together enables a new kind of framing of disadvantaged young parents. The period of youth offers a vantage point to observe shifting trends, by this reasoning, studying young parents can offer insights into the changing nature of family, gender and parental practices. In context of recent discussions about youth transitions and welfare reforms, the chapter begins by exploring how the shift from dependence to independence is resourced. Next, the changing nature of families is discussed, drawing on the work of Morgan's (2011) theory of dynamic family practices. The growing body of literature on young parenthood will then be discussed. Literature on young mothers and fathers has largely focused on challenging popular negative perceptions of young parenthood. Young motherhood research often focuses on mothers' experiences of stigma, while young fatherhood research challenges the veracity of the absent father discourse by evidencing their desire to 'be there' and the complex challenges that may impede this.

2.2 Youth Transitions

This section begins by exploring the field of youth studies and theories around youth transitions. Shildrick et al (2009 p457) argue that, 'the youth phase provides a privileged vantage point from which to observe broader processes of social change and social continuity'. In other words, societal changes and cultural trends can be more readily observed through the experiences and biographies of emerging

generations of young adults. Empirical exploration of the experiences of young people tells us much more than how young people experience the social world. Their experiences and biographies are also an important proxy for considering much wider social processes and societal issues. By this reasoning, studying young parents can also offer a much broader set of insights around issues such as the changing nature of family, gender and parental practices (this is discussed in more detail in Chapter Eight).

Sociologists and scholars in the field of youth studies have long been concerned with understanding youth transitions, especially since the post-war period (Clarke, 1978). Sociologies of youth have typically examined transitions out of education and the family home as fundamental 'rights of passage' in the shift from childhood to adulthood. It is also taken to mean the processes that occur that signify shifts through and beyond the youth phase of the life course (Irwin, 1995) and as a central concept of life course research (Neale, 2021). Transitions from one life phase to another are understood to be dynamic, complex and diverse. They also offer a way of understanding the interplay between individual biographies and wider social change (Bynner, 2001; MacDonald et al., 2001; Shildrick, 2016). The term 'life course' is preferred in these debates over 'life cycle' or 'life stages'. The latter implies rigid passages through life in relation to biological processes. The 'life course', first coined by Glaser and Strauss (1965), denotes a series of variable and flexible transitions from one social state to the next. It does not presume a single fixed social system, but recognises that it is constantly changing over time and across cultures (Hockey and James, 2003; Neale, 2015a). As Hockey and James (2003 p5) eloquently explain, the life course is, 'a way of envisaging the passage of a lifetime less as the mechanical turning of a wheel and more as the unpredictable flow of a river'.

While contemporary life course categories such as child, youth and adult are becoming increasingly blurred, as MacDonald and colleagues (2001) argue, it remains important to deploy adequate terminology to capture the biographical changes that people experience. This is particularly relevant to those from the age of 16, to whom more 'choice' opens up. Extending the 'careers' metaphor (Becker, Howard Saul, 1963; Berger et al., 1972; MacDonald et al., 2005), Coles (1995)

conceptualises transitions as the pathways of young people as they move towards adulthood. Young people navigate their way through a diverse range of pathways as well as key social institutions such education, employment, housing, and family and relationships. Youth Studies researchers have sought to unravel the ostensible linearity of the youth phase in order to reconceptualise it as increasingly messy, fluid and elongated (Furlong and Cartmel, 2007; Furlong et al., 2011). Despite these inherent complexities in the languages used to understand the experiences of young people, the concepts of transitions, trajectories and pathways are dominant terms in the field and are useful in that they are less rigid. The terminology also facilitates an investigation of single-issue pathways (such as school to work) whilst also taking into account the interplay with other pathways (such as housing).

Transitions to adulthood include a range of symbolic markers such as leaving home, entering employment and becoming a parent (Hockey and James, 2003). The timing of these events are therefore important and are interpreted through normative sets of expectations about when the right time is to make these transitions. This temporal dimension of transitions (Henderson et al., 2007; Shirani and Henwood 2011) means that within the context of protracted youth transitions, young parenthood may represent the 'fast lane' to adulthood (Bynner, 2005). Neale (2016 p76) describes young parents as the 'pioneers' of 'new adulthood' (Wyn, 2014) because they do not wait to achieve a complete transition to independent adulthood before starting a family. These arguments must therefore be considered within the context of a decade of austerity measures and changes to the labour and housing markets, which make it increasingly difficult for young people to achieve independence and the symbolic markers of adulthood.

Indeed, within the field of youth studies, the experiences of young people are increasingly examined within the context of risk and uncertainty that characterise contemporary society. Young people are particularly exposed to risk as they transition to adulthood and attempt to acquire independent resources (Beck, 1992; Furlong and Cartmel, 1997). Young people are often the subject of moral panic and come to epitomise wider societal fears regarding growing uncertainty and inequalities, so much so that the youth phase is said to be in 'crisis' as the transition to adulthood becomes more fluid, fragmented and difficult to navigate (Furlong and

Cartmel, 2007). Whether young people today are in the midst of 'new' crisis is still subject to much debate. Many of the 'problems' facing young people today for example are reminiscent of those following the crash of the youth labour market in the 1980s (Irwin, 1995). Additionally, MacDonald (2011) cautions against solely focusing on 'headline-grabbing' new issues. In comparing portrayals of youth in crisis in the 1980s to today, he nonetheless acknowledges that there are new structural elements to consider. Chiefly, the crisis in the 1980s predominantly affected disadvantaged and working-class youths, while today, a more diverse population of youths are finding themselves in precarious situations (Furlong et al., 2011). Young people who finished their education at the age of 16 were particularly adversely affected by the collapse of the youth labour market in the 1980s and so the policy response was to expand further and higher education, introduce a range of training and low paid job creation schemes, and to reform the benefits system (Antonucci et al., 2014). In contrast to the 1980s, young people are now navigating a labour market that is saturated with low-paid and precarious work (MacDonald and Giazitzoglu, 2019). 'Under-employment' is a significant problem as semi-skilled or low-skilled precarious work has become 'poor' in the sense that it offers low wages and little long-term security (MacDonald 2011). Young people therefore 'face the prospect of precarious EET trajectories; 'patchwork' careers in which they churn between training, unemployment and insecure jobs that are low paid and low status' (Neale and Davies 2016 p87). In terms of housing, there are also new patterns of housing formation; young people are either living with their parents for longer or increasingly living in shared accommodation, or alone, before cohabiting (Holdsworth and Morgan, 2005; Stone et al., 2013; Heath, 2019). The housing configurations for young people are discussed further in Chapter Three. The ability for young parents to economically support themselves and secure a home for them and their children therefore occurs against a backdrop of increasing insecurity and constraint on their EET and housing trajectories (see Chapters Seven and Eight).

Alongside these structural constraints, it is also important to consider how 'normative' transitions are constructed, particularly in relation to historic and cultural variations in the age-appropriateness of certain timings and transitions including entering parenthood. It is noteworthy that the atypical 'condensed' transitions characteristic of the 1950s and 1960s continue to shape the construct of normative

transitions today (Allan and Crow, 2001; Jones, 1995). Condensed transitions refer to young people attaining independence in key social institutions at a similar linear time in their lives. For example, a normative trajectory would involve leaving education and then gaining employment, which would then facilitate moving into one's own home and starting a family. Normative transitions and life course trajectories therefore also interact with, and are influenced by, economic structures and processes. Hobsbawm (1994) attributes post-war economic growth, the expansion of social housing and high levels of employment to making this one-note trajectory appear attainable. Yet the 'protracted' transitions evident prior to the 1950s, and again more recently, distinctly contrast with condensed transitions. Allan and Crow (2001 p37) argue that the post-war years were actually more:

'Peculiar rather than normal... it is therefore ironic that the condensed transitions of that period have come to take on the status of a norm from which other patterns are judged to be deviations, particularly as even then a significant degree of diversity was observable'.

Reflecting a paradox at the heart of normative expectations and lived realities, young parents ironically most embody the condensed transition to adulthood as they move quickly into starting a family and in some cases living independently. However, against the backdrop of current economic structures and an expensive housing market (Preece et al., 2020) that is contributing towards the trend to delay entering parenthood until later in life (ONS, 2020a), young parents are considered to have deviated, despite fulfilling a 'condensed' transition to adulthood.

As introduced in Chapter One, theories pertaining to youth transitions and disadvantage support exploration and understanding of the timing of entering parenthood and also offer some explanation of fertility trends. Walkerdine (2001) suggests that career aspirations can act as a contraceptive for middle class young women as academic and employment success is privileged ahead of starting a family. In addition, Bynner (2005 p378) found that despite an overall trend towards postponing parenthood and marriage, this is less evident amongst the most disadvantaged, signalling, 'social fracturing' between advantaged and disadvantaged groups, a point to which the chapter now turns.

2.3 Disadvantaged youth transitions: resourcing independence

As discussed in the Introduction to this thesis, the framing of young parenthood as problematic is woven with concerns about welfare dependency and the ‘problem’ that young parents are perceived as not having accumulated enough independent financial resources. Building further on the theoretical foundations of youth studies, this section considers youth transitions in relation to the shift from being ‘dependent’ to ‘independent’ and how this is resourced. According to Hockey and James (2003 p69), in the transition to adulthood, ‘dependence must be shrugged off in favour of an individualistic, knowledgeable independence’. Protracted transitions and a lengthening of the youth life course phase can be configured as a period of ‘partial independence’ that is shaped by social structures such as family relations, education and employment (Irwin, 1995). How dependence, independence or partial independence are resourced is key here. In conjunction with a labour market that is unstable and set up to pay less to young people, there is an increased expectation that children are the responsibility of their parents for longer. This is reflected in a general trend of children living with their parents for longer and until an older age (Holdsworth and Morgan, 2005; ONS, 2019c). Living with parents allows, ‘youths [to] experience a period of semi-autonomous independence partly underwritten by the income of their parents’ (Irwin 1995 p7). This argument is premised on the assumption of young people not being parents themselves. As Jones (2002) argues, rather than signifying a shift to adulthood and independence, young parenthood actually generates increased intergenerational dependence. She says:

‘The transition to independent adulthood is not necessarily accomplished through motherhood which might serve the function (to the grandparent) of extending the dependency of the young mother’ (Jones 2002, p. 21).

Jones's argument points to the complexity at the heart of defining independence, particularly in relation to young parenthood. Taking this argument further, Yardley (2008) argues that 'teenage motherhood cannot be treated as a singular, uniform transition to adulthood; it is experienced differently by individuals drawing on economic and social support from a variety of sources'. Whether entering young parenthood leads to increased independence or dependence therefore depends on a broad range of circumstantial factors, including the resources available to young parents (explored further empirically in Chapter Six). Children and young people are dependent on others and often have limited autonomy in decision-making and practical issues such as housing and financial support. Thomson et al (2002 p338) explain that the outcomes of this dependency in terms of life chances is,

'Highly structured... the passage of a middle-class child can be eased in the 'slipstream' of their parents' status and achievements. In contrast the turbulence resulting from a chaotic family and economic life can not only hinder progress, but may even prove dangerous in itself, forcing young people into premature independence'.

In a society that typically castigates young parents, questions of (in)dependence are therefore essential to an understanding of their experiences. In Chapter Five of the thesis, the question of how family and housing backgrounds shape entry into parenthood and future life chances is discussed in more detail.

For families who cannot provide housing and economic support for their children during an elongated youth phase, concern over how their independence will be resourced is even more pronounced. The hierarchical structures of wages and benefits according to age 'creates a 'second-class' labour market for young people and has the potential to further entrench youth disadvantage and precariousness' (Antonucci et al., 2014 p4). For young people dependent on welfare benefits, France (2008) argues that the threat of sanctions if they do not accept any form of paid work may worsen their situation, particularly in the long term if they become trapped in unskilled, low paid and insecure jobs. Young parents are placed in a particularly tricky position in this regard. They are more likely to remain economically dependent on others (their families or the welfare state), whilst developing an independent

identity as a parent. Their caring responsibilities can also limit their potential to access and gain economic resources and achieve economic independence (Neale and Davies, 2016). These themes are returned to in the thesis in chapters Six and Eight.

In policy, there is tendency for young people in socially and economically disadvantaged areas to be primarily understood in terms of their alleged deficits. Cast as deficits, poverty, disadvantage and lack of independence are interpreted as individual 'failings', such as lacking in aspiration or employability (Shildrick and MacDonald, 2008). Furlong and Cartmel (2007) argue that personal explanations for 'failure' ignore structural constraints, like those identified. With greater uncertainty and less prescriptive life course trajectories, a fundamental debate has emerged about whether there is greater choice and reflexivity for young people in their transitions to adulthood (Arnett, 2006; Patterson et al., 2009). However, most youth scholars contend that agency remains constrained and transitions are shaped by pervasive structural factors (Evans, 2002; Furlong, 2007; MacDonald et al., 2001). Taking inspiration from C. Wright Mills' (1959) assertion that individual biography and social structure are inextricably linked, (Shildrick and MacDonald, 2008) argue that a more 'holistic' perspective, accounting for the interplay between agency, local culture and structural constraint, is required in order to theorise these transitions. This is particularly important in attempting to understand the experiences of disadvantaged young parents. MacDonald et al., (2001) argue that it is through transitions that structural differences are consolidated and reproduced. This position goes some way to explain why young parenthood is concentrated in disadvantaged areas and why there is a prevalence of intergenerational instances of young parenthood (Kiernan, 1997; Sigle-Rushton, 2008) especially in regions and localities marked by disadvantage.

2.4 Becoming a young parent

Explanations as to why some people enter parenthood at a young age mostly focuses on mothers and a comparison between deprived and less deprived areas. The ONS (2019a) found that in 2018, the conception rate for women under 18 years

was higher in the 50% most deprived areas in England, while the percentage of conceptions leading to a legal abortion was higher in the 50% least deprived areas in England. There is a clear divide along the lines of socio-economic background in terms of the decision to continue with the pregnancy, with young people from affluent backgrounds more likely to have an abortion (Lee et al., 2004). Turner (2004) believes that this is because those from more deprived areas are more likely to have lower expectations, particularly due to their more limited opportunities in work and education, so they are more likely to accept what happens *to them*. However, this theory is rather limited in the way it reduces young parents' agency to passivity and does not account for the decision-making processes that occur prior to conception and during pregnancy, which eventually result in birth. Participants in Chase et al (2008) study generally felt 'positive' about their pregnancy, conceptualising it as an 'opportunity'. Additionally, Lee et al. (2004) found that young parents decided against abortion not for moral reasons, but because of their personal situations, including the attitudes of family and friends, the acceptability of young parenthood in their local area, and the opportunity parenthood could provide in positively changing their lives.

Young parents' childhood and background are significant factors in their decision to have a child (Arai, 2003; Duncan et al., 2010). In Cater and Coleman's (2006) study, all participants (41 women and 10 men) had 'unsettled backgrounds'; difficult family lives and problems at school. As a result of the hardships faced, young parents had a desire to change their lives, to 'turn things around' and take some control in the midst of chaotic situations. Participants were also aware of a number of other young parents in local area and that they were generally well accepted. Qualitative studies that have revealed positive aspects of young parenthood found that becoming a parent provided a chance to gain independence, forge a new identity and escape family hardships and unhappiness (Barn and Mantovani, 2007; Cater and Coleman, 2006; Chase et al., 2008; Duncan et al., 2010; Neale and Lau-Clayton, 2014; Arai, 2003).

With the availability of contraception and abortion, becoming a parent entails a certain degree of choice for most. Cater and Coleman (2006) developed a tripartite analysis showing pregnancies that were planned, unplanned or a result of young parents being 'positively ambivalent'; meaning that they did not actively plan to get

pregnant but they were happily aware it was possible. Similarly, MacDonald and Marsh (2005) used the notion of 'fatalism' to describe how 'falling' pregnant was left to fate for their participants who were resigned towards the future. One of their participants is quoted as stating, 'she had learned 'not to plan anything because it never works anyway'' (p144). MacDonald and Marsh's (2004) notion of fatalism usefully takes account a temporal dimension and they theorise that plans are constrained by a lack of choice in the context of poverty and social exclusion. There is a need to further interrogate notions of 'choice' and 'planned' conceptions that draw upon both mother and father accounts and goes beyond statistical comparisons of deprived and least deprived areas (see Chapter Six).

2.5 Intergenerational reproduction of disadvantage

The intergenerational reproduction of disadvantage remains a key concern, occupying in academic debate and underscoring social policies relating to young parents (Brown, 2016; SEU, 1999). As discussed in Chapter One, the notion that young parenthood is part of a 'cycle of disadvantage' is powerful and has shaped social policies aimed at reducing young parenthood (SEU, 1999). However, a number of studies have long challenged the simplistic notion of a cycle, or reproduction, of disadvantage (see for example: Coffield et al., 1981; Laub and Sampson, 2003; Irwin and Elley, 2011; MacDonald et al., 2020). In using qualitative methods, these studies show the rich constellation of factors that shape lives and life chances. Coffield et al (1981) argue that rather than a 'cycle of deprivation', there is a 'web of deprivation', in which multiple factors intersect to shape pathways within, but also out of, deprivation. More recently, Shildrick et al (2012) and MacDonald et al (2020) have rebuffed claims by MPs that there are families, across multiple generations, who have never been employed. In failing to identify any statistical evidence of three generations of workless families (Shildrick et al, 2012), they conclude, just as Coffield et al (1981) did 40 years ago, that an intergenerational reproduction of disadvantage is an overly simplified concept that suits a political narrative that seeks an easy policy solution and to victim blame. The concept fails to account for structural issues but also lacks evidence that is a cultural transmission of choice to remain in disadvantaged circumstances. These systematic critiques

indicate that 'cycles of disadvantage' theories are premised on an essentialist explanation that lacks nuance or consideration of the broad range of factors that may either lead to a prediction of disadvantage or equally to new pathways out of disadvantage.

In considering how class positions and disadvantage, are reproduced, it is also useful to draw upon the concept of 'resources', alongside (in)dependence. Resources include economic and material, as well as subjective practices such as family relationships, self-esteem, confidence and aspirations. Bottero (2004) and Irwin (2005) take a 'relational' approach to consider how social differences such as gender, class and race intersect with material, social and emotional resources. Relationality moves beyond categories of working, middle and upper class, and instead conceptualises class as an individualised hierarchy. Resources are a conceptually useful way to explore intra-class diversity and the intersections of economic, social and cultural contexts as well as interactions, relationships and subjective experiences (Bottero, 2005). This framework has been especially popular amongst education theorists in conceptualising educational opportunities, pathways and reproductions of advantage or disadvantage (Feinstein, 2008; Reay, 1998; Walkerdine, 2001). Resources are crucial in facilitating or restricting young peoples' opportunities. For example, resources can determine when a young person lives independently and the type of accommodation that they live in. Using the concept of resources is therefore beneficial to explore diversity amongst disadvantaged youths and young parents, including why some may fare better than others through their parenting journeys. Chapter Five considers the resources young parents had prior to entering parenthood and subsequent chapters consider how resources shape their pathways, practices and principles.

In summary, the field of youth studies and the concept of youth transitions provide an essential underpinning to an advanced understanding of young parenthood. Young parenthood is situated within the context of increasingly messy and protracted transitions to adulthood (Furlong and Cartmel, 2007). In rarely addressing the experiences of young people who become parents, what the youth transitions literatures do not explain are how family identities and practices are experienced and

constructed by young parents within their combined transitions to adulthood and parenthood and in contexts of wider structural and policy change. Key questions remain. In a context of elongated timings and transitions, does entering parenthood early represent a transition to adulthood? Does it lead to increased independence or dependence and how is this resourced? The empirical chapters of this thesis go on to address these questions. Before doing so however, this chapter turns to more pressing questions around how parenthood and family life is understood and conceptualised and what this means for understanding the experiences of young parents.

2.6 Family practices

As discussed in Chapter One, despite falling rates of young parenthood, there remains a public fascination and a host of policy interventions aimed towards those who enter parenthood 'early' (Arai 2009) . One of the ways in which the problem of young parenthood is framed, is a moralising concern for the changing nature of the family and normative constructs of the life course (Duncan et al 2010). For different reasons to the explanations found in youth studies, family research has much to contribute in developing understandings of why young people might enter parenthood at a young age. The concept of family practices is especially useful here for understanding the dynamics of young parenthood. The intersection of family and gender practices is also elaborated. Finally, gender and family practices are applied to motherhood and fatherhood more broadly, showing a gap in knowledge that focuses on young parents' family and gender practices.

2.6.1 Families and young parents

Social change is often explored in family sociology through family structure change; the family practices approach emerged as a reaction to imbalanced focus on macro change rather than the micro dynamics of family lives (Morgan, 1996) . As shown in Chapter One, young parenthood is in decline and young parents are increasingly framed as taking a deviant life course and family pathway. Young parents are less likely to conform to an idealised version of the nuclear family: in 2006 0.5% of 18-24

year olds in Britain were married and 12% were cohabiting (Duncan et al., 2010). However, the nuclear family is no longer the singular standard model of family formations. There has been a pluralisation of family types, competing ideas of normality and a broader range of family configurations that are considered 'legitimate' rather than 'deviant' (Holdsworth and Morgan, 2005; Smart and Neale, 1999). Parents are no longer expected to marry before having children and there has been a decline in marriage and a rise in one-parent families (ONS, 2019b). This begs the question, when diverse family forms are increasingly commonplace and accepted as such, why are young parents considered deviant?

There is a range of dynamic influences on the parental role that change over time. These include social policies, relationships, cultural, legal and economic shifts, historical background and biology. Morgan (1996) considers these dynamics to be what constitutes 'family practices', or 'doing' the family. He has conceptualised the family as a network of continually changing relationships. Morgan's (1996; 2011; 2020) theorisation of family as fluid and relational transformed the field of family studies. The concept of 'family practices' emphasises how the activities that each family member engages in, are enacted in relation to one another. It is in the doing of these activities, or practices, that family relationships are affirmed, reproduced or transformed (Morgan 2020).

'Family practices' is an approach that facilitates an investigation of intra and inter family life: 'the practices approach can recognise the divisions and inequalities that exist within and cut across family life and explore how these are practically constituted on a day-to-day basis' (Morgan 2020 p741). Morgan's concept of family 'practices' is connected to Bourdieu's concept of 'habitus'; that is, the habits, values and behaviours that constitute the 'correct' set of practices for one's social group. Habitus is 'dynamic' and 'reflexive', and beliefs about 'correct' practices are shaped over time by all forms of institutions, such as schools, the media, the state, and the family (Holdsworth and Morgan, 2005). In Bourdieu's view, habitus conditions people to achieve predetermined outcomes and replicate accepted forms of behaviour (Bourdieu, 1984). This may offer some explanation as to why attitudes towards young parenthood are locally inflected, and how constructs of acceptable timings of

life course transitions are not mono-cultural (Lee et al., 2004). One aspect of habitus and the social reproduction of normative practices is the transfer of resources between family members. Young people acquire resources through institutions, and interpersonal and familial resources. The extent to which individuals and families can acquire resources can perpetuate inequalities. Both the family and the state are particularly important institutions that influence ideas about how young parents should be supported and by who. Family dynamics and parenting practices are also class differentiated (Reay, 1998; Lawler, 2000; Walkerdine et al., 2001) and the intergenerational passing of resources can also include the skills to deal with poverty and disadvantage. This transmission is a resource that influences life chances (Gillies, 2005). Chapter Five of the thesis considers the family resources that young parents access and provides an opportunity to consider the intra class diversity of family life.

2.7 Gender practices

In using the concept of 'practices' and of 'doing', 'what may through one set of lenses, be seen as family practices may also, through swapping these lens, be seen as gender practices, class practices and so on' (Morgan, 2020 p734). This makes family practices a useful conceptual tool to investigate disadvantaged young parents' gender, family and home practices. This is especially pertinent for a study that examines the gendered character of parenting from the perspectives of young mothers and fathers. As a dynamic framework, the family practices approach allows an investigation into changes and continuities in family practices over time and provides a vantage point to investigate whether young parents are engaging in transformative gender and family (see Chapter Eight). Disadvantaged and working class experiences are rarely considered to be transformative (Roberts, 2018) and there is a gap in extant research that considers the diverse experiences and gender practices of young parents over time. The value of a dynamic approach to exploring change and continuity over time is discussed in Chapter Four.

Gender role attitudes and practices shape, and are shaped by, families and homes over time. West and Zimmerman (1987) coined the term 'doing gender' to explain

gender as a socially guided and active process that casts particular roles and responsibilities as inherently masculine or feminine. 'Doing gender' is an ongoing negotiation; it is socially constructed, reproduced and reshaped. There is a large body of research that applies the 'doing gender' approach to explain how gendered behaviours reproduce or contest existing normative constructs of gender (see for example, Pinho and Gaunt, 2019; Chesley, 2011; West and Zimmerman, 1987; West and Zimmerman, 2009). Inequalities remain between men and women, however, there has been an increase in the amount of time men are spending with their children and doing domestic labour than in previous generations (Altintas and Sullivan, 2016; Kan et al., 2011; Wishart et al., 2019; Brannen, 2006). Different living arrangements can have implications for 'doing the family' (Morgan 1996) 'doing gender' (West and Zimmerman, 1987) and 'doing home' (Bowlby et al., 1997). An exploration of the gendered division of labour amongst young parents can shine a light on evolving gendering roles, practices and relationships. As Pinho and Gaunt (2019 p3) observe, 'couples who deviate from prevailing gendered roles provide us with an opportunity to systematically observe new social realities as they evolve'.

While there remains an unequal distribution of labour between men and women, quantitative time-use studies show that fathers are spending more time with their children and doing more domestic labour than in previous generations (Altintas and Sullivan, 2016; Kan et al., 2011; Wishart et al., 2019). However, research also shows that the tasks and time-use that men and women are engaged in remain gendered. The time mothers and fathers spend with their children is also qualitatively different (Vincent, C. et al., 2008). Women spend more time on physical tasks and care, while men spend more of their time with children doing play and recreation (Craig, 2006). Therefore, despite some changes in the unequal gendered division of labour, caring for children remains overwhelmingly the responsibility of mothers (Braun et al., 2011). Women are also spending an increased amount of time in paid employment; yet continue to spend more time than their male partners on domestic and childcare work. Hochschild (1995) called this the 'care deficit'. However, there are intersectional differences with white middle class families more likely than other groups to have a setup with the father as the primary caregiver and the mother as the breadwinner for economic reasons (Chesley and Flood, 2017; Kramer and Kramer, 2016).

In general, gender roles and equality are messy and difficult to classify. They are constantly in flux, evolving and shaped by a number of structural and subjective issues. Both qualitative and quantitative evidence indicate this mixed picture. Brannen and Nilsen's (2006) study of four generations of fathers found that younger fathers were more involved in family life, breaking from recent past practices of fathering roles predominantly centred on breadwinning. One explanation for this is a greater need for households to be dual income (Brannen and Nilsen 2006; Weis 2004). In addition, Neale and Patrick (2016) found that the relationship young fathers had with their child's mother was significant in determining fathers' relationships with their children. This is a widely reported finding for fathers in general, whether they are partnered and sharing residence with their children, or single and non-resident (Poole et al., 2016). In their study of low-income fathers, Braun, Vincent and Ball (2011) found that fathering roles were not fixed and could change over time. They also found that traditional childcare arrangements, with women being the primary caregiver, was the most common arrangement amongst their working class participants. Dermott (2018) and Dermott and Pomati (2016) also argue that social class and levels of resources play a significant role in shaping family and gender practices.

There is a suggestion that younger generations may increasingly move towards an equal gender division of labour, as Dernberger and Pepin (2020) found that young people had greater openness to a variety of division of labour scenarios for their future selves as parents. Yet, policies to promote gender equality in the UK such as Shared Parental Leave (SPL) have had a low take-up (Birkett and Forbes, 2019). Despite efforts to encourage father involvement at policy level, parenting policies are less relevant to many disadvantaged young people who are often not entitled to it because of their employment status. Young parents are also more likely to be separated and lone parents (Poole et al., 2016) . This poses questions as to how parental relationships and household configurations affect childcare and the gendered division of labour. There is a gap in the literature with few studies specifically focusing on young parents Given that youths are a 'vantage point for change' (Shildrick et al., 2009) this oversight is problematic. Exploring the attitudes

and experiences of young parents may be illuminating of transformative gender and family practices (see Chapter Eight).

It is evident that gendered parenting roles have evolved in tandem with the changing nature of the family and labour market and policy change. While recent studies have unravelled some of the negative axioms surrounding young parenthood (Duncan et al., 2010), navigating 'good' mother and father identities is perhaps more complex and class inflected. As there is greater control over fertility and lower fertility levels, parenthood is no longer inevitable and there is no neat consensus on parenting practices, leading to greater public debate on how to 'do' motherhood and fatherhood. The next two sections explore the related literatures on young mothers and fathers respectively.

2.8 Young Mothers

While mother and father identities and practices have become more fluid (Dermott, Esther, 2009), motherhood in particular is increasingly politicised, and, 'bound up with the idea that many societal and health related problems can be explained and resolved in terms of the quality of parental care in a child's early life' (Smyth, 2012 p2). Investigating social attitudes and social constructs of mothers, Benard and Correll (2010) found that there was a general perception of working mothers as being less 'caring'. Angst about 'how' to parent stretches across the generations, however, young parents (particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds) are more likely to be subjected to professional surveillance and public scrutiny. The 'quality' of teen parenting has been called into question propped up by evidence from health research which shows that children born to teenage mothers have lower birth weights and higher rates of accidents (Shields and Pierce, 2006). Globally, teen pregnancy and parenthood is regarded as a contributor to maternal and child mortality and cycles of ill-health and poverty (Swann et al., 2003). The presumed inadequacy of young mothers has also been linked with single parenthood and concerns about the lack of independent economic resources (Wenham, 2011).

Wilson and Huntington (2006) argue that there is a new set of norms governing femininity that marries the ideal life course trajectory of middle class women to governments' objectives to increase economic growth through increasing women's participation in higher education and the workforce. This is at odds with the figure of the 'chav mum'. Imogen Tyler (2008) for example uses the popular media to explore perceptions of young mothers as, 'chav mum, chav scum', arguing that the 'disgust' directed towards working class young mothers is emblematic of 'heightened class antagonism' (p18). In the context of growing class inequalities (Piketty, 2014; Savage, 2015), the 'chav mum' is a demonised 'caricatured' figure that is, 'expressive of an underlying social crisis or anxiety' (Tyler, 2008 p19) and, 'is mobilised in ways that justify the continued division of society into those who can speak, act, and feel and those who are 'spoken for' (p32). However, Tyler (2008) also argues that this 'disgust' for young mothers is also 'symptomatic of an explosion of anxiety about dropping fertility rates amongst the white middle classes. Indeed, the disgust for, and fascinated obsession with, the chav mum's 'easy fertility' is bound up with social angst about infertility amongst middle-class women, a group continually chastised for 'putting career over motherhood' and 'leaving it too late' to have children' (p30). What constitutes a 'good' mother and the 'right' time to become a mother is also heavily policed and working class young mothers with limited resources are situated at the bottom of the 'good' mother hierarchy.

As well as an inter- classed hierarchy of mothers there is also an intra- classed hierarchy of 'good' young mothers. Writing about the reproduction of negative representations of young mothers in MTV's 'reality' show, 'Underage and Pregnant', Tyler (2011) argues there has been a significant increase in representations of maternity within popular culture. Here, she argues, that the hierarchies amongst young mothers, predominantly divided along class lines, were clearly visible in the TV show: 'the moral worth of the participants is often correlated with their educational status: those mothers seen to be continuing in education are able to acquire forms of value and resources, while those seen as 'abandoning' education for motherhood are more harshly judged' (p220).

In contrast to the glut of negative media portrayal of young parents (Duncan et al, 2010), those who are successful in education or employment acquire some status

with normative aspirations and academic achievement exonerating young mothers from the negative discursive construct of the 'bad' teenage mother. For example, a teenage mother from a middle-class background, interviewed for the Guardian newspaper was asked, 'did she feel any sense of shame to find herself at a centre for teenage mothers, with all its social implications of failure? She nods. 'I thought, I can't believe I've ended up here with girls like this. But then, when I got talking to them, I realised they were nothing like the stereotype of teen mums either' (Aitkenhead, 2005). The quote demonstrates how young mothers, in deviating from contemporary normative parenthood, are frequently construed as 'incapable', 'feckless' or 'bad' parents (Arai, 2003). The normative life course trajectory towards parenthood is intertwined with the neo-liberal model that values establishing individual economic independence, therefore minimising dependency on the welfare state (McDermott and Graham, 2005; Wilson and Huntington, 2006). Young parents internalise and seemingly accept public perceptions of themselves but also critique it and resist applying it to themselves (Patrick, 2017).

A common focus in young motherhood literature is how young mothers (and more specifically, teenage mothers) experience stigma from both the general public and public services (Hanna, 2001; Kirkman et al., 2001; McDermott and Graham, 2005; Yardley, 2008; Calver, 2019). As Yardley elaborates:

'Policy-makers might not want to be seen as accepting of certain groups whose values and beliefs have perceived costs, both in terms of welfare dependency and what policy perceives as irresponsible parenting. Therefore, in effect, the stigma attached to these groups, both by policy-makers and within wider society, is functional for the social investment state in so far as it enables the continuation of the disdain for groups whose values are at odds with its philosophy. Furthermore, such stigma may indeed act to further legitimise policy initiatives aimed at pushing these individuals towards the desired outcomes of labour market participation and self sufficiency' (Yardley 2008 p682).

The stigma of young motherhood is therefore bound up with disadvantage and neo-liberalism. Early motherhood is a 'working-class affair' (Walkerdine et al., 2001) and,

'young motherhood can be seen as a particularly feminised route to poverty, with the determining prospect of lack of respectability and pram-pushing chavette status' (Nayak and Kehily, 2014 p1339). Ellis-Sloan (2014) argues that in the context of contemporary neo-liberal society, working class women are subjected to increased surveillance around their choices in education, employment. As a result, young mothers are acutely aware of how they are perceived and stigmatised by others. Young mothers' (lack) of engagement in education, employment and training (EET) is also frequently at the centre of young parenthood discussions (Vincent, 2012). Entering parenthood at a young age is considered an undesirable disruption to EET. In Sex and Relationships Education (SRE) the message is to not engage in risky sexual behaviour as teen pregnancy can disrupt the life course premised upon a successful academic trajectory (Elley, 2013). Kidger (2004) and Yardley (2019) both argue that support for young mothers is overly focused on education and employment at the expense of concern for social dimensions including lack of support networks and stigma.

McDermott and Graham (2005) contend that teenage mothers deal with stigma by generating a 'good mother identity' that focuses on the strengths that younger mothers have over older mothers, such as greater levels of fitness and energy to play and care for their children. Early motherhood is also normalised through familial and localised support, which can protect against stigma (Hanna, 2001; Phoenix, 1991). McDermott and Graham (2005), argue that the 'good' mother discourse of always putting the child first, taking caring responsibilities seriously and privileging motherhood as a primary identity can act as a 'buffer against the potential threats to self-esteem which the studies reported young mothers experiencing in public places from public agencies' (p29). Investing in the 'good' mother identity and prioritising the mother/child dyad can be a source of intimacy that is secure and meaningful. It also puts young mothers at the centre of their own biographies and can create a sense of self-worth (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 1995; McDermott and Graham, 2005).

Despite coping mechanisms to resist stigmatisation, Hanna (2001) found that some teenage mothers 'internalised the negative stereotypes which portrayed them as a deviant group' (Hanna 2001 p460). Yardley (2019) confirms that teenage mothers in her study regularly experienced discrimination from the general public and that some

young mothers adopted stigmatising attitudes to other young mothers whilst simultaneously presenting themselves as an exception. This is similar to findings from Ellis-Sloan (2014) and MacDonald and Marsh (2004) whereby their participants differentiated themselves from 'bad' mothers in order to preserve personal and family respectability (MacDonald and Marsh 2004). Likewise, Jones et al (2019 p769) found that young mothers', 'motivation to maintain a positive self-image leads them to engage in negative evaluations of 'other girls' in the same situation. Evident in this data is that young mothers, when asked about their teenage mother contemporaries, employed a process of 'othering'. Othering is a means to rebuff stigma. The literature on stigma is important in giving an 'insider account' into how young mothers deal with the negative popular stereotypes of young motherhood and it makes a valuable contribution to the literature that challenges the notion of young motherhood as wholly negative (Mitchell and Green, 2002; Kidger, 2004; Wenham, 2016).

Allen and Osgood (2009) argue that the experiences of teenage motherhood are complex as constructs of 'good' and 'bad' motherhood are closely connected to social class. Often young mothers are perceived as a homogeneous group that is benefit-dependent, unfit, irresponsible and single (Campion, 1995; Phoenix et al., 1991). Hamilton et al. (2018) contend that working class women struggle to assert a legitimate maternal identity, while Calver (2019) states that there is a need to 'critically consider what is classified as respectable mothering and how this imposes limits on the lives and experiences of pregnant and mothering young women'. There is more work to be done to explore how young mothers carve out a 'good' identity within disadvantaged circumstances and against a backdrop that clearly views young mothers as deviant and deficient (see Chapter Six). There is also a gap in literature that incorporates and compares the accounts of both mothers and fathers.

2.9 Young Fathers

Until recently, young fathers have been marginalised in literature, policy and practice (Neale and Davies, 2015; Davies, 2016). Despite a wealth of research about young motherhood, fathers have largely been ignored. This has been attributed to access

difficulties including uncooperative gate-keepers and the unwillingness of young men to take part in research due to the legal implications of underage sex, or perceived negative attitudes towards them (Lau Clayton, 2016; Reeves, 2006). McDermott and Graham (2005) found that formal support from link workers was of vital importance for young mothers in mediating their access to welfare services, but that professional support was less useful for fathers as they were positioned as outside the mother/child dyad and a 'hard to reach group'. However, the assumption that fathers are 'hard to reach' is stigmatising because it reinforces fathers' marginalised position (Davies, 2016). The entrenched popular perspective of feckless, irresponsible, risky and absent young fathers (Barker, 2005) has been a central focus of young fatherhood literature to date, which has sought to tackle these assumptions (Neale, 2016). Research has consistently shown that young fathers are keen to have an active and engaged role in their children's lives (Quinton et al., 2002; Beggs Weber, 2020; Neale, 2016). 'Being there' literature reframes early entry into fatherhood as an opportunity to move away from risky behaviour (Reeves et al 2009, Duncan 2007) and as a potential route to redemption (Ladlow and Neale, 2016). Beggs Weber (2020) found that, like young mothers, young fathers often invoke negative stereotypes about other young fathers whilst simultaneously elevating themselves as 'good' fathers who want to 'be there' for their children. They therefore engage in processes of 'othering' as young mothers do (as discussed above).

Amongst young mothers, familial support, particularly from their own parents, was found to be highly valuable (Mitchell and Green, 2002). However, family relationships have been found to be more complex for young fathers. A lack of their own father figure has been cited as motivation for young fathers to 'be there' for their children and do things differently (Neale and Lau Clayton 2015, Neale and Davies 2015). While kinship care by grandparents is a vital source of support for disadvantaged young parents (Tarrant 2018), maternal grandmothers can act as gatekeepers that may control or restrict young fathers' involvement with their children (Neale and Lau Clayton 2011). As Neale and Lau Clayton (2014) argue, decisions about the care of children has a propensity to run vertically down the generations, rather than horizontally between the young parents themselves.

Despite the historic and continued focus on the mother parent, fathers are becoming more visible (Dermott, 2009), and policy changes, such as improved paternity leave entitlements (HMRC, 2012) are helping to facilitate increased paternal involvement. However, there is a dichotomy in social policy and practice. On the one hand, New Labour's Supporting Families Initiative (1998) outlined the 'crucial role' fathers play in the upbringing of their child. Yet, particularly in legal texts and social work practice, there is a discourse of 'dangerous fathers' (Lewis and Lamb 2007), where fathers are described as, 'unable to cope, childlike, deluded, obsessive and stubborn... they are regarded as of little practical use in terms of family life' (Scourfield, 2001 p81). There is then, a conflict around fathering practices and identities. Despite more recent conceptualisations of masculinities as fluid and multiple (Connell, 2005), hegemonic mother and father identities remain, with mothers as primary carers and fathers as economic providers (Finn and Henwood, 2009). However, for young fathers, adopting the economic provider identity poses a greater challenge. Their age positions them at a disadvantage in the labour market, they may still be in education, and their inexperience renders them unlikely to be able get well paid jobs (Neale and Davies 2016).

The lack of opportunity to be an economic provider contributes to the increasingly diverse understanding of the 'good father', with a greater appreciation and expectation for fathers to be more 'hands on' and involved in caring for their child (Finn and Henwood, 2009; Lewis, J., 2006). This form of 'modern fatherhood', in privileging a more involved caring role, is perhaps beneficial for young fathers who are more able to fulfil that role unencumbered by the barriers to being a financial provider. Dermott (2009) argues that as traditional parenting roles are diminishing but mothers remain the primary carers, contemporary fatherhood is more individualised and is primarily constituted as a personal relationship between the father and his child. This privileges the agency, reflexivity and flexibility of fathering, free from the more rigid demands and expectations placed on mothering and 'traditional' fathering. This could be beneficial for young, disadvantaged fathers who may have the opportunity to develop emotional bonds and a unique individual and valued relationship with their child. Young fathers, therefore, have a certain degree of freedom and agency to develop a 'good father' identity which values an individual relationship with their child, although it may be difficult for them to navigate through

the complex, fluid and contradictory concept of the 'good father'. Their age, and for many, social and economic deprivation, may impose constraints and barriers to their desired fatherhood identity and the relationship with the mother can be a critical gateway to fathering practices.

There is a wealth of literature focussed on the 'new' father and there is evidence that some gender practices have changed over time (Dermott and Miller 2015). However, Dermott and Miller (2015) contend that fatherhood research now needs to address conceptual questions. They note:

'Exploring which material and familial circumstances, such as the experience of divorce/separation or unemployment, prompt the 'jolt' towards reflexivity, thereby building a better understanding of how fathering practices shift, allowing us to document the 'why' in addition to the 'what'; assessing the contexts in which fatherhood practices become problematic as they bump up against competing social priorities such as economic constraints' (p191).

Dermott and Miller (2015) pose an interesting line of enquiry and illuminate an important gap in knowledge in relation to young fatherhood. Little is known about the processes that enable or constrain engaged young fatherhood and there is a gap in focus on the relationships between young mothers and fathers, an omission addressed in this thesis. Chapter Eight explores gender, relationships and households, going some way towards bridging that gap in knowledge.

A key aspect of young parents' relationships that has been overlooked in extant literature is domestic abuse. There is little existing research on young parents and domestic abuse in the UK. The NSPCC's study (Barter et al., 2009) is the first and only major study into incidences of partner violence in the lives of young people. There has since been a handful of small-scale studies focusing on young pregnant women and mothers (Brown et al., 2011). Most research on domestic abuse focuses on older women as victims and there is less evidence on the specific experiences of young women (Brown et al., 2011). However, research shows that women (of all ages) are more likely to be victims of domestic abuse when they are pregnant and have a child (Harrison 2003). Little is known about young fathers and domestic

abuse. The literature on domestic abuse largely focuses on women, and mothers are the focus in young parenthood literature. Brown et al., (2011 p363) argue that,

'It is possible to suggest that this omission also renders invisible the intimate relationships between young mothers and their partners, creating a situation where little is known about their relationships and the power dimensions within these'.

In only focusing on the mother as a victim of domestic abuse, relationships and power dynamics are not fully understood and support needs for either partner cannot be fully developed. This is a significant gap in young parenthood literature, which Chapter Eight of this thesis begins to address.

2.10 Conclusion

This chapter synthesises key overlapping concepts of, youth transitions, disadvantage and family and gender practices. These are complimentary themes that seek to interrogate the complex interplay between structure and agency by taking into account changes and continuities over time. The usefulness of these themes in relation to young parenthood has been highlighted and the gaps in literature have been outlined. Using the conceptual frameworks of youth transitions, disadvantage and family/gender practices can offer new theoretical insight into, and advance, our understanding of young parenthood. Overall, existing young parenthood research is narrow in scope and lacks intersectional consideration for the breadth of young parent demographics and identities (Tyler, 2008, 2010). In seeking to debunk the pervasive narrative of problematic young parenthood, the bulk of young parenthood literature emphasises how young parents challenge notions of feckless young men and stereotypes of 'pramface' young women. Young mother research focuses largely on stigma, while the newer area of young fatherhood research shows how fathers want to 'being there' for their children. In this way, the literature often reframes young parenthood as a potentially positive life course decision. While research that challenges the notion of young parenthood as 'problematic' provides a useful counter-narrative to the dominant discourse, such

polemic analyses are perhaps ideologically or agenda-driven. There is a need for more in-depth research that investigates the lived experience of young parents over time and in relation to broader social structures, in order to develop understandings of their support needs. There is a gap in young parent literature that ties together the experiences of young mothers and fathers and there is a need to explore intra class diversity.

Chapter 3: Housing, home and young parents

3.1 Introduction

This chapter appraises the literature on housing and home, drawing out the key theories, themes and social policies that are relevant to investigating young parents' housing pathways and how they 'do' home. This chapter explores key theories in relation to housing, providing a conceptual framing for the subsequent empirical chapters. The field of housing straddles multiple disciplines and intersects with a range of complex economic, social and cultural dimensions (Clapham, 2005; Kemeny, 1992; Lawson, 2013). This literature review begins by discussing the multiplicity of contributions to our understanding of homes and housing. Terminology is vitally important in articulating and shaping meanings and understandings so the distinction and intersection of 'housing' and 'home[s]' are considered. Next, the intersections of home and family are explored, making an explicit link with the family practices approach discussed in Chapter Two. The concept of ontological security in relation to home is then discussed, tracing its origins and how it is used in the field of housing. The chapter then goes on to explore housing policy, focusing specifically on young people and the housing support available to young parents. Finally, highlighting one of the gaps addressed by this thesis, the small amount of literature that identifies the significance of addressing the questions of housing and home for young parenthood is explored.

3.2 Housing and home

Housing and home are understood as two distinct but interrelated concepts (Casey, 1993; Blunt and Dowling, 2006). Housing refers to the physical housing stock while 'home' is constructed and constantly renegotiated. This distinction is important as it facilitates an investigation into both the dwelling, tenancies and availability of housing, as well as the conceptual constructs of home. Housing is a basic human need that provides a place of shelter and warmth. It is perhaps not surprising that the primary focus in the field of housing studies, which predominantly draws on economic and

policy disciplines, revolves around housing stock and housing policy. King (1996; 2006) argues that academic discussions of housing are generally assumed to be shorthand for 'housing policy'. However, this is just one facet of a more complex issue. A more complete account of housing must also take into account agents' experiences and interpretations of 'home'.

In an effort to move beyond a largely material fixation on housing, Turner (1972) made the distinction between housing as a verb as well as a noun, to take into account processes, relationships and experiences of housing. This corresponds with Simmel's (1994 p10) dualistic notions of separation and connection. He argues that, 'the human being is the connecting creature who must always separate and cannot connect without separating'. He sees the door of a house as facilitating a 'linkage between the space of human beings and everything that remains outside it, it transcends the separation between inner and outer' (ibid p8). In other words, the house is a private space, separated from the public and the outside world. The door is a (symbolic and physical) mechanism that can be closed, facilitating privacy; or opened, enabling a connection to the outside and the, 'limitlessness of all possible directions' (ibid p8). McDowell and Sharp (1999) argue that such dualisms permeate social thinking and that this is problematic as it necessarily positions binary categories of 'good' and 'bad' and linkages between opposite categories are not accounted for. Families and homes were traditionally viewed as private but the state has increasingly intervened over time via changing constructions of childhood, parental responsibility and associated policies. Intensified scrutiny of disadvantaged families' parenting capabilities has turned the once private space of the home into a place where 'deficient' families (particularly mothers) are regulated by the state (Skeggs, 1997; Lambert and Crossley, 2017; Bimpson et al., 2020).

Heidegger (1971, 1973) also challenges the Cartesian dualism of public and private space. The theory that the mind is not entirely separate from the body and that identities are influenced by the outside world, or 'being in the world' (1973) is extended to describe how home and house, or in Heideggerian terminology 'dwelling' and 'building', are in 'circular relation' (Young 1997 p136 cited in Blunt and Dowling 2006 p4). In this way they are understood as cyclical and intertwined. Dwelling says something about our being and ontological self. We build to facilitate

our dwelling and the building in turn influences our dwelling practices. Heidegger also begins the move away from the focus on home as a singular, fixed and physical structure, and moves towards an emotional connection to home and place; arguing that we can feel 'at home' in places that are not our individual houses, for example, the workplace (Heidegger 1971). Heidegger's theory makes a critical contribution to current understandings of the complexities and multiplicities of home and interactions between structure and agency. The shift away from conceptualising home as singular and fixed is important in researching disadvantaged young parents who are likely to experience frequent house moves (Cooke and Owen, 2007). This is discussed in Chapters Five and Seven.

Blunt and Dowling (2006) put forward a convincing framework for conceptualising, 'a critical geography of home', that encompasses a broad range of intersecting issues. This includes 'home as simultaneously material and imaginative; the nexus between home, power and identity; and home as multi-scalar' (Blunt and Dowling 2006 p22). This approach views the physical house and emotional home as intertwined, as real and imagined, as experienced differently according to individual intersectionality, and as influenced by political, public and structural relations. 'Home' is also an active and temporal construct. How home is created, experienced and imagined is shaped by previous housing experiences and future ideals of home (Chapman and Hockey, 1999). It is contingent on the context of the broader housing market and the types of housing, and housing support, that is available. Interactions with other people in the household and in the local area are also highly important in the making and understanding of home. How home is constructed, and understood, is therefore complex, multifaceted, and often contradictory (Imrie, 2004; Blunt and Dowling, 2006; Mallett, 2004; Casey, 1993). It is possible to simultaneously hold feelings of security in the present and insecurity based on temporal imaginings of the future and the past. These are the relational and collective dimensions to home (Bowlby et al., 1997; Easthope, 2004).

Conceptualisations of home as fluid and relational are consistent with conceptual approaches of family practices and youth transitions. The intersection of the physical house and the social construct of home is therefore a useful theoretical framing for considering how young parents develop parenting identities and practices within at

home, and the freedom and constraint they have to do so within the context of contemporary housing policy.

3.3 Home and family practices

Building on the family practices approach outlined in Chapter Two, this section explores the interconnection between doing family and gender, and doing home. This is an essential framing of this thesis because the empirical chapters go on to show how the doing of family, gender and home are inextricably linked.

Valentine (2008) argues that the 'family practices' approach is valuable in analysing the active roles that family members play in constructing the home. Family practices create spaces, through the investment of meanings. Using the verb 'doing' captures the ways that these are active constructs rather than fixed. Homes are fundamental to our personal lives (Holdsworth & Morgan 2005; Mallett 2004; Morgan 2011) and are observable sites where family and care practices are negotiated, contested and performed (Jupp and Bowlby, 2019). Family practices are shaped by intersecting relationship configurations and living arrangements. Bowlby et al. (1997 p344) argue that although not all households are made up of families, a central purpose of the home is child rearing, therefore home constitutes a 'place of origin, a place of belonging, a place to which to return'. Meanings of home are inextricably linked to identities and families and they are fluid and subject to change over the life course. It is possible to feel 'at home' in places outside of one's current dwelling. For example, people who live independently may still consider 'home' to be their parents' house.

Household configurations and living arrangements have also diversified in tandem with changing family formations and youth transitions. Whether through choice or necessity, for most young people, there is no longer a straightforward transition from the parental home to their own marital home and the reproduction of the nuclear family household (Holdsworth and Morgan, 2005). As noted in Chapter Two, young people are living with their parents for longer (Stone et al., 2013). This has implications for young parents in terms of where they live and how they do family and home. Within the family home, there are on-going negotiations regarding

personal and family timetables, time-based practices and use of space (Holdsworth and Morgan 2005). Within the family, these are guided by inequalities of power: 'Negotiations take place in a context shaped by notions of parental obligations and responsibilities and emotional ties stretching back' (p50). Relationship dynamics are also constructed within the context of broader social and cultural ideas about familial roles, rights and responsibilities. These dynamics have potential to produce quite tough negotiations if young parents continue to live in their parental home, as they are constructing their parental identity while also negotiating their own independence (see Chapter Seven).

While conceived as a site of both family and gender practices, home is also the primary setting where parenting takes place. Women have a distinctive relationship with home, through gendered experiences, positions and inequalities based on their real, and culturally conceived, role as the carer or family-maker (Bimpson et al., 2020; Skeggs, 1997). Bimpson et al (2020 p2) argue that, 'an intrinsic connection between the categories of 'woman', 'family' and 'home' persist, highlighting the inherently gendered nature of 'home'. The home is therefore a site where inequalities are reproduced and therefore it is not always a site of well-being and safety for women. However, as discussed in Chapter Two, gender practices are fluid and subject to change. Furthermore, as researching young people is a vantage point for change (Shildrick et al., 2009), home is therefore a lens to investigate transformative gender practices (see Chapter Eight).

3.4 Ontological security

The concept of ontological security was introduced in Chapter One. Below, ontological security is discussed in detail, showing how the concept has been developed and utilised in housing studies literature. In this thesis, it is a key concept deployed in relation to housing, home and wellbeing over time. In Chapter Seven it is applied to explore young parents' housing pathways and constructs of home in depth.

Ontological security is a theoretical framework frequently deployed in housing studies to investigate the concept of home. It was initially conceptualised by Laing (1960). He took a social and political approach to psychiatry, seeking to recognise those with mental disorders as 'persons-in-the-world' rather than as individually abstract and deficient. He defined the ontologically secure individual as someone with a 'stable sense of being' and 'temporal continuity' (Laing 1960 p42). In contrast, those who are ontologically insecure experience the everyday world as existentially threatening and are unable to adapt to changes and challenges. Giddens (1984 p375) later adapted it as a sociological formation, conceptualising it as, 'confidence or trust that the natural and social worlds are as they appear to be, including the basic existential parameters of self and social identity'. For Giddens, ontological security is based on social practices that successfully bracket out anxieties.

For both Laing (1960) and Giddens (1984), to be ontologically secure means having a stable sense of being and a degree of trust in the narratives on which that sense of being is constructed. Critically, there must be an acceptance that these narratives are contingent and that ontological security is precarious (Laing 1960, Giddens 1984). Ontological security is not about having a static identity throughout the life course therefore but having a sense of security and confidence in one's place in the world. Being ontologically secure means not being overly concerned with the fragile and contingent nature of social life and having confidence in one's self-identities, routines and place-in the world. It involves having a reasonable amount of trust in social structures and a sense of agency within them. Mitzen (2016) argues that with basic trust in the self, people can tolerate a 'certain measure' of uncertainty. In other words, providing an individual remains 'safe', they can cope with a level of disruption or chaos.

While ontological security has roots in psychology, it has been commonly adapted by various other disciplines, including critical geographies (Mallett, 2004; Dupuis and Thorns, 1998; Saunders, 1990) and security studies (Mitzen, 2006; Kinnvall et al., 2018). Ontological security has also been applied to understand home, and often single aspects that intersect with home, such as health (Hiscock et al., 2001). At its roots, home can provide a secure base to meet basic needs and improve health and wellbeing (Hiscock et al., 2001 p50).

Dupuis and Thorns (1998) state that home can be a source of ontological security if:

- Home is a site of constancy in the social and material environment,
- Home is the spatial context in which day to day routines of human existence are performed,
- Home is a site where people feel most in control of their lives because they are free from surveillance that is part of the contemporary world,
- Home is a secure base around which identity is constructed.

Similarly, Somerville (1992) outlines 6 basic elements of the meanings of home:

1. Home as SHELTER – material form of home (the dwelling),
2. Home as HEARTH – warmth and coziness that home provides,
3. Home as HEART – the emotional elements of home, based on relations of mutual affection and support,
4. Home as PRIVACY – the ability to control one's boundaries,
5. Home as ROOTS – source of identity and meaningfulness, involving a sense of security,
6. Home as ABODE – the minimal meaning of home, wherever one happens to stay.

Home ownership is considered to be the tenancy most likely to meet the conditions of ontological security (Saunders, 1990; Dupuis and Thorns, 1998). People are more likely to feel a sense of ownership, are able to adapt their home through the doing of family, and be more protected from wider structural and policy conditions. Those on a low income, like disadvantaged young parents, are most to be locked out of home ownership, and achieving and maintaining adequate secure housing can be difficult. However, the notion that ontological security is predominately attained through home ownership is problematic. Saunders' (1990) advocacy for owner occupation for everyone is elitist and overlooks a significant proportion of the population who reside in Social Rented Sector (SRS) or Private Rented Sector (PRS) housing, it devalues their lived experiences and has the potential to excuse poor quality rented sector housing by asserting only ownership as a valid route to ontological security.

Saunders' (1990) work is also problematic as he argues men and women experience home/housing in the same way and that social class is not as important as different housing tenures. Hiscock et al. (2001) argue that ontological security is 'not necessarily to do with tenure itself; it is to do with having wealth, living in a nice area, living in a larger and better quality dwelling and being settled in relationships and work... it may be more important to talk of problematic neighbourhoods, housing conditions and dwelling types rather than aggregating all social renters and treating them as if they were socially inadequate' (p62-63). This quote challenges Saunders' inference that the rented sector is less likely to facilitate ontological security and it raises a key point about the importance of geographical location and community. However, in giving prominence to 'wealth' and 'living in a nice area', it perhaps suggests that ontological security is the preserve of those with high levels of resources. However, ontological security is, by definition, subjective. It is about finding a level of safety and security within one's own life-world and communities.

Ontological security takes into account temporality and how this is useful in articulating the fragility of housing and how that affects people's housing pathways and sense of home. It takes as a starting point that a quality home is an essential basic need and that it can provide a base from which to develop security and a place to establish routines of everyday life (Dupuis and Thorns, 1998). Home may also generate ontological *in*security; rather than a place of sanctuary, home may be a site of oppression and alienation. This may be the case where there are instances of domestic violence for example. Easthope (2004 p135) argues that, 'since 'home' is a term imbued with personal meanings, different people are likely to understand 'home' to mean different things at different times and in different contexts [but they are] places that hold considerable social, psychological and emotive meanings for individuals and for groups'. Ontological security can therefore be a useful tool of analysis in investigating home in relation to identities and temporality. Easthope (2004) more subjective definition of ontological security is useful for analysing the complexity of disadvantaged young parents' experiences of housing and home, particularly as they are unlikely to meet the rigid and elitist conditions of ontological security set out by Saunders (1990). There is a gap in literature that focuses specifically on disadvantaged young people in relation to housing and ontological security. Chapter Seven goes some way towards addressing that gap.

3.5 Housing pathways and young people

The previous sections of this chapter confirm that housing and home are complex, contested and also have temporal dimensions. Developed by Clapham (2002; 2005), the 'housing pathways' approach, which was developed from 'histories' and 'careers' approaches (Clapham et al., 2014), is a useful theoretical framework for tracing housing through the life course. 'Pathways' has similarities with the 'careers' approach used by MacDonald et al. (2005) in seeking to apprehend how different 'careers' or 'pathways' intersect with each other. For example, housing can be considered alongside employment, education, relationship and crime pathways. 'Housing pathways' incorporate the meanings individuals attach to housing and how these meanings can change over the life course. The theoretical underpinnings of this approach therefore overlap with frameworks exploring trajectories, transitions, and the life course (as discussed in Chapter Two) and are a particularly useful for studying young parents and housing in longitudinal perspective.

Specifically in relation to housing, the pathways approach follows the establishment of a constructionist approach to housing studies in its focus on structure and agency (Kemeny 1992). Clapham (2005) is concerned with concepts of identity and lifestyle and elucidating the links between this and housing. It also takes inspiration from Giddens (1991) and considers structuration, choice and agency. A 'housing pathway' refers to a housing journey, or route, that individuals take, the household forms that they participate in, and their experience of housing over time.

Ford et al. (2002) applied the housing pathways approach to their study of young people's housing journeys. They emphasise the various choices and constraints that influence young people's housing pathways over time. Ford et al. (2002) argue that there is a distinct 'youth housing market' that is 'characterised by shared housing, precarious housing, temporary housing and frequent mobility' (Ford et al, 2002 p 2456). Their study outlines five different housing pathways as shaped by young people's motivation, ability to plan for, and control, the move to independent living. These pathways are described as chaotic, unplanned, constrained, planned (non-

student) and student. MacDonald and Marsh (2004) found that disadvantaged young people who experienced multiple house moves were not triggered or motivated by education or employment like in Ford's et al.'s (2002) planned and student categories, but were spurred by turbulent relationships with family, becoming a parent, forming new relationships or separating. These contrasting findings indicate diversity in the housing pathways of young people linked to social disadvantage and class. Attention to the factors that produce disadvantaged housing pathways are particularly useful to build upon in researching young parents' housing pathways and are developed further as they intersect with family and relationships over time in empirical Chapters Five and Seven.

The pathways approach, then, considers dynamic temporal elements and is useful in recognising agency and individual circumstances whilst also taking into consideration opportunities and constraints in relation to broader social structures and policy changes. Furthermore, in taking a dynamic temporally orientated approach, housing pathways is a useful theoretical framework that compliments the youth transitions approach outlined in Chapter Two.

3.5.1 Housing pathways and place

Home and ontological security is also closely connected to place and community. Casey (2001) contends that, 'Place' is distinct from 'space' as they denote two separate orders of reality: everything exists in space; it is the 'name for that most encompassing reality that allows for things to be located within it '(Casey 2001 p404). 'Place' is a social construct, although it is not entirely subjective; it is influenced by economic, political, physical and social realities. Massey (1995) argues that we 'actively make places' (p48). It is also a useful concept as it is 'intertwined with ideas of community, collective memory, group (and individual) identity, political organization and capital flows' (Easthope, 2004 p128). This situates the individual within broader networks and takes into account relationality and how meanings of home are enmeshed with community and loaded with cultural, historic and spatial dimensions. The concept of place is critically important as a tool to investigate identity formation and home, particularly in relation to family and community. Place

has implications in terms of support networks, quality of life and opportunities (see Chapter Seven).

Support networks and mutual interdependencies were vitally important for disadvantaged young people in the '*Teesside Studies*' (MacDonald et al., 2005). The *Teesside Studies* is a series of longitudinal studies that examined the experiences of families in low-income contexts in Teesside that began in the late 1990s (MacDonald and Shildrick, 2018). The research found that over time, social networks became increasingly 'locally embedded' and less diverse, and, 'the loyalties, allegiances, associations and friendships developed through these local, informal networks reinforced transition pathways, narrative possibilities and social identities' (Shildrick and MacDonald, 2008 p9). In relation to housing, young people in the study felt a strong attachment to their local neighbourhoods and the social support that was available to them. Therefore their 'housing careers' were locally circumscribed (MacDonald et al., 2005). Forrest, Ray and Kearns (2001) found that a sense of community, strong family ties and mutual aid were a compelling feature of poor areas and that this was a source of support in helping people cope with issues of poverty and adversity. MacDonald and Marsh (2004) and MacDonald et al (2005) found that their participants preferred to stay in their local area despite high levels of deprivation and various other problems such as crime and drug use. 'Embeddedness', a 'sense of belonging' and 'looking out for each other' were important concepts. Their participants articulated strong connections to life in their local area, and young lone mothers in particular, were dependent on family and friends for emotional and practical support.

Local and relational support can be considered a resource or form of social capital. Putnam (2000) identified two distinct components: 'bridging' social capital is one's connections to more socially diverse contacts; and 'bonding' social capital is a strong connection to localised networks, often based on kin or community (Putnam, 2000; Barry, 2006). Shildrick and MacDonald (2008) found that bonding social capital was, 'crucial to making life livable for young adults under conditions of poverty, multiple deprivation and social exclusion' (p9). However, while bonding social capital is a source of support, it can also limit opportunities (Putnam, 2000) The tight networks and established shared meanings of identities could also be constraining; 'young

mothers who wanted to achieve a different or additional identity (as a university student) were subject to hostility from otherwise and previously friendly circles of other young mothers' (Shildrick and MacDonald, 2008 p10). The entrenchment of bonding social capital over time combined with a lack of bridging social capital can therefore contribute to the social reproduction of inequalities. This raises questions of particular importance for theorising young parents' pathways. Namely, what are young parents' housing options in terms of location and their support networks? How does housing and place affect their lived experiences and life chances? These questions are addressed in Chapter Seven.

3.6 Housing policies and young people

So far, this chapter has addressed how and why people establish and maintain a connection to home, identifying the potential for diverse and divergent housing trajectories for people according to their class and age. Before exploring the small amount of literature relating to young parents and housing, this section moves on to review the housing policy landscape, the key context in which these diverse pathways are forged, by focusing on the implications for young people.

3.6.1 The housing crisis context

It is widely accepted that the UK is in the midst of a housing crisis (Dorling, 2014; Slater, 2018; Robertson, 2017; White and Nandedkar, 2019). The housing crisis was triggered by the global financial crisis in 2008, and this affected house prices and house building. House prices fell significantly, causing the market to stagnate and house building was stalled. The origins of the crisis can be traced back to the neoliberal turn of the 1980s and the privatisation of council housing coupled with an expansion of mortgage markets. This shift resulted in rising ground rents on residential land and shaped the behaviour of housing producers to attempt to capture those rents (Robertson, 2017). The housing system both structures and reinforces inequalities and those who profit from it have a vested interest in maintaining the status quo (Robertson, 2017). Therefore, while there is a growing

consensus that Britain is in the midst of a housing crisis, this has not been adequately addressed in policy. For example, the *Help to Buy* scheme, introduced by the Coalition Government in 2013, has been used predominately by people who could have afforded to buy their own home anyway and has failed to help those who need it in any meaningful way (NAO, 2019). Despite government targets to boost housing supply, housing stock remains low. This is further undermined by the lack of available social housing and the expansion of the *Right to Buy* scheme, which gives council house tenants the opportunity to buy their house. The shortage of social housing stock coupled with increasing demand left 1.5 million people on social housing waiting lists in 2017, with only 290,000 houses made available to them (Shelter, 2018). The housing crisis can therefore more adequately be termed a housing crisis for working class and disadvantaged people. It is within this context that disadvantaged young parents are navigating their housing pathways.

3.6.2 Young people and housing policies

Precarious housing is commonplace amongst young people (Heath, 2019; Hoolachan et al., 2017; McKee et al., 2020). For example, students often live in shared housing and move frequently around the Private Rented Sector (PRS). For more advantaged young people, this is almost a rite of passage and is accepted and embraced as a stepping stone en-route to something better (Heath, 2019). Much of the recent literature around disadvantaged young people's housing pathways has focused on 'Generation Rent' (Hoolachan et al., 2017; McKee et al., 2020) and the binary between renting and owning a home. Social renting had played a significant role in young working-class people's housing transitions during the post war period, however, social housing now has limited significance in many parts of the UK (McKee et al., 2017). Following the Housing Act 1977, entry to social housing has increasingly come via the homelessness/temporary accommodation route (Watts and Fitzpatrick, 2018).

Successive governments' focus on getting young people into home ownership and onto the housing 'ladder' trajectory has come at the expense of consideration for youth homelessness (Quilgars et al., 2011a; Quilgars et al., 2008): 'Young people

with low incomes, little family support and low eligibility for social housing face the most difficulties in accessing appropriate accommodation' (Rugg and Quilgars, 2015 p8). HomelessLink (2013) identifies a lack of emergency accommodation available for young people and suggests that moving them into more long-term tenancies was difficult due to the decrease in social tenancies and increased competition and costs for private tenancies. In areas with significant shortages of social housing, young people were housed in temporary accommodation for long periods of time and this often had a negative effect on young people's motivation and psychological well being (Quilgars et al., 2011a). Living in temporary accommodation prevents parents from maintaining or developing family routines and rituals, or providing children with a safe place (Bimpson et al., 2020; Shelter, 2016).

3.7 Young parents and housing

Building on the discussion of young parenthood and housing in Chapter One, this section draws out the key issues for young parents' housing pathways in the context of current social policies. As discussed in Chapter One, young people from disadvantaged backgrounds often require independent housing due to overcrowding and relationship difficulties (Cooke and Owen 2007, Shaw 2010, Quilgars et al 2008). Cooke and Owen (2007) found that a typical housing pathway for young mothers involved multiple moves: from their parents' home to temporary accommodation such as a hostel or bed and breakfast, gaining housing via the homeless system for a small flat or house and finally gaining a tenancy for better quality housing. This trajectory does not meet the conditions required for 'home' as: 'a site of constancy in the social and material environment; the context in which day-to-day routines of human existence are performed and where daily life is predictable; the site of control over one's life and freedom from surveillance in the contemporary world; and a secure base around which identities are constructed' (Brueckner et al., 2010 p3). With the swell of temporary accommodation, there is an absence of permanence that may have implications for young parents in forging their identities and independence. Good quality housing is vital for wellbeing. Mitchell and Green (2002) identified independent living, autonomy and self-reflexivity, as highly important for young mothers in the transition to adulthood and creating her own

identity. However, young parents who are dependent on welfare are often left with little choice and Giullari and Shaw (2005) argue that housing policies are more concerned with the 'problem' of welfare dependency than the actual needs of young parents. In Chase et al. (2008) study, all professionals and young parents spoke about the importance of housing but the difficulties in obtaining it. As one social worker explained, 'without housing everything suffers. They can't focus on anything else if they have nowhere to live' (p112).

Social Rented Sector (SRS) housing is a safety net, a 'saving grace', in an otherwise hostile welfare system (Tunstall et al., 2013). SRS housing may not always be high quality but it offers low rents and security of tenure. While social housing stock is at an all-time low, disadvantaged young parents often meet the criteria for social housing priority. In particular, young parents from disadvantaged backgrounds are in a unique position of being able to access SRS at a time when it is 'rationed' (Pawson, 2009). However, this depends on whether young parents are partnered or if they are separated and the primary carer. As separated young fathers are more commonly not the primary carer and young men are rarely asked if they are fathers, they are generally not entitled to social housing that takes into account their parental status and are therefore often unable to access social housing that is suitable for them and their children (Royston and Davey, 2013; Neale and Ladlow, 2015).

Welfare reforms targeting those aged under 25 may therefore disproportionately affect single young fathers. Young people under the age of 21 are no longer eligible for housing benefit and those under the age of 35 are only entitled to the shared accommodation rate of housing benefit (Cole et al., 2016). As a result, Clapham et al (2014) found that young people were forced to find accommodation at the cheaper end of the market and that this was often of poor quality. For disadvantaged single young fathers who are entitled to social housing because of homelessness, this often entails living in a hostel, which is generally deemed unsuitable for children (Neale and Ladlow, 2015). 'The nomadic lives of these young men were a constant disruption to developing a role as a father, and a major constraint on their ability to provide a stable, homely environment for their child' (Neale and Ladlow 2015 p2). Single young fathers are most neglected in social housing provision and this further reinforces gendered parenting practices (see Chapters Seven and Eight).

3.8 Young parents and housing support

So far, the chapter has considered housing that is available either via the housing market or social housing. However, there are housing support agencies that sit outside of these more normative mechanisms. These have their own policy histories and sit alongside of policy changes in relation to housing stock. Before outlining the current housing support provision for young parents, recent historic housing support policies leading up to this point will be discussed.

Kiernan (1998) argues that the post-war welfare state was based on the 'male breadwinner' model, which necessitated women's dependency on men and rendered unmarried mothers anomalies. The focus on the nuclear family was all encompassing and those who did not conform were left unsupported by the welfare state. Single mothers were considered less eligible for council housing and so while the majority of single mothers lived with their families, during the 1950s and 1960s, many women entered 'mother and baby homes' (Nicholson, 1968). Nicholson's survey of 'homes for unmarried mothers' found that there were 172 homes in the 1950s and that each year they catered for, "somewhere between 11,000 and 12,000 of the 70,000 women having an extra-marital pregnancy" (Nicholson, 1968: 21). These homes were largely run by religious or voluntary organisations and often took a punitive approach focusing on repentance and religious conversion. There were limited options for the women to leave as they were deliberately kept from the outside world. Unmarried mothers were labelled as 'psychopathic' and 'defective' (Lewis, J. and Welshman, 1997) and this gave credence to the acceptability of separating mothers from their 'illegitimate' children. There were particularly high rates of adoption in the 1950s and 1960s and Spensky (1992) argues that the homes served to produce 'legitimacy' as children were adopted into nuclear families and 'respectable' middle class homes.

The 1977 Housing Act made local authorities responsible for housing the homeless. The 'unintentionally homeless' were prioritised, meaning that for this first time, there was a duty to house single mothers (Burnett, 1986; Kiernan, 1998). Subsequently,

the number of mother and baby homes fell to 49 in 1978 (Picard and Cawson, 1977). As social attitudes and values began to relax and (to a certain extent) variations on the nuclear family became more acceptable (Kiernan, 1998), the category of admission to mother and baby homes was broadened to include women who were homeless and victims of domestic violence. Most of these women were aged between 16 and 25 and there was a shift in the purpose of the homes towards providing safe accommodation and advising mothers on how to find independent accommodation (Picard and Cawson, 1977).

The current housing support provision available for young parents can be broadly separated into two forms: supported housing units and floating support. In an evaluation of housing support for young parents, Quilgars et al. (2011b) found that there was a need to support young parents in a wide variety of housing types, depending on their individual needs. For those with high levels of need and limited personal support networks, supported housing units with on-site staff was found to be useful. This was particularly the case for young parents under the age of 18 and professional support workers found this type of support to be effective in relation to preventing or responding to child protection issues. Quilgars et al. (2011b) also argue that there is a need for more supported housing units that accommodate couples. They do so however, with the caution that due consideration be given in relation to age-gaps between young mothers and their partners and the appropriateness of placing males in units that may accommodate victims of domestic violence. In Clark's (1989) study, young mothers generally found supported housing units to be helpful and viewed them as a sort of 'half-way house' while they waited to be placed in social housing. Similarly, Chase et al's (2008) participants had a positive experience of supported housing; one young mother said, 'Since I've been here I've felt more confident doing things. They do help... I think its brilliant. They really make you feel at home' (Chase et al 2008: 153). One of the professionals interviewed in their study believed that supported housing provided a 'balance' (Chase et al 2008: p154) between support and independence.

However, other professionals have argued that floating support is often more suitable as it is more flexible and responsive to need, and some supported housing units do not allow partners to stay overnight. Floating support helps young parents

remain in independent tenancies or provides support to those living in the parental home in the short-term with a view to helping them develop skills for independent living in the future. Quilgars et al. (2011b) found that young mothers rated floating support as particularly helpful. Support workers were valued in offering a range of flexible support that was not necessarily housing-based, for example supporting or signposting to other services in relation to health, education and parenting.

There are some key changes and continuities in the housing policies and associated social attitudes about the family between 1950 and today. Supported housing for young mothers has shifted from the overtly punitive mother and baby units in the 1950s and 1960s and there is greater diversity, and acceptability of, various family formations. However, housing policies and proposals continue to focus solely on the mother, demonising her and marginalising fathers. Writing in 1968, Nicholson noted the lack of national provision and an over-reliance on voluntary organisations to provide housing support for 'unmarried mothers'. Today, housing support services have had public funding cut considerably and are relying on a combination of reducing provision and fixed-term funding from private bodies.

3.9 Conclusion

Despite the value of these varied kinds of accommodation to disadvantaged young parents in their pathways to independence, there is a significant gap in research focusing on young parents, housing and home. To begin to address this gap, this literature review has traced developments in housing and home theories and policies relating to families and disadvantaged young people. 'Home' is an active and temporal construct. How home is created, experienced and imagined is shaped both by previous housing experiences and future ideals of home. Housing pathways and the concept of ontological security are useful theoretical frameworks to investigate experiences of home over time. How young parents ascribe meaning to 'home' and how housing and home intersects with the development of their parenthood identities and practices are therefore worthy of further study, particularly in relation to the ways in which they are shaped by their families and social policies. It is evident that empirical research focusing on housing provision also has the potential to inform

housing support services for young parents. Utilising the theories and key themes discussed in this chapter, the following empirical chapters generate new knowledge and insights that go some way towards addressing these themes. Indeed, the qualitative longitudinal empirical evidence that follows goes some way towards addressing a gap in knowledge about young parents' housing support experiences and needs over time.

Chapter 4: Methodology

4.1 Introduction

This chapter describes the methodological approach of using Qualitative Longitudinal (QL) research to generate new insights into the housing pathways and support needs of disadvantaged young parents. A mixture of ethnographic and interview methods were used to generate data. Two housing support services ('Agora' and 'Mosaic') acted as the research sites where I conducted participant observations and recruited participants for interviews. 22 young parents were interviewed over the course of 18 months and seven of these participated in second follow-up interviews. The strategic research design is outlined below. However, as Mason (2002) argues, the researcher should be sensitive to changing contexts and the research design was therefore conducted flexibly and reflexively. As befits the method of co-production, this was often in consultation with the collaborators, housing support service, 'Agora'. This chapter shows how the research evolved over time in response to various developments and challenges. Ethical concerns are paramount, particularly in researching disadvantaged young people; it was crucial that the research design was constantly reviewed in order to ensure the minimisation of risk. This chapter begins by discussing the theoretical orientations of the methodology, explaining and justifying the QL approach and the focus on time as both a vehicle and an object of research. The chapter then goes on to discuss methods and how and why they were deployed in practice.

4.2 Theoretical grounding: ontology and epistemology

QL research is situated within constructionist ontology and interpretivist epistemology. This theoretical orientation guides the nature of my enquiry, with research questions, aims, data generation and analysis hinging upon the notion of a socially constructed world. Constructivism sees the social world as a moving feast with multiple realities that are constantly remade. An interpretive epistemological approach privileges the meanings, experiences and interpretations of the people

being studied and provides what Blaikie (2000) calls the 'insider view'. Interpretivists often seek to generate knowledge through an investigation of structure and agency. A constructionist and interpretivist orientation stands in contrast to objectivist ontology and positivist epistemology, which views the social world as a fixed entity, with an observable and objective truth just waiting to be uncovered (Bryman 2008, Mason 2001, Patton 2002).

Operating broadly within an interpretivist epistemology, a reflexive, holistic approach to methods has been adopted (Mason 2011). As Neale (2021) notes, paradigms have 'porous boundaries' and QL researchers can be considered 'bricoleurs' in adopting a mixture of methods such as ethnography, case-study, biographical and narrative methods in order to integrate timeframes and to generate detailed temporal understandings. A flexible QL ontological and epistemological approach, with roots in constructionism and interpretivism, is particularly well suited to answering my research questions. The research is theoretically concerned with young parents' construction of identities, relationships and transitions within the context of housing and changing social policies. Structure and agency are central to the inquiry and an interpretivist QL approach sets out to understand the relationship between the two. Methods were developed from my epistemological assumptions about what can legitimately constitute knowledge or evidence. It is narratives, life stories, and individual accounts of experience over time that hold the most weight in this research approach.

In order to move beyond descriptive narratives from the participants and get at the unobservable social structures, an abductive research strategy (Blaikie, 2000) or 'zigzagging' approach (Emmel, 2015) was used. Abductive logic is an on-going process throughout the research that goes back and forth between empirical findings and theories in order to generate new insights (Neale 2021). Abductive logic is a cumulative process that is well suited to QL analysis as it operates in a non-linear way and adds breadth and depth to analyses (Blaikie, 2007; Neale, 2021). The research process began with some key questions about the subject of inquiry, which then guided the sampling and methods to be used in conducting the empirical research. There was then a 'to-ing and fro-ing' to refine ideas in relation to the data and existing theories, thus generating explanations of underlying social processes.

Conducting the research longitudinally and working collaboratively with practitioners enhanced this process, allowing for data analysis, confirmation and greater refinement of theories through repeated waves of empirical data generation.

4.2.1 Taking an interpretivist approach: researching reflexively

The research was conducted reflexively as an integral part of an interpretivist stance to social research. Documenting limitations and making the researcher's subjectivity explicit helps make the research process more transparent and provides further explanation for how theories are generated. Snape and Spencer (2003) argue that the researcher should adopt a position of 'empathic neutrality'; in other words, it should be acknowledged that the researcher is not value-free and should therefore make their assumptions and research processes clear. As Mason (2018) asserts, the researcher does not objectively sit outside of the research, but is part of the data generation process. 'Walking alongside' (Neale 2020) the participants and spending a significant amount of time with them necessitated a high level of reflexivity. Taking the lead from feminist methods, as a researcher, I situate myself within the research (Cotterill and Letherby, 2016). I will briefly outline my social positions as they shaped the research process, from my initial interest in the field, my interactions with participants, and my analytical lens.

At the beginning of the research I was not a mother but I had experience of 'mothering' as I had significant caring responsibilities for my siblings as an adolescent and this, in part, influenced my interest in researching young parents. I also grew up in an area with high levels of deprivation, I am from a working class background and many of my friends became young parents. During the fieldwork my sister became a mother at the age of 16 and I too became pregnant towards the end of the fieldwork. Although I was not a 'young' mother, this helped strengthen relationships and break down power barriers with participants who offered me parenting advice and joked about pregnancy, childbirth and parenthood. I brought my working class and maternal capital into the research and I was able to relate to the disadvantaged young parents who participated. However, I was also aware of my

privileged educated position and resultant social mobility. Building on Bourdieu's (2008), concept of 'cleft habitus', Bentley (2020), calls this position 'murking-class'; a blend of middle and working class that is complex, murky, betwixt and between, but neither comfortably one or the other. Therefore, whilst I could empathise and relate to the research participants, I was never 'one of them'. I also acknowledge my position as a female researcher interviewing men. Tarrant (2016) observes that there may be a form of self-censorship if participants feel there is a difference of opinion with the researcher, this was possibly the case with one male participant who appeared to change his answer to a question about gender roles and reflected on his comment being 'sexist'. However, as Davies and Hanna (2020) note, being a female researcher can also be beneficial as some men may find it easier to speak to women about more personal matters. Overall, my social position helped me to develop natural and easy relationships with the participants, which enhanced their engagement with the research over time.

4.2.2 Taking an interpretivist approach: co-production and reciprocity

Enhancing the potential for impact in social policy and practice, the project set out in collaboration with 'Agora', a housing support charity for young people aged 16-25 in Leeds. 'Agora' was the primary research site for the project. The organisation provided floating support to young people living independently with their own tenancies. They also had a resource centre that ran support and advice groups, leisure activities, and specialist services such as debt management and counselling. They also ran a weekly young parents' group, which I participated in over the course of one year. A second research site, 'Mosaic', operated in a similar manner but housed clients in temporary accommodation before supporting them to obtain and maintain their own tenancies. 'Mosaic' began running a parents' group during the course of the research and I participated in some of these groups too. 'Mosaic' and 'Agora' later merged due to funding cuts.

Methods of co-production were employed throughout the project and I situated myself within the research,

The qualitative researcher is not an objective, authoritative, politically neutral observer standing outside and above the text... qualitative inquiry is properly conceptualized as a civic, participatory, collaborative project. This joins the researcher and the researched in an ongoing moral dialogue (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000 p1049).

The quote above demonstrates the ontological and epistemological connection to the method of co-production and collaborative research. The benefits of a collaborative approach have largely been discussed in relation to impact and ethics. In terms of impact, Neale and Morton (2012) argue that working collaboratively with those who have use for the research will, 'deepen the users' understanding of research, improve their ability to make use of the findings, and create a fruitful context for research uptake across their networks' (Neale and Morton, 2012 p1). Campbell and Lassiter (2014) stipulate that ethnographers have always conducted research collaboratively whilst in the field but they advocate striving to move beyond that and towards collaborating at every stage of the research. With this in mind, 'Agora' were consulted in the research design process and provided crucial guidance on formulating the research questions based on their professional experience and they also facilitated some participant recruitment. The participant observation took place at 'Agora' at their weekly young parents' group.

In relation to ethics, co-production facilitates a level of empowerment for those involved and constitutes a level of shared ownership over the research, making those involved feel part of the process (Neale and Morton, 2012; Campbell and Lassiter, 2014; Nutley et al., 2007). While there were some ambitions to create joint outputs and disseminate findings, regrettably, collaboration with 'Agora' was not fully sustained. This was partly due to the changing landscape of housing support services and funding cuts to the sector more broadly. Within the first year of the research there were three different directors and major changes occurred within 'Agora'. As sector funding became increasingly stretched, 'Agora' merged with 'Mosaic'. By the end of the fieldwork, the parents' groups were no longer running and

amidst job losses and changing priorities it was difficult to maintain their engagement with the research. Neale (2021) cautions that working with gatekeepers presents challenges as relationship building with practitioners can become unravelled due to insecure short term funding and problems with job mobility. 'Agora's contribution to the research design, as gatekeepers/gate openers, and as research participants, was invaluable in shaping the research. However, the research evolved beyond a case study of 'Agora's support services into a broader study of disadvantaged young parents' varied housing pathways. Positive relationships were developed with support workers in a forward-facing role and there remains some potential for future collaboration.

4.3 Time and temporality

Temporality is fundamental to my ontological and epistemological position. Building time into qualitative research enhances capacity for processual explanations. Time underpins this research in two crucial ways: firstly the research was conducted longitudinally, intensively tracking participants over the course of 18 months; and secondly, time in relation to biographies and life course formed part of the subject matter.

Past, present and future temporalities are understood to be fluid and intersecting rather than linear. This conceptualisation is important in terms of understanding changes and continuities in participants' lives and how they ascribe meaning to particular events. Schutz (1982) laid the foundations for reconceptualising time as fluid and cyclical, stating that all knowledge requires reflection and is inextricably linked to the present. In reflection, particularly meaningful past acts are selected from a vast number of past events and rationalised through the lens of the present. Schutz (1982) further argues that these individual meanings are connected to collective systems of common knowledge and language, 'this means that people are grounded in subjective time while simultaneously being rooted in the intersubjective reality of common sense' (Adam, 2004 p68). This gives credence to the notion that time and agency is relational, not just individual (Mason, 2004; Neale, 2021), and this dynamic interplay of social relations was explored in the research.

Temporality is a conceptual theme grappled with across disciplines. In literature, L. P. Hartley's (1953) novel 'The Go Between', opens with the famous line, 'The past is a foreign country, they do things differently there'. The quote raises questions about how we construct, reconstruct, distance or glorify the past. How is the past conceptually appropriated across space and time? The relationships that we have with the past are important, individually, collectively, generationally and relationally. As Stuart Hall (1993 p225) demonstrates, we are shaped by our collective and individual past, 'Identities are the names we give to the different ways we are positioned by, and position ourselves in, the narratives of the past'. Exploring the future also creates particular challenges for research; how can we study something that is yet to happen? We are dealing with uncertainties and possibilities rather than observable empirical evidence. This has implications for the validity, reliability and the credibility of the research and requires a particular epistemological approach. Giddens (1991) argues that the future is in the forefront of our minds, constantly affecting actions and emotions in the present. As Shirani and Henwood (2011 p50) argue, 'The future is prepared in the present and may be 'known' through the actions and their effects that will bring it into being, transforming the future into the present'. This theoretical stance has implications for the scope of the research. The past, present and the future are folded into one another creating a temporal melting pot of memories and aspirations that are constantly evolving.

Social researchers are tasked with how to investigate conceptual understandings of the temporal; if the past, present and the future are understood to be fluid then how do we investigate them? Firstly, a temporal orientation needs to be made clear; the past and the future are omnipresent and subject to change. Secondly, QL researchers can deploy a processual ontology (Neale 2021); this approach looks for causality and explanations of why and how things happen in a particular way. Researching over time deepens capacity to explore causality and consequences of change and continuity. Taking the lead from critical realism, each participant's account at any one time is considered authentic and it is by 'zigzagging' between various empirical accounts and existing theories that the 'real' can be uncovered and understandings and explanations of the ways in which a particular group of people experience the social world can be generated (Emmel, 2015). However, temporal

fluidity means that caution must be exercised in making claims of correlation and causality (Neale 2021). As Young (1997 p151) argues 'we are not the same from one moment to the next, one day to the next or one year to the next because we dwell in the flux of interaction and history. We are not the same from one day to the next because our selves are constituted by differing relations with others.' Our lives are constantly unfolding and in a state of 'becoming' (Bergson cited in Neale 2021); they are relational and temporal. This demonstrates the importance of taking a QL approach but reminds us of the need to be modest in our claims.

This understanding of time and the life course guides the QL methods that were used to generate knowledge and understanding of young parent families during a pivotal transitional point in their lives. Time is conceptualised as fluid and relational, and the life course as dynamic and textual rather than consisting of normative fixed milestones. This is then related to broader social structures and social policies over time, facilitating greater scope for impact. Corden and Millar (2007) argue that QL research is valuable for social policy as it can demonstrate how interventions may affect future outcomes. Enabling a closer alignment of lived experiences and policy responses over time, can address 'what works' in a more nuanced way, seeking to understand what works, over time, for whom, and in what circumstances (Pawson, R., 2006). A temporal lens is crucial to investigating the micro-macro plane: the interplay between structure and agency, and biography and history, is dynamic. Processes of interconnections and transformations along the micro-macro plane are a key concern that can be explored through a QL investigation of lived experiences over time (Neale 2021). Temporality is fundamental to the ontological and epistemological position of this study, and QL research enables these positions to be operationalised.

4.4 Qualitative Longitudinal research

Qualitative methods, and more specifically, qualitative longitudinal (QL) research methods have been chosen as opposed to quantitative methods. Quantitative methods have the advantage of being able to draw upon considerably larger sample sizes and can reveal broad patterns and social trends. For example, data collected

and collated by the Office of National Statistics (ONS) on fertility shows rates of young parenthood and fertility trends over time and in different localities (ONS, 2014a). This is invaluable data. However, it does not provide any answers to 'how' and 'why' questions. This research project sought to explore the life worlds of young parents through generating 'thick description' (Geertz, 1973) of their lived experiences. There is currently very little evidence available on young parents and housing support. A situated qualitative approach that epistemologically privileges the first-hand experiences of young parents can help to provide a well-rounded insight, connecting individual biography and agency to wider social structures and political processes (Neale, 2015b). In particular, in attempting to understand their experiences of life course transitions, and more broadly, changes in social and housing policies, the temporal framing in QL research is favourable: 'the capacity to discern the mechanisms that shape life course trajectories, and the causes and consequences of change in particular contexts, gives this mode of research significant explanatory power' (Neale 2015 p30). Thomson et al (2002) argue that QL research focusing on biographical and life history methods are useful approaches in exploring how young people experience transitions and negotiate risks. Similarly, Millar (2007 p535) argues that, 'qualitative studies thus present a more complex picture of transitions, and of the factors that trigger them, than do the large-scale quantitative studies. Transitions are not necessarily temporally fixed, discrete and clearly definable events'. QL research in the form of retrospective and prospective tracking allows researchers to "see continuities as well as change and upheaval in a relatively 'close-up' way" (McLeod, 2003: 204) and, 'the triggers for such journeys, why they are undertaken, and their varied nature along the way' (Neale, 2015b p30).

QL research is not just a method of data collection, it is a paradigm that presumes the social world is constructed and reconstructed over time; it privileges the interpretations and lived experiences of those who are the focus of the investigation. How we come to generate knowledge about social phenomena is through the focus on, 'time and texture—or the interplay of the temporal and cultural dimensions of social life' (Neale and Flowerdew, 2003:189). In other words, lived experience is at the heart of QL research, through its concern with micro processes and how these are interconnected with macro processes, and the dynamic relationship between structure and agency which can be understood through time. Conducting QL

research and revisiting participants over a period of time rather than conducting singular interviews at one particular moment facilitates a better understanding of how individuals manage and generate change in response to social structures. This epistemological approach is particularly useful for researching the lives of young parents who experience rapid and frequent changes over a relatively short period of time as they make the transition to adulthood and adapt to parenthood. How they manage this in the context of welfare reforms and changing social policies can be better understood through following participants as they experience these changes; thereby capturing what Berthoud and Gershuny (2000) suggests is, 'a 'movie' rather than simply a 'snapshot' of social life' (Neale and Flowerdew, 2003 p190).

QL research is generative of theory, bringing time, process and change to the centre of the theoretical project. Neale (2021) makes a powerful case for using QL research as an approach that embodies a processual ontology and fluid causality. However, Neale (2021) also cautions that there are no definitive findings or facts in a fluid world and we should therefore be modest in making claims about what our research shows. Nevertheless, it is possible to discern change, continuity and even causality by using creative and exploratory methods, by synthesising a range of methods and taking as a starting point an understanding of the world as fluid and temporal.

4.5 Design and sampling

A QL study was carried out with twenty-two young parent participants (fourteen women and eight men). Seventeen of these participants engaged in the research over time, and seven of these took part in two interviews, one year apart. Five housing support professionals were also interviewed. Participants were predominantly recruited through two housing support charities, 'Agora' and 'Mosaic'. As is common in QL enquiry I used a mixture of ethnographic and interview methods, including participant observation, to generate data over the course of 18 months of fieldwork. I also drew on secondary analysis of existing data from the Following Young Fathers project (Neale et al., 2015) to boost my sample. As the participants were recruited from housing support charities, it follows that many of

them were experiencing disadvantaged and chaotic housing situations. The sample characteristics of the participants are set out at the start of Chapter Five.

The initial project design aimed to sample across three different housing cases. These were: young parents living in supported housing units, young parents living independently and receiving floating housing support, and young parents living with their own parents. However, as the project got underway and housing support provision for young parents was reviewed, it became apparent that it would not be appropriate to include the housing support unit case. As discussed in Chapter Three, a housing support unit for young parents (usually mothers, although some have provision for fathers) is a form of temporary accommodation whereby support workers are a constant presence in the unit and young parents receive significant support/intervention. Housing support units were developed and managed by each local authority and at the time of the fieldwork there was no longer a housing support unit for young parents in the local region. As localism, place and space are themes of the research, it did not make sense to seek out a housing support unit in a different area. Instead of a case study of a supported housing unit, and guided by project partners 'Agora', a second housing support service for young people was approached. 'Mosaic' agreed to be part of the research; their service operates in a similar manner to 'Agora' in terms of providing floating support. However, 'Mosaic' also owns and manages their own properties, which young people can be temporarily housed in prior to obtaining their own independent tenancies.

A small subsample of seven participants was followed up for a second interview. This was for both practical and strategic reasons. Within the confines of PhD research and limited resources, I funnelled in on key cases to follow up. I also had prolonged interactions with many of the participants through participant observations so I strategically selected a small sample for a second in-depth interview. I chose the participants based on their diverse experiences and in some cases because I knew they had experienced changes that would be interesting to discuss in detail, for example, moving house, separating from a partner and birth of another child. I also chose a couple that had experienced some continuity in their circumstances. While

the number of second interviews was relatively small, they generated valuable data that enabled me to explore key themes and processes longitudinally.

A multi-methods approach was taken in order to generate in-depth data. Participants were largely recruited from 'Agora' and 'Mosaic'. Two additional participants were recruited following their involvement in the Following Young Fathers study. 17 out of 22 participants were involved in the research over time. Seven participants were interviewed twice, twelve participants attended parents' groups where I conducted participant observation, and the two participants who had taken part in Following Young Fathers (University of Leeds 2012 – 2015) were known to me as I'd worked on the project and accessed their archived data through Timescapes. The data generated for FYF from these two participants was included in my analysis. There is an ontological, epistemological and methodological constellation between the two projects. This allowed the FYF data to be re-coded and analysed in the same way as the newly generated data, building up a longitudinal picture of the two participants. The two participants were purposively chosen in order to boost the number of fathers in the sample, and as the broader Following Young Fathers dataset was familiar to me this process helped to shape my thinking. There is an imbalance between mothers and fathers in the sample, with 14 mothers and 8 fathers. The sample was relatively diverse and representative of the local area. Young parents with a range of housing arrangements participated in the study and during the course of the research, some experienced house moves and changes in circumstances. Chapter Five outlines the characteristics of the participants and shows some changes and continuities in their circumstances during the research project.

In addition to the 22 young parents who participated in interviews, five housing support workers were interviewed and I spend three days shadowing housing support workers as they visited clients in their homes. The findings from the fieldwork with housing support workers are discussed in chapter seven. I also engaged with approximately 10 other young parents who attended 'Agora' and 'Mosaic's parents' groups but did not participate in interviews. This tapestry of methods made for an intensive 18 months in the field, which helped to generate greater insight into processual change (Neale 2021). The follow-up interviewees were strategically selected in order to follow up participants with a range of experiences. I sought to

reconnect with a mix of mothers and fathers and those who took different housing pathways to one another. I also strategically targeted those who I knew had experienced some changes in their housing arrangements with the aim of generating knowledge of these processual changes. While I maintained contact with many participants throughout the research via parents' groups, there were some participants who I was unable to get in touch with. It has been noted elsewhere that disadvantaged young people are often transient, frequently changing phone numbers and moving houses (Neale and Ladlow, 2015). I generally sought contact with participants through their support workers, who acted as gatekeepers and I also managed to connect with some participants via social media. As Neale (2013) argues, maintaining a sample is transformed into 'sustaining relationships' in QL research.

4.6 Data generation: conceptual road mapping

The project tracked participants over the course of 18 months, enabling an understanding of how their housing pathways unfolded over time. Although this is a relatively short period of time, as necessitated by the timescales and limited resources of doctoral research, young people often experience rapid changes in transitioning to adulthood and parenthood. In addition, Cooke and Owen (2007) found that young parents who need housing support often experience a high frequency of house moves. Therefore, a tracking study over the course of 18 months is long enough to generate insight into the changes and continuities young parents experience during a pivotal time in their lives. McLeod (2003 p205) supports this approach, arguing that, 'interviews conducted over a shorter period of time, and in quick succession, can capture elements of change and still allow for degrees of reflexivity; they also offer a more immediate and 'as-it-is-happening' sense of change and development'. Furthermore, using a mixture of retrospective and prospective interviewing and gathering a life history of participants helped to capture a longer sweep of their lives.

The study utilised QL methodology to generate new dynamic evidence on the housing support available to young parents and the opportunities and constraints facing both young parents and service providers. This was generated through in-

depth qualitative interviews, carried out in two waves of interviews over 18 months. Participatory methods of data generation were used in the interviews, with participants invited to draw life maps and pictures of their current home and their future home. The interviews were supplemented by participant observation [interviews and participatory methods are discussed in detail below]. Given the multiple facets involved in QL research, it is important to develop a clear set of research questions and 'map' the route to answering them. Neale (2021 p87) advises developing a 'conceptual road map'; this is a 'chart that sets out the guiding research questions and sub questions, sources of data, sampling strategies and field methods and a provisional list of themes that can feed into topic guides and broad brush thematic analysis'. Figure 3, below, shows the conceptual road map for this research project. The map was refined as the study progressed and new themes emerged.

Research Questions	Sub-questions	Sources of Data: Samples and field methods	Fieldwork themes
<p>Lived Experiences:</p> <p>How and why do young people become parents at a young age? How do they manage this transition and its aftermath?</p> <p>How does housing provision impact on young parents? What factors shape their housing pathways, and how are these pathways negotiated and experienced? How is 'home' understood?</p> <p>What forms of supported housing are available for disadvantaged young parents? How do they experience this support over time?</p>	<p>How do the past experiences and life histories of young parents shape their current lives, future aspirations, and their life chances?</p> <p>How do young parents' housing journeys evolve over time? What are their aspirations for housing and what opportunities and constraints impact on these aspirations over time?</p> <p>How do the housing trajectories of young parents intersect with their family/relational/ education/ employment/and welfare pathways to create distinctive life trajectories for this group?</p>	<p>Pre-existing empirical evidence: Literature review</p> <p>Secondary analysis of related datasets: the Following Young Fathers Study, selected parent interviews.</p> <p>New empirical evidence: a Qualitative longitudinal enquiry carried out with primarily disadvantaged young parents: Life journey interviewing (2 waves); Life mapping participatory tools</p> <p>Participant-observation at local housing support service.</p>	<p>Life histories and journeys: Family background and relationships Childhood experiences, Housing and home, Education and employment Welfare provision/support Parental pathways/ transitions/ practices/opportunities/constraints</p> <p>Time: past, present, future</p> <p>Space and place: constructions of home, community, security, risk</p> <p>Identities & values (e.g. related to gender, class, parenthood, socio-economic and academic background, support and dependency)</p>

Research Questions	Sub-questions	Sources of Data: Samples and field methods	Fieldwork themes
<p>Policy & Practice Processes:</p> <p>How are supported housing services delivered to young parents and how have such services evolved over time?</p> <p>To what extent are lived experiences of housing provision among young parents in tune with professional practices and expectations and with wider policy processes?</p> <p>How do these intersecting processes evolve over time and what are the implications for the development/sustainability of effective housing policies for young parents?</p>	<p>What kinds of supported housing services are available? What are the issues for professionals in their effective delivery, and in meeting the needs of young parents?</p> <p>How do wider policies (welfare reform, benefit changes, sanctions and conditionality) impact on housing provision and general support for young parents?</p> <p>How are these policies shifting over time? How do practitioners interpret policy directives at local level for young parents?</p> <p>How effective is current policy and professional practice?</p>	<p>Literature review of policy documents.</p> <p>New empirical data: In depth, one-off interviews with selected local housing practitioners and service commissioners.</p> <p>Participant-observation at local housing support services and shadowing of housing support workers.</p>	<p>The housing and wider support needs of young parents</p> <p>History of housing services, current provision and future plans.</p> <p>Specialist and generic provision, referrals to other agencies</p> <p>How do practitioners interpret and implement housing and welfare policies?</p> <p>Opportunities and constraints that impact on service delivery, including housing eligibility, welfare reforms, changes in housing policy over time</p> <p>Hopes and fears for the future Examples of good practice, What could be done differently? What resources would be needed?</p>

Figure 3 Conceptual road map (Neale and Ladlow cited in Neale 2021)

Using multiple methods and data sources requires a strategy of integration (Mason 2018). The multiple methods of data generation used in this project have been designed in order to address different aspects of the research aims and to generate in-depth data that can credibly contribute to existing theories and generate new ones. The process of how the research questions are to be addressed can be seen more clearly in Figure Three. Firstly, the methods are ontologically and epistemologically coherent. Each method is born out of the assumption that there are underlying social structures that can be understood through the epistemological approach of privileging interpretations through time. Secondly, the data must be technically integrated in relation to the method of analysis and at the level of explanation. A justification for the each of the proposed methods and an explanation of how they were carried out will be discussed below, followed by a discussion of the methods of analysis.

4.7 Ethics

Careful consideration must be given to ethical concerns, which are potentially heightened in QL research (Neale et al., 2012; Thomson and McLeod, 2015; Neale, 2013; Henderson et al., 2012). Interacting with people and sustaining relationships over time creates a form of 'longitudinal ethics' (Neale 2021). The impact of the research process on participants is central to ethical considerations. Taking part in the research imposes self-reflection onto the participant. Being part of the research becomes part of their narrative and life story and can alter their life course, their future and their interpretations of their past (Plumridge and Thomson, 2003). In all cases, minimising potential harm to participants was fundamental. An 'ethics of care' approach (Tronto, 1994; Holland et al., 2014) was taken and I aimed to foster on-going collaborative relationships with the young parents and the support organisations. This involved reciprocity and an attempt to foster an inclusive and democratising approach to flatten power relations in the research (Tarrant and Hughes, 2020). Ethical issues need to be continuously considered

throughout longitudinal research and entails both proactive and reactive ethical responses (Neale 2021).

Informed consent and confidentiality are core principles of research ethics. Consent in QL research is an on-going process, revisited at various research intersections such as new waves of interviews and on frequent occasions during participant observation. Informed consent was sought from interview participants; they were given an information sheet outlining the purpose of the research and how their data would be used. This was also discussed verbally prior to the interview and again at the beginning of the interview. Confidentiality and anonymity are key concerns, however, the limitations for the scope of this was discussed with the participants. Although data was anonymised, small sample case-study research runs the risk of the participants being identifiable. The names of the organisations as well as all participants were anonymised and the content of the research was carefully checked to make sure that there were no unique identifying features. However, the gatekeepers who help recruit participants and work with them in a professional capacity may recognise individual narratives and the practitioners who participate may be known to have taken part by others in the organisation. This was discussed with participants and participants had the opportunity to withdraw from the study at any time during the fieldwork period.

All but one of the interviews took place in the young parents' own homes. One interview took place in 'Agora' at the request of a participant who wanted privacy from his housemates. A risk assessment was carried out as part of the ethics application and protocols were put in place to minimise risks associated with entering an unpredictable environment. Firstly, all of the participants were in some way known to me before I entered their homes. Most participants were accessed through a gatekeeper who was also their support worker; the gatekeepers therefore facilitated access only to those young people who were deemed to be of no risk to me personally. As an extra layer of precaution, before each interview I gave details of where I was going to be to a trusted person who I then called after the interview to confirm my safety. Some of the interviews were distressing as some participants were experiencing significant

adversity, I debriefed afterwards as a means of 'emotional care' (Holland et al 2014).

Engaging with participants over time creates a specific 'longitudinal ethics' (Neale 2021). It is a balancing act to sustain relationships whilst managing the risk of participants becoming over-dependent on the researcher (Neale and Hanna 2012). Developing trusting relationships over time also presents emotional risks to both the researcher and the participants. Due to the nature of our friendly interactions, at the parents' group especially, I was careful to ensure that I regularly reminded participants of my researcher role and the length of the research project. There was a need to respond reflexively and quickly to some ethical challenges as they emerged. Most participants were aware of the boundaries, however, one participant (who had some learning difficulties) began messaging me on my personal Facebook page and sent me a friend request. I did not want to offend the participant but it was not appropriate for the research relationship to become a friendship. I set up a researcher Facebook page and replied to her through that, reiterating my researcher role and thanking her for involvement in the research.

Conducting the interviews in people's homes, and having developed relationships with the participants over time, also presented some ethical quandaries. During the second wave of interviews I was seven months pregnant, this led to conversations with participants who were interested in my pregnancy and often offered me advice. Upon finding out I was having a baby boy, one participant wanted to give me her son's old baby clothes. This came as a surprise and made me feel a little uncomfortable. I asked if any of her friends might benefit from the clothes instead but she did not know anyone and was keen to give them to me. In the moment, it felt right to accept the clothes so not to offend the participant, this is reminiscent of Patrick's (2012b) dilemma when a participant bought a gift for her new baby. As with Patrick's stance, accepting the baby clothes felt like the right thing to do both morally and ethically. Another ethical challenge arose when a participant needed to get to an appointment after our interview and asked if I might be able to give her a lift in my car. Although I would have liked to help the participant, I did not

feel comfortable with the potential risk that posed. I politely refused on the grounds that I did not have a baby car seat and the participant accepted this. In all of these ethical challenges, having a positive relationship with the participants led to the requests but also helped me to deal with them appropriately without causing offence or damaging the relationship in the long term.

The research concluded after the second wave of interviews. The young parents were given my contact details including a Facebook page to keep in touch if they wanted to. I have remained in contact with some participants; indeed three participants have subsequently been involved in the new Following Young Fathers Further project (Tarrant et al., 2020).

Ethics was at the forefront of the research design and therefore ethical considerations are embedded within various sections of this chapter. In terms of research design, elements of co-production were employed for ethical reasons. Gatekeepers who had close professional relationships with the young parents helped to select appropriate participants and they were the primary source of support should participation in the research have necessitated this.

4.8 Participant observation

Ethnographic and interviews methods are often combined in QL enquiry and participant observation was a crucial, and enjoyable, element of my QL toolkit. It served three key purposes; firstly, it was an act of reciprocity in exchange for the research support from 'Agora'. Secondly, it facilitated access to participants and helped to build authentic relationships over time. Thirdly, it was a method of data generation that helped me to gain insights into the lives of young parents and their support needs.

In the ethnographic tradition of immersing myself in the environment (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007), I carried out participant observation primarily at 'Agora' and to a lesser extent, 'Mosaic'. The purpose of this was to learn more about the support services, how they operate and how young parents interact and experience them. The participant observation also helped to build trusting and reciprocal relationships with the organisations, practitioners, gatekeepers and the young parents themselves. The main setting for participant observation was the weekly 'parents group' at 'Agora'. On any given week, there were usually around five or six young parents in attendance. The parents were usually mothers, although two fathers regularly attended with their partners. The sessions varied over the course of the year that I was involved. At times, the children went into a crèche while the parents took part in an activity. At other points, activities were arranged to include the children as the focal point. I supported the staff running the group and took on a 'volunteer' role; on occasion I helped to facilitate the sessions if usual staff members were not available. This was part of a reciprocal relationship I had with 'Agora'; it was a way to 'give something back' in return for their input in the research. It also helped to foster relationships with both staff and the young parents. Participant observations were not recorded and I did not seek written informed consent. I did explain my role clearly and reminded them of this over time and they gave verbal consent for me to be there. When new members joined the group, I always introduced myself as a researcher. I regularly reminded the group of the research I was doing and often posed questions 'that were interesting for my research'. Many of the parents' group attendees also participated in interviews so they were quite involved in the research,

Three of the mums have all been coming to 'Agora' and the parents group for some time. They were relaxed and comfortable with me being there. At the beginning I introduced myself and explained that I was a researcher. I told them that I became interested in researching young parents due to the negative portrayal, which I felt was out of touch with reality. I spoke about some of my friends who had children at a young age and whom I felt were wrongly stigmatised. This prompted

Stephanie to discuss a story she had heard from Facebook about a 16 year old mum who had a problem with her pregnancy and was sent home from the maternity ward/not taken seriously - this was put down to her age (Researcher fieldwork notes 'Agora's parents' group 19/05/2015).

During the course of the research I became increasingly comfortable with my blurred role of researcher-volunteer and the participants and their children became increasingly comfortable with me. I became especially close with the support workers who ran the parents' groups. They took a keen interest in my research, commenting on interview schedules, helping me recruit participants and letting me shadow them during their home visits. I always arrived early and stayed late at parents' groups to help set up and tidy away. As well as trying to be helpful, this also provided an opportunity to speak with the support workers privately. However, some conflict did arise, as support workers would talk to me about their clients, some of whom were my research participants. I gained information about participants that I would not have otherwise. Some of this information was background information that was useful in tailoring my approach to participants, for example I was made aware of a participant who struggled with reading and writing and so I was careful in approaching written participatory activities during the interview. On one occasion I was told that a participant I had recently interviewed was (unbeknownst to him) not the biological father. At the second wave of interviews he had separated from his partner after she had told him about the paternity of the child. During the interview I could not reveal that I was already aware of this information, which was difficult to manage.

I also shadowed a housing support worker in order to gain an insight into how they deliver support and implement policy [these findings are discussed in chapter seven]. This facilitated interaction with the young parents that they were supporting, some of whom become participants for the QL interviews. At all times I made my researcher identity clear to those I was interacting with and this was reiterated over time. Participant observations were recorded

using fieldwork notes after the event. It was a method that I employed in order to generate deeper background knowledge about young parents and the support they receive from 'Agora'. This was supplemented by the main source of data, QL interviews.

4.9 Interviews

The participant observations helped to shape the interview schedules based on the knowledge I gained from spending time with young parents and their support workers. Eleven of the interviewees were recruited from the young parents' group; this was useful in extending the longitudinal element of the research by providing prolonged interactions with participants. It also helped to strengthen authentic and trusting relationships, which helped to create a sense of ease for the researcher, participants and their children as I entered their homes. Almost all interviews took place in the participants' homes (the ethical issues associated with this are addressed above). As the topic of enquiry concerned housing, this had the added benefit of allowing me to observe housing arrangements. Some participants gave me a tour of their home, offering valuable insight into their living conditions.

The participants were given a £10 shopping voucher as a 'thank you' for participating. While some caution that this can be constituted as a payment and potentially coercive (Patton, 2002), I considered it to be unethical not to give a 'thank you' voucher given the emotional labour involved and the time participants take to participate. Furthermore, as Neale (2021) argues, it is important to avoid economic exploitation, particularly for low-income participants. I also took some age-appropriate healthy snacks and an activity book for children as a means to keep them occupied during the interview. In interviews where children were present, they were very much part of the interview, we frequently paused to interact with them and take care of their needs. As the children and their parents were comfortable with me, I spent some interviews feeding babies or playing on the floor with toddlers. As a result the interviews were relaxed, sometimes quite long and required a high

level of reflexivity. There were some challenges with interviewing participants in their own homes. Some interviews had interruptions from visitors and some interviews took place in the presence of others such as a parent, friend or partner. This required reflexivity and sensitivity, and in some cases certain lines of questioning were avoided until I could speak to the participant privately.

Eight participants who were partnered and cohabiting took part in joint interviews. They were offered a choice of being interviewed separately or together and they all opted to be interviewed jointly. There has been limited attention given to ethical issues surrounding couple research, yet interviewing couples presents specific ethical challenges (Valentine, 1999; Braybrook et al., 2017). The four couples were all recruited through 'Agora's Parents' Group or recommended by their support worker, therefore some prior knowledge of relationship dynamics were known before the interview. Some sensitive topics had to be broached carefully or not at all. For example, it was known to me that Craig and Stephanie had experienced an incidence of domestic abuse that resulted in intervention from Social Services. The issue had been resolved, however, during the interview the couple seemed uncomfortable when it was mentioned and I considered it inappropriate to probe further. Couple interviews may elicit disagreements between participants as they may have conflicting accounts of events or differing points of view. As Braybrook et al., (2017 p14) argue, points of tension also demonstrate couple dynamics in meaning making and can provide opportunities to demonstrate power in front of an interested third party, utilising the interview to safely discuss difficult issues. In the case of Stephanie, when she was drawing her future life map (see below), she took the opportunity to question Craig about his views on marriage and having more children. In this sense she became the interviewer. There was the added benefit of the research being carried out over time, which provided opportunities to speak to each participant separately at times. Furthermore, two of the four couples separated and they were subsequently interviewed separately one year after their first joint interview. This provided the opportunity to harness retrospective accounts by

revisiting some of the sensitive topics that were contentious when speaking to them as a couple.

Semi-structured interviews were carried out with twenty-two participants and seven were followed up for a second interview 12-18 months later. They were audio-recorded and transcribed. Regrettably, two of the interviews failed to record properly due to a malfunction with the Dictaphone. These participants remain included in the study as they were also involved in participant observations and they carried out the visual and creative tasks (detailed below). However, these participants (Chris and Amber) are rarely quoted in the empirical chapters.

Interviews were conducted in a conversational style and every effort was made to put the participants at ease (Oakley, 1981). A topic guide was produced to stay focused on generating data that was relevant to answering the research questions and that allowed for comparison between participants in analysing the data (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009). Key topics of inquiry are set out in the 'fieldwork themes' section of the 'conceptual road map' above. However, the interview was left relatively open in order to, 'enable participants to reflect on the meaning and significance of their own experiences, and to convey these in their own terms, as accomplished and reflexive individuals...this yields thick descriptive data' (Neale 2021 p171). The interview schedules were loosely structured around temporal dimensions, beginning with an inquiry into participants' biographical histories in order to understand how past experiences of growing up are implicated in their current circumstances. Capturing imaginary futures at each follow-up point is a useful way to understand the changing aspirations of individuals, and how and why their life chances are forged, enabled or constrained over time (Neale and Lau-Clayton, 2011). The research moved across temporal planes, asking for retrospective insights, future expectations and present day reflections. A 'recursive interviewing approach' (Neale 2021) provided an opportunity to revisit constructs of the past, present and the future at subsequent interactions, this built up a 'cumulative picture of continuities and change as

they occur', which can, 'offer valuable insights into the seeds of change' (Neale 2021 p178).

To aid the temporal approach to interviewing, visual and participatory methods were incorporated. Participants were asked to create: life maps showing key events in their lives and their plans for the future; relationship maps showing the people they feel closest to; and drawings of their home in the present and then how they imagine their home in the future. Re-visiting these activities at each interview helped to track changes and continuities in their relationships, identities and aspirations (Hanna and Lau-Clayton, 2012) . Some participants really enjoyed these activities; it gave them a break from the interview questioning and acted as a visual prompt to talk through their constructs, ideals and expectations of housing and home. It also made the interviews more participatory and engaging (Hanna and Lau-Clayton 2012) and the activities were seen as data to be analysed in their own right as well as acting as a tool for discussion in the interview. Some of the images are shown in the empirical chapters. However, not all participants enjoyed these activities, or wanted to participate in them, in some cases this was because of their limited literacy levels and in one case a participant was breastfeeding her baby and was physically unable to. In these cases, I explained the activities to each participant and gave an opportunity for them to opt out or to describe to me so I could do it for them.

Seven participants were interviewed for a second time. In taking an iterative analytical approach, questions were developed after analysis of the first wave of interviews and the participant observation in order to further develop emerging themes and findings. Follow-up interviews were also tailored specifically to each participant to elaborate on their first interview and to probe for further details when needed. At the beginning of the second interview I recapped their previous interview and prompted them to remember where we left off in order to find out what happened since.

Repeated interviews and engagement built trust with participants and further information was often disclosed as time went on. This was most evident in

participants disclosing information such as living with a partner but not declaring it, working 'cash in hand jobs', previous low level criminal behaviour and domestic violence. Participants were reassured that these disclosures were confidential and it provided an opportunity to recap the details on the consent form which stated my obligation to break confidentiality only if someone was at serious risk of harm.

4.10 Analysis

Becker (1996) explains that a crucial difference between quantitative and qualitative research is that quantitative research tends to have a clear bracket of information that is sought and has pre-defined variables. For qualitative researchers the depth of data and number of possible variables is endless as new themes emerge whilst in the field, this Becker (1996 p57) argues is 'the essence of the method'. However, it can make it difficult to keep the research focused and to provide meaningful analysis and conclusions. There are a myriad of ways in which to understand the data and it must firstly be acknowledged that it is a subjective process which the researcher is intrinsically part of (Mason, 2002); my theoretical standpoint must be addressed as part of making the analytical process transparent. During the data analysis, there is a continual transformation of the participants, and as they are interpreted and labelled there is a danger of misrepresentation. Qualitative research is concerned with offering explanations, but is careful to not deal in absolutes. Becker, Howard S. (1996 p56) outlines the practical epistemology of qualitative research, 'is not to prove, beyond doubt, the existence of particular relationships so much as to describe a system of relationships, to show how things hang together in a web of mutual influence or support or interdependence'. That is not to say that qualitative research should merely describe the social phenomena for fear of misrepresentation, rather, explanations and theories should be shown to be accurate and presented with a clear demonstration of how they were reached. Indeed, QL research generates a vast amount of in-depth, situated and temporal data, which Neale (2015b) argues has compelling and significant explanatory

power. Qualitative research is often criticised for using methods that are not as easily replicable as they are in quantitative positivist epistemology. Instead, validity comes from transparency and a deep explanation of the researcher's interpretations and how they were reached (Mason 2018).

Different forms of data were triangulated for analysis. Interviews provided the most in-depth data and direct quotes for thick description. Participant observation helped to develop broader contextual information and build up case profiles of those who also participated in interviews. Participant observation facilitated opportunities to informally follow up with participants, for example, through informal conversations I found out about a young father moving between different jobs and claiming universal credit over the course of the year.

The data were analysed both cross-sectionally and longitudinally (Millar, 2007). It is necessary to analyse themes within each case over time and across cases in order to follow individual narratives and to also be able to make comparisons and identify trends across the sample (Thomson and Holland 2003). This dual approach can, 'highlight differences and similarities within the sample, and by accumulating further rounds of analysis begin to identify the relationship between individual narratives and wider social processes' (Thomson and Holland 2003 p240). Neale (2021) emphasises the importance of striking a balance between case and thematic analysis in order to maintain a focus on time, processes, continuities and change. This requires an iterative approach moving between cases, themes and processes (Neale 2021). Taking an iterative approach to data analysis also provides the opportunity to re-analyse and re-interpret data at a number of time intervals (Hughes and Emmel 2012). A range of tools was used to facilitate this. Narrative analyses of each young parent participant were written after each interview, creating a 'case profile' (Thomson and Holland, 2003). All interview transcripts were coded in NVivo and new themes that emerged during the research process were added to the coding framework accordingly. Once the transcripts had been coded, the data was organised into analytical framework grids by participant and key themes over time. Framework grids condensed

the data as part of the initial descriptive level of analysis and were useful in providing an overview of themes in relation to cases over time (Ritchie and Lewis 2003; Neale 2021).

As discussed earlier in this chapter, in following an abductive research strategy (Blaikie, 2000) and to move beyond descriptive accounts and towards explanatory analysis, existing theories were considered and help inform understandings of the empirical data. In order to authentically convey the nature of the social phenomenon and clearly demonstrate how I reached my interpretations, the presentation of data is interspersed with long direct quotes from the participants. The quotes encapsulate the interpretations that participants use to make sense of their own worlds and provides what Geertz (1973) calls 'thick description'. QL research not only documents changes and continuities in relationships and networks over time, but is useful for data analysis, as layers of meaning are built up over time using a process of cumulative logic (Neale 2021). Repeatedly interviewing participants over time, fosters a sense of co-production and on-going empirical engagement, enhancing ethical credibility and validity (Mason, 2002; Patton, 2002).

4.11 Archiving data for future use

From the outset of the research, I planned to archive the interview data to be made available for secondary data analysis and the participants were asked to give their consent (see appendices). Archiving was considered to be ethically important as the participants' narratives are highly valuable and there is usefulness in preservation for future researchers. Given the time and effort that participants put into data generation, there is an ethical obligation to make the data available to a wider audience beyond the primary researcher (Neale and Bishop, 2012) with secondary data analysis reducing the burden on participants to retell their stories. There is also a heightened ethical importance to archive marginalised voices that are less likely to be captured via traditional forms of political representation (Hughes and Tarrant 2020) . Secondary analysis has often been sidelined in favor of primary data

generation; however, Hughes and Tarrant (2020) make a compelling case for it. Building an ethical temporal sensibility generates a collective responsibility that extends and enhances the value of socio-historical research both now and in future (Hughes and Tarrant, 2020b).

4.12 Conclusion

This chapter has detailed the research strategy used to investigate the experiences of young parents' housing pathways and support needs. Utilising multiple QL methods, and taking a collaborative approach, was considered the most useful strategy to contribute new insights into young parents' changes and continuities over time. A QL ethos has guided the approach to research design, sampling, methods and analysis and is underpinned by an ethics of care. However this approach was not without its challenges in relation to sampling, ethics and the changes within the partner organisations. As well as acknowledging my own social position and subjectivities embedded within the research, there was a need to respond reflexively to a variety of ethical challenges that emerged. The QL toolkit of methods helped to build trusting relationships over time and facilitated rich, in-depth data generation. Synthesising data from multiple sources and over time is a complex task, however each method was carefully selected in order to allow for integration at every level (Mason 2018). The potential for QL research to generate such vast amounts of data, the focus on agency, and the intricacies and complexities of lived experience allow for a rich detailed explanation of young parents' lives; and it is the vast amounts of data, derived from multiple sources over time, that actually makes the research more reliable. Conducting QL is conducive to building up a cohesive, textual picture of housing support for young parents, revealing the contours of their lives as they experience continuities and changes.

Chapter 5: Housing histories, family background and pathways into parenthood

5.1 Introduction

This first empirical chapter introduces the participants and maps out the contours of their past lives. Drawing on the concept of ontological security, as set out in Chapters One and Three, an analytical framework is set out that categorises participants' family and housing circumstances based on their retrospective accounts of growing up. Exploring their past lives, housing backgrounds and where they have come from can give us an insight into their consequent life chances, housing pathways and family relationships. Grounded in a life course and temporal approach, subsequent chapters explore how their backgrounds go on to influence their housing pathways, parenting practices and identities, and their future aspirations. There is a link between disadvantage and early parenthood, but disadvantage is complex and there is diversity in disadvantage. This chapter sets the scene for a temporal discussion that comes in subsequent chapters showing changes and continuity over time. The chapter explores the backgrounds of the sample, showing how housing and family resources shape opportunities and choices.

5.2 Setting the scene: difficult childhoods?

As outlined in Chapter Four, twenty-two young parents participated in the study over the course of 18 months; fourteen mothers and eight fathers. Seventeen participants were involved in the research over time, allowing a greater insight into changes and continuities in their lives. The demographic profile of participants is shown below, showing their age at first birth, their relationships, EET and housing situations during the course of the research.

Pseudonym	Gender	Ethnicity	Age at 1st birth	No. of children	Relationship status		Occupation		Tenancy		Followed longitudinally?
					W1	W2	W1	W2	W1	W2	
Amber	F	White British	20	1	Cohabiting		NEET		Independent SRS		Y
Amy	F	White British	19	1	Single		NEET		Independent SRS		Y
Andy	M	White British	20	1	Cohabiting	Single	NEET	Retail	Partner's family SRS	Mother's SRS	N
Brooke	F	White British	19	1	Cohabiting	Single	NEET		Own family	Independent SRS	Y
Chelsea	F	White British	18	1	Single		NEET		Father's SRS house		Y
Chris	M	White British	22	1	Cohabiting		NEET	Catering	Independent SRS		Y
Craig	M	White British	20	2	Cohabiting		NEET	Postal work	Independent SRS		Y
Danny	M	White British	19	1	Single		NEET		Independent SRS		N
George	M	White British	23	1	Cohabiting	Single	NEET		Independent SRS	Mother's SRS	Y
Jayden	M	White British	19	1	Single		Forklift driver		Mother's SRS		Y
Jock	M	White British	22	1	Single		Teacher		Parent's mortgaged house		Y
Jordan	M	Mixed White and Black Caribbean	18	2	Single		NEET		Independent PRS		N
Kerry	F	White British	22	1	Cohabiting	Single	NEET		Independent SRS		Y

Pseudonym	Gender	Ethnicity	Age at 1st birth	No. of children	Relationship status		Occupation		Tenancy		Followed longitudinally?
					W1	W2	W1	W2	W1	W2	
Kimberly	F	White British	15	2	Cohabiting		NEET		Independent SRS		N
Megan	F	Mixed White and Black Caribbean	16	1	Single		NEET		Mother's SRS		Y
Michelle	F	White British	23	2	Partnered		NEET		Independent PRS		N
Monique	F	Black British	22	1	Single		NEET		Independent SRS		Y
Samirah	F	British Asian (Muslim)	16	2	Cohabiting		College student and disability benefit		Independent SRS		Y
Simone	F	Black	20	2	Single		NEET		Independent SRS		Y
Sonia	F	White European	22	1	Single		NEET (asylum seeker)		G4S housing		Y
Stephanie	F	White British	19	2	Cohabiting		College student	NEET	Independent SRS		Y
Tamara	F	Mixed White and Black Caribbean	18	1	Single		NEET		Supported housing	Independent SRS	Y

Figure 4 Participant demographics

Nineteen of the participants grew up and/or continued to live in a highly deprived area within a radius of around four miles of each other. The asylum seekers lived in the area at the time of the research, while Jock, Jayden and Chelsea lived elsewhere in the city. The ward where the majority of participants resided has approximately 40,000 residents and is one of the most deprived areas in the city. 16% of people claim unemployment related benefits compared to an average 6.3% across England (Observatory, 2019b). In 2018-19 almost half of children living in this ward were living in low-income families, compared 18% across England (Observatory, 2019c). The area has a higher than average number of lone parents, a significantly lower proportion of people with no qualifications, and according to the 2007 indices of deprivation, several smaller neighbourhoods fall into the 3% most nationally deprived (Observatory, 2019a). All except one of the participants in this study (Jock) can be described as disadvantaged in terms of their economic, social and cultural resources (see the sampling strategy in Chapter Four). In contrast to the others, Jock grew up in an affluent suburban area in a large house with both parents working in professional jobs. He is the only participant to go to university and stands out as a real anomaly in the sample. He therefore provides an interesting contrast to the more disadvantaged participants. Monique, Jayden, Danny and Megan also had stable family lives growing up and while they still lacked in economic resources, family stability acted as a supportive resource and a protective factor against some of the more extreme hardships some of the other young parents faced. Simone and Sonia are asylum seekers, and both had tremendously difficult journeys escaping from extreme hardships.

Analysing the participants' housing and family backgrounds, they can be divided across an axis of: stable housing and stable family/chaotic housing and chaotic family/stable family a chaotic housing/chaotic family and stable housing. The stable housing category consists of those who experienced few house moves growing up and had a secure home. Conversely, those in the chaotic housing category experienced frequent house moves and described homes that did not meet the conditions of ontological security (see Chapter One for an outline of how ontological security is operationalised and Chapter

Three for a detailed definition of ontological security in relation to home). The stable family category consists of those who had family relationships that were described as positive, supportive and enduring. The chaotic family category encompasses relationships that were fragmented, tempestuous and difficult. Elley (2013) captured family dynamics using the framework of 'harmonious and inharmonious family ties and interactions'. As is the case in this study, Elley (2013) cautions that there are commonalities between the categories but it helps show 'the importance of relationships as resources with consequences' (p128). The categorisations of stable and chaotic are fluid and subsequent chapters will show how some participants move into different categories. Figure Five shows the categories each participant fell into as they were growing up, providing a 'snapshot' (Neale 2021) of their circumstances.

<p>Stable Family/Stable Housing</p> <p>Jock Monique Jayden Chelsea Amy</p>	<p>Chaotic Family/Chaotic Housing</p> <p>Andy Jordan Kimberly Michelle Samirah Stephanie Simone Sonia Tamara George Chris Amber Brooke</p>
<p>Stable Family/Chaotic Housing</p> <p>Megan Danny</p>	<p>Chaotic Family/Stable Housing</p> <p>Craig Kerry</p>

Figure 5: stable/chaotic quadrant 1

The majority of the participants fall into the 'chaotic family and chaotic housing' bracket. Since home and family are closely entwined, it follows that difficult family lives and housing pathways go hand-in-hand for most of the participants. Only five participants described a stable family and home life. Megan and Danny had chaotic housing backgrounds and are not entirely without family problems, however they had both consistently maintained stable relationships with their mothers throughout their lives and this stands in contrast to the more extreme family problems described by other participants.

Eighteen participants were raised in lone parent families. This was not enough to deem a family 'chaotic'; the participants who fall into the 'chaotic family' bracket described serious problems and relationship breakdowns with their parents, including parental drug and alcohol issues, domestic abuse and mental health problems. Participants were deemed to have chaotic housing backgrounds if they experienced multiple and undesirable house moves. For several participants in the 'chaotic family, chaotic housing' (CC) section, relationship problems with their parents triggered house moves. Those from CC backgrounds described ontologically insecure lives (see Chapter Three for a discussion of this concept), with unstable constructs of home and family. Most participants fall into the category 'chaotic family/chaotic housing' and this will be the focus in the subsequent sections. The other categories provide a useful comparison in two key ways; firstly, they show diversity amongst disadvantaged young people, and secondly, they provide a framework to show changes and continuities over time. This quadrant will be referred to in subsequent chapters and updated to show what happens next in their lives.

5.3.1 Stable family/stable housing

The five participants in this category all described backgrounds that could be described as stable.

Name	Family relationships and housing background
Amy	Stable background and good relationships with both parents. Grew up with both parents and 2 siblings. Both parents were in stable jobs. She lived in the same family home until she moved out to live with her partner in his family home.
Chelsea	Stable background and good relationships with both parents. Grew up with both parents as an only child. Both parents in stable jobs. When her parents separated she moved to a different city with her mother. When she had her daughter, she returned to live with her father in the home she grew up in.
Jayden	Stable background and good relationship with both parents. Grew up with 2 siblings. His parents separated when he was about 8 years old. His father moved out and Jayden continued to live with his mother. He has lived in the same house most of his life.
Jock	Stable background and good relationship with both parents. Both parents had professional jobs. Lived in the same house most of his life with his 2 siblings.
Monique	Stable background and good relationship with both parents. Grew up with 1 sibling. Parents owned a shop and Monique moved out of the family home and into the flat above the shop when she was 18.

Figure 6 Stable family/stable housing participants

Both Jock and Jayden continued to live in the same house that they grew up in throughout the research and have never experienced the disruption of house moves that blighted many of the other participants. They described relationships with their parents and siblings as consistently supportive and positive, particularly following the births of their own children. In the 'stable family, stable house' (SS) category, Monique and Amy both live independently. Monique has strong relationships with her parents and wider family; they bridged her housing pathway to independence as she moved into the flat above her parents' shop before getting her own SRS tenancy after

having her son. Her family were an important resource to Monique, particularly as she had some mental health problems and some financial difficulties due to issues with her benefits claim. Amy was supported by 'Mosaic' to gain independent housing and was strongly supported by her family throughout. Chelsea was living with her father at the time of the research. This was the family home that she grew up in, however, she had spent time living with her mother in a different city. Chelsea maintained positive relationships with both of her parents.

Participants were asked to draw a life map [see methodology Chapter Four]. They were asked to note key events and any house moves in their past. Those from more stable backgrounds had quite sparse life maps, with few house moves and few significant events up until the point of having a child. This is in contrast to those from more chaotic backgrounds who produced life maps that were often busy and complex.

Jayden's life map shows no house moves. His significant events relate to siblings being born and his parents' separation.

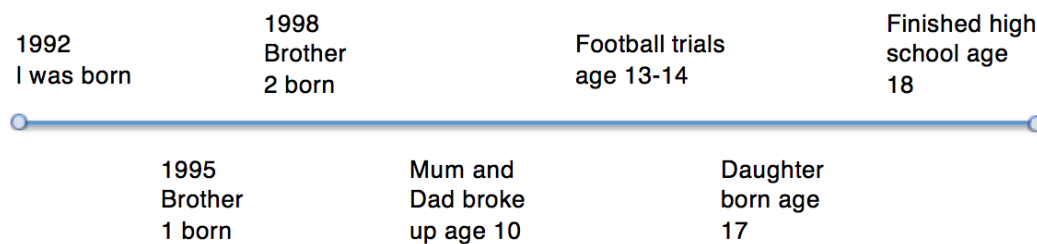


Figure 7 Jayden's past life map

Similar to Jayden, the only event on Monique's life map before she moved out into her own home and had her son was the birth of her sibling.

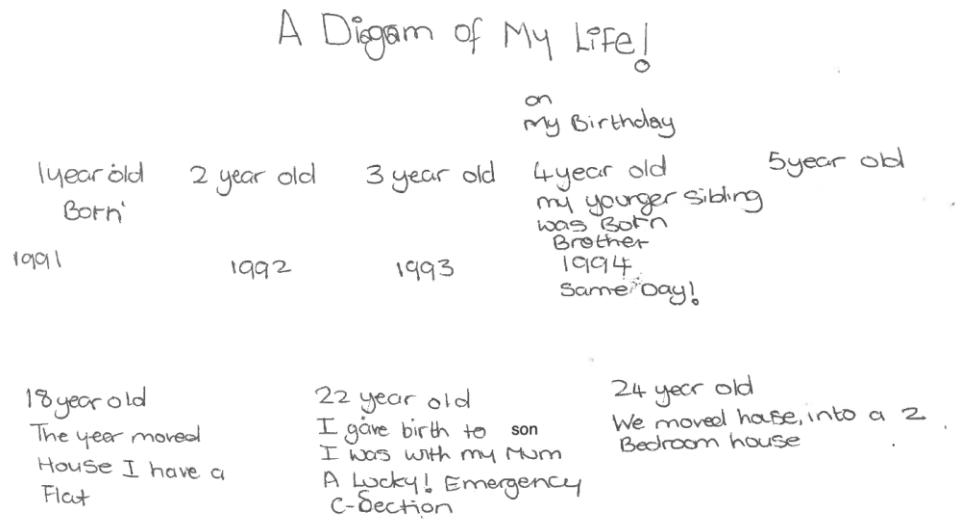


Figure 8 Monique's past life map

Discussing past lives, house moves, childhood and family relationships made up a large part of the first interview for those from chaotic backgrounds. Whereas, those from more stable backgrounds struggled to give much information,

Linzi: Can you tell me a little bit about what it was like for you growing up?

Amy: It was just normal... (Amy, aged 21, W1).

When probed further, Amy could recall finding it difficult when her older sister left home, as the two of them were very close. However, unlike those from chaotic backgrounds, Amy had little to say about her childhood. This was typical of the SS group who struggled to give much detail about their childhoods, as they did not experience such hardships and dramatic life events as the other participants.

This group had residential stability, growing up in the same home, and staying in the same schools and local area. As will be discussed in subsequent analysis, after having their children, this group were well supported by their families and were able to maintain housing stability. They were well resourced prior to entering parenthood, living in homes and belonging to families that

provided ontological security. The security and stability they experienced growing up was highly advantageous in comparison to those from chaotic backgrounds who had to try to attain this as new parents.

Name	Family relationships and housing background
Kerry	Kerry had a relatively stable family and home life until her mother had an accident leaving her with significant disabilities. Kerry had a difficult relationship with her parents and her older sister. She moved out of the family home to live with George.
Craig	Craig had a chaotic family background but his housing was more stable. His father was an alcoholic and Craig recalled lots of arguments before his parents separated. Craig continued to live with his mother and 3 sisters in the family home until he moved in with Stephanie.

5.3.2 Chaotic family/stable housing

Figure 9 chaotic family/stable housing participant summary

In the ‘chaotic family, stable housing’ category are Kerry and Craig. Both had housing stability and did not move out of the family home until late adolescence when they went to live with their respective partners. However, they both described difficult relationships with their parents and siblings. Craig’s father was an alcoholic and he remembers his parent’s frequent arguments as well as his own violent altercations with his sister,

It was fairly big. Nice, spacious. We had our own rooms. That’s all I can really remember. It was a nice big house. But I can’t remember much about living up there. A lot of arguments used to happen up there. And I just blocked everything out. It just wasn’t a nice place to grow up. With my dad being a drinker (Craig, age 23, W1).

Similarly, Kerry had difficult relationships with her parents. She described her dad as ‘strict and controlling’. Her mum had an accident and was left with

disabilities that confined her to hospital for a long time,

It were my dad that brought me up, instead of my mum, because my mum was in hospital. It hurt me when my mum did come out of hospital, because I kept saying to my dad, that's not mum, you know her but I don't know my mum. You know? I've had a tough life, but I got through it (Kerry, age 22, W1).

While Craig and Kerry had housing stability, in the sense that they did not experience frequent and undesirable house moves, they did not describe happy homes. However, stable housing does mean staying in the same area and the same school and these can be useful resources.

5.3.3 Stable family/chaotic housing

Name	Family relationships and housing background
Megan	Megan had a consistently good relationship with her mother but her father was in and out of her life. She had a chaotic housing background with frequent house moves and new schools.
Danny	Danny had a consistently good relationship with his mother but does not have a relationship with his father at all. He had a chaotic housing background with frequent house moves. He was often in trouble for criminal behaviour and went to a Pupil Referral Unit after being excluded from school.

Figure 10 stable family/chaotic housing participant summary

Alongside Danny, Megan falls into the 'stable family, chaotic housing' bracket. She had consistently maintained a close relationship with her mother but experienced a turbulent housing journey as they moved counties and lived in a women's shelter before obtaining council housing. For Megan, residential mobility was problematic as it prevented her making friends and affected her education pathway, contributing to social disadvantage,

When I was younger it didn't bother me [moving house], cause I was just living like that, see. I didn't really think, 'oh, this is bothering me,' but when I got older and didn't have a lot of friends, it bothered me then... Moving house didn't bother me. Yeah, moving house hasn't been a problem really. Moving schools was the problem. But in a lot of the schools I was always getting bullied, so I wasn't really too bothered about leaving (Megan, age 17, W1).

Frequent house moves affected participants in multiple ways. As Megan illustrates, house moves meant moving schools and struggling to form long lasting solid friendships. This can leave young people with diminished social capital as well as disrupting their education and limiting their resources for future career opportunities (see Chapter Eight]. However, although Megan had a difficult school experience she obtained good qualifications and aspired to go to university.

Both Megan and Danny had infrequent involvement from their fathers and both spoke about them disparagingly. However, they both experienced the stability of their mothers as their primary carers and continued to be strongly supported emotionally and financially,

My mum's very-, she lets me be honest with her, do you know what I mean? Like, she's someone that I'm able to speak to about anything, and she won't go mad. She might go a little bit mad, but I'm able to tell her things, just like what I was saying with how she'll do anything to make sure we've got food on the table and clothes on our back and stuff. My dad's really shit. Terrible dad, he's disgusting. I don't like him, I don't know if I want to speak to him ever again (Megan, age 17, W1).

Having a strong relationship with a parent is a significant resource. Megan and Danny had chaotic lives in some respects, but their mothers were a continuous source of support,

I see my mum every day. She helps me out here and there (Danny,

age 21, W1).

Danny was often in trouble at school and left with few qualifications. However, he went straight into employment after school. At the time of his interview he had recently been let go by the agency he was working through. However, he was able to draw upon relational resources as his mother was in the process of getting him a job at her place of employment.

Yeah. I'm going to find a job eventually but not through the agencies. A proper job what's just there for me permanently. It [previous job] was supposed to be until Christmas and then if they liked you they kept you on. But they didn't. Tried to put me on a waiting list. They took the job off me 6 times. I phoned up and they gave me it back. Then I went back in and they put me on a waiting list after I finished that week... I see my mum every day. She helps me out here and there. Food. Cos obviously I haven't been paid by the job centre yet. So she's been helping me out. She's trying to get me a job (Danny, age 21, W1).

Danny frequently moved house but he always stayed with his mother and had a consistently strong relationship with her. For those with stable family but chaotic housing backgrounds, frequent house moves often meant changing schools. However, family support and resources can act as a buffer to the risks associated with disadvantaged mobilities. Categories of stable/chaotic are not fixed but move along a spectrum, in a similar manner to the notion of ontological security as a fluid concept. While these participants experienced some chaos, their partial stability provided them with some resources that would serve them well as they transitioned to independence and parenthood. Partial stability provided resources such family support systems. This partial stability can act a protective factor for disadvantaged youths as they transition to independence, adulthood and parenthood.

5.3.4 Chaotic family/chaotic housing

Name	Family relationships and housing background
Kimberly	Kimberly had a chaotic family life and turbulent relationships with both parents. Her parents were not together. Her mother worked as a prostitute and her father spend time in prison. She had a chaotic housing background, moving between her mother, father and grandmother's houses.
Simone	Simone was an asylum seeker. She fled from a war situation when she was a child and initially lived with her Auntie in a European Country. Both her parents are dead. She entered the UK and spent time in a detention centre. She was moved around several cities before being housed in Leeds and granted leave to remain.
Samirah	Samirah had a chaotic family and housing life. She spend time living in women's refuges after her mother and siblings fled domestic abuse. She took on caring responsibilities for her younger siblings as her mum struggled with mental health problems.
Sonia	Sonia was an asylum seeker. She had a difficult childhood and was abused by her father. She was trafficked into the UK by her boyfriend from Eastern Europe and forced to work as a prostitute. After escaping she discovered she was pregnant and was also detained as an illegal immigrant. She was housed in various cities across England before being placed in Leeds. At the time of the interview she was applying for asylum.
Tamara	Tamara had chaotic childhood. She had a difficult relationship with her mother, who was violent towards her. She does not know her father. Tamara moved around frequently, spending time living with different family members and lived independently from the age of 15 when she was placed in a hostel.
Amber	Amber had a chaotic childhood and a difficult relationship with her mother. They moved house several times and she was living independently from the age of 18. She briefly moved in with Chris and his family before they got their own SRS flat.
Chris	Chris had a chaotic family and housing background and regularly got into trouble at school and with the police. He grew up with his mother, stepfather and two stepbrothers. He left the family home aged 14 and lived with his Grandmother before living independently aged 16, firstly in a hostel and then in a shared PRS house. He reconciled with his mother and moved back into the family home before he met Amber and they got their own SRS flat.

Name	Family relationships and housing background
Andy	Andy had a highly chaotic background with several significant events that led to family difficulties and house moves. His step-father died and his mother developed severe mental health problems. Andy and his older sister were largely left to their own devices and regularly got into trouble with anti-social behaviour.
Brooke	Brooke had a chaotic family and housing background. Her mother moved from another part of the country to escape domestic violence from Brooke's father. Brooke has never had a relationship with him. For most of her childhood she lived in a small flat with her mother and 2 younger siblings. She had a good relationship with her stepfather but he later died. Her mother was an alcoholic. Brooke had a difficult relationship with her mother and spent time living with her auntie when she was a teenager. Brooke later moved in with Andy and his family before moving back to live with her mother.
Michelle	Michelle had a highly chaotic family background. Her father was violent and her mother left him, along with Michelle and her older brothers when she was 2 years old. Michelle and her brothers were officially placed in her Granddad's care although she 'pretty much just raised myself'. She moved in with her older boyfriend when she was 13 and barely attended school. She moved houses regularly as her partner was a drug dealer, they were often raided by the police and had to move around to avoid trouble.
Stephanie	Stephanie had a highly chaotic family and housing background. She grew up with her mother and has 3 younger siblings. She had limited contact with her father as a child but began seeing him more regularly as she got older. She had a difficult relationship with her mother at times and they moved house frequently.
George	George had a chaotic family and housing background. His family experienced homelessness after fleeing from his mother's partner due to domestic violence. George, his mother and younger brother lived with his grandparents temporarily until they obtained social housing, there was not enough room for them all so George slept in a tent in the garden. George did not have a relationship with his own father growing up.
Jordan	Jordan had a chaotic family life and was placed in care aged 5. He often moved care homes due to his bad behaviour. His mother has drug and alcohol problems and his father was in prison for most of his childhood. Jordan began using drugs and alcohol at a young age and has been involved in criminal activity

Figure 11 chaotic family/chaotic housing

Most of the participants (13) fell into the chaotic family/chaotic housing (CC) category. This subsection begins by detailing some cases of difficult childhoods, before focussing specifically on chaotic housing pathways and how these intersect with family relations.

Kimberly described difficult relationships with her parents, her mother worked as a prostitute and struggled with drug use, and her father spent time in prison. She went on to leave education at the age of 14 and became pregnant at 15. Jordan's earliest memories were visiting his father in prison and being taken into care when he was 5 years old. Both Kimberly and Jordan described childhoods that lacked any sort of stability and they seemingly had poor attachments to their parents who would drift in and out of their lives. They both went on to have their own children removed.

Similarly, Stephanie described an extremely difficult and traumatic childhood,

My childhood has been tragic. I block all of mine out cos my mum got involved with bad people cos of drugs and stuff. So I don't really know any of mine. All I know is moving house and moving school. And I don't even know when the years were cos I just block it all out (Stephanie, age 22, W1).

Like Stephanie, several participants had backgrounds that they tried to forget or 'block out'. Participants often discussed their own difficult backgrounds in relation to wanting to do things differently as parents. There was a desire to erase and rewrite difficult pasts with the life they create with their own children. However, the problems from their childhood often weighed heavy upon their shoulders,

It was very hard for me. I didn't enjoy my childhood like other kids. And that's why I am fighting, that's why I am saying to you I want to forget all of my past. If I had any medicine to forget my past I swear I will do it. I want to forget everything, just to be good example for my daughter.

And believe me, I spend my money, I stay without food. I want to buy for her more best things (Sonia, age 22, W1).

Sonia is perhaps the most extreme example of highly traumatic childhood and adolescence. She grew up in Eastern Europe and her father was extremely abusive. She left Eastern Europe with her boyfriend when she was 19 after her family disowned her when they discovered she had a partner. Her boyfriend then became abusive and trafficked her into the UK to work as a prostitute. After she escaped she found out she was pregnant and was sent to a detention centre.



Figure 12 Sonia's past life map

On Sonia's life map she has drawn herself crying in every scene from her past. It shows the domestic abuse she received as a child from her father and as teenager from her partner, and then her time in a detention centre where she is 'tired from life destroyed'. In the final drawing she is happy with her daughter but worried about 'what will happen with me' as she was waiting to be granted asylum. Like others, Sonia wanted to forget what she has been through and focus on her new motherhood identity. However, she remained in a state of uncertainty and transience. Her asylum seeker status placed her in a highly precarious situation, especially in relation to finances, housing and

being ineligible for employment. Mayblin (2020) calls this an act of 'slow violence' against asylum seekers.

Participants like Sonia and Stephanie described a litany of difficulties, poor parenting and an almost constant stream of adversity. While other participants such as Andy could pinpoint specific triggers that led to a downward spiral, changing and reshaping the course of their lives. Here, Andy discusses the key events and difficulties he experienced growing up,

I've been through a lot of death. I've seen a lot of people... a lot of people hate each other fighting wise. And erm... I seen my sister got raped. My son died. That affected me. (Pause) Normal stuff that you can think of I didn't really have. I never really had a normal family. They're all mental cases. Always like, I dunno we just never really got on. Never got on with my family. Erm... the only person I got on with was me sister and then she moved out. And like I say, I've seen a lot of fights and a lot of bad stuff happen to people and that's affected me because I've seen it but I've not been able to do nothing about it and it... it just messes with your mind. Very much (Andy, age 22 W1).

Andy reflects on his difficult childhood and lack of agency and control over events. He highlights his stepfather's death as a key turning point and later his sister's sexual assault which led them to move house,

The only reason we moved was because that happened to my sister. And erm... me and my mum and my sister decided that we didn't want to be there and look at him next door anymore so we moved from there. When my little brother's dad was alive it was more strict and you had to do certain things at certain times. But strict enough that it was just someone being there. And then he died. Erm... my mum kind of got very depressed and I mean she already had depression before he died and it just made it 10 times worse so she used to just sleep all the time. Erm... so it kind of fell apart from then. That's when me and my sister just started doing what we wanted. Drinking, smoking, taking drugs.

Walking about the streets until stupid o'clock in the morning. I mean it just got a bit hectic and erm.. that's it really. It were a loving household. My mam did love us. She did. She just fell apart once her partner died and just fell into a depressive state (Andy, age 22, W1).

Andy seemed to define himself by the problems he had experienced and like other participants who experienced difficult childhoods, overcoming traumatic events was a significant challenge. As will be discussed in Chapter Eight, for Andy and several others from chaotic backgrounds, their education pathways were constantly disrupted. Similar to Coffield and colleagues (1981) 'web of deprivation' and MacDonald and colleagues' (2020) theory around a 'constellation of problems' (see Chapter Two), difficulties snowballed and in some cases became overwhelming. Difficulties throughout Andy's childhood overshadowed all aspects of his life, seriously affecting his mental health and acting as a barrier to education and normative life course trajectories and opportunities. He became 'stuck' in the moment, unable to progress through education, which in turn hampered his employment opportunities, leaving him lacking in aspirations and trapped in welfare,

I was about 14 when I left school. I was going through a lot of shit as a kid and I wasn't prepared to sit there and listen to teachings and stuff. I mean I wish I did now so I would have been able to get in college, well a better stage in college, cos I always ended up on a level one course but I should have been able to get on a higher one... Something always went wrong when I was in college so I never passed a course. There was always something messing up in life. To stop me from doing it.... Not having... well I've got goals in life but I haven't really thought about what I want to do really. I just think I'm bad stuff. And that's just my thinking. I think I'm bad stuff. Cos I've always been through bad as a kid and that's just how you think, I guess. Once you grow up in that environment (Andy, age 22, W1).

Life events stifle education pathways. Similar to other participants, Andy ended up not being able to progress in education, never making it past the

first hurdle.

Resources transmitted intergenerationally can be material and non-material, economic, cultural and social. The more parental resources that are available, the more likely young people are to overcome constraints, plan for their futures and achieve their aspirations. Difficult childhoods limit life chances from the outset. Those from CC backgrounds have fewer resources with which to smooth the transition to independence and adulthood, and adverse circumstances often propelled them into early independence. Comparatively, those from stable backgrounds glided towards independence and were well resourced and supported as they entered parenthood. Family difficulties often intersected with housing pathways, as will be discussed in the next section.

5.3.5 Chaotic housing pathways?

This section focuses on those with chaotic housing backgrounds, exploring the ways family relationships and key life events intersect with housing.

The volatile and fragile family relationships in these cases (reported above) were in 13 cases also linked to volatile housing. Many participants reflected upon difficult childhoods, volatile relationships and social problems such as parental drug and alcohol abuse, domestic violence and crime. For several participants, these issues triggered house moves,

I lived everywhere, like my dad went to prison, I ended up going back with my Nanna, but before that I was with my mum and my dad when I was younger. Then they split up cos my mum cheated. She ended up leaving us to run away with this man. Left us with black bags, so we ended up having to go to my Nanna's. She asked if we wanted to stay with her or go back to my dads. So we went back to my dads. Then my mum got us back through the courts cos my dad went to prison and signed residency over to my Nanna, my Nanna didn't give any of them back and then about year 9 I just ran away from my Nanna's one day

and went back to my dad's. And then I ran away from my dad and lived with my mum when I was 14 cos my dad used to be really horrible [DV] (Kimberly, age 19, W1).

Difficult family lives prompted housing instability, which in turn exacerbated relationship problems. Tamara lived independently since the age of 15 when she was made homeless and moved into a hostel. Prior to that, she moved around different family members with violence often being the trigger for her to move on,

Oh, I've lived everywhere! I lived with my mum, then my mum kicked me out and I went to live with my auntie. Then she kicked me out, I went to my nanna's, then decided to go back to my mum, but she kicked me out, then I went in a hostel. Then I went to another hostel, flat and then I went into my house, and then I moved from there to [a nearby city], and then back here to my auntie's, and then we moved to [nearby town] and then I moved to this house. And I've got to move from here soon... My mum kicked me out because she was going out with like a drug addict. And then my auntie kicked me out because-, she'd glassed me in my head, yeah, and I hit her back. So she kicked me out (Tamara, age 19, W1).

Tamara was successful in education, attaining good GCSE qualifications despite experiencing significant difficulties throughout her childhood. However, dealing with hardships put the brakes on Tamara's Further Education journey and caused mental health problems,

I hated living there [hostel]. I just got depressed in there. That's why I think I quit college as well, because I just felt like I couldn't do it. D'you know what I mean? I just thought, like, I couldn't go to college, cause college, there was a lot of work to do at college. Like, you had to work-, because it was practically-, I was doing level 3 extended diploma, so you had-, and it was winter time as well. So I just wanted to be home, but I didn't have a laptop or internet at home, and I couldn't really do

my work and I was just getting more stressed being at college than I was not being at college. Then when I quit college (Tamara, age 19, W1).

Housing and access to technology are vital resources for successful education pathways. For Tamara, the hostel she was living in did not provide adequate resources and the conditions were hostile and ontologically threatening. Despite her ambitions, her day-to-day constraints were too much and she was left dealing with a multitude of problems that left her 'living in the moment' (Neale, 2019).

Like both Kimberly and Tamara, several participants relied on extended family members for housing. Tamara was happiest living with her Grandmother; however, her one-bedroom flat was not suitable for her to stay there long-term. George moved into his grandparents' house along with his mother and brother after fleeing a domestic violence situation. His grandparents' house was so small that George slept in a tent in the garden.

Samirah and her family also frequently moved house after fleeing a domestic violence situation. They also relied on extended family for housing support and just 'got used to' a nomadic lifestyle,

We lived in that house and then we moved to like two different houses. In the time of living in these two different houses, cos we only lived in them for about a year each and in the mid time of living in these houses, I moved out to go live with the same auntie who I lived with before, for like six months or something. I don't know why, it just did. Nothing was ever explained to me. It just happened. We all stayed there sometimes. And then one day they just didn't take me home (laughs). I stayed there, I didn't ask any questions, I didn't ask for my mum, I didn't miss her. yeah. I don't know... We got used to it. We always lived in boxes, we never really unpacked anything. Things were always in bags. It was just like that. Sleeping on mattresses. At one

point within all of that we lived for a couple of months in some women's refuge (Samirah, age 23, W1).

Extended family members were vital for these participants in providing refuge, and a place for them to be supported and cared for following difficulties with their parents. However, space and resources were often stretched to their limit and any sense of permanence or 'home' was out of reach. This is symptomatic of the trappings of poverty and disadvantage; while extended family members were willing to help in times of crises, the resources were not available to them.

For these participants, frequent moves were far from advantageous. Their moves were not ones of privilege, whereby there is a move towards improved housing quality. Often their moves were involuntary, difficult and to worse or equally poor housing. It is a downward or zigzagging housing pathway. These participants were seemingly simultaneously mobile and immobile. Mobile in the sense of frequent moves but immobile in terms of their mobility being restricted to disadvantaged areas and poor quality housing.

Using the concept of 'housing pathways' (Clapham 2002), this chapter shows how residential mobility is a significant aspect of participants' social, cultural and economic disadvantage. Chaotic housing pathways can act as a barrier to accumulating resources and progressing through other pathways such as education and employment. The concept of 'pathways' is not necessarily associated with upward movements and in the case of these participants; volatile housing pathways are both a symptom and a cause of social and economic disadvantage. Their housing journeys, family relationships and the context that they have grown up in, can provide us with an insight into the resources they have prior to entering parenthood. Frequent house moves were often triggered by domestic problems and, as discussed above, many participants reported being parented in an inadequate way. Frequently moving house and location limited opportunities to acquire resources, as forging friendships and succeeding in school were stifled by costly house moves.

5.4 Conclusion

This chapter has introduced the participants, drawing their retrospective accounts of growing up to investigate their family and housing backgrounds. In exploring the backgrounds of disadvantaged young parents, this chapter has shown the complex and diverse experiences of the participants' family relationships and access to resources. Different pathways, or trajectories, overlap and intersect. Chaotic backgrounds with less emotional, social and economic resources places young parents in a precarious situation, with narrow opportunities and sources of support. Dealing with snowballing difficulties constrains choice and ontological security, and can trap them temporally 'living in the moment' (Neale 2019). The analytical quadrant categorising participants as having stable or chaotic family and housing backgrounds is updated in Chapter Seven to show how the categorisation is fluid and subject to change over time. Subsequent chapters will show how resources, including family bonds, shape entry into parenthood and their opportunities going forward as parents in relation to housing and other pathways such as EET.

Chapter Six: Becoming a Young Parent: principles, practices and pathways

6.1 Introduction

Having set the scene with a discussion of the participants' family and housing backgrounds in Chapter Five, this chapter explores the circumstances surrounding the participants' entry into parenthood. The timing of entering parenthood is considered in relation to the life course and youth transitions. It describes their pathways into parenthood, whether the pregnancy was 'planned', and their reactions to the pregnancy. The chapter goes on to discuss the participants' journeys into parenthood, their values around age of entering parenthood and what makes for a 'good' mother or father. Building on both their retrospective accounts of the early years of parenthood, and on prospective data gathered in wave one and wave two of interviews, this chapter traces continuities and changes through their transition into parenthood. Their backgrounds and available resources are significant in shaping their available options and choices. The findings provide new insights into the diversity of agency and decision-making amongst disadvantaged young parents. The chapter also provides new evidence and a more complex picture of disadvantaged young parents' principles and practices of 'good' motherhood and fatherhood.

6.2 Choosing to become a parent?

As discussed in Chapter Two, becoming a young parent is considered deviant as it is at odds with the trend towards delaying parenthood until later in life (Vincent and Thomas 2013; Neale 2016). Chapter Two also showed how conception and abortion rates differ between deprived and affluent areas (Lee et al., 2004). The findings in this chapter offer an in-depth exploration of disadvantaged young parents and the choices they made about entering parenthood. The analysis shows young parents acting with greater agency

than previous research acknowledges. Furthermore, the notion that disadvantaged communities find early parenthood a 'cause for celebration' (Cater and Coleman, 2006) is challenged. There is in fact a complex dichotomy between intergenerational and local community patterns of entering parenthood early, versus family attitudes and negative reactions to pregnancy announcements.

The table below shows the range of circumstances and reactions to pregnancies across the sample. Half of the participants' pregnancies (11) were unplanned, while the other half of participants had 'planned' pregnancies (11). There is a complexity and spectrum of experiences within the 'planned' category, as will be discussed below. Although the sample is small, there are some interesting patterns.

Name	Age at birth of child	Planned?	Relationship	Background	Abortion views	Initial Parental reaction
Amy	19	Unplanned	Partnered	SS	Previously had an abortion	Negative
Chelsea	21	Unplanned	Un-partnered	SS	Too late	Negative
Jayden	17	Unplanned	Partnered	SS	Anti-abortion	Negative
Jock	22	Unplanned	Partnered	SS	Anti-abortion	Negative
Kimberly	15	Unplanned	Un-partnered	CC	Considered abortion	Negative
Megan	16	Unplanned	Partnered	SC	Considered abortion	Negative
Monique	22	Unplanned	Un-partnered	SS	Too late	Negative
Simone	20	Unplanned	Un-partnered	CC	Anti-abortion	NA
Samirah	16	Unplanned	Partnered	CC	Anti-abortion	Negative
Sonia	22	Unplanned	Un-partnered	CC	Anti-abortion	NA
Tamara	18	Unplanned	Un-partnered	CC	Considered abortion	NA
Amber	21	Planned	Partnered	CC	Anti-abortion	NA
Chris	21	Planned	Partnered	CC	Anti-abortion	Positive
Andy	20	Planned	Partnered	CC	Anti-abortion	Positive
Brooke	19	Planned	Partnered	CC	Anti-abortion	Positive
Danny	19	Planned	Partnered	SC	Anti-abortion	Negative
Michelle	23	Planned	Partnered	CC	NA	Negative
Stephanie	19	Planned	Partnered	CC	Anti-abortion	Positive

Craig	20	Planned	Partnered	CS	Anti-abortion	Positive
George	23	Planned	Partnered	CC	Anti-abortion	Negative
Kerry	22	Planned	Partnered	CS	Anti-abortion	Negative
Jordan	18	Planned	Partnered	CC	Anti-abortion	NA

Figure 13 conception circumstances

As outlined earlier (and in Chapter Two), disadvantaged young people have constrained agency and life course opportunities. However, deciding to become a parent is a momentous choice with which some young people get to wield a significant amount of agency. Even when the pregnancy is unplanned there is still a choice to make about whether to continue or to terminate it. There was an even split between planned and unplanned pregnancies, with 11 participants falling into each category (the 'planned' category is complexified below). In exploring the characteristics of those who had planned or unplanned pregnancies, it is interesting to note that all of those who planned their pregnancies were from chaotic backgrounds, while all participants who had stable backgrounds had unplanned pregnancies (see Figure 13). All of those who planned their pregnancies were in committed and fairly long-term relationships (usually around one year). They were also aged in their very late teens or early 20s. Across the unplanned pregnancies, there was a broader range of ages, with the youngest participants all falling into this category. Several of those who did not plan their pregnancies were in relationships with the other parent; however, by the time of the first interview none of them remained partnered. The participants from more stable backgrounds were also generally more accepting of abortion, although they all had reasons for not pursuing this themselves. Of the nine from stable and semi-stable backgrounds, only Jayden and Danny expressed views that they found abortion morally wrong, while there was generally a stronger anti-abortion sentiment expressed amongst those from chaotic backgrounds.

6.2.1 Planning or 'anticipating' pregnancies

Eleven participants 'planned' their pregnancies. Eight of the Eleven were interviewed as couples and four of the eight remained together throughout the research. Those who planned their pregnancies were in long-term

relationships and (apart from Jordan) they were all living with their partner. Craig and Stephanie had been together for a year and a half and were living together in Craig's family home when they conceived,

We was wanting and we did start trying. But nothing was happening so we thought we'll just leave it. We won't bother trying and if it comes along it comes along. It came along! (Stephanie, age 22, W1, not using contraception).

Craig and Stephanie had a casual attitude towards planning their pregnancy that was echoed by several others,

It was planned but for the future. It just happened. Got pregnant (Jordan, age 21, W1, not using contraception).

We did [plan it] but I wanted one when I was 16. That's when we planned it. But 3 years later he just came... (Danny, age 21, W1 not using contraception).

This shows the complexity and diversity within 'planned' pregnancies. For example, while some participants wanted to have a baby and were not using contraception, they were still surprised by the pregnancy, as the timing of conception did not match their expectations. Jordan expected the pregnancy to occur later than it did, while Stephanie, Craig, and Danny, took a little longer to conceive. The TPS linked high rates of teenage pregnancy and low rates of contraception to 'ignorance', 'mixed media messages' and 'low expectations' (SEU, 1999). However, this group of participants had discussed and, to a certain extent, planned their pregnancies with their partners. While they expressed a casual approach to conceiving, rather than being 'ignorant', they were consciously not using contraception. In some ways, this is reminiscent of Cater and Coleman's (2006) definition of being 'positively ambivalent'; that is, parents who had not formally or extensively planned the pregnancy but were aware it might occur (see Chapter Two). However, the notion of 'positive ambivalence' does not adequately capture the tempo of

planned or anticipated pregnancies. MacDonald and Marsh (2005) usefully use the notion of 'fatalism' (see Chapter Two). Anticipated pregnancies is more akin to this idea of fatalism, as some participants similarly expressed a reluctance to make formal plans in the context of limited opportunities to make life choices due to their disadvantaged circumstances (see the case of Monique below). However, the notion of anticipated pregnancies goes further in showing that there is a sense of wanting a child as part of a broader life course and family plan for the future. There was a rather loose sense of planning that was more akin to an acceptance and inevitability that children would come along at some point for those in a relationship. However, for some participants, pregnancies occurred sooner (Jordan) or later (Danny, Stephanie and Craig) than they imagined. Despite conceptions occurring out of sync with their imagined timings, their children were very much wanted, and these participants framed their pregnancies as planned.

All of those who planned, or anticipated, their pregnancies were from chaotic backgrounds. They had experienced difficult childhoods, turbulent relationships with their parents and frequent house moves. However, their long-term partnership provided a level of stability. For some the relationship also gave them an opportunity to leave their parental home and move into their partner's family home. This newly forged stability is one explanation for planned pregnancies. Their families were also influential in some cases. Andy and Brooke were encouraged by their parents to have a child,

My mum and Brooke's mum were saying basically you better hurry up and have a kid before we get too old and we can't do nowt. So we were trying. It weren't all them, we did really want to try have a kid together (Andy, age 22 W1).

Family and local community based values and norms are significant and can go some way towards countering negative public discourses on young parenthood. Andy and Brooke were supported and encouraged to have their first child by their immediate family, however they were also forthright in their own autonomy and decision-making when questioned by others,

When I had my first one, they were all like, 'oh you're too young to be a mum, you've still got all you're life ahead of you'. But it's my choice (Brooke, age 22, W1).

Here, Brooke is referring to the baby that died towards the end of her pregnancy. Brooke and Andy made the decision to try again for another baby straight away, as a means of coping with the loss of their first child. Both pregnancies were 'planned', with the first pregnancy being anticipated, while the second was more urgent. This shows how earlier experiences can impact upon later choices and aspirations. After the loss of their first baby, Brooke and Andy were well supported by their families and wider community. Their local shop helped to fundraise money to pay for their son's funeral. There was an acceptance and an expectation that they would have another baby.

Craig and Stephanie received positive reactions from their parents. They were also in a long-term relationship together,

Craig: She was happy. Over the moon. First grandchild and everything. So yeah she was really happy.

Stephanie: My mum was pleased. My mum was over the moon. That's when we started to get closer. A lot closer actually (Stephanie, age 22, W1 and Craig, age 23, W1).

Similar to other research (Neale and Lau-Clayton, 2014), having a child can help to mend family relationships and bring young parents closer to their own parents. However, even amongst the planned pregnancies, there were negative reactions to the announcements. In Michelle's case this was because there was domestic abuse in her relationship rather than specifically about her age (she was 23 when became pregnant). However, Kerry and Danny's parents thought that they were 'too young'. Kerry came from a background of 'stable housing/chaotic family', while Danny had a 'chaotic housing/stable family' background (see Chapter Five). Their semi-stable backgrounds perhaps meant that there was a greater expectation for them to

follow a normative life course trajectory of entering parenthood later in life. It also shows the diversity and complexity of attitudes amongst disadvantaged young parents and their families.

6.2.2 Unplanned pregnancies

The discourse around early parenthood, and policies such as the TPS, suggest that it is an irrational bad choice or an accidental conception (Carabine, 2007). However, while some of those with unplanned pregnancies were initially unhappy, they all framed their decisions to continue with the pregnancy as a positive choice. This chimes with other research that recognises the decision to enter parenthood early can be an empowering choice (Arai, 2009; Elley, 2013). As with findings from the Following Young Fathers study, an unplanned pregnancy does not mean an unwanted child (Neale and Davies, 2015).

The unplanned pregnancies tended to arise from casual relationships, while Sonia became pregnant after being trafficked into prostitution. Participants who had not planned the pregnancy often had a difficult time coming to terms with it,

It was like the world went quiet for about so many minutes. It was like I was in the solar system and I came back to earth. And it wasn't like I just found out like 2 weeks later, it was 4 months down the line... My mum told me to take a pregnancy test and it came back positive and I was just like 'nooooo!' It was a really big shock. It was just so weird. I felt like an alien because obviously it was my first pregnancy, my first child so unexpected' (Monique, age 24, W1).

These unplanned pregnancies and the shock of finding out represented a 'fateful moment' (Giddens, 1991) or a 'turning point' (Neale, 2019) for the participants, as their planned life course was disrupted and their ontological security was challenged. This is in contrast to those who planned their

pregnancies, for whom early parenthood was aligned with their life chances. Shirani and Henwood (2011) argue that unplanned pregnancies require 'temporal processes of renegotiation' as individuals are forced to reimagine their futures. An unplanned pregnancy can cause an unwanted diversion in their future plans; Tamara had to make major changes to her life,

It was a horrible time for me when I found out I was pregnant. It was confusing because my baby's dad was, 'yeah lets have a baby'. Then, 'let's not'. So I was on my own. I didn't like my pregnancy... I was going to be doing it on my own and I had nowhere really to live at that point. It wasn't my intention to have a baby. It was a shock because I was on the pill.... I was working and I was thinking, 'oh my God, I'm going to have to quit my job'. I had to move back to [city], because I was living with my auntie at the time (Tamara, age 19).

Tamara was unhappy about her unplanned pregnancy as she was lacking in resources; she was not in a relationship and did not have her own place to live. For Tamara, her pregnancy threatened to put the brakes on her employment pathway. In contrast, Simone was an asylum seeker who firstly did not have any legal rights to work or education and then after being granted the right to stay, worked in unsatisfactory temporary jobs,

It was a shock. I didn't want an abortion. Because if you don't work, you don't educate then maybe you do something else. Because I believe that sometimes God if he don't give you job maybe he want you this way. So I believe that and I accepted (Simone, age 22).

For Simone, rather than curtail life course opportunities and act as a barrier, her pregnancy represented an opportunity. She had already faced significant barriers in work and education. Becoming a parent was a route to create a meaningful identity. This corresponds with Elley's (2013 p185) assertion that 'For some less advantaged young people, choices, resources and trajectories are limited which results in less means with which to construct their identities'. Simone faced significant disadvantages as an asylum seeker until she was

granted leave to stay she was unable to work. Given the limited education and employment opportunities available to Simone, despite her pregnancy not being planned, it did not represent a disruption to her planned life course trajectory in the same way as some of the other unplanned pregnancies.

Most of the young parents received negative reactions to their pregnancy announcements from their families. This was the case for all of the unplanned pregnancies. Some cautioned their children not to enter parenthood early based on their own experiences of being young parents themselves. However, once the baby arrived they were generally very supportive. Amy's mum was 18 when she had her first child,

She moaned at the beginning, saying 'you don't know what you're getting yourself into'. Cos back in her day is different to now. Now I've got her she's all for her. She'd do anything for her. But part of me still thinks, 'have I let her down?' Do you know what I mean? Cos my brothers and sisters are doing good for themselves. They've got jobs and houses and stuff like that. And I'm the only one, like a black sheep. I'm the one that smokes. I'm the one that went out drinking with my mates. I'm the one that got pregnant at a young age (Amy, aged 21 W1).

Despite Amy's mum being young when she had her first child, early parenthood is not seen as a normative or desirable option amongst her family. Amy groups early parenthood with negative traits, such as drinking and smoking, in contrast to her siblings who 'have jobs and houses'. Similarly, Jock's early parenthood came as a shock to his family,

I think for my family it was more of a shock than her family, well my family were really shocked...I don't think my mum handled it very well but she is coping with it now. She's dead excited now...But at first she was a bit, you know, 'oh what are you going to do, where are you going to live, what you going to do for money?' Whereas her, her mum was a parent when she was sixteen. And her sister was when she was

seventeen. And now my girlfriend's nineteen it's just, you know, it's kind of, you know... (Jock, age 22, FYF W1).

While there was expressions of shock for the unplanned pregnancies and disruptions of life course plans, Jock and his mother expressed most concern about providing material resources for his child despite being far more equipped than any of the other participants. Early parenthood was an anomaly in his family and his mother in particular was 'shocked' and 'worried' about him not first acquiring enough resources to live independently. Wilson and Huntington (2005) suggest that the 'middle-class' trajectory of higher education, career and then family underpins the stigmatisation and marginalisation of young parents. Jock's early entry into parenthood had the potential to disrupt that 'middle-class' trajectory and this is perhaps at the root of his family's concern. It is also plausible that this concern was heightened by his gender and the pervasiveness of the breadwinner role for fathers. This will be discussed further later in this chapter.

For those who had unplanned pregnancies, it represented a potential life course disruption or change. For some this was a positive change and a route to a desirable identity (as Simone illustrates). While for others, the life course change was, at least initially, threatening (Tamara and Jock). For this group, while entering parenthood early was not planned, there was a general acceptance and a framing of continuing the pregnancy as a positive agentic choice.

6.3 Abortion

Of the eleven unplanned pregnancies, three of them considered having an abortion before changing their minds. Megan and Samirah both considered having an abortion without telling their own mothers. Samirah was particularly concerned about her mother's response to the pregnancy due to her religious beliefs,

I actually arranged it and everything and then I just thought I didn't want to but I was like, how's my mum going to react? What am I supposed to do? I'm going to be like 17. But I couldn't get rid of him... He [father of the child] told me to get an abortion and then went mad when I had a kid (Samirah, age 23, W1).

Megan was also 16 when she became pregnant, and like Samirah she was worried about telling her mother,

And at first, I smiled a little bit, and I then I started really thinking about what was happening, and I was absolutely-, like, I felt sick. It was horrible. So I knew, for ages, really, and then I was just thinking, right, I'll just get an abortion behind my mum's back, she'll never find out and I can just move on. But I didn't really want to have an abortion. So I was just waiting for about-, I think I was pregnant for about three weeks. I was telling my family, and in my head, like, I wanted to keep the baby, and I was thinking 'my mum will come round to it, she'll be fine.' So I was telling my family, and they was like, 'your mum will kick you out, and you'll have to be in a hostel with your baby, you won't be able to cope. You won't get no money, you won't this, you won't that. You won't get a house.' They were so horrible about it, persuading me to get an abortion behind my mum's back (Megan, age 17, W1).

Megan shows that choice can be constrained and it is important to note that while for many young parents making the decision to continue with their pregnancy is empowering and a chance to exercise their agency, others may be coerced into conceding body autonomy. It is well established that agency is not the same thing as autonomy and is always exercised within a nexus of relational and socio-economic considerations (Neale and Smart, 1998). Several mothers in this study were pressurised by others (predominantly the father of the child) to have an abortion. Rebuffing this is perhaps a way for mothers to exercise and strengthen a 'good' mother identity ['Good' mother and father identities are discussed in more depth later in this chapter].

As discussed in Chapter Two, deprived areas have higher rates of young parenthood and lower levels of abortion compared to the least deprived areas in England (ONS 2019a). Most disadvantaged young parents across the sample expressed a strong anti-abortion sentiment,

I've always said its murder (George, age 23, W1).

No I don't believe in that stuff. Whoever believes in that needs to get shot (Jordan, age 21, W1).

This finding supports existing empirical evidence on the negative attitudes towards abortion amongst disadvantaged young parents (Neale, B. and Davies, L., 2015; Elley, 2013; Lee et al., 2004). Even for those whose pregnancies came as a shock, abortion was not desirable. The participants in this study were generally quite forthright in their decisions and they were able to exercise their agency and take control. George and Jordan's anti-abortion attitudes were typical of several participants. It may be that taking an anti-abortion stance legitimised their decision to continue with the pregnancy within a context of young parenthood being broadly considered a 'bad' choice. Amy told her mother that she was using the contraceptive pill so that '*she wouldn't think bad of me*', while Megan also lied to her mother about the circumstances of her pregnancy. This shows that although they wanted to become parents, they understood the stigma attached to young parenthood and by constructing a narrative that reduces their accountability it leaves them less open to challenges from others.

6.4 Choosing to become a parent?

In contrast to the notion that young parenthood is a 'cause for celebration' in deprived communities (Cater and Coleman, 2006), most participants received negative reactions from their parents. Five participants did not have relationships with their parents and were unable to comment on this. Those

who had positive reactions were in long-term relationships, aged between 19 and 21, and had planned their pregnancies. Despite most young parents receiving negative reactions from their own parents about their pregnancies, young parenthood was common in their families. In making the decision to become a parent, or to continue with an unplanned pregnancy, local cultural contexts and broader social contexts and networks are important in shaping values and identities. Despite fertility trends showing young parenthood is in decline (ONS, 2020a), becoming a young parent was quite common within the participants' families and local networks. The parents of all of the participants, except Jock, were also young parents (aged under 25 at the time of first birth).

Contrary to the popularly held view that disadvantaged young parents purposefully choose to get pregnant in order to access social housing (as discussed in Chapter One), the participants in this study disagreed that welfare benefits were a factor in their decision making,

Linzi: Some people say things like 'oh, young parents, they deliberately get pregnant so they can get benefits and a house' and stuff like that. Was that ever a consideration for you?

Kerry: Oh no! Basically, it wasn't- like, do you know, to be honest, it wasn't- I never even looked at it for the benefits. I just wanted to, you know, bring my son up. I didn't even have a choice of being pregnant. I didn't plan him. I know that sounds cruel, but I didn't plan him. He was unplanned, but you know, it's nothing bad about having- it's fair dos, you do struggle when you're on benefit. It's not even much more money you get for having a kid, you know what I mean? (Kerry, age 23, W2).

For Kerry, her son was unplanned and accessing benefits was not something she had thought about. Kerry's quote also highlights a flaw in the narrative that benefits are an incentive to have a child, as she discussed how difficult it was to manage financially on benefits.

Similarly, Stephanie and Craig discuss how their plans to live independently and have children were not affected by welfare entitlements,

Linzi: So was it ever a consideration for you that if you have a baby, you get a house, benefits- did that cross your mind or was that-

Stephanie: No! Cause we was on about getting a house anyway, before we even thought about having Kyle. We just needed our own space, didn't we? We wanted our own space and needed it, we was already on the bidding list before I fell pregnant with Kyle

Craig: I- no, it didn't. Because that didn't really bother me. Because at the time that we was bidding, I was in- I was working at the time as well. It didn't really cross our mind about that.

Stephanie: It's like, we know if we was to have another child now, we wouldn't get benefits for that child, and it doesn't bother us one bit.

Linzi: Oh yeah, cause there's the two child limit now, isn't there?

Stephanie: I did warn him, I said to him, 'I hope you know, if we do have another child, you're not gonna get no money for them' and he goes, 'yeah, so?' It don't bother us. Money's money. Like my dad says, 'can't be the richest guy in the graveyard'

(Stephanie, age 23, W2 and Craig, age 24, W2).

Stephanie and Craig were planning to have a third child and were doing so knowing that the new 'two-child limit' would mean that they were not entitled to any child tax credit payments for that child. The inaccurate, yet pervasive and damaging trope that young parents choose to enter parenthood in order to access welfare benefits has contributed to punitive policies such as the 'two-child limit'. The 'two-child' limit now affects almost one million children and is contributing to rising poverty (Stewart et al., 2020).

Whether pregnancies were anticipated, planned or unplanned, the children were very much wanted. Simone succinctly explained her reasons for becoming a parent,

Me, not for benefit, but I like children. Very much I like children
(Simone, age 22, W2).

None of the participants in this study cited welfare benefits as a factor in their decision making to have a child. On the contrary, living on benefits was a struggle for most.

In summary, the findings show that those who planned their pregnancies were from chaotic backgrounds, in committed long-term relationships, older, anti-abortion, and were more likely to receive positive responses to their pregnancy announcement. Those who had unplanned pregnancies included the youngest participants and all of those from more stable backgrounds. The attitudes to abortion were slightly more varied and they were all either unpartnered or in fragile relationships that ended before the start of the research. None of these participants received a positive reaction from their parents when they announced the pregnancy.

Despite all those with planned pregnancies being from chaotic backgrounds they were carving out stability with their partner and in creating their own family. For this group, having a child was part of the route to independence, ontological security and perhaps part of a life course plan. On the other hand, for those from more stable backgrounds, becoming a parent at a young age threatened their existing stability and had potential to disrupt their life course plans. This chimes with the 'why wait' theory in relation to different life course opportunities divided along the lines of social class (Arai 2003; Arai 2009). However, the findings here show that there is not just a difference between working and middle class youths; there are also variations amongst disadvantaged young parents between the most chaotic and those with more stability. Disadvantaged young parents are not a homogenous group. Explanations around early entry into parenthood are based on a variety of circumstances, relationships and opportunities. The next section continues to analyse these choices in relation to youth transitions and life course timings.

6.5 Transitions to adulthood?

The previous section demonstrated how the participants framed their entry into parenthood as a deliberate choice regardless of whether they planned the pregnancy and regardless of their circumstances. The next sections consider life course timings of contemporary young parenthood amongst disadvantaged youths and seeks to explore the participants' attitudes towards their timing of parenthood and the extent to which do they consider themselves to be 'young' parents. This section finishes by exploring young parenthood and intergenerational reproduction.

What signifies the transition to adulthood? At what point in the life course does this occur? As discussed in Chapter Two, there are multifaceted strands that make up the transition to adulthood (Thomson et al., 2002; Bynner, 2001; Côté and Bynner, 2008). Signifiers of adulthood, and life course timings of achieving these, evolve over time. Contemporary transitions are commonly conceptualised as elongated and young parents deviate from this trend in reaching a marker of adulthood early in the life course. Often the participants had a range of other life experiences that signalled their transition to adulthood and heightened their sense of maturity and independence. Participants were often in the 'fast lane' to adulthood (McDermott and Graham, 2005). However, becoming a parent was not necessarily the accelerator. Several participants had already experienced living independently and managing their own finances. As discussed earlier, most participants had unusually difficult childhoods and had to shoulder big responsibilities at a young age. Most had faced adversity and family problems, and a number of participants had caring responsibilities prior to having their own child. For these participants, becoming a parent did not signify the transition to adulthood as they were already transitioning through other factors. For example, Andy (chaotic background) marks on his past life map 'growing up' at the age of 13. In contrast, Jayden (stable background) describes a more 'in-between' identity. Jayden was planning to move out of his mother's house when he was 25,

It's just cos you are an adult then. Even though I'm 23 now, I think I am a bit childish still. But I can act grown up as well. I've got a responsible job. I'm flying round on a forklift. You've got to be sensible on that cos if it goes wrong you'll kill someone. But I can be childish as well. But I need to grow up properly one day (Jayden, age 23, W1).

The young parents were generally aware of the contemporary normative life course trajectory and how they have deviated from it,

If we could have had him a little bit later, around my age now, that would have been better. I truly think really, 24 onwards is probably the best because you are a lot more wiser. Got time to grow up, get your priorities into place. Unfortunately with me things have gone upside down a little bit but its just life at the end of the day (George, age 23, W1).

As George stated, delaying becoming a parent allows time to 'get your priorities in place'. He alluded here to accumulating resources and being prepared for parenthood. Interestingly, some of the participants did not necessarily see themselves as 'young' parents. At the time of the interview, Chris' first child was due a few weeks later. He felt he was a 'normal' age to become a father but being unemployed and living in social housing meant he felt 'unprepared'.

I don't feel like a young dad but I do feel like an unprepared dad (Chris, age 21, W1).

Chris would have ideally liked to develop a career first. However, disadvantaged youths are facing significant obstacles in gaining steady employment. Low paid and insecure work is increasingly commonplace in contemporary society (MacDonald and Giazitzoglu, 2019) and this has implications for young fathers attempting to fulfil a traditional 'breadwinner' role (Neale and Davies, 2016). More broadly, underemployment, precarity and

insecure work are incompatible with the dominant attitudes around establishing stability and independence prior to entering parenthood. Samirah articulated the dichotomy between navigating dominant attitudes towards early parenthood and the timings she thinks are 'right',

If there wasn't so much stigma attached I'd say 20s. Early 20s. Just because it's your youth and you can do the things you want to do. Like when you're old how are you supposed to jump around in the park with them? (Samirah, age 23, W1).

Samirah and other participants were able to justify and see value in youthful parenthood, such as having higher levels of fitness and a greater capacity to play with their children. Disadvantaged areas have lower life expectancy and poorer health. Therefore, having generations closer together allows for intergenerational support. Some of the advantages of being young parents identified by the participants were based on low expectations of life expectancy and good health, and intergenerational support from their own parents,

You don't want to be too old cos you won't see their life. You might die (Jayden, age 23, W1).

My mum said she was too young to be a Grandma. But she's not. She's 40-something. She'll be on her deathbed soon. 60, I'll give it. Obviously if I wait until 25, 26 until I had a kid then the kid would have hardly seen her. She's getting poorly now (Danny, age 19, W1).

Across the UK, people are entering grandparenthood later in life (ONS, 2019). However, given that children of young parents are more likely to also become young parents, there are a small yet significant number of young grandparents. The difference in ages of grandparents reveals important divergence between socio-economic groups (Emmel and Hughes, 2010). There is a close layering, and in some cases an overlapping, of generations. This is a reflection of norms, lower life expectancies and quality of life in

deprived areas that have higher rates of young parenthood. This has implications for support: grandparents who are younger and healthy may be able to offer more support. However, close layering of generations perhaps can also act as a barrier to accumulating resources and grandparents who are still of working age may not have the time to offer support. As discussed in Chapter Two, young parents (especially mothers) are often reliant on intergenerational support, and power and decision-making may run down the generational line (Neale and Lau-Clayton, 2014). As shown earlier in this chapter, participants' own parents are influential in their decisions to plan a pregnancy or continue with an unplanned pregnancy.

6.5.1 Pathways through early parenthood

Some of the participants did not consider it significant that they became a parent at a 'young' age and it was not framed as an unusual life course timing;

It's not very hard being a parent. Like I said to you, it hasn't changed much. It hasn't changed much for me anyway. It's just the way it is (Andy, age 22, W1).

For young parents like Andy, being a parent was just a natural part of his life and there were bigger concerns such as employment, housing and relationships with wider family. Andy was not in work and was highly involved in childcare. Andy had grown up with instability and caring responsibilities, becoming a father did not present a significant change in his roles.

The idealised notion of having a child once the transition to adulthood is complete and economic and social independence has been achieved is unrealistic for some people who will continue to live with instability and struggle to get by throughout their life course. Monique thinks the best time to have a child is '*when life is smooth*'. However, despite Monique being from a more stable background, she could not imagine a time when her life would be,

When life is smooth. My life is never smooth! So I don't think there's ever a right time. I wouldn't even plan a time. If I could in my life. Cos it's just going to be the same. I couldn't make my life any smoother than it is. There's always some rides, y'know. There's always sticks and stones thrown in the way so I wouldn't even plan it myself (Monique, age 24, W1).

Monique had already dropped out of college and she did not have a clear plan for the future through education or employment routes. Calver (2019) found that young mothers placed an emphasis on their EET engagement and aspirations as a means to gain respectability in order to counter negative stereotypes of young motherhood. However, the mothers in this study were generally less concerned about EET and focused instead on being a 'present' parent (EET and gender are discussed in Chapter Eight). Parenthood can be seen as a good option for young people who perhaps lack the same access to normative life course opportunities. Indeed, it is parenthood that provides a chance to gain independence, forge a new identity and escape family hardships and unhappiness.

Tamara had a turbulent relationship with her mother while she was growing up and was living independently from the age of 15. She managed her own finances and coped with living in undesirable hostel accommodation whilst continuing her education. While she recognised herself as 'young', she conceptualised young motherhood in terms of levels of maturity and she saw a clear distinction in her levels of maturity in comparison to her own mother's,

My mum-, I didn't really like look at her as that, but now, I see that she's still young in her head. I feel old. I don't know, I think it depends on the person, doesn't it? My mum acts like a kid. I think it's because she kind of missed out on her childhood a bit, so she's not had the chance to really grow up properly. Like me, I've had my son young, but I'm still old. I was old, like, in comparison to her, I had four years on my mum. So, you know. I was 18 when I had my son, my mum had just turned 15, so she were pregnant when she were 14. So that was really

young. I couldn't imagine having a baby that young, 14, could you?
(Tamara, age 19, W1).

Tamara made a distinction between herself and her own mother as a parent. There is of course significant variation between 'very young' (17 and under) and young parents (over 18 and under 25), yet images of school-aged teen parents is often axiomatic in popular discourses (Duncan et al., 2010). Participants were acutely aware of the stigma associated with young parenthood and rebuffed stereotypes by distinguished themselves from 'other' young parents,

I think really young mums is... a bit too much. It's like kids having kids. You need to learn to look after yourself. I'm not saying they can't, they just need to learn everything first. You know. Do your school
(Stephanie, age 23, W2).

In distinguishing herself from the 'really young mums', Stephanie shows an internalisation of early parenthood as 'bad'. However, she situated herself outside of this as she considered herself to be knowledgeable and well prepared before entering parenthood. The process of 'othering' (Weis 1995) was a way for young parents to justify their timing of entering parenthood and to position their choices and identities as legitimate and valuable. Sayer (2005) refers to this as a moral boundary drawing which 'denotes the way in which social groups often distinguish themselves from others in terms of moral differences, claiming for themselves virtues which others are held to lack'.

Like several other participants from chaotic backgrounds, Stephanie had already had significant caring responsibilities and experiences of 'mothering' her younger siblings. Samirah, Michelle, George, Danny, Stephanie, Brooke and Andy identified as feeling mature and responsible after taking on caring responsibilities for their siblings as their parents struggled to cope. They stepped into a caring role and received less parental support themselves,

Like when I hit 11 my mum came down with depression so I became... she doesn't like it when I say it but I became mum to my baby brother and my 2 sisters. I was the one that did the shopping, I was the one that cooked the meals. I was the one who took them to school and got them on the bus and picked them up. I used to take myself from school, yeah it was with the money she gave me, but I went with that money, got to the supermarket then pick them up from school cos I only had about a 10 minute space, pick up a week's worth of shopping, nappies all that lot. Pick them up. Run for the bus, get home, cook food. Then there was days where I didn't go into school cos I was ill. I don't know where she'd go but she'd go out and do things and I'd be left with my brother who was just short of 1. And I'd say right up to the age of him being 4 or 5 I looked after him a lot. I changed his nappies, I looked after him on a night. I picked him up from school. I cooked all of the meals up until I was 16 and got pregnant and couldn't really do it anymore (Samirah, age 23, W1).

Samirah's experiences powerfully convey a fluid boundary around adolescence and adulthood. For those from most disadvantaged backgrounds, the shift from childhood to adulthood can be rapid, with extra difficulties arising from their lack of resources and support (Reeves, 2006). Social class fragments transitions to adulthood. Jones, G. (2005) argues that working class youths are expected to become self supported earlier than the middle classes. Difficult circumstances may complicate family practices. Weiss (1979) argues that the usual intergenerational relationships between adults and children are dissolved and recast in single parent households. Building on Weiss' argument, Alenen (1992) discusses how children grow up a little faster in difficult family circumstances. This is relevant to the participants from chaotic backgrounds who had experienced a range of adversity and early responsibility.

Other participants from chaotic backgrounds discussed feeling 'old'. Sonia was trafficked into the country and became pregnant after being forced to work as a prostitute. Her traumatic experiences left her feeling disconnected

from her youth and prematurely old,

I think I grew up before my age comes. I'm young. I'm 22. But my body is like I'm 70. I feel very old inside of me (Sonia, age 22, W1).

For those from chaotic backgrounds, their early responsibilities and adverse experiences are factors that make them feel mature and therefore better equipped for parenthood. Difficult backgrounds are repackaged as resources that equip them for parenthood and also set them apart from the stereotype of the feckless, irresponsible, ill-prepared young parent. Across the spectrum of disadvantaged participants from stable or chaotic backgrounds, their acquired resources shape the availability of choices and their decision-making. Those from the most chaotic backgrounds have constrained resources, however they are not resource-less. The resources that are transmitted can be useful. However, these resources are more akin to bonding capital than bridging capital (Putnam, 2000; Barry, 2006) and this can contribute to the reproduction of disadvantage (Shildrick and MacDonald, 2008) [see Chapter Three for a further discussion of this concept]. Resources and experiences shape opportunities, perhaps leading to young parenthood and perhaps providing the resources to manage and navigate early parenthood. The resources that are transmitted can therefore contribute to the reproduction of disadvantage. Shaking the shackles of difficult pasts is incredibly difficult. Adversity is embedded in biographies, ongoing relationships and missed opportunities. This is carried into adulthood and parenthood, and alongside navigating specific contemporary issues (such as underemployment and a shortage of social housing) it perpetuates disadvantage through the generations. Similar to MacDonald et al.'s (2020) conceptualisation of the 'constellation of difficulties', chaotic young parents were firefighting a multitude of difficulties that left them 'living in the moment' (Neale 2019) and with an uphill battle to break from disadvantaged circumstances. However, becoming a parent presented an opportunity to create their own family, do things differently, and achieve security and stability through their life with their children and through their parenthood identity.

6.6 Becoming a young parent

As discussed in Chapter Two, positive parenthood literature is useful in terms of challenging popular negative discourses around 'feckless fathers' and irresponsible stigmatised mothers. The evidence below shows some participants cited entry into parenthood as a reason to make positive changes to their lives. However, this was not the case for all participants and positive changes were often incremental rather than immediately transformative. The changes, both positive and negative, are not necessarily unique to young parents. This section considers how the participants felt their lives had changed after becoming parents, what they are doing differently and how their priorities changed. Their lived experiences of being young parents and the advantages and disadvantages of their new circumstances are explored.

Entering parenthood at any age entails a process of 'becoming' (Bergson, 1946 [1903] cited in Neale 2021); lifestyle and identity changes are inevitable. All of the participants were asked if they had experienced any changes since becoming a parent. The answers were varied and did not fall neatly into the stable or chaotic categories outlined in the previous chapter. The table below outlines the key emergent themes characterising the changes each participant experienced and described. These were isolation, future purpose, self-improvement, no changes and disrupted EET pathways. Although none of the participants cited this as their main change, it is worth noting here that intergenerational family relationships often underwent significant changes. In some cases relationships improved while others became more strained; this was often in relation to living arrangements and the intergenerational transmission of support and resources [Chapter Seven considers intergenerational support in terms of living arrangements].

	Isolation	Future purpose	Self improvement	No changes	Disrupted EET
Mothers	Amy	Amber		Kimberly	Tamara
	Megan	Sonia			
	Samirah	Simone			
	Stephanie	Michelle			
	Brooke				
	Kerry				
	Chelsea				
Total mothers	7	4	0	1	1
Fathers	Craig		Jayden	Andy	
			Danny	Jordan	
			George		
			Chris		
			Jock		
Total Fathers	1	0	5	2	0
Total:	8	4	5	3	1

Figure 14 Changes since becoming a parent

Gender differences were the most striking factor, and this reflects young mothers' and fathers' different roles and orientations to parenthood and how much they are invested in it. Researching both mothers and fathers allowed a unique comparison of how young parents 'do' gender. Figure 14 shows that for mothers, the major lifestyle change was an increase in loneliness and isolation, while others cited having a child as a 'reason to live'. This was often linked to difficult backgrounds and mental health issues. Fathers mostly experienced change in relation to self-improvement, this was a mix of desistance from risky or criminal behaviour (Danny and Jayden), becoming more 'mature' (George and Chris), and working harder at university (Jock). Those from chaotic backgrounds had a desire to do things differently. However, in terms of aspirations, opportunities were gendered and resource dependent. Multiple problems such as housing, relationship difficulties, domestic violence and low incomes, can prevent future plans or the pursuit of anything that does not involve dealing with immediate problems (this is also connected to ontological security which will be discussed in Chapter Seven). The next two sections consider the specific changes for mothers and fathers,

focusing on the three main categories of isolation, future purpose and self-improvement.

6.6.1 Mothers: Isolation and a new sense of purpose

A key issue for low-income young mothers is isolation. Increased isolation was highlighted as the most significant change for eight of the participants. Seven of these were mothers and there was a mix of those from both stable and chaotic family backgrounds. Isolation was generally produced by a combination of processes including drifting apart from friends, being restricted by caring responsibilities and limited resources.

Well since I've had Courtney they don't really seem to bother because they're more interested in going out and drinking and doing what they do and I'm more at home than going out (Brooke, age 21, W1).

Brooke and several other participants stated that they had lost contact with their friends. This may at first seem to be because those without children have a different lifestyle to those who do. However, most of these participants stated that their pre-parenthood friends also had children at a similarly young age:

Well they've got kids and... I don't know... we're not really in contact. We don't really have conversations anymore. But I don't really know why that is. It's not really anything to do with Troy [son]. Just we grew apart (Monique, age 24, W1).

Having children at similar times in their lives could ostensibly been seen as a route to strengthening friendships and solidarity but that was not the case here. The participants offer several explanations such as limited material resources, simply growing apart, and relationship statuses. In terms of financial resources, all of the young mothers were reliant on social security payments. Their finances were stretched and they had little spare money to

spend on entertainment and social activities for themselves. Furthermore, as will be discussed in the next chapter, disadvantaged young parents have little choice about where they live. Isolation can be geographical as well as relational. Some young parents found themselves living in a different area to their friends and family and with limited funds for transport. Amy temporarily lived in supported housing when her baby was born. She was housed in a different area to her family and struggled to meet the costs of transport,

I'd go to my mum's but it was nearly every day I was spending £12 to get there and back. It was a bit of a struggle. But it wasn't as bad with Lexi cos she was just on formula and baby food. So it was all right. It was just feeding me at the time. Trying to find something as cheap as possible that could fill me up (Amy, aged 21, W1).

Limited finances meant tough decisions. Amy prioritised visiting her mum but this left her with limited funds for food. On the other hand, Megan lived with her mum and did not need to spend money on travel in order to receive familial support. However, Megan had little spare money to go out and socialise, leaving her isolated at home,

I love being a mum, it's great. It's just, you know, you don't have a lot of money, so just the usual. But it's not that bad, at all. It's bad when you've got nowhere to go, and you've got to sit in the house with them. That's horrible. Very boring. Cause you've got no adults to talk to. Not adults, like people my age. Just talking to a baby all day (Megan, age 17, W1).

With fragmented friendships and limited funds for socialising, there is a need for parents' groups and support services. There is a palpable sense here that in being a parent and a young person that they are missing out on doing what young people do,

I stopped going out clubbing, to bars. Erm don't have drink ups that often, don't really drink cos I've got to spend it on other things like

nappies and other essentials. I do miss going out with my friends, having a few drinks now and again (Monique, age 24, W1).

For mothers experiencing isolation, there was a loss of a previous lifestyle. However, this loss could also be positioned as a positive choice that affirmed their 'good' mother identity.

Gaining a sense of future purpose was considered to be the main change engendered by becoming a parent for four of the mothers interviewed. These four women were amongst the most disadvantaged young parents of the sample and in some instances their children became a reason to live:

I feel more positive, I feel like I have more erm... like I have... reason to go ahead. Like she's my important thing. I want to forget everything. I want to forget. It's for me to forget and go ahead (Sonia, age 22, W1).

Sonia stated multiple times throughout her interview that she wanted to 'forget' her difficult past. As discussed in Chapter Four, Sonia is an asylum seeker who grew up with an abusive father and was then trafficked into the UK by her partner who forced her to work as a prostitute. Fully embracing her mother identity and focusing on her child was a way to move on from her past experiences. Becoming a mother represented a 'turning point' (Neale 2021), driving an opportunity and desire for change. Like Sonia, the other three mothers who described having a new sense of purpose all had poor relationships with their families and had all experienced significant adversity (as shown in Chapter Five).

Becoming a mother was an opportunity to move on. These mothers set aside their difficult pasts and sacrificed their social lives in order to prioritise their children, constructing a 'good' mother narrative based on their pathway out of adversity.

6.6.2 Fathers: slow pathways to self-improvement

Similarly to the mothers, some fathers moved away from a lifestyle that could be considered incompatible with parenthood. Many of the young men had troubled backgrounds and had engaged in risky and sometimes criminal behaviour before their children were born. Being an involved dad was a reason to curtail that behaviour:

I haven't gone out grafting. I ain't done nothing for the police to arrest me. Kids change your life. They do. Innit. Cos if you think, yeah, you go out, you get arrested, you get put in prison, you don't see your son whenever you want (Danny, age 21, W1).

However, as argued elsewhere (Ladlow and Neale, 2016), mechanisms for change are often an accumulation of key moments, interactions and practices that may or may not lead to concrete changes. These pathways are not always straightforward and may entail a degree of 'snakes and ladders' (MacDonald et al., 2001). Jayden made a similar point to Danny about ceasing risky and criminal behaviour. However for Jayden, it was not a straightforward or instant change,

Jayden: I was getting pissed up every weekend and that. And like not coming home for days and stuff. Like getting locked up and stuff like that. Never been to jail or anything like that but like, you know, getting put in local police station for like, for the night and stuff like that for fighting. I just used to do that every weekend really.

Linzi: And did that just totally stop?

Jayden: No not totally no. I still did it when she were first born and stuff like that. Well not when she were first born. I, we didn't go out for like eight week, you know, like first two months when she were born and stuff like that. And then I thought, 'oh I'll go out for a couple'. Then I used to get in, still get into trouble and stuff like that. It's only like the

last like year and a half where I've started like sorting myself out, you know what I mean? So that, I were a bit of a dickhead until she were like, until like one and a half year old, know what I mean.

Danny and Jayden both cited fatherhood as a reason to desist from risky and criminal behaviour. However, there was some slippage and becoming a father did not trigger an instant lifestyle change, rather, it was incremental over time. Helyar-Cardwell (2012) argues that some youths simply 'grow out' of risky behaviour as they get older and this could also be the case for these participants. Participants discussed changes since parenthood that were largely lifestyle related changes linked to responsibilities. These findings resonate with those of Reeves (2006) and Tuffin and colleagues (2010) who found that fathers used the notion of 'emerging adult responsibility' to describe changes in their lives. Neale and Patrick (2016) also argue that the adjustment to fatherhood often entails a sense of loss as they seek to curtail risky behaviour and calm their social lives. The extent of changes depended on their circumstances and lifestyles prior to entry. It was also highly gendered. Some fathers took a little longer than the mothers to enact lifestyle changes and shrug off risky behaviour in favour of acceptable parent identities. This was sometimes a source of conflict with the mothers, and for Craig and Stephanie it became a factor in their separation. They temporarily separated shortly after their son was born as Stephanie felt he was not committed to the relationship and did not prepare adequately for the arrival of their child:

I just felt like he needed to cut down cos there was a baby that was due. Cos he was out the majority of the time. Smoking with his friend and I felt like I was on my own with the pregnancy. And when I tried getting in contact with him I couldn't. So that was hard for me. I was at the end of the pregnancy and sometimes I felt like he wasn't there (Stephanie, age 22, W1).

However, Craig explained that he felt apprehensive about becoming a father and was seeking support from his friend,

It was scary. Very scary. Cos my mate was, he got his missus pregnant as well at roughly the same time it was sort of like someone I could relate to with how I was feeling so that's why I was spending so much time with him (Craig, age 23, W1).

Like Craig, several fathers seemed to take a little longer to fall into a fatherhood identity. For example, Danny struggled to accept he was a father until he took a DNA test,

I was hardly there [during the pregnancy]. When he was born I was hardly there either. Until I got a DNA test (Danny, age 21, W1).

Most of the fathers in this study described a pathway to self-improvement triggered by fatherhood. However, this was often a slow road. Fathers seemingly took longer than mothers to adopt the 'good' parent identity that they were striving towards. In comparing mothers and fathers, these narratives demonstrate how parenting roles are gendered, especially for young parents who are also often transitioning to adulthood at the same time. Fathers had greater choice and were able to take their time, whereas, mothers had to change their lifestyles and put their child first as soon as they became pregnant. Healthcare professionals see the health of the unborn child as paramount and this is policed by wider society. Failure to act accordingly during pregnancy risks spoiling a 'good' parent identity, ostracisation from family and kinship networks and the possibility of having their child removed from their care. These risks/consequences are much more pronounced for mothers who have physical responsibility for their pregnancy as well as the weight of historic constructs of mothers as the primary carers. Mothers are therefore bound by the rigidity of 'good' motherhood, which in turn accommodates greater flexibility for young men seeking to ascribe to notions of 'good' fatherhood.

6.6.3 Transitions to parenthood: summary

Transitions to early parenthood are complex, dynamic and rarely positive or negative. For the most disadvantaged participants, those who fell into the chaotic categories, changes and transitions were incremental. The positive change theory suggests young parents emerge from a chrysalis as reformed characters with aspirations linked to their new parenthood identity. However, the findings here suggest that becoming a young parent can lead to some undesirable changes and is not instantly transformative. As Neale (2021) argues, a 'trigger point' (such as becoming a parent) can only be understood as a transformative event retrospectively. Drawing on Laub and Simpson (1993), Neale (2021 p76) argues that, 'if trigger points have any causal power, what is likely to make a difference is their cumulative impact, how they are situated relative to each other through an unfolding process'. This is an important framing in taking forward the positive parenthood literature. Becoming a young parent entails nuanced changes that unfold over time and in relation to other key events, relationships and resources. The data shows that gender differences were significant, as well as how young parents carved out their parenting practices and identities relationally and with the resources they were tooled with. Understanding the varied and gendered pathways into parenthood can help tailor support needs. It is well established that while mothers get a range of support there is less available for fathers who often feel left out/written off as hard to reach (Davies, 2016).

The next section will consider concepts of 'good' mothers and fathers and how the participants of this study constructed 'good' parent identities.

6.7 Doing Things Differently? Becoming a 'Good' Parent

As discussed in the previous chapter, most of the young parents had disadvantaged backgrounds, with many experiencing significant adversity. The scars of their childhood bore heavily on their parenting identities and

practices, often serving as a signal to do things differently. There was often conflict between the young parents and their families in that their identities are simultaneously embedded within existing kinship ties whilst they are also carving out their independent individual identity. The participants expressed distinctive narratives about their parental identity that were rooted in the ways they were similar or different to their own parents.

For some, biological family ties, influenced by tenuous claims to paternity were central in terms of forging a fatherhood identity. Danny was unable to bond with his son until he had carried out a DNA test to prove he was the biological father. George began to suspect he was not the biological father of his son and after a DNA test confirmed this, he ceased contact. This left George with a conflicting fatherhood identity and a sense of loss, however, he felt it would not have been be right to continue a fathering relationship. In contrast, Craig acted as a father to a child that was not biologically his. For both George and Craig, the romantic relationships they had with the mothers of the children were influential in determining a non-biological (or social) fathering relationship.

Differing views around what constitutes 'good' fathering identities (and 'bad' as a corollary), are forged in context of intergenerational patterns of fathering and a context in which deficit models of young fathers construct them as feckless and inadequate. This is internalised by some young men, especially when their own family histories have been chaotic, fractured and violent. Jordan had spent most of his life in care and wanted to be a father but he struggled to enact his idealised fathering identity and practices due to his constrained circumstances and limited resources.

And that's one thing I've always wanted to be. A dad. So I can teach and bring up the kid that I never got to be. The way my mum didn't bring me up... That's why I turned the way I did (Jordan, age 21, W1).

Jordan was a drug user and involved in gang related crime and he acknowledged the role of his difficult childhood in shaping his current circumstances. Jordan's son was taken into care shortly after he was born and Jordan visited him in a contact centre before he was adopted. Jordan asserted his fatherhood identity and connection with his son purely on biological grounds, as he was unable to fulfil his idealised perception of 'good' fatherhood:

I took a couple of photos [at the contact centre] and he's got his fingers stuck up. He's got his fingers near his mouth like he's smoking. He's going to be another me. And I've told the social workers this, by the time he's 16 he's going to be in jail. Like father, like son (Jordan, age 21, W1).

One way in which identities are carved is in relation to kinship relationships, with some traits being embraced and others disowned. As Lawler (2014) argues, identity is created through doing family relationships and understanding one's place within the family. Those participants from chaotic backgrounds were keen to emphasise how their parenting identity was different to their own parents, although as Jordan's observations suggest, following in the same footsteps can hold the weight of inevitability. Rich (1977) discusses this in relation to 'matrophobia' whereby young women express wanting to avoid being like their own mothers, based on their own experiences of being mothered. Allen and Osgood (2009) investigated this in relation to young women seeking an upward trajectory towards a middle class lifestyle and a rejection of the working class lifestyle that their mothers had. This also entailed a rejection of young parenthood. For the participants in this study, they followed in their parents' footsteps of entering parenthood at a young age. However, they emphasised how they used their own negative experiences of being parented by someone young to forge new parenting practices and pathways:

My mum didn't have any support, none, and her mum died. My mum had no support. So she was growing at the same time. She was dead

young. So she was a bit all over the place. Like, I'd like to be a lot different. She's a lot, lot different now to how she was then. Like, she went through a phase-, I'm not saying this was bad, because she didn't know anything, do you know what I mean? But she went through a phase of just, like, going out with her friends and stuff. I'd like to not do that so much, yeah (Megan, age 17, W1).

Megan felt as though she and her mother 'grew up together' and emphasised the prioritisation of 'being there' for her daughter over going out with friends. Yet, she also highlighted the values instilled by her mother and her intention to replicate their own close and open relationship with her daughter.

How the participants were parented was significant in the development of their parenting identities. For young fathers, this often centred on their own fathers being absent from their lives,

I was a handful wasn't I? Didn't have my dad around. Thought I could get away with everything. Tried everything. But kind of just fucked me up in life, it did.... I know that I'm never going to leave his side. Never. But my dad did. He walked out on me as soon as I was born (Danny, age 21, W1).

Some of the fathers expressed quite raw emotions in relation to the way they were fathered. However, this was often a springboard to discuss the positive aspects of their own fathering and to show how they were doing things differently,

Well I don't want her to go through the same things that I've had to go through. Definitely. It makes me more protective over her. Makes me... a better person towards her I guess because like I've seen how my dad's been with me and he were never there so I guess it makes me just want to be a better dad towards her and be a stronger... erm ... teach her things that I never got taught and erm like I said, just look after her (laughs) do things that dads are supposed to do. Go on bike

rides with her and play games with her and teach her how to blooming do everything she can. Teach her how to fish! Teach her how to play football or whatever she wants to do. I'm not going to push her into things. No, I don't want to push her. I'm just going to go with the flow I guess. I go with the flow (Andy, age 22, W1).

Rejecting the way they were parented by seeking to do better can be considered a form of 'intergenerational repair' (Tuffin et al., 2010), and is connected to the development of a 'good' parental identity. There are similarities and differences in what constitutes 'good' parenthood for mothers and fathers; this will be interrogated further in the next sections.

6.7.1 Being a 'good' mother

Hays (1996) developed the concept of 'intensive mothering' to theorise how mothers centre their lives on their children, personal sacrifice and being a highly involved parent. Hays (1996) argued that the concept of 'good' mothering transgresses class boundaries. However, it is important to consider the nuances of how motherhood is constituted intersectionally and in different contexts. 'Motherhood' is a socially constructed institution with normative 'good' mothering premised empirically on being white, married and middle class (Phoenix et al., 1991; Smart, 1996; Gillies, 2006). Those who do not conform to these social standards risk being castigated as 'bad' mothers. Young mothers are therefore often seen as problematic because they have entered motherhood at the 'wrong' age (Phoenix et al., 1991; Mitchell and Green, 2002). Previous research has highlighted the ways young mothers challenge their location on the margins on good motherhood. For example, Skeggs (1997) devised the notion of the 'caring self', whereby young mothers attained respectability through developing a socially respectable nurturing and caring identity. 'Good' mothers are understood as those who put their children first and privilege caring practices and identities (Vincent and Thomson, 2013; Wenham, 2016).

There are comparable findings in this thesis, with the caring role being central to young mothers' narratives of 'good' mothering. The 'good' mother is often constructed around personal sacrifices and the overarching centrality of putting their child and motherhood identity ahead of anything else,

Being a good mom means to leave your things on one side and concentrate on her (Sonia, age 22, W1).

A good mother, you take care of your child, what else? You give your time and you do what she wants. If I want to go out any time I can't I have to take care of her (Simone, age 22, W1).

Here Simone demonstrates personal sacrifice as she puts taking care of her child ahead of her own wants and needs. As discussed earlier in the chapter, becoming a parent often involves a change of lifestyle. Giving up previous lifestyles and moving away from risky behaviour is inextricably linked with cultivating a 'good' parent identity. The mothers in this study described becoming more isolated as they gave up their previous lifestyles, prioritising their children ahead of socialising. Motherhood is often framed around 'sacrifice', and like the young fathers, 'providing' was also considered important,

It's making sacrifices and making sure you are working for your own kids and stuff like that (Tamara W1).

Just being there for your child. Just nurturing them. As long as you support them and provide for them, what more can there be? (Samirah, age 23, W1)

Young working class mothers experience particular pressures to also be financial providers, this is especially the case for lone mothers and those without family financial support. Kidger (2004) argues that full-time mothering is discounted as a valid choice for young women. However, employment opportunities can be constrained by resources such as time and skills,

especially when children are very young. None of the mothers were employed during the course of the research. Despite expressing a desire to work, they were the primary carers of very young children and this responsibility was prioritised. The young mothers appeared secure in knowing what a 'good' mother looked like. They displayed their 'good' mothering as personal sacrifice and a prioritisation to 'be there' for their children above anything else in life. Motherhood was absolutely intrinsic to their identities,

I couldn't not be a good mum. I couldn't be without him. I really would be terrible without him. I'd damage myself (Kerry, age 19, W1).

The concept of 'good' mothering being associated with prioritising care (Skeggs, 1997; Lareau, 2002; Hays, 1996; Wenham, 2016) plays into the traditional understandings of women as 'natural' carers with primary responsibility for the caregiving role. With mothers taking centre-stage with parenting, fathers are located on the margins. Being a 'good' mother is fairly narrowly defined (Vincent, C. et al., 2010) and the mothers in this study were easily able to explain what a 'good' mother is and how they embody that.

6.7.2 Being a 'good' father

'Good' fatherhood can be attained through a variety of practices, identities and approaches. Fatherhood literature often contrasts the 'traditional' good father as the breadwinner with contemporary diverse identities encompassing more caring and involved roles (Dermott, 2003; Featherstone, 2009). Beggs Weber (2020) found that teen fathers invoked the expectation that fathers are frequently absent in order to 'lower the bar' of expectation and in turn elevate their own performance by comparison. However, rather than the bar being lower, 'good' fatherhood is perhaps a different obstacle course to navigate.

While some fathers may have a lack of choice in whether the pregnancy is terminated (see Chapter Four), they may have a choice regarding their involvement in their child's life. Fatherhood is seemingly less restrictive than

motherhood, with fathers having greater opportunities to opt in or out of the parts they want. This was evident in the FYF study with some fathers continuing their education and even studying abroad while the mothers cared for the children (Neale and Davies, 2016). In this study, mothers often had to pause their EET pathways and their social lives (this is discussed further in Chapter Eight). Mothers were the primary carers for their children, whereas, the young fathers were less restricted by their parenting responsibilities. Due to this, the fathers provided conflicting accounts of 'good' fatherhood identity roles. Jock and Jayden were both in work but their good father identity was compromised, as they were unable to financially provide enough for their children. Similar to the accounts of the mothers, Jock privileged 'being there' for his child but also wrestled with the responsibility of financially providing,

The thing is being there for them, whatever, you know? Putting them first no matter what. But you always have those old-fashioned views that the dad's the breadwinner. He's going to go out and provide for the family, and all this. I kind of feel like that now, anyway. I feel like, well, I was the one at work and I still am the one at work. I should be able to provide, you know, like, a house, food, comfort, should be able to do that, but I'm still not able to do that at the moment (Jock, age 25, W1).

Even with a graduate job, Jock was not earning enough money to be able to financially support his child in the way he would like to. Young people earn less than older employees (ONS, 2019a) and this is perhaps connected with the trend to delay parenthood until adequate financial resources are acquired. For the three fathers who were in stable employment, they were not able to provide to the extent that they wanted to. Similar to the findings from the Following Young Fathers study (Neale and Davies, 2016, Tarrant 2016, Tarrant and Neale 2017) while the breadwinner role was a concern for fathers, 'being there' was considered the most important aspect of 'good' fathering. In this sense, mothers and fathers had the same parental priorities, putting their children first and spending time together.

Providing for her as a father. ... I did try go get a job but I just didn't end up taking it. Looking out for her, like not being so over protective that she can't do owt but setting her boundaries. Erm... being there for her when she's miserable. Like just being there for her like a good dad. Listening to her. Tell her that she can come and talk to me whenever she wants. Let her know that I'm there for her. Cuddle her, let her know that she's loved (Andy, age 22, W1).

Young fathers have a certain degree of freedom and agency to develop a 'good father' identity which values an individual relationship with their child, although it may be difficult for them to navigate through the complex, fluid and contradictory concept of the 'good father'. Their age, and for many, social and economic disadvantage, may impose constraints and barriers to their desired fatherhood identity. While Craig initially said he thought financially providing for his children and being able to buy them 'expensive things' was what made a good parent, his partner Stephanie interjected,

Whereas to me it's just giving them the main priority. Things like love. Having a routine. Giving them food and water. That's to me, that's a good enough parent. And if you want to go the extra mile fair enough. But like us for the situation that we are in, personally I think that's enough. Cos that's all you can give cos at least you're there for that child or children. You know, they know that you're there. They know that you care. And that's to me all that matters (Stephanie, age 22, W1).

Both mothers and fathers privileged 'being there' as a 'good enough' parental identity that they were able to fulfil. Fathers who do not have the capacity to fulfil a breadwinner role may strongly value engaged fatherhood in constructing their parental identity (Tyrer et al., 2005; Neale and Davies, 2016). This was evident in the accounts of young fathers like Craig and Andy; however, their narratives were peppered with the expectations of breadwinning,

Linzi: Do you think there's differences between what it means to be a good mum and a good dad? Like do you think mums and dads have different roles?

Andy: People say that they do but to me, no. I'm just the same as Brooke. The mothers and the fathers should have common goals, I guess I'd put it as. Raise them the same because if one of them has got a different role. because... yeah... now I say it out loud... because people have like, say that girls should cook and clean and all that. All sexist stuff. But no.

Brooke: It should work both ways to be honest

Andy: It should work both ways shouldn't it? (Andy, age 22, W1 and Brooke, age 21, W1).

Andy and Brooke described a reciprocal partnership and demonstrated a break from gender specific tasks. However, while Brooke and Andy shared the same ideals around doing their own family, they also situated themselves within the context of 'traditional' gender roles and models of the family. Brooke elaborated upon this, pointing to the greater flexibility fathers have over mothers. She considered 'good' dads to be rare, with involved fatherhood being framed more as a choice rather than an obligation,

I'd say your dad is just as good as your mum and I know you may get some dads that are part time and not really willing to look after and support your child but there is some good dads out there that do look after them and are willing to do anything for them (Brooke, age 21, W1).

Brooke's comment demonstrates the fluidity of fatherhood and the limited expectations of fathers to take equal responsibility for care labour. It is easier for fathers to gain status as a 'good' father by choosing to do some of the care work that mothers are expected to do. In navigating fatherhood roles, young

fathers are faced with expectations around the 'triple burden of earning, learning and caring' (Neale and Davies, 2016). The same can be said for mothers; however, the order of burden priority is different. Mothers unambiguously have to privilege caring.

6.8 Conclusion

The previous chapter explored the participants' diverse backgrounds, their entry into parenthood and the choices available to them. Following their parenting pathways chronologically, this chapter began by exploring the changes young parents experienced after entering parenthood. Secondly, the concept of 'good' mothering and fathering was discussed. The findings in this chapter fill a gap in this knowledge, showing how young parents conceptualise good mother/father identities and how they construct their own good parent identity within those ideals.

The empirical evidence has been analysed drawing on theories of youth transitions and life course timings. This chapter adds a new contribution to the field of youth studies by further interrogating the concept of transitions and what it means to be 'young' parent. Ultimately the reasons for entering parenthood at a young age are multifaceted but there is a clear correlation between deprivation and early parenthood both in terms of the likelihood of becoming pregnant and the decision not to terminate. This is evident in statistical data (Sigle-Rushton, 2008; Hadley, 2018) and is supported by previous qualitative research (Neale and Davies, 2016). The findings here provide new insights into intergenerational reproduction of disadvantage and life course timings of entering parenthood. Exploring the backgrounds of disadvantaged young parents in Chapter Five, showed complex and diverse experiences in their family relationships and access to resources. Resources, including family bonds and housing pathways, shape entry into parenthood and their opportunities going forward as parents. Chaotic backgrounds with limited emotional, social and economic resources place young parents in a precarious situation, narrowing their opportunities and sources of support.

However, the resources acquired through early responsibility and adverse circumstances helped to prepare disadvantaged youths for parenthood. Their experiences also acted as a marker of respectability against the stigma of young parenthood as they were able to justify their capabilities of parenthood through previous experiences and existing independence. The chapter shows the diversity amongst disadvantaged youths in how they are resourced and the 'choices' they make. Family and housing resources shape pathways into parenthood. The choices and agency around planning or continuing with pregnancies is an empowering decision, especially for those from the most chaotic backgrounds. The following chapters will explore how their backgrounds, resources and choices impact upon them and their housing pathways, after they became parents. Who maintains or attains stability? What influences this? How do things pan out for these disadvantaged young people? What resources do they have that they take with them into parenthood? How do those resources go onto shape their lives, lived experiences, opportunities, relationships? For those who have few resources, can housing support services help to bridge that gap?

Chapter 7: Walking a tightrope? Housing pathways and the ontological security of home

'Home is really important because where you're living is part of what makes you who you are. Because if you don't have a secure home or anything then you're not going to go anywhere in life. 'Cos you're busy trying to live day-to-day' (Michelle, age 25, W1).

7.1 Introduction

This chapter examines the participants' housing pathways following their entry into parenthood. The chapter draws upon the accounts of both young parent and housing support worker participants. Chapter Four showed that chaotic lives and multiple house moves were characteristic of many of these young people's lives. Chapter Six explored the participants' pathways into parenthood and their principles and practices around motherhood and fatherhood. This chapter aims to ascertain how young parents construct and ascribe meaning to 'home'. House and home are interrelated; housing pathways, living arrangements and tenancies are considered in relation to choices and how housing quality can constrain or enable constructs of home. The concept of ontological security is operationalised to analyse participants' experiences of home, based on the themes of quality, safety and homeliness (as set out in Chapter One). Secondly, young parents' different relational living arrangements are explored. Next, the roles of housing support services are discussed. The chapter ends by discussing the dynamic processes involved in housing pathways and constructs of home, and considers the future opportunities for young parents. This chapter seeks to explore; what are the different housing pathways for young parents? What sort of housing support do they receive? What are the choices available to young parents? What kinds of housing meet the conditions for ontological security? How do young parents experience and construct 'home' in different housing situations?

7.2 Support services

The main housing support services discussed in this chapter are 'floating support' and temporary housing in the form of 'trainer flats'. Floating support services can include managing transitions to new accommodation/tenancies, support to become established in a new home and community, and support to access and sustain employment, education and training. For the participants in this study, floating support was provided by the charity "Agora", who later merged with 'Mosaic'. At the time of the research, 'Agora' provided floating support for up to two years; this has since reduced to one year. Temporary housing, or 'trainer flats', are usually allocated on a six-month Assured Shorthold Tenancy, however, in practice this usually lasts longer due to the limited availability of social housing. The properties are owned and managed by the housing support service (in this research 'Mosaic' and 'Lodge'). Whilst living in a 'trainer flat', clients receive support to develop independent living skills and to identify suitable longer-term accommodation. Young people can self-refer to these organisations or they may be referred by other agencies such as Social Services, Housing Options, Health Visitors or Youth Offending Teams. Floating support was found to be the most valuable form of housing support in an evaluation of housing support for young mothers (Quilgars et al., 2011b)

7.3 Young parents' housing pathways

Turning now to the empirical evidence generated by this study, this section begins by providing an overview of the young parents' housing pathways. It presents the analytical categories that the participants fall into, which then forms an analytical lens for the rest of the chapter's empirical discussion. The analytical quadrants build on Figure Five in Chapter Five, following the participants' biographical accounts of stable or chaotic backgrounds through to their situation at the time of the research. For some participants, turbulent chaotic lives continued while others found the stability that they craved. Becoming a parent necessitated new housing requirements. As discussed in

the Chapter Five, all of the participants had unstable, unsuitable or undesirable housing. Even those in the 'Stable Housing/Stable Family' (SS) category were not wholly satisfied with their housing situation. They all required some form of housing support and this came in the shape of either informal familial support or formal support services.

The qualitative longitudinal research gives a unique insight into the housing and family pathways of the participants during a busy transitional phase in their lives. Building on the life histories of the participants discussed in Chapter Five, the analysis here shows that at the time of the research many of the participants (nine) managed to attain a level of stability and move away from their chaotic housing and family backgrounds. All participants who were classified as stable (five) remained as such, while eight participants remained in chaotic housing and family situations. Participants were categorised based on the extent to which home provided them with ontological security, alongside how they rated their family relationships and general satisfaction with their housing situation.

The figures below show the housing journeys of young parents over time and where this placed them in relation to stable and chaotic categories. Figure 15 is an update of the quadrant set out in Chapter Five. It illustrates continuity and change for participants in relation to their housing and family backgrounds and their present situation.

Figure 16 shows an overview of participants' housing pathways and is colour coded (see figure 17) to show how these journeys are categorised in relation to continuity or change in stable and chaotic housing and family situations. In the stable family/stable housing category, the participants grouped at the bottom (Stephanie, Craig, Amber and Simone) continued to have difficult and chaotic relationships with their parents and wider family, however, they gained stability in the new family they created. In the stable family/chaotic housing category, Andy and George separated from their partners and ended up living back with their mothers.

<p>STABLE FAMILY STABLE HOUSING (SS)</p> <p>Jock</p> <p>Monique</p> <p>Jayden</p> <p>Chelsea</p> <p>Amy</p> <p>Megan (Previously SC)</p> <p>Chris (Previously CC)</p> <p>Samirah (Previously CC)</p> <p>Brooke (Previously CC)</p> <p>Kerry (Previously CS)</p> <p>*Stephanie (Previously CC)</p> <p>*Craig (Previously CS)</p> <p>*Amber (Previously CC)</p> <p>*Simone (Previously CC)</p>	<p>CHAOTIC FAMILY CHAOTIC HOUSING (CC)</p> <p>Jordan</p> <p>Kimberly</p> <p>Michelle</p> <p>Sonia</p> <p>Tamara</p>
<p>STABLE FAMILY CHAOTIC HOUSING (SC)</p> <p>Danny</p> <p>**Andy (Previously CC)</p> <p>**George (Previously CC)</p>	<p>CHAOTIC FAMILY STABLE HOUSING (CS)</p>

Figure 15: Quadrant two

Name	Quadrant 1	Pre-birth	Pregnancy	Post-birth	Beyond	Quadrant 2	Housing support?
Chelsea	SS	Mother	Mother	Father	Father	SS	Yes
Jayden	SS	Mother	Mother	Mother	Mother	SS	No
Jock	SS	Mother	Mother	Mother	Mother	SS	No
Monique	SS	Own flat (parents)	Own flat	Own SRS tenancy	Own SRS tenancy	SS	Yes
Amber	CC	Own SRS tenancy	Own SRS tenancy	Own SRS tenancy	Own SRS tenancy	SS	Yes
Chris	CC					SS	Yes
Brooke	CC	Andy's mother	Andy's mother	Brooke's mother	Own SRS tenancy	SS	No
Kerry	CS	George's mother	George's mother	George's mother	Own SRS tenancy then separated.	SS	Yes
Megan	SC	Mother	Mother	Mother	Mother	SS	No
Samirah	CC	Mother	Mother	Mother	Supported housing/ Own SRS tenancy	SS	Yes
Stephanie	CC	Craig's Mother	Stephanie's mother	Stephanie's mother	Own SRS tenancy	SS	Yes
Craig	CS				Period of separation, lived with his mother then back to Stephanie's	SS	No
Simone	CC	Own SRS tenancy	Own SRS tenancy	Own SRS tenancy	Own SRS tenancy	SS	Yes
Danny	SC	Mother	Partner's council house	Partner's council house	Separated. With mother then own SRS tenancy	SC	
Jordan	CC	Shared SRS	Shared SRS	Shared SRS	Shared SRS	CC	

Michelle	CC	PRS	PRS	PRS	PRS	CC	
Kimberly	CC	Between different family members	Father	Mother, foster placement, own SRS tenancy	Own SRS tenancy	CC	
Sonia	CC	G4S tenancy	G4S tenancy	G4S tenancy	G4S tenancy	CC	
Tamara	CC	Own PRS tenancy	'Lodge'	'Lodge'	Own SRS tenancy	CC	
Andy	CC	Andy's mother	Andy's mother	Brooke's mother	Andy's Mother	SC	
George	CC	George's mother	George's mother	George's mother	Sofa surfing with friends/Mother	SC	

Figure 16: housing pathways

Remains stable	5
Chaotic to stable	9
Remains chaotic	6
Chaotic to somewhat stable	2

Figure 17: housing pathways colour coded key

Analysis shows that stable beginnings make the transition to independence and parenthood smoother. All participants who had a stable beginning remained stable following their entry into early parenthood. Conversely, many participants managed to move from chaotic to stable, with parenthood providing opportunities to attain a more stable life, often through a housing pathway that led to an independent tenancy in the SRS. While some participants had a chaotic family background, in creating their own family they could achieve a level of stability. As discussed in chapter six, parenthood providing an impetus to change is a common finding in young parenthood research. However, the findings here, and elsewhere (Hadley, 2014; Tarrant,

A and Neale, 2017), also show that a significant amount of support is also needed.

The following sections explore the different housing pathways of the participants, considering how they construct home in the process. Firstly, living with parents is discussed, then living independently and finally living in temporary supported housing. Housing is explored in relation to whether the living arrangements meet the conditions for ontological security and can be classified as chaotic or stable. This is considered in terms of how far housing pathways affect changes and continuities in relation to their stable or chaotic backgrounds outlined in chapter 4. Some participants fall into more than one housing pathway category, for example, participants who are discussed in relation to living with their own parents and then again when they receive housing support to gain an independent tenancy. The longitudinal research affords an insight into the changes and continuities of household formations and constructs of home. Some participants moved house during the course of the research and were able to reflect on their parenting practices and identities in different housing arrangements. The next section begins by examining those who live with their parents in relative comfort and stability. This is then compared to those who are unhappy living with their parents and seek independent accommodation.

7.4 Living with parents

Eleven participants lived with their parents or their partner's parents when their children were first born. Four of these were living with their partner's parents. Seven out of eleven participants later moved into their own accommodation by the time of the first interview. The next subsection discusses participants who were generally satisfied living with their parents; their homes largely met the conditions for ontological security and they remained in the stable analytical category, living with their parents throughout. The following subsection explores those who were unsatisfied living with their parents, using Andy and Brooke as a case study. For these participants, this

living arrangement failed to meet the conditions of ontological security and placed them in the chaotic analytical category. The third subsection follows participants as they move into their own accommodation and reflect on their previous experiences of living with their parents.

7.4.1 Living with parents: stability and continuity

Four of the twenty-one participants began their lives as parents with their families of origin, and maintained this during the course of the study. All fell into the 'stable family/stable housing' (SS) category and remained in this category throughout the research. However, they all had found pros and cons with the arrangement and all had considered finding alternative housing. They all had family homes that largely met the conditions of ontological security and they described being happy and secure there. However, some aspects such as privacy and space were somewhat constrained and all four participants wanted to move into their own home in the near future, citing reasons associated with these concepts.

For those living with their parents, housing quality was not an issue and any problems that were to arise would not be their responsibility. Housing quality for this group was taken for granted and did not particularly feature in the in their interviews. In turn, the ontological security attained through good quality housing could be assumed. Positive family relationships are an important factor in determining the timing young people leave home (Holdsworth and Morgan, 2005). Blaauboer and Mulder (2009) found that parental resources and family atmosphere led to decreased risk of leaving home at a young age. Greater family resources can more comfortably accommodate young parents, although there were still desires for future independence once personal resources were attained. For Jayden, family and home were highly conflated,

Say I got a house, that would just be a house. This is my home. Home is where you feel loved. If I got a house now it would be just me. I wouldn't even have Courtney that much. Just Fridays and Saturdays so

I'd be at home by myself. That's not a home. That's just somewhere where you live. Or you can come home, come to my mums, it's a bit carnage, like you can't move but that is a home. Like this is clean. Usually there's toys everywhere. If Courtney was here everything would be out. But a messy... you don't get a messy house do you? It's a messy home. That's how I see it (Jayden, age 23, W1).

As the quote from Jayden demonstrates, having a positive relationship with the family members in his household strengthened his sense of homeliness and ontological security. For the four participants in this SS category, living with their parents also provided consistency and support. It facilitated a state of semi-independence whereby they could focus on parenting without having to worry about other responsibilities such as paying bills and maintaining their own tenancy. This allowed the young parents to continue with their life course plans, with early parenthood causing minimal disruption. This is particularly the case for fathers who are generally not the primary carer (Neale and Davies, 2016). Jock was able to finish his university degree and get a professional job. Similarly, Megan was happy to live with her mother. Here, she weighed up their differences in opinion with the support she received,

The other day I thought to myself, 'Oh, I've gotta get out of here,' cause my mum's a bit odd sometimes, like, cause we're both-, cause I'm getting older and now we've both got different points of view, we've got different styles of how we live and how we do things. But I don't want to move out just yet. I want to stay in college and live here, because my mum gives loads of support (Megan, age 17, W1).

The participants in the SS category weighed these pros of living at home against the cons of limited space and privacy. Despite the lack of space and privacy, Jayden's sense of homeliness and positive relationships with his family mitigate against this,

Well I've still got to share with my brother now. And our Courtney, she sleeps in there. But we get through it. If you don't know owt different it

doesn't matter does it. Most people when they've got their own room, they live in their room but we don't. I just sleep in there. We all sit in the living room. (Jayden, age 23, W1).

Here, the lack of personal space for Jayden helped to forge greater bonds with his family as they all gathered together in the living room. However, while family members often supported the participants in their parenting journey, parenting practices and identities were often compromised by the lack of space and privacy,

I love living at home but it's not ideal. Not ideal. I want my own space and to be with my son, and I don't want him to go into school saying he's going to see his dad at his grandma's, because his dad lives with his grandma. It's not good (Jock, age 25, W1).

Jock had stability in the family home and positive relationships with his family. However, when his son came to stay, Jock rarely had space for them to spend time alone together. When asked to draw his home in the present compared to his home in the future, Jock created an image showing his son surrounded by his family members and himself outside of that. In the future, Jock imagined himself and his son in a separate household to his family.

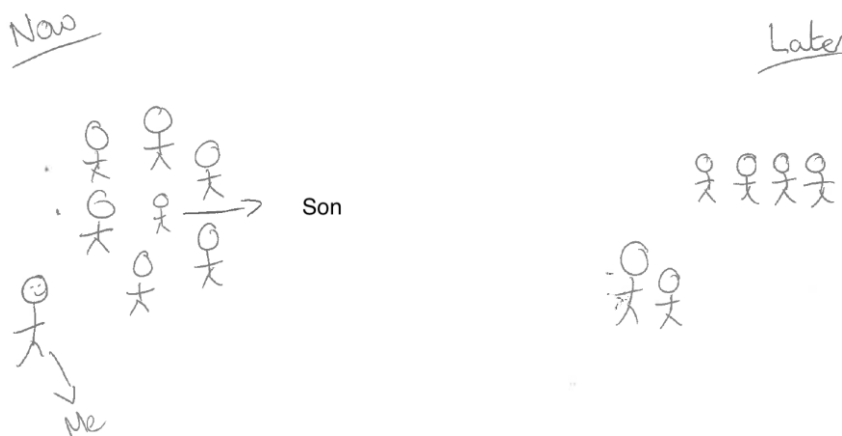


Figure 18 Jock's present and future home

Similarly, Chelsea also had to compromise, as she was not allowed to have friends visit at her father's house. However, she was grateful to him for his support in caring for her daughter,

It's good that he looks after her and stuff so it's good to have him there for that and he's really good with her. But other than that... It's a case of like not being able to bring people back and things like that. I don't mean in the form of guys or anything, I just mean having mates round (Chelsea, age 19, W1).

Relationships among family members living in intergenerational households can shape capacity to exert control over day-to-day life, and it is generally the tenancy holder that wields that power (Easthope et al., 2015). A floating housing support worker was supporting Chelsea to obtain her own tenancy, however, she was worried about living independently.

All four of these participants had considered alternatives but for varied reasons there were constraints on them pursuing this. Very young parents, like Megan, are limited in the types of support they can receive. They cannot access 'adult' services until they are 18 years old. Although she is supported by her mother, Megan was ineligible for some kinds of housing support,

The other day, like, I really wanted some housing support. But my age was restricting me from, like, 'Lodge', you have to be 18, and stuff like that. (Megan, age 17, W1)

Megan considered her professional support options but changed her mind. Similarly, Jock and Jayden enquired about accessing social housing but did not pursue it in much depth. Choice and agency was constrained for all young parents in various ways and to varying degrees. Jock and Jayden had a barrier of being low-wage employed and therefore ineligible for most welfare support. Further, as they were not the primary carers of their children, their father status would not have been taken into account if they did apply to the

SRS. Young fathers in this situation are therefore given a very low priority status, or depending on their level of income, they are entirely ineligible for SRS housing,

It's a joke I think. Housing. It is a joke. I'm willing to pay rent on a council house and they won't even entertain me. Cos what is it, about £300 for a council house? I think my mum pays about £300 for this. This would do me and Courtney just fine, the two of us. But they won't even let me bid for a house (Jayden, age 23, W1).

Similarly, Jock found his SRS options limited, while the mother of his child was allocated a SRS house after they separated,

Thing is, I've been put off with that [SRS], because when we looked for it before, because I was employed, it was kind of like, "Well, you've got an income, you can sort of pay for it yourself" sort of thing. But as soon as like, she left, and, "Oh, you're a single parent, oh, can't be having that, there's your own place" kind of like that, because she was the main carer and she didn't have a job. (Jock, age 25, W1)

As social housing stock is at an all time low, young fathers like Jock and Jayden had few options for independent housing in the SRS as they were not considered a high priority needs group. For them, being able to continue living with their own parents was a vital source of stability and ontological security. It provided a secure base from which they could pursue other aspects of their lives such as education and employment [Chapter 8 discusses EET experiences]. However, for those who were living in stable homes with their own parents, there was a worry about creating their own independent family home in the future. Jayden created an illustration of his home in the present and what he thinks his home may look like in the future. For Jayden, his present home provided him with ontological security and was inextricably linked with family relations. Jayden's future home was risky; he was worried about having the financial resources to live independently and drew a caravan in the rain to depict this. He was also concerned an undesirable future home

might constrain his parenting practices. While Jayden's current home lacked privacy and space he had security and a strong sense of homeliness created through the positive relationships with his family. How ontological security is constructed is uniquely personal.



Figure 19 Jayden's present and future home

How I'd describe it now is... you know how people say the grass is always greener on the other side? The grass isn't always greener on the other side though. I'm struggling with money now so what am I going to be like in my own house? I'm lucky cos my mum does all that. So I don't know. I could probably describe it as now in my mums house is sunshine. When I have my own house in 5 years time, a big rain cloud. Simple as that (Jayden, age 23, W1).

Similarly, Chelsea and Jock were concerned about moving out of their parents' house as they worried their own home would not be good enough. This was also factor in them continuing to live with their parents despite a desire to live independently.

In summary, for this group of parents, the positive aspects of living with their own parents were the security, stability and support that they received. The negative aspects were the lack of control over time and space within the home. Their aspirations to move into their own independent home in the future and the limited opportunities to do so threaten their stability and their ontological security. Furthermore, the limited housing options available in the current housing market can trap young parents into dependent relationships with their family. Living with their own parents was paradoxically both enabling and constraining.

7.5 Moving on: from familial to independent housing and home

Living with parents was considerably more challenging for some participants, particularly those who were living with their partner's parents. They were less able to attain ontological security; privacy and space were often compromised and they did not feel 'at home'. This next section discusses cases where participants had been unsatisfied living with their parents and moved on. They were able to reflect and compare living in their own house to living with their parents.

Young parents moving into their own tenancy from their parental home experience a shift from semi-independence to independence. While all participants valued and preferred living independently, the road to independence was often challenging. At the point in their life course that the participants become parents, some can be described as experiencing 'liminality' (Arnold van, 2013; Van Gennep, 1960). They are between social identities and transitioning to establish a parenting identity. Chamberlain and Johnson (2018) use the concept of liminality to refer to the experience of feeling like an outsider when people are transitioning from one housing status (long-term homelessness) to another (housed). Similarly, the young parents in this research often found themselves in a liminal state; as well as making

transitions to new social identities (parenthood and adulthood) they were often seeking appropriate housing but were yet to obtain it. They were in a transitional housing phase and this affected how they constructed and experienced 'home'. This is particularly pertinent to those in the 'chaotic' category or for those living in constrained family homes while they waited for independent housing. For participants who juxtaposed their current home with their previous housing experiences, independent living was universally preferred despite it presenting some challenges. Some of the participants who were previously in the chaotic category were able to shift to stability as they moved from their parents' house into their own home. This shows how ontological security is not fixed, but in constant negotiation. In contrast, limited family resources and difficult relationships can push young parents into independent tenancies prematurely and into houses that may not be suitable.

Seven participants lived with their own parents or partner's parents when they first had their children and then later gained their own independent tenancy. All seven moved into the social rented sector and three of these received housing support. Amy was supported by 'Mosaic' and moved into temporary accommodation before obtaining a council house. Stephanie received floating support from 'Agora', and as her partner, Craig also received some support. Partnerships can offer way out of difficult housing and family backgrounds but there are constraints in living with a partner's family in terms of the ontological security of home and in their relationships with each other (see chapter five). Andy and Brook demonstrate this and their experiences are traced in detail below, following their housing pathways through time, pre- and post-parenthood and across housing arrangements.

7.5.1 Andy and Brooke case-study

At the time of the first interview, Andy and Brooke were living together in Brooke's mum's house. They had previously lived together in Andy's mum's house but moved out following an argument. They had successfully bid for a council house and were set to move within the next few months.

Andy's reflections below encapsulate the difficulties of living with a partner's family. He described feeling an absence of homeliness as well as space, privacy and time being compromised. His basic freedoms were constrained,

It's not that it doesn't feel like a nice home, it just doesn't feel like it's my home. Living in someone else's home. So it's a bit awkward. You don't know what to do when you live in someone else's house. Like I don't do things that I'd normally do in my own home...I've always liked staying up in my bedroom. I don't like going to make myself drinks. I don't like going and getting a shower without asking and stuff like that. Like living in my own home I'd do them things without asking. You know. Like I feel obligated to do things in here that I wouldn't normally do. Like I feel obligated to ask to do things. I mean Brooke's mum always says I don't have to ask, just do it but I just don't feel comfortable enough to not ask (Andy, age 22, W1).

Andy did not like to stay at Brooke's mum's house when Brooke was not there and he regularly went to stay at his own mum's house. Home and family are entwined and Andy found himself between homes and between families; balancing his roles and identities as a father and partner at Brooke's family house and as a young person and son at his own mum's house.

Brooke's family home was overcrowded. This is often the case when parents have children spread out through their life course. The older children may have their own children who are the same age as their younger siblings. This family configuration of overlapping generations can be supportive as caring responsibilities can be shared and Brooke saw the positive aspects of the children being of a similar age to play with each other. However, with the addition of Brooke's partner Andy and their child, the house became considerably overcrowded,

Well it's a 3 bed roomed. My little sister is sleeping in my mum's room cos she won't sleep in her room so I'm actually staying in her bedroom

until we move into this property in a couple of weeks. So it is a bit small because me and Andy are having to share a single bed. With Courtney because she won't sleep in her travel cot (Brooke, age 21, W1).

Andy and Brooke subsequently accepted the first SRS flat that they were offered, with Brooke later having some regrets. The flat was in the same block that Brooke grew up in as a child. She was concerned about the safety of the shared balcony for her daughter. The area was highly deprived and has a high rate of crime.

I wouldn't say I definitely wanted to move here. But cause it were the first house that we got offered, I just- I took it, really, just so I had me own place. Because I couldn't cope with me mum any longer. I think we would've killed each other (Brooke, age 22, W2).

For Brooke, the difficult relationship she had with her mother, and the overcrowded house, acted as a push factor for her to obtain her own home as quickly as possible. Similarly, Cooke and Owen (2007) found that overcrowding was often the main reason young parents sought their own independent tenancy. Shortly after moving into their own flat Andy and Brooke separated, with Andy moving back to his mum's house and Brooke remaining in the flat with their daughter. Brooke reflected on the positive aspects of living independently as opposed to living with her mum,

I wouldn't change it, I like living on me own. It's nice to just be able to sit when you don't want to bother with anyone and you can just come home, and it's your house, you don't have to answer to anyone or anything (Brooke, age 22, W2).

Brooke compromised on housing quality and location in order to have her own home with space and privacy. This was a common trade off for participants moving on from chaotic family homes to their own independent tenancy, as will be discussed below. Previous research has shown how moving out of an overcrowded family home can improve relationships (Cooke and Owen, 2007;

Coleman and Dennison, 1998). Brooke maintained a close relationship with her family and continued to receive support from them, with several family members helping her to decorate her new flat.

7.5.2 Positive aspects of moving on

Andy and Brooke's case study over time showed a housing pathway from living with Brooke's family to obtaining an independent home. Five other participants were able to reflect on what it was like being a parent whilst living with their parents compared to living in their own accommodation. Moving into their own home enhanced ontological security in the form of increased space, privacy and room to parent independently. Independent tenancies were obtained post-birth of their children, often due to the waiting time involved when seeking a SRS tenancy, but this also enabled young parents to get some initial support from their own parents. Living independently allowed participants the space and freedom to parent in their own way without any kind of interference,

It's better now that we're in our own home. It's a lot better cos we haven't got no one there. You don't need to walk on egg shells cos someone doesn't like us. And not living with our parents so it's a lot easier. We've got our own ways of dealing with things on our own and not with other people having their words to say. It's a lot easier (Stephanie, age 22, W1).

Craig and Stephanie had similar issues to Andy and Brooke as they lived with Stephanie's mother when their son was first born. Craig also felt uncomfortable living with his partner's mother, with housing failing to meet any of the conditions of ontological security,

I was used to staying up most of the night playing on the computer and it felt like when I was there like I couldn't do that cos of having young kids [Stephanie's siblings] there. It felt like I had to stop doing the

things I enjoyed doing. And I had a curfew that I had to be in by 10 o'clock. And that to me... yeah it was someone else's house but it was unacceptable being back at 10 o'clock it's early, but if you live in someone else's house you have to play by the rules (Craig, age 23, W1).

Craig expressed a lack of agency in this living arrangement. This is a key issue for partners living in someone else's family home; they are outsiders without a family bond and relationship history and this can constrain their levels of comfort and homeliness in relation to ontological security. In contrast, living independently fostered autonomy and gave them control over their own time, space and parenting. Some participants were able to create a sanctuary and a home where they felt safe and comfortable,

I have my own place to de-stress and, you know, a place where if I need to get away, just to come home and just shut the door and not even, you know, think about it. Because, you know, I love having my own place, I wouldn't change it, but I wouldn't go back to my mum's now. I couldn't do it. I couldn't go back to my mum's now, because I've learned to stand on my own two feet now (Kerry, age 24, W1)

Independent housing solidified their independent identity and once this transition had been made it was deemed difficult to go back to any form of dependence. However, while the shift to independent housing was highly valued by this group of participants, they also had to contend with some negative aspects of moving on.

7.5.3 Negative aspects of moving on

The transition to independent housing was sometimes quite abrupt for those who were previously highly dependent and reliant on parental support. While Kerry valued living independently, her partner at the time, George, explained that it was also a difficult transition,

It's a lot harder. Hell of a lot harder cos there's only us two. We've got to try keep it as tight as we can to be able to get through things each day. Whereas when I was at my mam's it was a bit more laid back. My mam did nearly everything. When we were both there she would say wash up after yourselves, do a bit of tidying up. But it's everything now. Everything's got to be done. (George, age 25, W1)

Despite the difficulties of managing to live independently, in George's case, he attained a level of stability though obtaining a SRS tenancy with his partner. However, when they separated, George moved out and became homeless,

I were homeless for- well, I'm still classed as homeless now. Three month I were sofa-surfing at [friend's house]. I was sleeping on the sofa. Me mam kept asking me, you know, 'come home' and I said 'no', because I'm independent, I want to be independent, I've been independent for two years, coming up three years and I feel awful, because I'm here now (George, age 26, W2).

Having to return to the family home unwillingly cramps independence and threatens the progress already made. Yo-yo-ing housing arrangements are increasingly more common among young people (Stone et al., 2013). However, these are different circumstances. George had a pathway from chaotic to stable and back to chaotic. Stability can quickly become unraveled through changes in families and relationships. Ontological security is temporal, and for disadvantaged youths, stability is contingent, as they have limited resources to fall back on. For disadvantaged youths like George, housing pathways are less of a 'housing ladder', and more of a 'tightrope'. Without additional resources, housing is precarious and contingent. When George separated from his partner, he 'slipped off the tightrope' and became homeless,

Because your own home, it's your place to relax. Your own comfort. And coming out of that, to go into someone else's sort of daily routine of- under their roof, it's kind of off-putting. Cause you can't do your own thing that you would normally do. Or to your normal timescale. I had literally nothing, absolutely nothing. Crushed. I mean, I even, er, tried to commit suicide twice (George, age 26, W2).

These are the extreme negative affects of homelessness; it compromises ontological security and mental health. In returning to live with his mother, George struggled with a lack of control over time and space, and constraints on his independence.

A common complaint of participants living in their own independent tenancy is problems with the physical state of the house, particularly issues with damp. This can have serious health consequences. Participants described almost slum-like conditions and in conducting interviews in the participants' homes, I was able to observe first-hand the sub-standard quality of some of the housing. On first inspection and without luxury of time to consider other options, a house can initially seem suitable, with problems emerging only after they have already moved in and committed to the tenancy,

It was nice at first until all the damp and all the mould and having to throw things away and them not coming out and doing repairs. And even like the cupboards when it was damp I had to re-wash all the cups. And the shower chair falling off... it took a month for them to come out and fix it. It was like they didn't care that it had fallen off. It was loose and I'd reported that it was loose so they said they'd come out and repair it but they didn't and then it fell off on me (Samirah, age 23, W1).

Samirah had disabilities and the incident with the shower chair was not only dangerous for her but the length of time she waited for a repair left her unable to adequately use the shower. Disabilities can affect experiences of home (Imrie, 2004) and without adequate adjustments Samirah's home was unsafe.

A key benefit of ontological security of housing is that it is thought to enhance people's health (Kearns et al., 2000). Several young parents complained that they were unable to get their landlords to carry out repairs and maintenance work. This was the case in the PRS and SRS, although in follow-up interviews those housed in the SRS often reported that the repairs were eventually carried out. However, private landlords are not as readily held accountable and have greater capacity to be evasive. Michelle began living with her ex-partner in the PRS when she was 13. She was unable to hold her own tenancy until she was 18 and was dependent on her partner who was abusive. While he was in prison, Michelle took the opportunity to leave. As she needed housing quickly, her options were limited and she accepted a tenancy in the PRS. Michelle experienced domestic abuse from her ex-partner and the threat of him returning left her with limited time and options to source better quality housing,

I've been here for nearly a year and a half but its not... it's the house I needed to move into cos like I said I was on a tenancy with Patrick and when he did come out he was on about coming home and that was more drama. So I moved into this house but this isn't the best house in the world. I pay... it's like he gets £500 for it but he won't do a single repair. Since I moved in he's saying that he's going to do all these repairs and it's like my room's full of damp. His room is full of damp. Erm every now and then you get little pools of water. The whole house is full of damp. I've been in and out of hospital with it recently. I've had pneumonia from this house and all sorts (Michelle, age 25, W1).

The poor quality of Michelle's housing caused physical health problems and also constrained space as one of the two bedrooms was in such poor condition they were unable to use it. This left her sharing a bedroom with her two children and partner. Michelle was unsuccessful in her attempts to get repairs carried out and she had been waiting for social housing for a long time,

He doesn't care about the house or anything. I've had housing onto him and everything. All he's done is change his number. He's had letters out to him and you don't get anywhere at all. Housing benefit pay straight to my landlord but they've been ringing him up nonstop. I'm on band A at the moment but I've been on band A for coming up for a year and a half (Michelle, age 25, W1).

Despite the poor quality of the house, Michelle was struggling to access the SRS as she was not homeless. Michelle was registered with 'Agora' but was not being supported formally. Other participants who had been supported more formally were able to get help with the poor quality of their housing. For example, Stephanie and Craig also experienced problems with damp but their housing support worker helped them to complain to Environmental Health and negotiated with the Housing Association on their behalf. This demonstrates the lack of agency disadvantaged young people often have when dealing with authorities themselves. Disadvantaged young parents are popularly stigmatised as deficit, whereas, housing support workers have the authority and resources to negotiate on their behalf.

For young parents who move from their family of origin and into their own independent accommodation, the speed with which they needed to attain independent housing and the consequences of that, is particularly striking. While they gain space and privacy aspects of ontological security, they often have to compromise housing quality, homeliness and support. Furthermore, once they are housed, it is difficult for them to move on to accommodation that may be more suitable. Many of these participants did not see their independent accommodation as somewhere they wanted to stay long term but they found their options for alternative housing significantly limited, as Michelle shows. There are no 'higher rungs' on the 'housing ladder', instead young people like Michelle are left with limited options, limited support and limited opportunity for upward housing mobility.

7.6.1 Housing support services: preparing for independent living

14 participants received some form of housing support. The support services discussed here are floating support from 'Agora' and temporary housing from 'Mosaic' and 'Lodge' (these forms of support are outlined above in the introduction to this chapter). This section gives an overview of the aims of these housing support services and how the young parents interacted with them. The housing support services primarily aimed to get young people into a stable SRS tenancy. Support workers tried to avoid the PRS sector, especially for young parents,

There are some good private landlords but they are few and far between. And there is no real security with a private landlord. They can give you notice and they've got no duty to rehouse you. Irrelevant of whether you've been a good or a bad tenant. If you've been a good tenant and there's problems, the council do have a duty to house you, they've got no reason not to. I always advocate, especially a young parent, to go for social housing. There are times they do have to take on private, but you know, you're trying to get them settled in a community. You want them to be settled, established so that the local schools and everything are there and they know where they are by the time the child's ready for school. And it's pointless putting them in a private tenancy that's going to last for 6 months or a year and then they're going to have to look again and then either relocate or whatever. So wherever possible, I always advocate registered social landlords (June, housing support worker).

SRS is the preferred tenure and is more likely to meet the conditions for ontological security. Housing tenure is a key concern for housing studies; there is often a fixation with home ownership as it is thought to offer greater potential for ontological security (Somerville, 1992). However, home ownership is increasingly out of reach for disadvantaged youths (Hoolachan

et al., 2017). Hiscock et al., (2001) showed that social housing supports ontological security as cheaper costs of renting in the public sector enhance the capacity of tenants to plan and control small incomes. In contrast to the PRS, social housing can be constant, affordable and a relatively predictable home (Tunstall et al., 2013). Housing support workers help their clients to navigate the application process and advise them on bidding for appropriate properties in appropriate areas. 'Mosaic' called this 'pre-tenancy work' and during this time some young people move into a 'Mosaic' owned property, also known as a 'trainer flat'. They aim to obtain an SRS tenancy within six months but due to the shortage of social housing this can take up to two years. During this time they also support clients in their preparations for independent living on a practical level, for example, by helping them to source furniture and learn how to manage bills,

From the minute they move in, we're thinking about getting them moved on, so we're encouraging them all the time to accept donated furniture and buy things for their flat, not to decorate, because that's wasting money on our stuff when they could do with saving it for themselves. So we encourage them to like buy bits and pieces for the flat, and to help them to budget so they understand what needs to be paid, and not to get into emergency credit, and to try to stay above board with everything (Jane, 'Mosaic' housing support worker).

Seven out of eleven participants who attained stable SRS tenancies received housing support. It was often highly valued, with support workers helping clients to obtain tenancies, advocating with other services on their behalf and teaching them how to manage their property. Housing support workers can also help with furnishings and improving the quality of the home. This is particularly important for those moving into the SRS as the houses come unfurnished. Support workers are able help them access charities and other services that provide goods for free or on a subsidised low cost payment,

They got me a cooker, a fridge, paint. They're getting me a mattress, wardrobes and whatever else I need. Probably some carpets. I pay

weekly. I'm not bothered if I can get carpets down for Tyler [son] then it will be all right. I just need to finish his room off. And then that's done. [Support worker] gets me everything I need. Whatever I need she supports me with. She helped with my radiator, she helped when I needed support with that. She sorted out my housing benefits. So she's good. She is. She looked at the house before I looked at it to see if it was all right and she said yeah it was all right (Danny, age 21, W1).

Across the different forms of housing support discussed here (floating, temporary housing) floating support was the most valued and the least intrusive, allowing young parents greater freedom and control over their lives and their homes. This chimes with previous findings on the preferences of housing support amongst young mothers (Quilgars et al., 2011b; Cooke and Owen, 2007). A house can be considered a home when people have the capacity to exercise control (Easthope, 2004; Mallett, 2004). Housing support services had success in helping young parents attain stability through supporting them to obtain their own SRS tenancy. Long-term consistent support and a strong relationship between worker and client helped young parents to gain the skills to maintain their tenancy and stability. Floating support workers often take a holistic and individualised approach in supporting clients and helping young people to develop the skills they need to manage their own home,

Oh it's given me confidence. I wasn't a confident person. I knew nothing about houses. Proper a dummy when it comes to owt serious. Like I panic. Thinking have I done this, people have to tell me or show me a few times before I feel comfortable doing it. But she's [support worker] eased everything. It's not as bad as I thought it would be on my own (Amy, age 21, W1).

The move to independent housing is often difficult to navigate for young people, particularly in terms of welfare entitlements and the knowledge and resources needed to obtain and maintain a tenancy. Housing support workers play a vital role in bridging this gap to independence, fostering a period of

'dependent independence' (Forrest, R and Yip, 2013). The relationship they had with their support worker was often cited as the best thing about the service,

I like her, do you know what I mean? She's not just someone that's working. She's like a friend more than someone who is just helping you out: Like you can talk to her about anything. It's not just like a professional. She's laid back and talks to you about anything. You don't have to worry what you say (Amy, age 21, W1).

She treats me like a mum! (Kimberley, age 19 W1).

In lieu of familial support, their support workers became 'fictive kin' (Zadoroznyj, 2009). Relational aspects of support were highly valuable, and this chimes with the wider literature that explores the relationship between service providers and their clients (Neale, B. and Davies, L., 2015; Ferguson et al., 2020; Patrick, 2017). However, this also made the withdrawal of support quite tough and missing their support worker afterwards was common. Kerry, for example, received floating support for almost two years before she became too old for the service. In that time she built a strong relationship with her support worker and despite a gradual withdrawal over time, Kerry found it difficult once it ended,

I never seen her again. That were it, I never- you know, I never seen her again, that were the last time I ever seen her. I was upset, to be honest, because I knew after everything I'd been through, it used to hurt me. It felt like I'd had nobody. Because obviously I didn't have my mum and dad at that time, so- It were upsetting, to be honest, you know. But in a way, then, in a way I were relieved, because in a way it were like 'I'm gonna try and do it on my own' but you know, I have nobody to fall back on now (Kerry, age 25, W2).

The strength of relationship is highly beneficial but does pose problems regarding how and when the support is withdrawn. While support workers help bridge the gap to independence, there is a risk clients become dependent on their social relationship, particularly when they have limited support from family and friends. The housing support services discussed here are specifically for young people up to the age of 25, the withdrawal of support at this age poses questions around the age at which youths reach adulthood/independence. Support workers sometimes continued to keep in touch with their clients; however, this was an informal arrangement at the support worker's discretion,

[Support workers] told me that they support people after the 2 years but it is not taken into account in their deployment. One is still in touch with someone from 10 years ago. She attributes the quality of the relationship and the dependency on the fact that the workers provide consistency where often young people have not had that before. The role becomes one of mother or auntie. It is a trusting relationship that is much more than just a job (Researcher's participant observation fieldwork notes, 25/11/2015).

The participants who received support were asked at what age they think support should stop; they all said that there should not be a specific age limit but rather support should end when the client is ready. As youth transitions are elongated, messy and non-linear (Furlong and Cartmel, 2007), support services that take this into account and offer open-ended individualised support may have more success in helping clients maintain stability in the long-term.

7.6.2 Housing support in temporary accommodation

Some participants had an additional step in their journeys to independent housing, with a more intensive form of housing support in temporary accommodation. This is considered in detail below, drawing on the contrasting

cases of Amy and Tamara who had different outcomes from their stay in similar forms of temporary housing. Sonia and Kimberly also lived in temporary housing in highly constrained circumstances. Living in temporary accommodation can constrain ontological security; the lack of permanence is a barrier to creating a home. This was amplified as young parents in temporary supported housing were also under surveillance to varying extents.

Amy and Tamara both lived in temporary accommodation with floating support before obtaining their own tenancy. Amy experienced this as a chaotic spell with constrained ontological security,

It was stressful cos I wanted to be able to do my own decorating and stuff like that. It was someone else's carpet and it wasn't as clean as I wanted it to be (Amy, age 21, W1).

Amy described a sense of liminality living in her temporary home for nearly one year. The temporary nature of the housing affected her sense of homeliness as well as safety in the relation to the short-term tenancy. Tamara also described a sense of limbo in her accommodation, as she knew she would soon be moving,

I like this house, I love this house, if anything it's just old. But, say if I got this house and had to stay here forever, I wouldn't be upset, d'you know what I mean? I'd just make the most of it. But I have to move, so I feel a bit unsettled now (Tamara, age 19, W1).

Tamara's temporary home met the conditions for ontological security in terms of quality and homeliness but the temporariness and the uncertainty around the anticipated next move was constraining. Tamara had housing support workers since she began living independently at the age of 15. Some workers provided better support than others. At the second interview, Tamara had moved into an estate with high levels of deprivation and crime. It was disproportionately ethnically white and an unfamiliar area to Tamara, away from her family and friends. In the first interview Tamara had emphasised the

importance of place and community in relation to her and her child's Black identities. However, Tamara explained that she accepted the property on the advice of her support worker after she had requested a 'new-build' house in the SRS. However, Tamara and her son received racist abuse from the neighbours and she had several attempted and successful burglaries on her property,

Tamara: It's awful! I've been called racist names. And as I said, my windows have been smashed. The other night, my house were getting burgled into, and they've took my fence, like, the whole fence outside.

Linzi: Oh my god. Is it a very white area, then?

Tamara: Yeah.

Linzi: I remember you saying last time about how you wanted to be somewhere that was-

Tamara: Was multicultural, yeah. I know! Because like the housing officer said that up here's not bad and stuff anymore. But it really is (Tamara, age 21 W2).

As a black woman, Tamara faced an additional threat to her ontological security in relation to safety as she was housed in a predominantly white area with racist neighbours. Tamara did not feel safe in the house and was seeking emergency temporary accommodation and planned to stay with a friend in the meantime. She reflected on how happy she was in the temporary accommodation after moving into an unsuitable house in the SRS,

Since the week I moved in it's just been awful. This house, I just feel like it's bad luck. As beautiful as it is, I don't want to live here anymore... I loved- I miss that house [temporary house], I wish I could move back, but I can't. I was glowing in that house, wish I could go back to it... Next time I'm not going to be snobby about the house. It literally doesn't mean anything, the fact if it's new or old. Cause I was so happy in that 300-year-old house than this house, and it's not even a year old yet (Tamara, age 21, W2).

Here, Tamara demonstrates how intrinsic home is to ontological security and how fragile it can be. The lack of intensive continuation of support combined with bad advice and poorly informed decision-making plummeted Tamara back into chaotic circumstances.

Amy and Tamara had different outcomes from their time living in temporary supported housing. Amy attained stability and a level of ontological security through her SRS tenancy while Tamara did not. Amy came from a background of stability and her time in temporary accommodation was a short-term period of chaos before returning to stability. Amy had on-going support from her family as well as long-term support from her housing support worker who ensured she was established in her tenancy. On the other hand, Tamara had a highly chaotic background, no family support and poor advice from her housing support worker regarding choosing a SRS house.

Sonia also experienced living in temporary housing but for different reasons. Sonia was living in accommodation run by private company G4S on behalf of the government while she applied for asylum. With the limited supply of social housing, Phillips (2006) and Netto (2011) note that asylum seekers are faced with gaps in housing provision and choices, as well as personal and institutional racism. Sonia lived with her daughter and a housemate who also had a baby. The accommodation was very poor quality and as an asylum seeker Sonia could be moved at any time under the 'no-choice' dispersal policy (Robinson, 2003). Sonia had multiple constraints on her ontological security and housing pathways due to her asylum seeker status (Netto, 2011). Not only did she have no security of tenure, she also had an uncertain future in the UK and was in the midst of a lengthy process applying for leave to remain. The house had problems with damp and mice and the flooring was unsuitable for her baby to sit on. During the interview it was noted that there was a frequent electrical beeping sound, Sonia reported it had been occurring for around two months. These issues may appear minor but can, and were, having a significant impact on her daily life. Sonia and her housemate had logged complaints with G4S but the problems had not been rectified. Logging complaints was difficult as calls were expensive and time consuming, and she

was reluctant to complain for fear of repercussions. Sonia tried to create a sense of homeliness by sometimes going without food to buy decorations and toys for her daughter,

Sometimes I buy things like that [points to ornament] because I want to feel like it's my house. If I have empty, I feel... how can I say... it remembers me detention if it's empty. If I have some things it makes me feel more positive. I buy in pound shop. This one to make me feel like Christmas time (Sonia, age 22, W1).

When asked to draw a diagram of her present and future home, Sonia's illustrations reflected her difficult circumstances and her hopes for a happy family home,

My house in the future, I don't want a big house. Just to be like full of things, full of smiles, full of pictures, full of flowers, a garden, a space for my daughter. Here I feel empty (Sonia, aged 22, W1).



Figure 20 Sonia's present and future home

Sonia received support from 'Agora' and the local children's centre. Support workers had gone above and beyond in their support, with one worker acting as Sonia's birthing partner. Support services were essential resources for Sonia and helped her to navigate the hostile conditions she faced as an asylum seeker. The insecurity and poor quality housing she was living with were significant and beyond the scope of the support services' remit, however, the social support was a vital lifeline for Sonia.

Housing support services play an integral role in navigating young people through the rocky road of semi-independence towards establishing stable independent housing. Temporary housing can be vital for young people who are homeless or whose circumstances require them to move quickly (for example due to issues with domestic abuse). The waiting list for SRS tenancies is long and even those with high priority can wait two years for a property. While the temporariness of the housing constrains ontological security, it does provide the opportunity for pre-tenancy work and preparing young people to manage their own tenancy. Support workers are vital and are often highly successful in helping young parents move from chaotic backgrounds to stability in their own SRS tenancies. Participants who received support but remained chaotic had multiple and complex issues that could not be adequately addressed by housing support alone. Even those who had unsuccessful outcomes often spoke positively about the support they received, although they most notably discussed positive relationships with staff as opposed to practical successful support. Positive experiences with support workers do not necessarily lead to stable pathways; however, intensity, engagement and accessibility of support can make a significant impact.

7.7 The journey home: walking a tightrope?

Becoming a parent brings housing practicalities to the fore. Where young parents live can constrain or enable parenting practices. For some of the

participants, having a child provided the impetus and opportunity to live independently. Some preferred to live with their own parents in order to receive support, while others lived with their parents reluctantly until they were able to move into their own house. While having a child did give some participants a higher priority when bidding for social housing, the quality and choices of available properties were constrained. Young parents' pathways into independent housing were not straightforward and all of the participants who lived in the Social Rented Sector (SRS) had a difficult time getting there and often lived in houses in poor condition. The difficulties of accessing social housing, the limited choices and often rushed decisions, means many tenants have to compromise on their housing needs. This becomes problematic, as it is difficult to move around the SRS; once housed, tenants have a low priority when applying to move and this can leave them 'trapped' in unsuitable housing. This is heightened for people like disadvantaged young parents whose circumstances require housing quickly and without the luxury of resources to fully consider housing options.

This section considers how young parents experience changes and continuities in relation to their housing pathways. As shown in Figures 15 and 16, five of the participants remained in the stable category while six remained chaotic. Many of the participants (nine) moved from chaotic backgrounds to increased stability. Young parents can be rushed into taking a property to escape chaotic family homes that may be overcrowded and unsuitable for a child (South and Lei, 2015). Poor quality family relationships can act as a push factor to leave the parental home (Jones, G., 1995; Tomaszewski et al., 2016). Choice and agency were often constrained and where participants lived was highly influenced by family resources and the family structure in terms of relationship dynamics, values and atmosphere in the home. For these participants, becoming parents acted as a push factor to attain their own independent home as quickly as possible; this can leave parents with few options and limited capacity to make informed decisions. Housing support services can act as a bridge between dependent and independent housing.

Eight of the participants were deemed to have increased stability due to the security of their tenure in the SRS. However, while this may at first glance point to a break from their chaotic backgrounds, it is important to consider the quality of housing and how satisfied the young parents were with their situations. The stability is relatively precarious and relies on maintaining tenure in SRS. Because of the nature of SRS participants will find it very difficult to move to a different house, a fine line between stability and being trapped. Stability comes with conditionality and constraints; it is possible for stability to constrain upwards mobility. Several of the participants lived in SRS housing that was unsuitable, particularly long term. However, because they were already housed they were considered low priority when bidding for a different SRS property. Whether participants experience change or continuity in their levels of stability and ontological security was often dependent on support systems, both familial and professional. Their backgrounds are often the biggest factor in determining their levels of stability. However, even when there was a move from chaotic to stable, the stability is conditional and can stifle options for upward housing mobility. Disadvantaged young people are walking a tightrope, performing a balancing act to maintain ontological security that is both temporal and contingent.

Housing is often discussed in terms of a 'housing ladder', implying an upward trajectory towards housing improvement. For example, students who leave the parental home may live in shared accommodation, moving around the PRS before becoming a homeowner (Heath, 2019). In both the PRS and in homeownership, smaller 'starter homes' are often traded in for better quality housing as greater financial resources are obtained and housing needs change throughout the life course (Preece et al., 2020). The housing ladder metaphor is also closely aligned with home ownership, something many disadvantaged young people will be locked out of. There are limited opportunities for upward mobility for people from disadvantaged backgrounds. In the previous chapter, most of the participants discussed frequent house moves and chaotic lives. In contrast to mobility as a representation of freedom and reflective of moving up the housing ladder, these were what Wiesel (2013) terms 'mobilities of disadvantage'; he uses the metaphor of the

'revolving door' to describe movements in and out of the SRS and PRS, back and forth to the same pathways of disadvantage. As seen in figure two, many of these participants were able to exit the revolving door and attained a level of stability through acquiring their own SHS tenancy. Those who have entered social housing have greater security of tenure and affordability in comparison to those privately renting, and independent housing provided better quality of living in terms of space, privacy and the opportunity to parent autonomously without surveillance. Entering social housing and obtaining an independent tenancy could be viewed as getting on the first rung of the housing ladder, however, moving beyond that is likely to be difficult. They transition to adulthood and independence at an early age but then quickly plateau. Rather than climbing a housing ladder, disadvantaged young parents are walking a tightrope. Their trajectories are flattened and it becomes a balancing act to maintain their position. The stability of the SRS is fragile and dependent on housing needs and aspirations remaining static.

Social housing placements were not always suitable. Often young parents need to find independent accommodation very quickly and their difficult circumstances can limit their capacity to make informed choices. The desperate need for housing coupled with the shortage of social housing can leave young parents with an inability to refuse whatever is on offer and a sense that they should be grateful for anything. Once a SRS tenancy has been accepted it is very difficult to move on without moving out of social housing altogether and therefore giving up security and affordability of tenure, thus re-entering the 'revolving door' (Wiesel, 2013). The stability the SRS provides to participants can be a double-edged sword; they are able to step out of the revolving door and chaotic housing backgrounds, however, this renders them immobile and trapped in housing that may be unsuitable.

7.8 Home making? Housing and ontological security discussion

Home making is a process linked to the family, emotions and identities (Easthope, 2009). Disadvantaged young parents are at a pivotal intersection of forming their own new family and constructing a suitable family home, often with limited resources and choices. Living independently facilitated constructs of home in their own image, free from the constraints of living with their parents. Independent housing offered more space, control and privacy but housing quality was sometimes compromised. Circumstances meant that some young parents needed to find independent accommodation in a hurry, leaving their choices highly constrained. Often they did not have the capacity to make informed decisions leaving some of the participants with regrets about their accommodation. Problems included, damp, lack of space, structural problems, rodent infestations and poor locations, either in terms of proximity to friends and family or living in a neighbourhood they did not feel safe. Few participants experienced home as completely free from surveillance. Those living with their own parents often had their space, privacy and time compromised. However, in some cases, having positive family relationships protected against this as a constraint on their ontological security. Independent living fosters autonomy over space and time. However, some young parents can also have their privacy compromised through home visits from support workers and family.

The findings here chime with wider research that SRS housing is better for ontological security than PRS housing (Hiscock et al., 2001). Living with their parents is often the best option for young parents providing they have good relationships and the family home is well enough resourced to accommodate them. Poor housing and living in a home that engenders ontological insecurity is a heavy weight. It is a roadblock for other interrelated pathways such as education and employment. Poor housing is time consuming and resource intensive as well as potentially damaging to physical and mental health. Instead of home as a 'haven' (Mallett, 2004), it can be threatening and unsafe. This can be the case in instances of domestic violence (Wardhaugh, 1999). Homeliness is often conflated with family. When a home offers ontological security it is almost taken for granted as it fulfils a basic need. As Casey (1993) points out, home can be many different and conflicting things to people

at once. For some young parents there seemed to be a trade-off between different aspects of ontological security. This was often a compromise on quality of a property as a means to gain an independent tenancy and more privacy.

Including the participants with secure SRS tenancies, most participants expressed some feelings of temporariness and a sense of limbo as they made do with their current situation but had aspirations for something better. This liminality affected their sense of home and ontological security. They could identify both benefits and deficiencies of their housing situations. Quality, safety and homeliness, are interlinked and often contingent concepts of ontological security (Imrie, 2004; Heywood, 2005; Mallett, 2004). The longitudinal research shows changes and continuities in the participants' housing pathways and their sense of ontological security. The conceptual frame of ontological security recognizes the significance of reliability and continuity in relation to material environments such as housing and tenure (Newton, 2008). It is particularly relevant to young parents receiving housing support or living with their families as they are subjected to other people's rules, and in some cases the security of their tenure is dependent on following them. This is further complicated by their parental responsibilities that are also under surveillance.

Young parents who continued to live comfortably with their parents benefitted from the familiarity and comfort of the family home. Those living independently valued the notion of home as a 'place of their own' (Cooke and Owen, 2007) where they had the freedom to construct home in their own image. However, in temporary housing young parents were not able to put their own stamp on the place and this combined with lack of safety through the short-term tenancy, constrained ontological security. Ontological security is a concept that has been neglected in family and youth studies, however, it is shown here to be crucial in terms of planning for the future. Using the framework of ontological security brings a fresh insight into housing pathways, support needs and the construct of home over time. Often young parenthood research focuses on entry into young parent and its immediate aftermath. Exploring

participants' expectations and aspirations for the future in relation to home shows how crucial ontological security is in terms of the capacity to plan and achieve future goals. This lens has also exposed the long-term fragility of stability and ontological security gained from SRS tenancies. This has implications for social housing policies; there is a need to look beyond short-term needs and offer greater flexibility for changing circumstances over time. Support to facilitate better-informed decision-making would also be helpful. However, ultimately these policy suggestions rely on increased availability of social housing.

7.9 Conclusion

The housing pathways for young parents are highly constrained. This chapter has discussed how living with parents can offer stability for those who have positive relationships with their families and if their families have adequate resources to facilitate aspects of ontological security. For those who had a chaotic family background with limited resources, living with their own parents could be constraining. In some cases it pushed young parents into independent housing with limited time and resources to make informed decisions. Living independently was overall considered comparatively much better, however some aspects of housing and ontological security were sometimes compromised. This was often related to the quality and location of the house and its suitability long term. For young parents who accessed housing support, consistency over time was effective in guiding young parents through a period of semi-independence and helping them to establish and maintain their own tenancy. However, the withdrawal of support was difficult for some and the age limit for withdrawal could usefully be extended or abolished.

Stability and ontological security is contingent, temporal and negotiated. It is possible to move back and forth through chaos and stability. As shown in Figure 15, several participants were able to move out of the chaotic analytical category and attain a level of stability through obtaining their own SRS

tenancy. What helps to maintain, achieve or regain stability is the accumulation of resources and the support available. Support services are absolutely vital for young parents establishing their own home; and this could usefully be incorporated into social housing policy. Disadvantaged young people and parents may potentially remain precarious throughout the life course, balancing on the tightrope. Quality housing that offers ontological security can act as a protective factor. However, there is the possibility that disadvantaged people can become 'trapped' in their SRS house, with limited options for mobility or improved housing. It would be useful for support services to continue supporting clients who need it beyond two years and over the age of 25. However, support services can only do so much when operating in a system of reduced social housing and welfare cuts. There are broader societal issues of precarity and uncertainty for young people, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds, and this is heightened for young parents who have dependents of their own. Safe and secure housing can be a 'saving grace' in this context and increased social housing would significantly improve the lives of many.

The theoretical framework of housing pathways and ontological security have provided an opportunity to consider disadvantaged young parents varied housing journeys, support needs and constructs of home. This contributes to knowledge around disadvantaged young parents' housing journeys and support needs in the context of austerity and reduced social housing. Overall, the chapter argues that young parents' choices are highly constrained. Their housing pathways are varied and often messy. Young people who enter parenthood from a background of stability have the resources to make the pathway smoother. Those from a more chaotic background can attain a level of stability if they receive appropriate support, however this stability can be fragile and comes with conditionality. These young parents are seemingly walking a tightrope rather than climbing a housing ladder.

Chapter Eight: Gender, Housing and Life Chances: fragile homes, volatile relationships

8.1 Introduction

Researching and analysing data relationally and through the lens of time offers unique insights into how young parents construct, challenge or conform to normative gendered parenting practices. This original empirical work addresses a gap in knowledge around relationships of young parents through time, considering how young parents' identities and practices are constituted in various housing contexts. There is very little research on young parents and the division of labour; most extant literature considers older parents (see Chapter Two). However, young parents and specifically disadvantaged young parents, have to negotiate a range of constraints on their resources linked to the intersections of age, circumstances, backgrounds and opportunities. This chapter explores the gendering relationships of the participants, comparing those who are cohabiting partners and have an ideology of sharing parenting practices, with those who are separated but co-parenting, and lone parents. The findings in this chapter fill a gap in this knowledge, firstly exploring the different relationship and household configurations of the participants and how these contexts shape gendered parenting practices. Secondly, domestic abuse and EET pathways are explored. The chapter ends by considering how volatile relationships and fragile homes intersect, making for an unstable relational tightrope and constrained life chances.

8.2 Relationships and household configurations

Having followed participants over time and through different household/relationship configurations, this section seeks to explore which contexts potentially facilitate transformative parenting practices and which contexts have increased barriers. How young parents actively construct family and home also entails 'doing' gender. This section presents three different relationship and household configurations for the young parents in this study.

It considers what doing gender, family, and home looks like in each set-up. Categories of family and home are not permanent, but are configurations that evolve over a short space of time. Change and continuity is apparent even within short timeframes, as captured through the second waves of interviews, participant observations, and the biographical and temporal approach to the research. Young parents can experience rapid changes as they navigate constraints and opportunities around housing options, and as relationship dynamics fluctuate. The participants are categorised below based on their relationship status and living arrangements during their involvement in the research. For some, it was possible to trace their housing/relationship trajectories over the course of 18 months, while others were only involved in the research for a short period of time. Eight participants were cohabiting and in a relationship with the other parent, however, four of them separated during the study. Five participants were not in a relationship or living with the other parent but were continuing to co-parent. Seven participants were lone parents.

8.2.1 Partnered and cohabitating parenting

Eight participants were partnered and cohabitating at the time of the first interview. Of the four couples, two separated during the course of the research and two remained living together.

Most of the participants believed that parenting should be equal and that mothers and fathers should take equal responsibility for care and finances. However, there were limitations to the extent that this was happening. Gender equality was more likely to work in practice for the couples that lived together and were not in education, employment or training (NEET), as parents had more time and space to share responsibilities. Brannen and Nilsen (2006) identified 4 out of 31 fathers in their study as 'hands-on-fathers' as they were heavily involved in childcare. These fathers were working class, had few qualifications and had experienced significant spells of unemployment. Brannen and Nilsen (2006) argued that in the absence of a worker identity,

these working class men privileged a strong father identity as a 'new way of being male' (p347). This was similarly a key finding for Neale and Davies (2016). Equality in gender roles is the minority, although there is some indication that this is changing through the generations. However, changes in attitudes are hampered by structural constraints and lack of support, particularly for separated and lone parents.

This partnered and cohabiting group of young parents challenged traditional gendered parenting roles and expressed views that mothers and fathers should be equal in their caring, domestic and financial responsibilities. All of the young parents in this study believed that parenting and care work should be equal, but this was only happening in practice for a small number of couples. Living together provided increased opportunities to share the division of labour more equally. Andy and Brooke shared an understanding of reciprocity that transcended the normative gendered division of labour,

Brooke: Yeah like if you was working, say you'd been at work all day then I'd make sure that your dinner was ready for you coming home. Or if I was working then you'd do the same for me. Do you know what I mean? That's how it works. We should just be the same and do the same things. I don't think there should be any differences. I think it should be an equal partnership (Andy, age 22 and Brooke, age 21, W1).

Couples who lived together tended to describe a more even split of caring and domestic work. Brooke and Andy agreed about parenting roles and did not believe that it should be gendered. They put these attitudes into practice and split caring responsibilities evenly, although this did change over time (see below). They were able to do this partly because neither of them was in education or employment and parenting was their primary focus. This suggests that young fathers' involvement in childcare is connected to their relationship with the other parent of the child and to their EET situation.

Cohabiting provided greater opportunities for fathers to share responsibilities and spend more time with their children. However, finding a place to live and parent together was complicated. Housing and social security policies can act as a barrier. For example, Stephanie had an independent SRS tenancy but at the time of the first interview, she did not declare that Craig was living with her, as this would have reduced their benefits. This affected their constructs of home and family as they were '*living together in secret*' (Stephanie). Craig had moved in and out of employment and at the time of the first interview, he was working on a short-term precarious contract,

Well I got kicked out of school and then from there I got a job working with my mate straight away. Erm... that lasted for about a year or so. That was working in food production. Erm.... and from there I signed on for about 2 years. After that I was working at a sandwich shop. And I was there for 3 years and after that signed on and now working at the sorting office (Craig, age 23, W1).

While Craig and Stephanie wanted to declare that they were living together, the couple decided it was too financially risky given Craig's precarious employment,

I would lose the lot [benefits]. Yeah. So that's going to be really difficult. Especially if it's just for a term. I know they've said he could have a permanent place but we don't know that for a definite yet. Before we have discussed it and said if he does get a permanent place we will be wanting to just drop it and do it properly cos I don't... I feel like I'm hiding. I feel like we're not showing ourselves and I don't want to be hiding us anymore (Stephanie, age 22, W1).

Craig and Stephanie did not want to risk putting in a joint claim for social security, as Craig's employment status and income levels were liable to change. Moving between paid employment and claiming benefits could leave a gap in income, which was too risky. Temporary work and a lack of employment security have implications for housing and family life,

It's annoying cos all my mail goes up to my mum's and that and if I get something important I have to wait until the weekend to get it off my mum. So... I don't... like Stephanie said, I don't want to be hiding no more, I want people to know. I want everything of mine to start coming here, all my letters and that (Craig, age 23, W1).

Having a joint tenancy and a joint social security claim is risky for several reasons. Firstly, it can reduce the amount of money they receive. This is complicated further if one parent enters work. Disadvantaged young people are often in precarious, short term or zero hour's employment (MacDonald and Giazitzoglu, 2019). This makes claims complicated, potentially risking loss of social security payments. There can also be serious repercussions, especially if housing benefit is discontinued. Secondly, joint claims are risky as relationships can break down or the joint claim can be used to perpetuate domestic abuse through financial control. 'Agora's Benefits Advisor explained that he advised young mothers not to enter into a joint claim immediately based on these reasons. During Kerry's second interview, her new partner had moved in with her. However, she kept it '*under the radar*'. Kerry had previously experienced financial abuse and control when living with George and there were some difficulties in separating their claim after George moved out.

For partnered parents their home making and gender practices were often constrained by welfare conditionality. Co-habitation did provide greater opportunity in terms of time and space to share responsibilities in the home. However, this is fragile and some of the advantages of cohabitating and opportunities for greater gender equality are challenged once couples separate and are no longer live together. Two of the four couples separated and in both cases the fathers moved out. George decided to break contact completely after a DNA test showed he was not the biological father. Cohabiting provides greater opportunities for gender equality, whereas

separated couples living apart face greater obstacles, as will be discussed in the next section.

8.2.2 Living apart and co-parenting

Here, the term 'co-parenting' is used to mean that both parents are active and engaged in their children's lives. It does not mean that the parenting is equal in terms of time or parenting practices. Young fathers are more likely to be non-resident than older fathers (Poole et al., 2013). However, contact time between non-resident fathers and children is increasing (Poole et al., 2016). The relationship between separated parents is significant in determining contact time (Neale and Smart, 1998; Marsiglio and Roy, 2012; Kiernan, 2005).

This group of un-partnered young parents described on-going negotiations and conciliations in relation to parenting. Young fathers felt that they were especially affected by these negotiations as negative relationships with the mothers of their children could have implications for contact time. Five participants were no longer in a relationship with the other parent but continued to co-parent. In all cases the mother was the primary carer.

For the separated couples, there was sometimes a desire for equal parenting but this was not always possible for fathers who did not live with their child and/or worked full time. At the second wave of interviews, Andy had started a part time job working in retail. However, as he had separated from Brooke, she then struggled to continue her college course, as she became the primary carer,

I went on to another course, but due to having no-one really to watch Courtney, and not being with her dad anymore, it were a bit hard for me to go to college. Didn't always have someone to watch her, and I

ended up giving it up. I applied for a care work job not long ago. Just waiting for them to get back to me (Brooke, age 22, W2).

Andy moved back into his mother's house and as a result, his contact time with his daughter significantly reduced. Andy could therefore no longer realise his ideals around shared care of his child (as discussed above). Once Brooke and Andy were living separately, they had to renegotiate their roles and responsibilities,

He takes her most weekends. He's working now at the moment, so not every weekend he has her. But most weekends he does... at first because she wasn't at nursery, it were like I were having her so many days, and he were having her so many days. Just basically trying to split it between us. And then when she started nursery, he didn't like the fact that I said that I were gonna have her all week, basically, and he could have her on the weekends, just because I'm closer to school than what he is. And I know he's not really reliable on getting up on mornings, so. But I give him the benefit of the doubt to take her to nursery on the Mondays, which so far has been good. She's been there every time and on time (Brooke, age 22, W2).

While Andy and Brooke initially tried to share care, Andy's shift pattern and their daughter going to nursery gave them less flexibility and opportunity to achieve this. Brooke took charge of making the decisions, with the mother/child dyad being privileged. Andy was not available for a follow-up interview, however Brooke explained that Andy wanted to spend more time with his daughter and was not happy about the arrangement. For Brooke and Andy, once their joint relational tightrope broke down, housing and the new configurations of space and place became a significant barrier to shared care and Andy became side-lined.

Like many separated fathers, Jayden and Jock had their children stay with them every weekend. They both worked full-time, while the mothers of their children were stay-at-home parents. Jayden said he would 'love' to have his

daughter 'full time', but he worked long shifts during the week. Jayden wanted to be an involved father and it was important to him that other people saw him as an equal parent. After he changed jobs he could only look after his daughter on weekends and so he took time off work in order to take his daughter to school and display his 'good' father identity,

At my old place I started at 10am so I could take her to school. But now I've only got her Friday and Saturday so... But I like to book... I had 3 days holiday so I booked every Friday so I could have her Thursday, Friday, Saturday so I could take her to school. Cos I like to do the school run sometimes, you know, just to show your face up the school so they see that its not just all her mother (Jayden, age 23, W1).

Jayden had a period of being unemployed when his child was first born before later getting a full time job. As a non-resident father, Jayden had to arrange the time he spent with his daughter around his shift pattern. None of the separated young fathers in this study were the primary carers of their children and their education or employment was prioritised ahead of childcare.

Danny was also separated from the mother of his child and saw his son less regularly. His own mother generally cared for his son overnight twice per week and facilitated contact for Danny; he therefore did not care for his son alone. Grandparents can act as mediators, as found in the FYF study (Neale and Lau-Clayton, 2014). Danny claimed that while he lived with the mother of his child they divided caring responsibilities equally, yet when probed further there were some tasks he would not do,

I don't do the poo. I feed him, dress him and bottle him. She did nappies, I couldn't do that (Danny, age 21, W1).

Danny's comments demonstrate an unwillingness to do certain childcare tasks and an ability to opt out of responsibilities. Dermott (2009) argues that although fathers do care work and can be increasingly involved, mothers remain primarily responsible for daily tasks and organising of care. Fathers

get credit for their involvement whilst still not being equal. The separated mothers, Michelle and Amy, described an arrangement that positioned the fathers almost as 'helpers'. In Amy's case, the father of her child, Peter, did not contribute regular child maintenance payments and visited his child on an ad hoc basis,

He bothers with her but not a lot when he's round. It's more concentrating on asking me what I've been doing and what he's been doing (Amy, age 21, W1).

Their daughter did not stay overnight with Peter as he lived with his mother and there was no room for her. He also worked shifts so it was difficult to arrange regular contact times. These are real practical barriers, however even while they lived together Amy was responsible for most of the care,

Linzi: And how was he with doing the childcare? Who was doing what? Did he do much?

Amy: No. Only thing he would do is if I got in the shower he would sit downstairs patting her. Cos she had colic. And then as soon as I got out of the shower she would be passed back. I think he changed a nappy about 3 times. He didn't bath her or owt (Amy, age 21, W1).

Michelle was also responsible for the lion's share of childcare and domestic labour. She had little contact with the father of her first child, Patrick, and the father of her second child, Cameron, worked nightshifts,

Cameron would help, don't get me wrong Cameron would help and stuff but like I say, he works nights so it's me mainly that cares for them. But erm... with Nathan [eldest child] I pretty much raised him on my own. Patrick wasn't about. Comes and goes when he pleases. Sounds horrible but that's him (Michelle, age 25, W1).

Amy and Michelle were flexible in facilitating contact and could be considered 'gate openers' rather than gatekeepers (Reeves et al., 2009). For the separated parents, work was seemingly prioritised for fathers, while mothers acted as the primary carer. However, this did not necessarily mean fathers were fulfilling a breadwinner role as not all fathers supported their children financially. These relationships can be difficult to manage as young parents are often in short-term or fragile relationships with each other at the time of conception (Kiernan, 2005).

In summary, for parents who are not living together and/or are no longer in a relationship, there is often less opportunity for shared care. Traditional gender roles of the mother as the primary carer are more prevalent. There is a complexity to managing relationships with both parents required to make concessions to maintain positive relationships. In particular, there are implications for fathers and the contact they have with their children. This is due to the mother generally being the primary carer and having the power to act as a gatekeeper, as well as fathers having to plan contact time around working hours. Efforts from both mothers and fathers to compromise with one another shows young parents forging new pathways of engaged non-resident fatherhood. This was the case for Amy and Jock who both had partners that agreed to flexible and frequent contact. However, there was still some way to go before this could be considered a shift from the mother/child dyad to a mother/father/child triad, as resources act as a barrier to co-parenting.

Separated couples were walking a wobbly relational tightrope that required high levels of negotiation and compromise. Couples who are separated may have a greater strain on their resources in comparison to cohabiting couples that can pool their resources together. Time and space is constrained for non-resident fathers, especially for young fathers who may live with their own parents and therefore lack a private place to parent. The mother/child dyad remains privileged, positioning mothers in a powerful position. They have the opportunity to be gatekeepers or gate openers for fathers. However, mothers are also constrained by their childcare obligations, which limits their opportunities to enter education or employment.

8.2.3 Lone parenting

Mitchell and Green (2002 p9) found that ‘having a child did not automatically lead to a desire for, or an expectation of, a continuous relationship with the child’s father. Indeed a permanent relationship was not viewed as an issue of concern’. Similarly to Mitchell and Green’s (2002) findings, mothers in this thesis prioritised the relationships with their children above a partner, the mother/child dyad was central to their mothering identities. There were seven lone mothers in the sample. There were no lone fathers; this is perhaps a sampling issue (see Chapter Four), however lone fathers are less common than lone mothers, with mothers making up around 90% of all lone parents (ONS, 2021). Despite some shifting attitudes around gender roles, mothers still tend to be the primary carers. This group of mothers and their children had little to no contact with the fathers; a common reason for this was domestic abuse. The discussion below considers the parenting practices of lone mothers, their support networks and opportunities.

For the lone-mothers, the fathering role was seen as less important. Having a father in their child’s life was considered a bonus but not a necessity,

See, I see people, right, and they find it so weird that I ain’t had a dad. But I find it so weird that they have. Do you know what I mean, like, where I’ve grown up, round here, hardly anyone has a dad anyway. And if they do, they’re just like, it’s like a big thing, somehow. Whereas, like, say, people in different communities have got a mum and dad and they’re, like, so shocked to find out that we don’t have a mum and dad, together, and they’re not married and not got a house, and all that. It’s just like-, I don’t know. I mean, I don’t know. I don’t think it’s really important. I think it’s good, I think it is important but I don’t think it is as important as having a mum. If you’ve just got a mum, I think, you’re sorted, you’re made, cause you’ve got your mum. But if you don’t have a dad, it’s not the end of the world. Do you know what I mean? It’s not

like, oh, you really can't do it. Whereas if a guy had a kid on his own, he'd need the mum there (Tamara, age 19, W1).

Tamara's perspective is embedded in the enduring power of the mother/child dyad, which simultaneously positions engaged fatherhood as a choice. The absent father narrative is often presumed to be a particular problem in working class communities. Lewis (2002) argues that policies make class-based assumptions about absent fathers who are unwilling to financially support their children, burdening the state by leaving mothers reliant on social security. These assumptions also intersect with race; black and minority ethnic parents are more likely to be lone mothers (Elliott et al., 2015). Tamara's own experiences of having an absent father and the acceptance and prevalence of this within her community helps mitigate against any potential stigma of being a lone mother and strengthens her own identity as a 'good' mother who is managing independently and without the support of the other parent.

As previously discussed in Chapter Six, parenthood can be isolating for young mothers and this is heightened for lone parents. Transport costs and parenting with little relational support can be constraining, limiting opportunities to do things outside of the mother/child dyad,

When I have child I don't give myself to work or go out with friends. I don't know where to leave her (Simone, age 22, W1).

Simone had a particularly difficult time as she came to the UK as an asylum seeker, had no familial support and a lack of involvement from the father of her child,

If you help each other it's good for the child. If you have support you leave her. Because if he's good like helping to working, he's good hard worker, you leave her and go out with friends, to drink or have some talking. Even shopping. But I don't have that (Simone, age 22, W1).

Being a lone parent and having little support from family brings particular constraints as they are often lacking resources, especially time and space to pursue education, work or leisure,

I was in college but then I left college and I then I fell pregnant with my son. And I hadn't been back into education cos I just don't have time. I'm a lone parent so... (Monique, age 24, W1).

Lacking the time to return to education was a common issue for young mothers, particularly those who were un-partnered and the primary carer for their child. Amy echoed this,

I was in college but then I left college and I then I fell pregnant with my son. And I haven't been back into education cos I just don't have time (Amy, age 21, W1).

Amy aspired to return to education, however she had limited childcare options and planned to wait until her daughter started full time school.

In lieu of support from the father of the child or family, Sonia had interdependence with her housemate, who was also an asylum seeker from Eastern Europe,

But for the moment it's hard because if you are a single mom you have to go everywhere, appointments, shopping, getting for the house, for yourself. If you have partner or if you have a friend like me you can say, 'Caroline please can you look after my daughter, I'm just making 5 minutes a shower'. Or I will cook for half an hour, it's easy. If they were to change me and send me to [different city] it would be very hard for me (Sonia, age 22, W1).

Support networks are important for all parents, but dependence on kinships and friendships hold greater weight for those without a partner and limited options for affordable childcare.

Brown, Brady and Letherby (2011) argue that young women also have to weigh up the additional stigma attached to being a lone young mother. Being in a relationship is a way to challenge this, and some mothers may be reluctant to give up their relationship status and the positive identity it represents,

I wanted a family. A mum, dad and a baby. You just want everything. You don't want her to be the one where mum and dad aren't together and stuff like that. But it didn't work (Amy, age 21, W1).

Here Amy expressed some grief for the loss of the normative nuclear family. Gillis (1996) distinguishes between the families we live with and the families we live by. The family we live with is our everyday reality, while the family we live by is symbolic and an idealised notion of how we think the family should be, including the idealised versions of gender equality. Despite the growth in a variety of family formations and family practices, idealised notions of the nuclear family are powerful and enduring, even for young people. Lone parenthood was not what Amy envisaged family life would look like. Walking a lone tightrope presented challenges but it was also often a result of escaping domestic abuse.

8.3 Gender, power, money and domestic abuse

Fourteen of the participants had experience of domestic abuse. As discussed in Chapter Two, domestic abuse amongst young people is under-researched and there are even fewer studies on young parents, especially fathers. In this study, one father reported being the victim and another discussed violent incidences as being perpetrated by both himself and his partner. However, it was predominately lone mothers that gave accounts of domestic abuse. Experiencing domestic abuse had implications for housing pathways and constructs of home, as well as parenting capacity. In instances of domestic

abuse, home becomes risky, unsafe, and ontologically insecure; the notion of 'home as a haven' is dissolved (Dupuis and Thorns, 1998).

Women are more likely to be victims of domestic violence when they are pregnant or have a child (Lees, 2000),

The first time was when I was pregnant, he hit me in my face (Megan, aged 17, W1).

As outlined in Chapter One, young parents are disproportionately from disadvantaged backgrounds (ONS, 2014a; Hadley, 2018) and are more likely to have risk factors associated with domestic violence such as difficult and chaotic family backgrounds, family violence and care experiences (Wood and Barter 2014). Young parents' life histories and past experiences coupled with their interaction with socially determined behaviours around gender, age, family and parenthood can render them isolated and dependent on an abusive partner. Michelle and her brothers lived with her grandfather after her mother left the family because of domestic abuse from her father. Michelle moved in with her boyfriend, Patrick, when she was 12. Although he was abusive and he and his family obtained their money through criminal enterprise, Michelle's family encouraged her to stay with Patrick for financial reasons,

Patrick came from a good family. He was messed up himself but he did come from a rich family. My granddad thought that I didn't need anything when I grow up, I'll be sorted, everything could be pretty much provided and stuff like that so my granddad was all for Patrick (Michelle, age 25, W1).

Being dependent on an abusive partner smothered Michelle's agency and this negatively impacted on her health; Michelle blamed the abuse for the loss of one of her babies,

Yeah I was having twins. Erm... like I said, because of all the issues with Patrick, all the stress and everything. I had complications. I had bleeding. In and out of hospital, - I think I've still got a scan picture of them both. A couple of weeks after that scan picture was taken I ended up losing one of them... but it was more cos of me and Patrick were arguing. Patrick like I said has got anger issues so it's not an argument, it's just not just verbal (Michelle, age 25, W1).

For Michelle, having a child provided the impetus to leave her partner,

Well when Nathan was born I said I can't do it any more. Just that was enough for me cos I didn't want to go through all that with him. We were on and off for years. And sometimes mine and his arguments got so bad, cos he didn't like me going out with my friends or something, mine and his arguments got so bad that we were going down the same road as my mum and my dad and I didn't want to go down that road. With what happened. I really didn't want to go down that road (Michelle, age 25, W1).

Similarly, Samirah also separated from her abusive partner while she was pregnant,

He went back in [to prison] like a month before Zafar was born. So at this point I thought I can't do it anymore so I broke up with him over the phone. Cos I thought, he can't do anything to me over the phone! (Laughs). So I did that and basically cut him off. Spoke to him only again when I was in labour and even that proved to be a wrong decision cos he made me that stressed out that my blood pressure went up and my waters broke, which was really agonising! (Laughs). Cos it came on really sudden due to the stress (Samirah, age 23, W1).

The participants in this study reported a range of abuse, with the most common being emotional abuse and controlling behaviour. This correlates with Hird's (2000) findings that emotional abuse is most prevalent amongst

young people. Amy experienced controlling behaviour from her partner while she was living with him in his mother's house. Amy's had no relational support and her sense of home was constrained in a place that was unsafe,

I did used to go out with my mates but when I come back it would be an argument, 'what you being doing? Why you in at this time?' When I used to go out he used to drive round with his cousin and see if I was with other lads and stuff... He started getting a bit... very controlling. Where if I wanted to go out he wouldn't let me and then it would get... you know like when rats get stuck in a bucket they try get out? I got very panicky and started lashing and then it started getting into a fight. And his mum were there and it would piss me off, she used to erm... with me shouting I want to go, she used to just sit upstairs. The only thing that bugged me. So I moved all my stuff, all the baby stuff to my mums. Stayed there for a couple of days. Then I found 'Mosaic'. Moved into there (Amy, age 21, W1).

The abuse Amy received and the passive acceptance from her partner's mother prompted Amy to seek housing support and then move into her own independent accommodation. However, some participants were reluctant to seek support. Jayden was a victim of domestic abuse, but as a man he felt unable to report what was going on,

She used to whack me up all the time. You know, like, know what I mean, like it's not very good for a, well a lad to go to the police saying they've been battered by their girlfriend. They just don't do that do they. Like she, she, she were quite a violent person, know what I mean. Not, not to worry about that she'd ever harm me daughter or anything like that. But she, get on the wrong side of her and she's nasty... That's why we just ended it. No good for Courtney (Jayden, age 20, FYF W1).

Jayden left his partner as he thought the abuse was having a negative impact on his child. Similarly, Danny ended his relationship with the mother of his

child due to domestic abuse. Danny admitted to being a perpetrator of domestic violence, although he claims his partner was also violent towards him.

I just flipped out at anything. I gripped her by the throat and pinned her up, that's when I thought I didn't want it around him. Left for a good reason. And now she's got a new boyfriend. Let's see if that boyfriend doesn't batter her. She is a handful. She is... we've had police out quite a lot of times. Not just me, it's her too (Danny, age 21, W1).

Wood and Barter (2014) argue that relationships between youths are not considered to be serious in the same way as adult relationships are. With domestic abuse, there is a taboo and a lack of support that is relational and inclusive of fathers (Neale and Patrick, 2016). Often abusive behaviours are not recognised as such, particularly if it is not physical violence. Young parents may be reluctant to disclose domestic abuse to professionals for fear of social services involvement. Stephanie and Craig had to attend Common Assessment Framework (CAF) meetings after an incident of domestic violence. The case was closed and the couple found the support helpful,

It's helped him. Cos he does, yeah he does still have anger issues. It's not as bad as what it used to be. And I think going to that CAF meeting has also helped him cope with his anger. He uses his own coping mechanisms. Or whatever you want to call them. He does well now. 100 x better. Yeah he has his bad moments sometimes but we get through it. He's even started opening up and talking to me now. Which helped coping. But the CAF meetings, it's helped. We're on track. We're doing well. Well we must be because the CAF meetings have now stopped. And he's progressing well with his anger. I think he is anyway. I've said it to everyone, he's done brilliant with it (Stephanie, age 22, W1).

Safeguarding does, and indeed should, take precedence, however, the risk framework can be unnecessarily exclusionary and narrow in parameters

(Ladlow and Neale, 2016; Neale and Patrick, 2016). This did not appear to be the case with Stephanie and Craig and receiving support from professionals to improve communication and cope with anger issues had helped them move on from incidences of abuse.

However, some lone mothers controlled contact between children and their fathers as a defence strategy to protect themselves and their children (Smart and Neale, 1999). Some of the lone mothers in this research were unwilling to seek support from the fathers of their children as they wanted to avoid them having contact and influence in their children's lives. In paying maintenance, the mothers feared that the fathers would then have a stake in their children's lives: cash and care are therefore even more intertwined from their perspective,

I don't want anything from them... to put it bluntly, they're arse wipes! (laughs). What's the point? If my son's going to just feel rejected, what's the point in having anything to do with them at all? I don't want pity money (Samirah, age 23, W1).

Refusing, or not pursuing, financial contributions was a way for mothers to reject fathers having contact with their children. There is an assumption that accepting money acts as currency for contact. Taking sole financial responsibility strengthens the 'good' lone mother identity, especially in cases where refusing contact is on the grounds of domestic abuse. In opposition then, it maintains fathers as feckless, absent and uncaring. Independent lone motherhood and rejecting financial contributions from the father or not being offered maintenance at all can be facilitated by social security (Lewis, 2002).

However, lone mothers still get worse deal in terms of benefit entitlements and welfare cuts. The Child Maintenance Service (formally known as the Child Support Agency) operates to enforce fathers financially support their biological children, whether they have contact with them or not. However, while this policy may reduce some social security costs, it reduces fathers to a breadwinning role and devalues care. Child maintenance systems

problematically reinforce fathers as economic providers and mothers as carers (Natalier and Hewitt, 2014; Tarrant, 2017). In addition, cuts to legal aid means legal custody rights are difficult to obtain. While fathers have the ability to opt out of their parenting responsibilities and mothers can also reject involvement, this may also entail a loss of financial contributions. However, for the lone mothers in this study, rejecting child maintenance payments was worth it to safeguard themselves and their children.

This section brings new insight into the under-researched area of young parenthood and domestic abuse. Within this small sample, domestic abuse was common and mothers and fathers were both perpetrators and victims. However, mothers were more likely to have experienced being victims of domestic abuse and their accounts detailed a range of tactics used to safeguard themselves and their children from risk. Domestic abuse is a taboo topic (Neale and Patrick 2016) and the lack of extant literature perhaps reflects the ideology in much of the young parenthood research of challenging negative portrayals of young parents. However, shying away from domestic abuse as a taboo topic does a disservice to young parents who are experiencing it. There is a need understand the complexity of domestic abuse and relationship dynamics in order to provide suitable support. The evidence here shows that more support is needed for young parents who experience domestic abuse and that it needs to be taken seriously. When appropriate support is offered, it can have a significant positive impact on the family, as the case of Stephanie and Craig showed.

8.4 Education, Employment and Training: relational, gendered and disadvantaged pathways

This section explores how family and housing pathways intersect and impacted upon the participants' education, employment and training (EET) pathways. EET is a key concern in relation to young parenthood, and social policies have sought to increase young parents' participation in education and

employment (SEU, 1999). This is connected to the idea introduced in Chapter One, that young parents are considered 'problematic' in relation to welfare dependency and stigmatised for being NEET. Calver (2019) argues that being in education or employment is a way for young parents to gain respectability, as they are aware of the stigma attached to young parenthood and how valuable education and employment is in society. Across the sample there were a variety of education and employment experiences. As discussed in Chapter Five, many of the participants from chaotic backgrounds had rocky education experiences. For example, Andy's education was consistently hampered by difficulties within his family and Megan's frequent house moves led to difficult school moves.

EET pathways are shaped over time by relational and housing tightropes. The findings shows clear gender differences; most mothers were NEET at the time of the research (11 out of 15) while most fathers were either in work or had recently been employed (6 out of 7). However, a QL analysis shows a more complex picture. All participants had been in education or employment prior to having a child, many moved in and out of EET during the course of the research, and they all had EET aspirations and plans for the near future. Participants' experiences with EET were fragmented and difficult to navigate. This is reflective of disadvantaged young people and contemporary EET opportunities (MacDonald and Giazitzoglu, 2019; MacDonald et al., 2020). The analysis of the education and employment status of the participants in this study shows how disadvantage and gender intersect to enable or constrain pathways for young parents. Entering parenthood was disruptive for all of the mothers, whereas the fathers' EET pathways were less affected.

The following subsections compare the EET experiences of mothers and fathers over time, based on their gender, relationships and background categories of stable/chaotic as first outlined in Chapter Five.

8.4.1 Stable backgrounds and EET

Name	Stable-chaotic	Relationship W1	Relationship W2	EET W1	EET W2
Amy	SS-SS	Lone-parent	Lone-parent	NEET	
Chelsea	SS-SS	Lone-parent	Lone-parent	NEET	
Jayden	SS-SS	Co-parent	Co-parent	NEET	Employed. Manual work
Jock	SS-SS	Co-parent	Co-parent	University student/part-time employment	Employed. Teacher
Monique	SS-SS	Lone-parent	Lone-parent	NEET	

Figure 21: Stable backgrounds and EET

These participants came from a stable background and remained in the stable category throughout the research. These participants were also separated from the other parent of their child, with their housing configurations and relationship status also impacting upon their EET opportunities and constraints.

The stable family/stable housing background of these participants was conducive to their engagement and opportunities in EET,

Well the way I was brought up was like I'd go to school everyday until I leave school and that's how I want to bring my son up. Studying, doing your homework, getting good grades and try get a good job. At least try you know? (Monique, age 24, W1).

Despite the value Monique placed on education, becoming a mother put the brakes on her EET trajectory,

I was studying [course]. Level 1 and level 2. I passed both of those. I wanted to get like an office job. But erm... It was just like a really hard. If I would have carried on with it who knows what would have happened... I'd love to get back into it (Monique, age 24, W1).

Similarly, Amy had planned to go to university and had been accepted onto a course in a different city. However, this was derailed when she found out she was pregnant and she dropped out of college,

I got accepted [to university] but I left [college] cos I couldn't really concentrate. And you end up with baby brain. After you've had a kid you don't know nowt. Honestly. Sometimes I don't even know where to put stuff like shopping and stuff. It's proper mad how it changes (Amy, age 21, W1).

Amy and Monique were on a journey towards successful EET pathways and studying in Further Education at the time of conception. However, they dropped out of education to take care of their children and while they both had future plans to re-enter education, these plans were complicated by their relationship and household configuration as lone parents.

On the other hand, despite his early entry into parenthood, Jock continued with his EET trajectory of going to university and getting a professional job. As he was not the primary carer, his education and employment pathways continued uninterrupted and his son provided a motivating factor for him to work harder, improve his grades and gain successful employment,

I work harder on my Uni work, I can tell from the grades that I got last year when I didn't know that I were going to be a dad to my grades this year. They have gone up. So it just shows that I'm working hard (Jock, age 20, FYF W1).

While Jock, and Jayden, continued with uninterrupted EET pathways they had to compromise time spent with their children. This was particularly tricky for the separated fathers who had to navigate space and place constraints of living in different households to their children. At the time of the interview Jayden had recently started a new permanent full time that he 'loved'. However, the shift pattern was different to the job he had previously so he had

to rearrange the times he looked after his daughter and he went from having her three nights per week to two,

It was hard at first. I've been there 3 month now. And I'm bored through the week. If I could have her a Monday or Wednesday, even just one extra day. But I started work at 10am at my last place so I could get up and chill out but when you're up at 5 in the morning to get ready for work, by the time you... you might finish earlier but you're tired. So there's no point in me going to pick up Courtney up at 5 to have her until 7 to take her all the way back to be in bed by 9 to be up at 5. So I just have her Friday. It's ok now, Courtney's used to it so it's all good. (Jayden, age 23, W1).

In comparing the mums and dads from stable backgrounds, clear gender differences in parental roles emerged, affecting their education pathways. Jock and Jayden aspired to the normative breadwinner roles and prioritised work. In contrast, Amy and Monique's priorities markedly shifted and their motherhood identities and practices became all encompassing. As discussed earlier in this chapter, Amy and Monique had limited childcare options as the primary carers for their children. While Jock and Jayden worked full time and arranged seeing their children around their working hours. It may be that in the longer term, once Amy and Monique's children are older and in school, they are able to return to the EET pathways they were on before. Previous research has shown that teenage pregnancy has little impact on qualifications, employment or earnings by the age of 30 (Ermisch and Pevalin, 2003). With this in mind, having a child may lead to a 'pause' in EET pathways for young mothers, rather than a stop.

8.4.2 Chaotic backgrounds and EET

Name	Stable/ chaotic	Relationship W1	Relationship W2	EET W1	EET W2
Andy	CC-SC	Cohabiting	Co-parenting	NEET	Retail worker
Brooke	CC-SS	Cohabiting	Co-parenting	College student	College
Craig	CS-SS	Cohabiting	Cohabiting	Employed	Employed
Chris	CC-SS	Cohabiting	Cohabiting	NEET	Fast food worker
Danny	SC-SC	Co-parenting		NEET	
George	CC-SC	Cohabiting	Single	NEET	Part-time employed manual work
Jordan	CC-CC	Single		NEET	
Kerry		Cohabiting	Lone parent	NEET	NEET
Kimberly	CC-CC	Single		NEET	
Megan		Lone parent		NEET	
Michelle	CC-CC	Lone parent		NEET	
Samirah	CC-SS	Lone parent	Lone parent	College student	College student
Simone	CC-SS	Lone parent	Lone parent	NEET	NEET
Sonia	CC-CC	Lone parent		NEET	
Stephanie	CC-SS	Cohabiting	Cohabiting	College student	NEET
Tamara	CC-SS	Lone parent	Lone parent	NEET	NEET

Figure 22: Chaotic backgrounds and EET

Participants in this category were predominantly NEET. The mothers who were NEET were claiming income support and were out of EET whilst caring for their young children. Three of the mothers were also juggling college courses. One of the mothers, Kimberly, was claiming ESA for mental health problems after having her children removed. Of the fathers, Andy and Chris obtained their first jobs during the course of the research. Jordan was experiencing mental health problems and claiming ESA. George, Danny and Craig all drifted in and out of low paid work and unstable employment.

For those from the most chaotic backgrounds it was not entering parenthood that disrupted EET pathways, their trajectories were repeatedly affected by adversity. Precarious and limited employment opportunities were a key issue

for the dads. The mums talked about their EET aspirations but other life events were stifling, not just parenthood.

Danny was often in trouble at school and left with few qualifications. However, he went straight into employment after school. At the time of his interview, Danny had recently been let go by the agency he was working for. However, he was able to draw upon relational resources as his mother was in the process of getting him a job at her place of employment,

Danny: Yeah. I'm going to find a job eventually but not through the agencies. A proper job what's just there for me permanently.

Linzi: I suppose with the agency you never know how long it's going to be for.

Danny: Well it was supposed to be until Christmas and then if they liked you they kept you on. But they didn't. Tried to put me on a waiting list. They took the job off me 6 times. I phoned up and they gave me it back. Then I went back in and they put me on a waiting list after I finished that week... I see my mum every day. She helps me out here and there. Food. Cos obviously I haven't been paid by the job centre yet. So she's been helping me out. She's trying to get me a job [at her place of employment] (Danny, age 21, W1).

Moving between employment and claiming welfare benefits was problematic as this had the potential to leave periods of time without income. Insecure and short-term employment constrains ontological security and leaves families struggling financially. George had moved in and out of work multiple times. He was claiming ESA at the time of his first interview due to depression and was working part-time at the second interview. During his first interview he spoke about how difficult it was to manage financially and how this felt as a father,

At the minute cos of all the problems I've had trying to get work I'm actually on the sick due to depression. It's pretty hard trying to get jobs these days. Even with all the qualifications I've got. It's a nightmare... It's tough. It is tough. Cos I want the best for him [son]. I want to make

sure I've got the best for him and at the minute it's hard as hell to do that. Especially on the money (George, age 23, W1).

Like George, Stephanie found it difficult to find work. She also had the added barrier of trying to find a job that would fit in around her caring responsibilities. As such, she was considering working night shifts,

Craig's mum is trying to actually have a look at her place, where she works, a night job for me, for nights. Fingers crossed something comes up so that I can do that. Because that I'll be able to do, it's just cleaning, really. I want to be in work. It's just- well, I'm not really- what's the word, I'm not- I've forgotten the word. Like, suitable for any other jobs because I haven't got the experience. So it's very hard to find one. Like, I even tried retail, but they're saying I ain't got enough experience and it just really annoys me, because I always think, well, you say I ain't got no experience but you're not willing to take me on for me to be experienced? It's just really irritating (Stephanie, age 23, W2).

Despite cohabiting, Stephanie was in a similar position to the lone mothers who were unable to fit EET around caring responsibilities. She was struggling to find employment due to her limited work experience, lack of qualifications and constraints on her time. Stephanie ideally wanted to go and finish her college course, which had been disrupted by her pregnancies and other difficult life events. She was no longer entitled to free education and had left without obtaining qualifications. Stephanie was the primary carer for her children once her partner, Craig, began working full time. She was unable to fit EET around childcare and the 3 hours per day her youngest child was in nursery,

If I go back to college I have to pay for it. We can't really afford two grand. And that's just for college. And I ain't really got the time with Craig being at work, now. You only have three hours a day in nursery for the whole week, so I'm going to wait until they're in school, and try and find summat. It would be best as soon as she goes to school.

Because it'll be full days then... I'll be able to work round it better. No-one's really going to hire me for three hours in the morning, are they? Not even that, because I mean, travelling there and then travelling back, to be able to pick them up in time, because nobody else can do it. Because his mum's working, my dad's working, so we haven't got no-one else (Stephanie, age 23, W2).

The disrupted education experiences of the mothers in this study highlight the need for greater support from schools and colleges. Megan was pregnant through her first year of college and had her daughter a month after sitting her exams. Her college gave her little support,

They just asked me if I were coming back or not, and that was it really. And I filled out some plan, some form about-, they weren't that arsed, basically (Megan, age 17, W1).

Megan took a year out of college but she was unable to pick up where she left off,

Well they won't let me study [course] anymore because the syllabus has changed. I was going to resit my exams as well, because I didn't do so good, but now they're not letting anyone resit (Megan, age 17, W1).

Samirah had a similar experience with a lack of support from college. She was in her second year of college when she became pregnant,

I got pregnant midway through it [college course] so ended up having to leave. The school did promise that they were going to the things schools are supposed to do, give me a laptop and send homework via email.... So the school did promise they would help me but they didn't. So dropped out and sort of was a mum for a while (Samirah, age 23, W1).

Samirah re-entered education as her child got a bit older and she felt better able to manage. There is a pressure on young mothers to stay in EET when they have a child that stands in contrast to the acceptance and expectation of older mothers to take a period of maternity leave (Ellis-Sloan, 2017). Megan considered entering employment instead of going back to college but it was not suitable while her daughter was so young,

Recently I applied for an apprenticeship and they're going to give me an interview, but now I don't want to go to the interview. Cause, like, it's really good, it's actually surprisingly good money, and I'd be able to do a lot if I was living in my mum's house with it, but I don't want to-, it's 8 till half 5, so it means Willow will be in nursery for a long time, every day. And she's so clingy as it is, she'll be so terrified. So I don't think I'm going to do it. And you don't get that many holidays, so like she'll be at nursery in the holidays, which is going to be horrible for her. And at college, it's everyday but Sundays I finish at 12 or 1, so-, (Megan, age 17, W1).

The young mothers were faced with difficult choices around entering EET or prioritising care. Unpaid care is devalued in society and disadvantaged young parents, particularly mothers, face a double burden of stigma for entering parenthood early and claiming benefits (Yardley, 2008; Ellis-Sloan, 2014). The pressure to enter EET alongside caring for their children was particularly heightened for lone mothers who did not have a partner to share responsibilities with. Tamara had previously worked full time and had a number of qualifications. At the beginning of the research she had been successful in her application for an apprenticeship. However, similar to Megan she decided to turn it down, as her son was just a few months old. At the time of the second interview she had started a college course but her personal life made it too difficult to continue. Tamara had been in an abusive relationship; she became pregnant and had an abortion. She was also dealing with serious housing problems,

Tamara: I got the job! But I turned it down, because everyone made me chicken out, saying 'oh it's working too early' and stuff. So I turned it down. Erm, and then-

Linzi: You really wanted to do it at the time, I remember you saying.

Tamara: Yeah, I did. And then I moved to this house. And then my life fell apart from there! [laughs] Literally... So I took it [the house], and not really knowing what the area was like when I moved in. The first week I moved in, my window got smashed. And then my fence got taken. And then, erm, [sigh] my ex-boyfriend hit me for the first time... And then, I split up with him. And then I had an abortion, and then I got happier, and then everything just got worse (Tamara, age 21, W2).

Tamara was fire fighting a series of accumulated difficulties that prevented her from fulfilling her strong EET aspirations. She described a sense of 'liminality' (Van Gennep, 1960) as difficult life events left unable to move onto fulfilling her ambitions. The on-going and spiralling difficulties threatened to become a semi-permanent and entrenched state of material and emotional hardship.

Erm, I've just stopped doing it [college course]. I've just literally just stopped going. I'll be able to take it up eventually, when I'm feeling up to it, but right now I just can't be bothered... right now it's just not the time. I was really good at what I was doing. It's just I lost all interest and concentration, and I'm not putting my all into it, so I'm not doing it. It's just stress I don't need (Tamara, age 21, W2).

Tamara placed a high value on work and was especially keen for her son to see her working,

Linzi: Yeah. So how important is being a mum in your life?

Tamara: It's the most important thing. It puts you under pressure, as well, I think. Because now, like, it's more of a thing for me to- I put myself under pressure to- I need to get a job, and I need to loads of all these things. But then, you can't really do- I can't really do all the things I want to do because you have to find things that will work around

them. So it is difficult. It is important that you take everything they need into consideration. Plus for me, because I don't have, like, loads of family support and stuff, everything's ten times harder. Whereas if you've got like, I don't know, a husband or your family and that to help, it's not that bad (Tamara, age 21, W2).

Despite Tamara's best efforts, the relational and housing tightropes she was balancing on were too precarious. Her difficult relationships with her family and ex-partner intersected with her housing problems and left her with little opportunity to focus on anything else. Tamara's experiences show how fragile relational and housing tightropes are. When she fell off the tightrope there was no real safety net to catch her. Tamara had received various forms of support and intervention (as discussed in Chapter Seven) but this was not sustained and the bad advice she got in terms of housing had significant consequences for her wellbeing.

On the other hand, Michelle received support from a housing support worker that helped her learn how to read and write, and to get a job.

Because I've got learning difficulties and stuff it was harder for me to learn these stuff. So when 'Agora' stepped in, they could see I was struggling, it was Simon at 'Agora' who has now left, he turned round to me and went 'you need this help, you do'. And I was like, 'no I don't...'. but he was the one that noticed, cos like I said, I'd been going there for a while and Simon sort of saw that I was struggling so he's the one that helped me out. He ended up getting me a housing support worker. But he helped me out and then he helped me get my English and Maths and he motivated me to go to [supermarket] and start working there and stuff. So if it wasn't for him really helping me out this way I don't even no where I'd be right now. I really don't. I owe a lot to Simon (Michelle, age 25, W1).

The holistic support provided by Simon, a floating housing support worker at 'Agora', helped Michelle gain independence and escape an abusive

relationship. Good support like this can be powerful in shaping young people's opportunities.

In terms of EET all of the fathers prioritised work, even if they were unable to gain steady employment. It was a little more complex for the mothers, with some privileging strong motherhood identities exclusive of paid work, while other had idealised working mother aspirations, even if those aspirations were not realised (as in Tamara's case). For the young parents in this study, there were a range of constraints and barriers to EET that impacted upon family life. Ultimately, it was intersecting relational and housing difficulties rather than aspirations that hampered desired EET pathways.

8.5 Walking relational tightropes

This chapter builds on the empirical insights generated in Chapters Five, Six and Seven to show how ontological security is not simply about housing as a practical base (Someville's (1992) notion of 'home as shelter'), but it is about housing as the ontological core of family life (Someville's (1992) idea of 'home as heart'). Stable housing is of essential importance as the foundation of family life. For young parents who experienced ontological insecurity, this was not only in relation to their housing; it fundamentally shaped their family lives, relationships and their sense of home. The disadvantaged young parents in this study were not just walking a housing tightrope (as discussed in Chapter Seven) they were also walking a relational tightrope. For those from chaotic family/chaotic housing backgrounds, the fragility and volatility of relationships was a precarious balancing act that impinged upon their EET pathways. Some participants were dealing with significant relational and housing adversity, and snowballing problems threatened to become an entrenched state of 'liminality' (Van Gennep, 1960).

Many of the participants described traditional gender roles with the fathers taking on less responsibility than the mothers. This was particularly the case

for the separated parents, whereas couples tended to see their roles as more equal, especially when the father was unemployed. This demonstrates that while engaged fatherhood is desirable amongst mothers and fathers, the ability to actually fulfil this role depends on specific contexts in terms of relationships, resources and living arrangements. Relationships and housing arrangements provide different opportunities and constraints for 'doing' the family and 'doing' home. The household and relationship configurations discussed here offer insights for only a short period of time; the categories are fluid and likely to change. The two couples that separated during the course of the research went from describing an equitable distribution of childcare when they lived together, to the mothers becoming primary carers and gatekeepers to fathers' contact with the children.

The evidence shows that there are different models of parenting within and across households, which reflect shifts in both ideologies and practices. Attitudes amongst young parents largely embraced the idea of the engaged father and equal parenting; however, resources were barriers to equality in every setting. With the interplay between subjective, structural and relational disadvantages, there was a tendency to revert to traditional gender roles in order to manage. Intersecting structural inequalities were also significant, contributing additional barriers to mainstream notions of 'good' motherhood and fatherhood. In most cases, the mother/child dyad remained significant. The mother/father/child triad was on the periphery, and in tension with the privileging of the mother/child relationship (Miller and Dermott, 2015). This privileging of the mother/child dyad could also be purposefully invoked to order to exclude unwanted involvement of fathers, as was the case for some lone mothers who had experienced domestic abuse. However, roles are becoming more malleable and with attitudinal changes, broader transformations may occur if there is structural support to accommodate this. As Miller (2018 p2) argues, 'parenting is undertaken and choreographed in highly gendered and politicised contexts and only gradually are socially constructed care arrangements being challenged and reconfigured'. Equitable co-parenting would be more achievable if both parents had access to housing that provided a suitable place to parent (Neale and Ladlow, 2015).

While greater support for childcare would allow mothers to enter EET if they wanted to, caring for young children should be seen as a valid choice and not devalued. As there are a disproportionately high number of separated young parents, support to maintain positive relationships with each other could be beneficial. This could be in the form of mediation for example. There is a greater need for informal agreements and childcare arrangements between separated couples, as it is increasingly difficult to obtain legal aid for court proceedings. Gender roles in the context of different housing/relationship configurations needs to be taken into account in policy initiatives, however it is unlikely to improve without addressing complex and multiple disadvantages. Adequate housing is critical for young parents, particularly separated fathers. They are marginalised in policy and relegated to 'second' parent status, while mothers are more likely to receive housing support and SRS housing eligibility as the primary carer. However, mothers' EET trajectories were highly constrained in comparison to the fathers'. This chapter brings fresh insight into gendered parenting and family practices. It has been shown that while gender equity is idealised, it is difficult to realise. Processes of regendering cannot be separated from the context of available resources and disadvantaged circumstances. Housing and living arrangements play a significant role in enabling or constraining gender equality.

8.6 Conclusion

This chapter has considered how young parents 'do' family, gender within the context of household configurations. The nature of the relationship between the two young parents is shaped through gendered expectations and power play such as domestic abuse. In turn, relational tightropes are shaped through housing pathways and concepts of home. Relational and housing tightropes shape life chances and other pathways such as EET. For disadvantaged young parents, constraints on their resources shaped their family practices. There was often disconnection between desired gender relationships and their lived experiences.

Across different household configurations, cohabiting represented the greatest opportunity for transformative gender practices as they had the most resources available to facilitate this. Couples who were co-parenting but not living together were navigating a terrain of compromises; fathers were more able to be involved when mothers acted as gate openers. Amongst separated couples, the biggest barrier was not their relationship with the other parent, but the practicality of living in separate households. For lone mothers, their resources were highly constrained and the mother/child dyad was emphasised to compensate for the absence of fathers. Mothers may have serious reasons to exclude fathers, such as domestic abuse. The evidence from the mothers in this study shows that for some, lone parenthood was a choice associated with protecting themselves and their children. This chapter has provided new insight into how family lives and housing are intrinsically interrelated. Relational tightropes are incredibly wobbly for some and this impinges life chances and all aspects of daily life. This chapter contributes new evidence on the gender roles of young parents, showing a disconnection between ideology and practice, as constrained by structural barriers.

Chapter Nine: Conclusion

9.1 Introduction

The problem with young parents can more accurately be termed a problem with disadvantaged youths. At the heart of the problem is alleged welfare dependency, with housing being a particularly contentious issue. This thesis has explored the housing experiences and support needs of young parents, challenging the notion that young parenthood is problematic and highlighting how important housing is to ontological security and family life. Housing support services play a vital role in guiding young parents along their housing pathways and helping them to establish family homes. This concluding chapter summarises the main arguments of the thesis, drawing out theoretical and methodological contributions and policy implications. The chapter ends by highlighting the novel contributions of the study and implications for future research.

9.2 Theoretical contribution

In Chapter One, intersecting substantial themes were presented. These were, disadvantage, family practices, youth transitions, home and ontological security. This section highlights how they have been deployed in the thesis, generating a novel theoretical contribution that is useful for the fields of youth, family and housing studies. Chapters One, Two and Three surveyed the existing literature and found gaps in research that explored the experiences of both mothers and fathers. A small number of studies do mention housing as a key issue in relation to young parents (Cooke and Owen, 2007; Giullari and Shaw, 2005; Neale and Ladlow, 2015). However, there is a lack of in-depth research focusing on housing and home.

As outlined in Chapter One, the term 'disadvantage' is in dichotomy with 'advantage' (Dean and Platt, 2016) and is often used axiomatically as a catchall term for those who live in poverty or deprived areas. This thesis has shown the complexity and diversity amongst young parents who can be considered disadvantaged based on their environmental, economic and social backgrounds. Disadvantage is shaped by family relationships and housing pathways. There is considerable diversity within the framing of disadvantage. Some participants experienced stability over time as they were well resourced and supported by their families and had ontologically secure homes. Other participants gained some stability and became less disadvantaged through accessing housing support services and obtaining a quality home. However, for some, disadvantage became entrenched. The most disadvantaged young parents were walking highly precarious entwined relational and housing tightropes. The analysis in this thesis points towards a need to use the term 'disadvantage' with greater nuance; the evidence shows that there is substantial diversity within disadvantage, and the concept of resources can usefully be deployed in order to unravel that diversity. A more diverse framing of disadvantage can usefully provide insights into life chances and intergenerational reproduction of disadvantage.

Using the theoretical framework of family practices (Morgan, 1996; 2011; 2020) this thesis has considered how young parents 'do' family, relationships, gender and home. New insights emerged into the desire for transformative gender practices that were often thwarted by the significant structural barriers that prevent disadvantaged young parents from living their ideological gender practices. Doing family and doing home were closely connected. Intergenerational family practices were also significant. For those who lived with their parents, or partner's parents, when their children were born, intergenerational relationships could be supportive or constraining. Those with harmonious and stable family relationships and practices benefitted from intergenerational support and a safe and quality place to parent. While participants that had difficult and chaotic family relationships experienced constrained constructs of home, which acted as a push factor to obtain their own independent housing. The analysis contributes new insights into how

disadvantage and structural constraints operate to maintain 'traditional' gendered family practices despite an ideological desire for change.

Previous research has conceptualised entering parenthood as 'taking the fast lane to adulthood' (McDermott and Graham 2005). However, the findings here show some young parents have a range of prior experiences and responsibilities that engender a strong sense of independence and maturity. Becoming a parent did not signify a shift to adulthood as they were already there. The main problem participants faced as they entered into parenthood was the lack of material resources, particularly access to quality housing. Support services also play a vital role in supporting a period of semi-independence for those who need it. Becoming a young parent has often been hailed as a 'turning point' (Neale, 2016), whereby the young person moves away from risky or criminal behaviour (Ladlow and Neale, 2016). While this positive young parenthood literature is useful in challenging the pervasive notion of problematic, feckless young parents, the findings in this thesis show a more nuanced picture. Participants often did see their entry into parenthood as a reason for self-improvement; however, this was not necessarily an instant change. As shown in Chapter Six in the case of Jayden, desisting from criminal activity was a slow road. Gender differences also emerged with young women feeling increasingly isolated following their entry into motherhood. This may be related to the tendency of mothers to pause their EET pathways, while fathers were able to continue uninterrupted.

Overall, the findings make a new contribution to youth studies in problematising the term 'young' parent and adding weight to the conceptualisation of youth transitions and the life course as fluid and messy (Furlong 2007). However, young parents perhaps more readily embody a 'condensed' transition to adulthood rather than 'protracted' (Allan and Crow 2001; Jones 1995), and while early entry into parenthood is increasingly unusual and often considered a deviant life course path, young parents themselves frame it rather more as an empowered choice.

The housing pathways of young parents were often shaped by their family relationships. While existing research shows that young people are living with their parents for longer (Stone et al., 2013), for young parents this was not always possible or desirable. Finding a suitable place to parent was difficult. For those from more stable backgrounds with better resources, continuing to live with their own parents was beneficial but not without some difficulties. For those from more chaotic backgrounds, finding an independent home was urgent and in some cases resulted in them accepting accommodation that was poor quality, in an undesirable area, and/or unsuitable in the long term. Applying the concept of ontological security is a novel approach to understanding young parents and their constructs of home over time. A home that provides ontological security is a secure base from which to engage in other activities in life, such as EET. Conversely, those whose homes were ontologically insecure were dealing with a litany of difficulties generated by poor quality housing and difficult relationships. This curtailed their opportunities to engage in EET or plans for the future. Volatile relationships and difficult housing pathways intersect and are highly constraining. Home as an ontologically secure base is vital in enabling opportunities and planning for the future.

9.3 Methodological contribution

The Qualitative Longitudinal (QL) research design facilitated an insight into the participants' lives over time and tracked them through various changes and continuities. The biographical approach to interviews took into consideration the life course as a whole, with the aim of analysing the synchronicities between young parents' backgrounds, their present circumstances and their future aspirations.

Time as both a vehicle and object of study (Henwood and Shirani, 2011) has enabled the generation of new knowledge. Tracking mothers and fathers; couples, co-parents and lone parents over time enabled an exploration of how young parents' relationships change over time. A QL approach provided a

nuanced picture of how relationality intersects with housing pathways and constructs of home, which in turn impinges upon life chances. Using the theoretical tool of time to work across temporal planes of the past, present and the future has been invaluable in demonstrating how and why changes and continuities occur. For the participants who experienced chaotic family lives and chaotic housing throughout the research, difficulties accumulated, leaving them living in 'discontinuous time' (Neale, 2021), whereby troubles create a preoccupation with the present. Taking a QL approach, and incorporating a range of methods, generated an in-depth, dynamic and fluid picture of young parents' experiences of housing support, constructs of home and family. For example, in the cases of Andy and Brooke, their parenting practices and ideals of shared care shifted once they separated. The barriers of living in different households and moving into employment saw them revert to more traditional gender roles with Brooke becoming the primary carer (see Chapter Eight). Capturing these changes, and showing how ideologies can be constrained by circumstances and resources, are findings that could not so easily be captured by other methods and further highlight the benefit of a QL approach.

QL is an invaluable approach in studying the dynamic interplay of structure and agency (Corden and Millar, 2007; Neale, 2021). 'Walking alongside' (Neale and Flowerdew, 2003; Neale, 2021) participants through their entry into parenthood and as they navigated their housing pathways generated insight into the challenges they faced in the context of current housing policies, welfare reform and reduced support services. QL research can follow individual responses to structural reforms over time and has the potential to usefully inform policy and practice with the richness and depth of data generated. Policy has to take process into account; we cannot understand policy without the fluid causality (Neale 2021).

QL research has significant explanatory power (Neale 2021) and in the context of rapid changes and challenges emerging in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic, future researchers would benefit from incorporating a QL research design. Indeed, one of the issues with QL research is when to stop

(Neale, 2021). This research study does continue in some capacity, as the Following Young Fathers Further project (Tarrant et al., 2020) has recruited some of same participants and FYFF continues to explore some of the key issues raised in this thesis in relation to young fathers and their families. Furthermore, the dataset will be deposited in the Timescapes Archive for future researchers to use. Research is ongoing and this thesis is part of a wider conversation and contribution to methodological advancements in QL research.

9.4 Research findings summary

A central argument of this research is that the ‘problem’ with young parenthood is a problem with disadvantage. The evidence in this study shows that there is diversity in disadvantage, with participants’ housing pathways, experiences and support needs diverging based on their resources and relationships over time. Participants experiencing chaotic families and chaotic housing were often living in ‘discontinuous time’ (Neale, 2021) whereby difficulties create a preoccupation with the present. Relational and housing difficulties made it difficult to think about the future. Home and family were found to be inextricably linked, with household and family configurations facilitating or curtailing idealised gender, family and home practices.

Returning to the research questions, the project set out to explore the lived experiences of young parents in relation to housing and the policy and practice processes involved. Below, the research questions are outlined [detailed research questions and aims are set out in the ‘conceptual road map’ in Chapter 4].

1. How and why do young people become parents at a young age? How do they manage this transition and its aftermath?
2. How does housing provision impact on young parents? What factors shape their housing pathways, and how are these pathways negotiated and experienced? How is ‘home’ understood?

3. What forms of supported housing are available for disadvantaged young parents? How do they experience this support over time?

Below, the answers to these questions are summarised based on the substantive themes discussed in the empirical chapters.

9.5.1 Choosing to become a young parent

Chapter Five shows how past experiences shape entry into parenthood. This chapter also set out the analytical quadrant for the research that categorised the participants based on their stable or chaotic family and housing experiences. This quadrant was updated in subsequent chapters to show the changes and continuities that occurred in their lives over time. Chapter Five showed how participants' backgrounds and resources shaped their aspirations and life chances. Chapter Six then went on to explore participants' entry into parenthood and the circumstances that led to that point. The chapter problematised the dichotomy of planned/unplanned pregnancies and showed a more nuanced picture whereby pregnancies were often anticipated without formalised time expectations. The notion that young parents make a choice to have children in order to access social housing was challenged, with evidence showing that benefit entitlement was not a consideration in decision making. Furthermore, as shown in Chapter Seven, accessing social housing was difficult and choices were highly constrained. Young parents often had to make quick decisions about housing that were not always fully informed and in some cases left participants stuck in unsuitable accommodation.

This research sits within existing literature on young parenthood that challenges negative stereotypes of feckless and irresponsible young mothers and fathers. The analysis in Chapter Six shows that becoming a young parent was seen as an empowering choice. Many of the participants had a strong anti-abortion stance and whether pregnancies were planned, anticipated or unplanned, their children were very much wanted. The polemic constructs of young parenthood as a positive or negative have been problematised.

Entering parenthood at a young age can be a turning point, and route to stability, however, it is not an easy road to navigate. Young parenthood did not necessarily signal the transition to adulthood as many participants (particularly those from chaotic backgrounds) had already had experiences that had prepared them for parenthood, such as caring responsibilities for their siblings. Some participants, like Tamara, were living independently prior to becoming a parent. They were well equipped with the personal skills to become parents. The difficulties they encountered were related to having first not accumulated enough resources to be wholly independent. Disadvantaged young parents often have to rely on formal or familial support, and their age leaves them with limited experiences and opportunities for employment. Significantly, young parents can be rushed into making decisions from a limited range of housing options.

Social policies that focus on reducing young parenthood with an aim of reducing state financial dependence would be better-placed tackling inequalities. All of the participants in this study made thoughtful decisions to plan a pregnancy or to continue with an unexpected conception. Young parents need to be supported and empowered in making that decision without an assumption of irresponsibility. The stigma attached to young parenthood paints it as failed individual choice and coincides with the notion that young parents purposefully conceive in order to obtain a council house. Young parents enter parenthood with the knowledge that the social housing system and social security benefits are difficult to obtain and navigate. Punitive policies that aim to act as a deterrent are inherently flawed from the outset.

9.5.2 Young parents and home

Engaging temporally revealed the micro-dynamics of inequality at play when it comes to housing young parents. Often in popular discourse on young parenthood there is an emphasis on a personal individual failing. However, entry into parenthood and constituting parenting practices and identities are relational; there are multiple intersecting interdependencies. This thesis has

examined the circumstances leading up to entry into parenthood, how early childhood experiences, particularly pertaining to family and housing, shapes opportunities and parenting practices, but does not determine them.

Five participants remained in chaotic family and housing situations throughout the research. However, eleven young parents were able to escape their chaotic backgrounds and attain a semblance of stability and ontological security (see Chapter Seven). This challenges the notion of a simplistic intergenerational reproduction of disadvantage. The quadrant in Chapter Seven shows how many participants moved away from their chaotic backgrounds and achieved a degree of stability in creating their own family home. The SRS is considered a 'saving grace' of the declining welfare state (Tunstall et al., 2013). The findings here concur with this notion; the SRS was a lifeline for many of the participants. SRS housing can be a route out of the 'web of disadvantage' (Coffield et al., 1981), offering an ontologically secure base from which to parent. Many of the participants had increased stability in their lives through obtaining their own SRS tenancy and having the opportunity to construct their own family home. However, a temporal lens and questions about the future show the limitations of the SRS and how ontological security can be constrained in the long-term. The root of the problem with the SRS is the shortage of availability. While young parents are often recognised as a priority need for social housing, choices are highly constrained. Living in disadvantaged circumstances often means 'living in the moment' (Neale 2021) and surviving day-to-day rather than planning for the future. Therefore, young parents, like the participants in this study, may accept a property but find it unsuitable in the long-term. It is then difficult to move out of that property due to the shortage of homes.

Stability is therefore fragile, it has to be worked on and compromises have to be made in order to maintain it. Chaos, temporally and relationally, remain a threat. There is a need for policies must adequately support diverse family formations and life course transitions; suitable housing is at the heart of this. There needs to be a radical shift towards policies that support diverse life course patterns and family practices.

9.5.3 Gendered family practices and the future

Researching young people can show new societal trends (Shildrick et al., 2009). The findings here show a disconnection between a desire for equal caregiving between mothers and fathers yet significant barriers remain [see Chapter Eight]. The young fathers in this thesis were in some instances able to take a more equal role in childcare, as they were yet to establish themselves in employment. However, once they moved into work, their involvement reduced, while the mothers took on increased childcare with limited options for employment. These issues are likely to be exacerbated, as the young parents get older, unless there are significant policy changes, such as enhanced paternity leave and greater working flexibility for fathers. The ability for couples to share care and for fathers to have more equal involvement in their children's lives was also shaped by their relationship with the mother of the child and their housing situation. Separated fathers faced practical obstacles associated with time and space. They had to arrange seeing their children around their working hours and their children going to school. Space was also an issue if the separated parents were not living close to each other. Cohabiting parents had the greatest opportunity to share care. However, amongst all parenting and household configurations, mothers tended to take primary responsibility for childcare whilst the fathers prioritised work. Becoming a parent led to a pause in EET trajectories for young mothers, while young fathers continued on the EET pathway with limited disruption.

The participants were clear in articulating an ideological preference for shared care. However, there were barriers relating to structural inequalities, relationships and housing. There is potential for increasingly transformative gender practices if there is structural support. The first Covid-19 lockdown led to fathers spending 58% more time on childcare (ONS, 2020b). This coincided with an 11% drop in working hours and travel time as home working increased. However, this change was short-lived, with caring responsibilities

reverting back to mothers after lockdown. The Fatherhood Institute (2020) argues that this increase could have potentially been sustained by an increase in flexible working for fathers and a slight reduction in working hours. The increase in father involvement during the first Covid-19 lockdown tallies with the findings in this thesis that shows young fathers had increased involvement with their children when they had the opportunity, for example if they were NEET and/or residing with their children. This shows that men's primary role as breadwinners, and their framing as the 'second' parent, significantly influences the disproportionate distribution of childcare between mothers and fathers. There remains a gender pay gap and greater inflexibility for fathers' working hours, Olchawski (2016) found that fathers' requests for flexible working hours were refused by employers by almost twice the rate of mothers. This shows a disconnection between fathers' desire to be more involved in childcare and structures that prevent them from doing so, thereby conserving the traditional model of the breadwinner role.

9.6 Policy recommendations

In terms of policy and practice processes, the research set out to explore:

1. How are supported housing services delivered to young parents and how have such services evolved over time?
2. To what extent are lived experiences of housing provision among young parents in tune with professional practices and expectations and with wider policy processes?
3. How do these intersecting processes evolve over time and what are the implications for the development/sustainability of effective housing policies for young parents?

The key findings in relation to policy and practice processes relate to the constrained circumstances young parents find themselves in as a result of punitive policies directed towards them. Support services are highly valuable

in mitigating these difficulties and there is strong evidence that support over time can significantly improve the life chances of young parents and their families. There is concern about the increased funding pressures on support services and the negative impact this may have on disadvantaged youths.

Young parenthood, or more accurately teenage pregnancy and motherhood, has received a significant amount of policy interest, most notably through New Labour and the Teenage Pregnancy Strategy (SEU, 1999). As discussed in Chapter One, some of the policy aims were flawed and did not centre the voices of those with lived experiences of young parenthood (Wenham, 2016). Policies, under both Labour and Conservative governments, have veered towards punitive measures aimed to reduce incidents of teenage pregnancy. This is underpinned by a pervasive rhetoric of an individualisation of responsibility whereby young parents are inextricably linked with the notion of 'underserving' welfare recipients. At the same time, housing policy has significantly affected young people with policies such as the 'shared accommodation rate' of housing benefit (Wilkinson and Ortega-Alcázar, 2017).

Despite the challenging social policies that young parents have been subjected to, targeted support can be a critical source of help. Housing support services with a wide reaching and holistic remit, can help bridge the transition to independence, and help young parents to establish and maintain their own family home. Having a safe, secure and quality home that engendered ontological security provided a base from which young parents could engage in other activities in life, such as education and employment. On the other hand, difficult housing experiences and a sense of ontological insecurity could lead to snowballing difficulties that become overwhelming (see the case of Tamara in Chapters Seven and Eight).

The findings point to four key needs for disadvantaged young parents:

1. Greater choice and support to make informed decisions around housing

2. Quality housing that provides ontological security and a place to parent
3. Housing for both parents
4. Housing that reflects people's housing needs change over time

In order to meet these needs, policy recommendations are twofold. Firstly, there needs to be changes to social housing policy, and to social security more broadly. Secondly, support services should be expanded to increase their reach and remit.

Turning firstly to social housing, the findings here show that the SRS is tenure that offers excellent opportunities to provide ontological security. At its best, SRS housing offers long-term security, affordable rents and a home that is good quality so that it fulfils basic needs. The problems lay with the shortage of SRS housing stock and the lack of funding that has led many SRS houses to fall into disrepair. The 'Right-to-Buy' policy has seen houses in desirable locations move entirely into the private sector (Cooper et al., 2020). This, coupled with only the most needy being eligible for social housing, leaves SRS housing concentrated in deprived areas. As the analysis here shows, many participants who entered the SRS attained a level of ontological security through this tenure. However, their homes were not without problems and the suitability of the housing in the long-term was a particular issue.

As argued elsewhere (Neale and Ladlow, 2015), non-resident fathers are discriminated against when it comes to accessing social housing that is suitable for their children. With reduced social housing stock, separated fathers who are not the primary carers of their children do not get their fatherhood status taken into account when applying for social housing. In this research, Jock and Jayden were unable to access SRS housing at all. While Danny obtained a SRS flat but would not have his son stay with him as he did not deem it to be a safe and suitable place for a child. However, Danny was receiving support from a floating housing support worker who was helping him to improve the quality of his flat by getting him funding for carpets and

furniture. This highlights the valuable role housing support services and charities play in helping their clients to establish a family home.

The housing crisis can more adequately be termed a social housing crisis and affordability crisis. What is needed is a government that targets policies and funding directly towards supporting disadvantaged people and increasing social housing. This must coincide with an ideological reimagining of support for social security and social housing. The 'safety net' of social security is riddled with holes. There is a very real threat that people who are only just surviving may fall even further. Social housing alone is not enough to combat disadvantage, and austerity-based welfare reforms have widened inequalities and increased poverty. A social security system that provides adequate support for people who need it is urgently needed. Disadvantaged families and those living in poverty would benefit from the removal of the two-child limit on child tax credit and a permanent uplift of Universal Credit (Covid-Realities, 2021). In terms of housing, a reform or removal of the *housing benefit cap* and the *shared housing allowance rate* for those aged under 35 would be less discriminatory towards young people and those in the PRS (Wilkinson and Ortega-Alcázar, 2017). Young parents are discriminated against by the age graded Universal Credit entitlement. This is currently being challenged (CPAG, 2020) and if successful would go some way towards easing the financial hardship many young parents are dealing with.

There is a risk that some of the policy recommendations made here may be deemed unrealistic in the current context of prolonged austerity and an intensification of neoliberalism. While funding constraints exist and are an important consideration, it is not appropriate to water down policy recommendations that are evidence-based. It is a disservice to young parent families, and more broadly those living in poverty and disadvantage to write-off as too ideological the notion of quality housing as a basic right. The evidence in this thesis shows how a home that provides a level of ontological security better enables people to participate in everyday life, engage in activities such as education and employment and contribute to society. Punitive policies directed towards disadvantaged young parents do not

discourage them from entering parenthood as the evidence here shows welfare benefits and social housing were not reasons they chose become parents in the first place (see Chapter Six). Punitive policies therefore contribute to incidents of poverty and disadvantage. It surely should not be radical to suggest that benefits for young parents should be the same as for older parents. Discriminatory policies need to be challenged, failing to do so is tantamount to accepting and compounding structural disadvantage.

9.6.1 When floating support sinks away

Turning now to support services, the participants in this study were highly positive about the support that they received. Housing support workers were skilled in helping young parents obtain and maintain their own independent homes. 'Agora' and 'Mosaic' were long-running successful housing support services. The support they provided was holistic, practical and personalised; in some cases this was quite intensive, with clients and workers developing strong relationships. Participants in this study emphasised the positive relationship that they had with their worker as the best thing about the support service. However, this can lead to a dependency upon the support worker and can make things difficult when support is withdrawn. Some participants did not feel ready for their support to end and they continued to have problems after the support was withdrawn [see Chapter Seven]. Open-ended support that continues over a longer period if necessary would be beneficial. Alternatively, or complementarily, joined up multiagency work with better handover or signposting to adult services would enable a continuation of support.

Funding for support services has been cut significantly over the past decade and is continuing to be squeezed. Funding is increasingly piecemeal, resulting in a high turnover of jobs and increasingly short-term aims. This was evident during the course of the research, especially with the merger of 'Agora' with 'Mosaic'. While this was a financial necessity for the services, part of the success of the services is how they are embedded physically and socially in the local area. Localism is important. Accessing support services also

requires resources and some people might not know about, or feel comfortable, accessing services outside of their community. This is the importance of visible long running services like 'Agora' and 'Mosaic' who are based in the communities and who have helped generations of clients. Ultimately, holistic housing support services like 'Agora' need greater recognition of the invaluable work that they do. There is a pressing need to elevate housing support services and acknowledge the vital role they play in mitigating the hardships young people are dealing with.

9.7 Contribution of the study and implications for further research

This study has demonstrated the value of utilising a QL research design using time as both a theoretical lens and a method. Interviewing couples together was a novel approach, which was advantageous in being able to see couples' dynamics first hand. However, ethical considerations regarding sensitive topics were more pronounced. Overall, couple interviews provided a fascinating insight into relationship dynamics, and future research would benefit from extending the relational approach to researching family life by incorporating the whole family as research participants.

A QL approach has proven to be invaluable in answering the research questions, fostering an exploration of young parents' lived experiences in the present, their anticipated futures and reflections upon their pasts. The research has shown the diverse experiences of disadvantaged young parents and provided evidence showing the benefits of personalised and holistic housing support services. This thesis shows how themes of disadvantage, youth, family and home are intrinsically interconnected, contributing new knowledge in the fields of family, youth and housing studies. Living with disadvantage and walking wobbly relational and housing tightropes generates uncertainty about the future with some unable to see beyond their current snowballing difficulties in the present.

It is regrettable that collaboration with the housing support charities was not fully sustained due to challenges associated with their funding and high turnover of staff, as well as the researcher's period of maternity leave and suspension of studies. However, positive relationships with some housing support workers and their interest in the project holds potential to rekindle collaboration for joint outputs in the future.

As is typical of QL research, a significant volume of data was generated and not everything could be used in this thesis. There are themes that are worthy of more in-depth discussion that was beyond the scope of this thesis. However, there is potential to elaborate and disseminate these findings at a later date. The dataset will also be deposited in the Timescapes Archive providing an opportunity for future researchers to analyse the data across different themes. The themes covered in this thesis are a rich area for future research. In the context of the Covid-19 pandemic and the likelihood of increased austerity that will seriously affect disadvantaged people, there is a need now, more than ever, for activist research that provides strong evidence and advocates for those who are disadvantaged.

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Appendix One: Participant information sheet (young parents)

Housing young parents study: Information Sheet



What is it about?

Linzi is from the University of Leeds and is doing research into the housing experiences of young mums and dads. The aim of the research is to develop an understanding of the housing support available to young parents.

What happens if I decide to take part?

- You will be asked to take part in up to 3 interviews over the course of 1 year
- The interviews will last about 1 hour
- They can take place in your home or at a place that suits you
- They will be scheduled at a time and date to suit you
- Participation is voluntary and you can withdraw from the study at any time
- You will receive a £10 gift voucher for each interview that you participant in

What will the interviews be about?

- The interviews will be an opportunity for you to talk about your experiences as a young parent and the housing support you receive
- Your views will be treated with respect and confidentiality
- You do not have to answer any questions that you don't want to

What happens after the interview?

- The interview will be audio-recorded and typed out. Your information will be made anonymous and you will be given a pseudonym (fake name). Only Linzi will know your real name and personal information.
- Any publications that are written based on the study will not reveal any of your personal details and your identity will be protected

How can I find out more?

If you have any questions about the study or if you want to discuss any of this further, then please get in touch with Linzi.

Email: l.ladlow@leeds.ac.uk

You can also get a message to Linzi through staff at Archway

Appendix Two: participant information sheet (professionals)

Housing young parents study: Information Sheet



What is it about?

The research is part of a collaborative studentship with Archway and is funded by the ESRC (Economic and Social Research Council). The research is part of Linzi Ladlow's PhD studies.

The aim of the research is to develop an understanding of the housing support available to young parents, particularly in the context of increased funding cuts and proposals to reduce housing benefit for young people under the age of 21.

What happens if I decide to take part?

- You will be asked to take part in 1 interview that will last approximately 1 hour
- It can be conducted at your place of work or at a place that suits you
- It will be scheduled at a time and date to suit you
- Participation is voluntary and you can withdraw from the study at any time

What will the interviews be about?

- The interviews will be an opportunity for you to talk about your experiences supporting young parents and to hear your thoughts on the current service provision available
- Your views will be treated with respect and confidentiality
- You have the right not to answer any questions

What happens after the interview?

- The interview will be audio-recorded and typed out. Your information will be made anonymous and you will be given a pseudonym (fake name). Only Linzi will know your real name and personal information.
- Any publications that are written based on the study will not reveal any of your personal details and your identity will be protected

How can I find out more?

If you have any questions about the study or if you want to discuss any of this further, then please get in touch with Linzi.

Email: l.ladlow@leeds.ac.uk

Appendix Three: Archiving information sheet

Archiving Information Sheet

1. Archiving

As well as writing reports, books and magazine articles, we would like to store all the interviews and any activity sheets in an archive so that in the future other people will be able to look at them. It will help them to understand what young parenthood is like.

2. What is an archive?

An archive is a bit like a library, but it doesn't contain books. Our research archive will be based at the University of Leeds and Essex. It will hold written versions of the interviews (usually called transcripts) and copies of the activity sheets from you and the other people who have taken part in the research.

The material will be stored in a digital form in the archive, not just as a lot of paper in a building.

The archive allows people like researchers and historians to look at the material that we have gathered in our research project.

Everyone taking part in our research is telling us so many interesting things that we won't be able to give them all the attention they deserve, so storing the interviews and activity sheets gives other researchers a chance to look at them too.

The archive that your interviews are being stored in will be restricted. Your interviews and activity sheets will not be available to just anyone. We will make sure that the people who look at your material promise to do so in a responsible manner and protect your identity.

3. Protecting your identity

Nobody will be able to contact you because your interviews are stored in the archive.

We will NOT put your personal details such as address, telephone number or email in the archive.

We will also make sure that any details that could identify you or anyone you talk about in the interviews will be changed before the material goes in the archive.

4. Agreement to archive

To make sure that you agree that we can archive your interviews, we ask you to sign a consent form that says that we can do this. We will also sign the form, and we will give you a copy to keep.

The agreement covers ALL the interviews that we have already done with you, and any future interviews as part of the housing young parents research.

We take our responsibility to protect you from any harm as a result of taking part in our research very seriously. The form also says that you agree to give 'copyright', or ownership, of the interviews to our research team.

We are asking you to give us the copyright because this means that nobody will be able to look at your interview material without our approval and telling us why they want to see it.

Archiving Consent Form

RESEARCH PARTICIPANT:

- I have read and understood the information leaflet that outlines how my interviews and activity sheets will be archived, and I have had the opportunity to ask questions about it.
- I understand that Linzi will change any identifying details in my interviews to protect me.
- I agree that the material can be included in an archive.
- I give the copyright or ownership of my interviews and activity sheets to Linzi Ladlow
- I accept that including my research data in the archive will mean that, in the future, other researchers may also use my words in their reports, books and magazine articles.

NAME:

SIGNATURE:
.....

DATE:
.....

RESEARCHER:

- I have discussed with the research participant how their interviews and activity sheets will be archived, and given them the opportunity to ask questions about it.
- Linzi will make sure that personal contact and identifying details are not archived, and know their responsibility to ensure that no harm comes to participants as a result of taking part in the research.

NAME:
.....

SIGNATURE:
.....

Appendix Four: Participant consent form



UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS

Housing young parents study – consent form

Thank you for agreeing to take part in the study. Before we can begin the interviews, we will need your consent to take part. Please read the following statements and tick the boxes that you agree to:

	✓ YES	✓ NO
I have read and understood the project information sheet		
I have been given the opportunity to ask questions about the project		
I agree to participate in the project; my participation will include being recorded on a Dictaphone		
I understand that my participation is voluntary; I can withdraw from the study at any time		
I understand my personal details such as phone number and address will not be disclosed		
I understand that my accounts will be anonymised to protect my own identity and those who are discussed in the interviews		
I agree to assign the copyright I hold in any materials related to this project to Linzi Ladlow, University of Leeds		

With any publications we may use your accounts to explain what young parenthood is like. However as data will be anonymised, we will not use your real name within these publications.

Name of Participant _____

Participant Signature_____

Researcher Signature_____

Date _____