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Understanding the Experience of Adolescent Motherhood, 1939-2001

by

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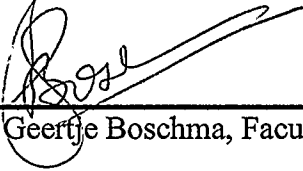
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ABSTRACT

A feminist oral history approach was used in this study to understand how social and historical influences shape women's experiences of motherhood. Twelve women who had their first child between the years 1939 and 2001 were interviewed. The main research question was: 'what was your experience of being a mother in your adolescent years?' Analysis of transcript data reveals changing meanings over time. For older participants, early motherhood was described as 'natural': women expected to leave their parent's home, marry and bear children. Other options were either not considered, or did not exist for most women. Interviews with younger participants revealed that society today promotes independence in decision making for some behaviours, however the decision to mother for young unmarried women continues to be penalized. The birth control pill, legalization of abortion, reproductive rights, and demands for higher education are identified as significantly influencing different experiences of motherhood.

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DEDICATION

To my mother Lorraine Scaia, who has been there through all my many projects, from the beginning.

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

The inspiration for this study has both personal and professional significance. The experience of a younger sibling who had a child before the age of 20 had a profound impact not only on her life but also on the relationship between us. The relationship between my sister, her son, and myself is among the most profound I have experienced and continues to change and unfold today. My sister's decision to mother without a partner and the subsequent struggles and triumphs of motherhood made me acutely aware of the influence both positive and negative that individuals working in nursing, social work and the legal system have on young unmarried mothers. Professionals bring with them their own social and historical understanding of motherhood and have the ability to influence the present and long term experience of becoming a mother. The experience of being present for my sister over the years and her willingness to share her experience of motherhood was reciprocal in its importance to my spiritual and emotional growth. This relationship served to ground me in my work as a nurse with young women who parent at an early age. Similarly, in using feminist oral history the interviewer, interviewee, and reader of the narrative engage in reciprocal learning and growth. Since becoming a nurse I see how relationships established at critical points in time are important in making the experience of motherhood positive for young women. The quality of this relationship is influenced by both the nurse's and the young woman's life history. Understanding how society evaluates motherhood and adolescent motherhood in particular has the potential to amplify positive outcomes resulting from relationships formed at critical points in the young mother's life. Feminist oral history as a research approach offered one way of

exploring how women's experiences of motherhood are shaped and influenced by dominant views of what it means to be a woman at a particular time in White European Canadian history .

Research Approach

Feminist Oral History: Hearing Voices

Feminist oral history is a methodological approach that has produced a substantive body of knowledge within the qualitative research tradition (Anderson & Jack, 1991; Gluck & Patai, 1991; Reinartz, 1992; Thompson & Barrett, 1997; Yow, 1994). Feminist oral history is interdisciplinary in nature, drawing on methodologies from history, psychology and sociology. In particular, it allows the narrator to reflect on the past within the context of the present. The narrator becomes a performer of, and in, his or her life-story (Yow, 1994). Unlike written records, the text transcribed from a verbal exchange between the narrator and the interviewer creates the historical text. In preserving the spoken word on tape, and transcribing it to paper, the nuances of language and other verbal expressions can be analyzed. The narrator has the freedom to express ideas and thoughts in a way that may not otherwise have been preserved in a written form, and about subjects that have not traditionally been topics of historical investigation (Reinartz, 1992). These non-traditional topics include the lived experience of women's everyday lives. In feminist oral history, there is no 'script' to follow. It is the narrator's experience that is sought in all its complexity, ambiguity and possible inconsistencies. Rather than focusing on grand historical events and asking the narrator to comment on how she has been affected by these events, it is the story of the narrator that is the focus

of the interview. In the case of adolescent motherhood, the personal experience of the narrator is at the centre of the story and social and historical events form the backdrop to the experience. Much of the experience of the day to day lives of ordinary people has not been recorded in historical documents (Cole & Knowles, 2001). Women's lives in particular are almost invisible in historical records. Increasing numbers of women in academia and the rise of the feminist movement have contributed to a re-examination of the social significance of women's role in shaping history, and in determining rules of social order. According to Parr (1995), the practice of feminist oral history is consistent with both the historical practices of gender history and women's history which examine,

How much of what is human changes through time...how stable and unified are people's perceptions of themselves and the world around them within time...[and] how hierarchical social, economic, and political contexts rather than biology, history rather than nature, created woman. (p. 362)

In the oral history tradition, the interviewer and the narrator participate in an interactive process either in a single conversation, or in a series of conversations (Anderson & Jack 1991; Borland, 1991; Rafael, 1997; Sandelowski, 1994; Thompson & Barrett, 1997; Yow, 1994). The interview transcript is then analyzed for meaning with attention to factors such as language structure, effects of time on past and present meaning, chronological structuring of the narrative, and social and historical context. The interviewer is an active participant in creating meaning in the research process, and brings with her to the interview and the interpretation of the interview, her own particular biases and assumptions as well as the influences of race, class, culture, education and professional status. Listening, reading, writing, journalling and reflecting are all part of the research design.

Description of Participant Selection

The method of selecting participants for this study is purposeful sampling. According to Sandelowski (1995), participation in purposeful sampling is 'case-oriented' rather than 'variable' oriented. That is, it is the representativeness of the experience under study that is sought, not the generalizability of the data. The criterion for sample selection reflects the intent of the research, which is to discover and understand the social construction of women's experience of adolescent motherhood between years 1939-2001. Purposeful sampling includes individuals on the basis of personal knowledge of the event or phenomenon, as well as the ability and willingness to communicate this experience to others (Sandelowski, 1995). In this study, the criterion of interest is the experience of adolescent motherhood between 1939 and 2001. Purposeful sampling seeks a rich and varied representation of women's experience of the phenomenon, over the time frame indicated. Participants were selected on the basis of representing four different time periods: Pre-World War II, the 1950s, 1960 to 1979, and 1980 to 2001. Twelve women were interviewed from the ages of 18 to 80 about their experience of becoming a mother in their adolescent years. The following questions guided the research process:

1. How has the experience of adolescent motherhood changed over the period 1939-2001?
2. What social and historical influences have shaped these women's particular experiences of adolescent motherhood?
3. How does the individual define and interpret these events within the past and present context of the event?

Recruiting Participants

Twelve participants were recruited through a third party. Personal and professional contacts who were likely to know suitable participants asked potential participants to contact me if they were interested in participating in the research study. The third party contact person was someone who was in a position to know potential participants, and who was interested and supportive of the research project. Recruitment included both oral and written components.

The oral component of the recruitment process was in the form of detailed information given to the third party by the researcher, which was conveyed verbally to potential participants. This information included the nature and purpose of the study, expectations of participants, information about the researcher, and guarantees of confidentiality and anonymity. The emphasis in this verbal information was to convey a sense of the importance of the participant's story, the researcher's respect for the experience of the participant, and the interest of oral historians in the stories of women's lives. The third party contact gave the potential participant the name and contact number of the researcher and instructed the potential participant to contact the researcher who answered questions and explained the research project in more detail. This detailed information included material related to signed informed consent, supervision of the research project, resources for participants in the event that issues raised caused any emotional discomfort for the participant, risks and benefits of the research, confidentiality and anonymity, description of the interview process, and the right of the participant to terminate the interview at any time (Appendix A).

The written component of the recruitment process was in the form of a poster

(Appendix B). This information was posted in public places at agencies where potential participants could be found. These agencies and programs were in two small rural hospitals, as well as the extended care facility at these same hospitals, Seniors Programs, and local Public Health Clinics. Each poster included the name of a facility contact person who is familiar and supportive of the research and who could provide additional verbal information as requested as well the name and contact number of the researcher.

The participants selected for this research study ranged in age from 18 to 80 years old. They had their children between the ages of 15 and 20, between the years 1939 and 2001.

Overview of Participants

| <i>Chapter and time period</i> | <i>Pseudonym of participant</i> | <i>Age at time of interview</i> | <i>Age at time of birth of child</i> | <i>Year when child was born</i> |
|--------------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|--------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| <i>Pre WW II</i> | <i>Connie</i> | <i>80</i> | <i>18</i> | <i>1939</i> |
| <i>1950s</i> | <i>Karla</i> | <i>66</i> | <i>18</i> | <i>1953</i> |
| | <i>Nina</i> | <i>62</i> | <i>18</i> | <i>1957</i> |
| <i>1960 to 1979</i> | <i>Helen</i> | <i>50</i> | <i>19</i> | <i>1970</i> |
| | <i>Donna</i> | <i>48</i> | <i>18</i> | <i>1971</i> |
| | <i>Jen</i> | <i>49</i> | <i>16</i> | <i>1968</i> |
| <i>1980 to 2001</i> | <i>Willa</i> | <i>36</i> | <i>15</i> | <i>1980</i> |
| | <i>Barb</i> | <i>28</i> | <i>19</i> | <i>1992</i> |
| | <i>Colleen</i> | <i>28</i> | <i>18</i> | <i>1991</i> |
| | <i>Cindy</i> | <i>20</i> | <i>20</i> | <i>2001</i> |
| | <i>Ellen</i> | <i>19</i> | <i>16</i> | <i>1999</i> |
| | <i>Linda</i> | <i>18</i> | <i>17</i> | <i>2001</i> |

Listening to the Interviews

Data gathering and analysis occurred simultaneously and were guided by the procedural methods of feminist oral history as outlined by Gluck and Patai (1991).

Primary sources in this study included taped-recorded interviews, transcripts of interviews, and journal material kept by the researcher. Secondary sources included literature relevant to establishing an historical framework for the time period discussed in each interview. One interview was conducted with each participant. The interviewer recorded the experiences of the narrator as they related to the experience of adolescent motherhood.

An interview guide guided the interview process. According to Yow (1994) this guide must support the flow of questions between the narrator and the interviewer. To facilitate this process, Minister (1991) recommends that the interviewer be well informed about important historical and social issues related to the topic, and include on a piece of paper, “an open-ended random scattering of potential issues” (p.37). These can be referred to, added to, or crossed off. For the purposes of this study, a list of issues was generated in order to explore both the general and particular nature of the experience. This list was revised during the interview to reflect the spirit and guidelines of feminist oral history interview techniques as described by Gluck and Patai (1991). Prior to beginning the conversational part of the interview, demographic data was gathered and incorporated into the process of developing rapport between the narrator and the researcher (Appendix C).

A personal journal was kept by the researcher to provide additional data material. Alvesson and Skoldberg (2000) and Borland (1991) explain that we must pay particular attention in data gathering and analysis to the ways in which our own personal language, politics, social values, and historical background influence how we as interviewers construct and interpret the ‘knowledge’ we seek and generate. Journalling allowed the

researcher to reflect on the progress of the research, the personal meaning generated by the process, as well as the influence that the relationship between the narrator and interviewer had on the narration and interpretation of the story.

Finally, information gathered from secondary sources relevant to the historical period in which the narrator lived was reviewed and developed as a framework by the researcher, and contributed to the development of the interview guide. This historical framework facilitated the aims of feminist oral historians to describe the experience of women within the context of the social and historical expectations that society imposes at a particular time in their lives and over the lifespan. This framework is woven into and around the analysis and interpretation of the particular woman's story. According to Chanfrault-Duchet (1991), the process of gathering data in the feminist oral history tradition seeks to establish a convincing and meaningful matrix of understanding in which, "facts and events are inscribed in patterns that relate to their socio-symbolic contents and that reflect, through complex processes, women's mentalities" (p. 90).

Analyzing the Interviews

Analyzing the interviews was concurrent with listening to and transcribing the interviews, and flowed from the content of the interview, the historical framework derived from secondary sources, and reflections on meaning developed through journalling. The primary source of data analysis was the taped-recorded interviews. This analysis included ways in which the narrator used language to express and convey meaning, the way meaning was affected by the passage of time, and the themes that emerged from the narration of the experience.

Gluck and Patai (1991) state that the act of listening with attention is key in the

process of analyzing the content of the feminist in-depth interview. The researcher does not listen with the goal of fitting what women are saying into an existing paradigm, but rather, the researcher listens with a critical ear to what is said and what is not said by the narrator. This includes both verbal and non-verbal communication. In this way, the meaning of the experience is honoured, and the woman and her story emerge with the integrity and complexity of the life preserved. Anderson and Jack (1991) suggest that the first step in active listening is to immerse oneself in the interview and try to understand the vantagepoint of the narrator. Chanfrault-Duchet (1991) explains that in analyzing the text of the narrative, the interviewer pays attention to the particular way language is used by the narrator, including key phrases that indicate unique ways in which the narrator interprets meaning, and key patterns that indicate dominant behavioural responses to life events. An examination of these key phrases and patterns contributes to a developing understanding of the how the narrator has created a sense of self, and how that self image fits within the particular social, cultural and historical context of the narrator's life experience.

The concept of time is also important in the analysis of interview data. Sandelowski (1999) proposes a number of meta frameworks for viewing how people reflect on events that occurred at recent and at distant points in their lives. She states that listening to the ways that people tell their story, and accounting for the ways they address change over time, "contributes to the ...discovery of patterns and regularities in lives lived in time, place, and in relationships" (p.84). The ways in which meaning changes over time is revealed not only in the text of the story, but also in the way the story is organized chronologically, and the temporal emphasis that is placed on particular events. This

discussion was included as part of the interview process.

In addition to examining emerging themes through the use of language and time, the researcher kept a written journal in order to reflect on the progress of the research, and personal meanings as they developed. An important consideration in understanding this personal meaning is an acknowledgement by the researcher of the ways that the researcher's personal presence and participation in the interview affect the narrative. The researcher engages in ongoing reflection on the relationship between the narrator's ways of knowing and the interviewer's ways of knowing. Thus the researcher becomes aware of the act of 'interpreting the interpretation' of the narrator's story (Alvesson & Skoldberg, 2000; Borland, 1991). Borland (1991) explains that at the same time we listen to the narrator and transcribe the narrative event, we also subject the story to our own interpretation, according to, "our own experience of the performance" (p. 63). This interplay creates a, "second-level narrative based upon, but at the same time reshaping, the first" (p.63), which must be acknowledged in the process of data analysis.

Criteria for Credibility of Research

Oral history as a method of historical research is unique in that data is generated in ways that differ from other historical research methods. First, data is generated in response to inquiries about events that occurred in the past during the interview setting. For this reason, 'evidence' of the historical event does not occur before the interview takes place. Secondly, data is generated as a result of the interview process itself. Apart from the story being recalled by the narrator, the interaction between the narrator and the researcher also impacts the way the story is told, constructed, and even the themes that emerge (Borland, 1991). As the narrator recalls past events, the narration of the events

and even the meaning that these events has for the narrator is affected and changed by the present telling of the story, including the environment in which the story is told, important events occurring presently for the narrator, and the nature of the relationship between the narrator and the researcher. The interviewer must, in the analysis of the narrative be sensitive to the ways in which these factors impact the narrative, and must include an analysis of these factors in the interpretation of the interview (Borland, 1991; Thompson & Barrett, 1997; Yow, 1994).

According to Cole and Knowles (2001), “history is a documentation of stories told and recorded about the past through the identification of significant people, places, moments, events, and movements located in time and context” (p. 20). Writing and interpreting history thus involves the use of many sources of information, including oral histories and written records. Cole and Knowles (2001) explain that, “the significant historical elements, when connected, help give meaning to the present”(p. 20). Oral history is not merely a means of corroborating written records, but is a source of historical information and documentation in its own right. This method of historical inquiry uses primary sources (interviews) and secondary sources (literature) to produce the text of the research study. In coming to understand the paradigm of the narrator through the interview process, Grele (1999) states that “we find the synthesis of all of the various structural relationships of the interview, as well as the particular relation of the individual to his vision of history” (p. 45). In order to achieve this goal, feminist oral historians engage in a reflexive and interactive process with the interview material and the narrator. Part of the process of creating meaning for the reader is to place the narrative within the larger social and historical context of the period described, not to

verify the historical accuracy of the narrator's memory of events. In establishing the credibility of this interpretation, feminist oral historians contribute to the present and future understanding of the ways in which women have experienced and interpreted the personal and historical meaning of their lives. The quality of the research study depends on the researcher's ability to communicate the meaning of the experience so that the reader comes to an understanding of the narrator's life-world in all its complexity (Chanfrault-Duchet, 1991).

Limitations of the Research Study

The question I asked of each participant about the experience of having a child before the age of 20 meant that many other significant events revealed in each story had to be either summarized, or left for future interpretation. Stories related to the participant's upbringing, socio-economic status, education, as well as experiences related to childrearing for example were not explored in depth. Another limitation to this study is the cultural and economic homogeneity of the sample. Participants were recruited voluntarily by means of a third party. All respondents to inquiries about their experience of adolescent motherhood were interviewed, and all interviews were included in this study. For this reason, the heterogeneity that might have been achieved in the research data by choosing participants representative of greater social, economic, geographic and cultural diversity was not possible. Also, due to circumstances during the interview that were beyond the control of the researcher such as background noise and the presence of individuals that might have influenced the telling of specific details or emotional responses by the participant, some depth in the quality of the interview was lost. This was also due in part to an unwillingness of the researcher to assume interpretations of the

interview process that were not necessarily verifiable through a reading of the transcript of the interview. In future, a more selective sample of women who have had the experience of adolescent motherhood might produce a more diverse analysis of this topic.

Both quantitative and qualitative research methods are limited in different ways by the approach of the particular research method. It was not the goal of this feminist oral history methodology to verify other historical records, and so this is not considered a limitation of the study. Predicting, finding the 'cause', or solving the social 'problem' of adolescent motherhood was also not the aim of this study. The tape-recorded stories of a small number of women about the experience of adolescent motherhood do not lend themselves to the accumulation of discrete units of data or the prediction of outcomes. Instead, in hearing the stories of women who became mothers before the age of 20, SmithBattle (1994) explains that "the reader is encouraged to consider how the stories of young mothers might shape the practices of educators, social workers, and health care providers in ways respectful of the meanings, obstacles, contradictions, options, and possibilities that their stories disclose" (p.163). Participants were not chosen for their representativeness of any particular economic, cultural or ethnic group, but rather for the fact that they have had the experience of adolescent motherhood. Therefore it will not be possible to generalize the findings of this study to any other 'similar' population. The focus of the interviews was on the contextuality of the stories as narrated by the individual. There was no attempt to draw parallels between stories or compare the sociocultural or economic backgrounds of participants. The reader will also find that the historic events 'recorded' during the interview were not subjected to verification, instead

relevant historical events were woven into the interpretation in order to create a historical context for the events described by the participant.

Usefulness of Feminist Oral History

According to Cole and Knowles (2001), oral history “represents both the researcher’s interpretation of the research participants’ lives, and the researcher’s theorizing about those lives in relation to broader contextual situations and issues” (p. 13). Through the use of feminist oral history, a greater appreciation of the broader contextual issues that have shaped the way we have come to understand motherhood, and in particular the experience of women who mother outside the accepted convention of marriage, are developed. It is hoped that the reader will gain the perspective that the ways in which we evaluate individuals and situations are themselves formed by the particular social and historical context in which we have lived. Anderson and Jack (1991) state that, “the categories and concepts we use for reflecting upon and evaluating ourselves come from a cultural context, one that has historically demeaned and controlled women’s activities” (p.18). Thus for many nurses, the choice to mother outside the ‘acceptable’ context of marriage, presents a puzzling and disturbing choice that can be difficult to relate to their own experience of womanhood and motherhood. This oral history study presents an opportunity for the reader to examine the particular lives of women who have made this choice, and to examine the historical context in which their own values and beliefs on this matter have been formed. What has been particularly noteworthy is the rich contextual detail of the stories that emerged from the interviews, and the multiple meanings that could be attributed to each woman’s story. There have been so many threads that weave together to form the texture of the stories of these women that it has

been frustrating not to tell each story in all its complexity. In particular, threads related to the ways in which the medical profession, including nurses, played a role in the experience of pregnancy, breastfeeding and post-partum care. For some women, health professionals were an aid, to others, they were part of the 'nightmare' they endured because of being young, unmarried and unable to support themselves financially. Because the question asked was 'what was your experience of being a mother in your adolescent years', the social and historical context of women's lives, the regulation of sexuality, the position of marriage and motherhood in women's lives, and the meaning of 'adolescence' itself at particular periods in time have been the focus of analysis. Themes related to medicalization, geographic isolation, relationships with peers, and aspirations for the future, while important in the context of the story, were not the focus of this study.

CHAPTER TWO

Review of the Literature

Background Issues: The Social Construction of Adolescence

In evaluating the effect of change over time in the social construction of adolescent motherhood, we must take into consideration how the concept of 'adolescence' has changed over the past 62 years. Today we generally define adolescence as the time between 11 and 20 years (Wong & Perry, 1998). Inherent in our perception of adolescence as a unique developmental stage are assumptions that include socially acceptable standards of behavior for this age group. Generally, these assumptions relate to a series of behaviors that include engaging in risk taking behaviors such as extreme sporting activities and experimenting with sex, drugs, and alcohol. Late adolescence has also come to include activities focused on obtaining an education, choosing a career, and moving out of the family home. This prolonged period of preparation for economic independence means that parenting must wait until social maturity, often associated with financial security, is achieved. SmithBattle (1994) explains that theories of adolescent development over the past forty years have come to present the 'tasks' of adolescence and the 'tasks' of motherhood as being in opposition to each other. In the last 25 years, the emphasis in the literature relating to adolescent development on 'individual' achievement has meant that becoming a mother must wait until the teen is prepared educationally and financially to take her place in adult society. This preparation includes a period of contemplating if and how marriage and motherhood fits into the life-world of what is meaningful and valuable to her as an individual. Because of the complexity of these events according to SmithBattle (1994), adolescent

women (under the age of 20) are generally warned against becoming mothers, “because of the teen’s failure to first achieve autonomy and become a differentiated self” (p. 143). These beliefs are consistent with current middle-class standards which dictate that a woman who is not yet (financially) autonomous is not ready to parent. Thus the choice to become a mother has become more dependent on how motherhood is placed within the broader spectrum of personal interests, education attainment, and job security, rather than the biological capacity to reproduce or the economic or social imperative to marry. The greater availability of birth control for single women is an example of one change in the past 25 years that has allowed the timing of motherhood to become a matter of personal choice. Addelson (1999) argues that, “ ‘responsible sex’...[has come] to mean sex with contraceptive ‘protection,’ unless the couple (married) was planning to have a child- provided they could afford one” (p.91). As a result of the use of birth control particularly by young women who are not married, health promotion experts and policy makers in the mid 1970s began to focus on contraception as a way to prevent ‘unwanted’ pregnancies (Addelson, 1999). Addleson (1999) observes that, “unwanted” here seems to mean unwanted by ‘society’ or unplanned according to the ‘good girl’ life plan which located childbearing after school and marriage” (p.93). Changes in how we now view adolescence differently are confirmed by the fact that a literature search for the term ‘adolescent pregnancy’ and ‘adolescent motherhood’ produced few results before the early 1970s. As an increasing number of unmarried young women were having sex outside marriage and becoming pregnant however, the topic of ‘teenage pregnancy’ and ‘unwed mothers’ began to draw attention in the media. Furstenberg (1991) argues that when the majority of women who became mothers in the their teenage years were

married in the 1950s and early 60s, “teenage pregnancy and childbearing drew little public notice....by the mid-1970s it had become an urgent crisis....since then, it has attracted almost limitless attention from scholars, policymakers, and the public at large” (p.127).

Concern about early childbearing is relatively new in White European Canadian history. Less than one hundred years ago, the imperative for middle-class families was for children to relieve parents of their physical and economic dependence at as early an age as possible. Status within the adult community was gained primarily through marriage and childbearing at an early age (Arnett, 1997; Broderick, 1988; Comacchio, 1999; Kunzel, 1993; Leavitt, 1986; Milan, 2000). It was not unusual for marriage to occur as early as 15 years, which was the average age of puberty in the early part of the 20th century (Apple & Golden, 1997; Montessoro & Blixen, 1996). While the age of marriage increased with the advent of the First World War, the Great Depression, and the Second World War, it was not uncommon for women to marry at age 18 in the 1950s as the ‘cult of domesticity’, which emphasized women’s role as wife and mother within the home, emerged in the post war era (Edwards, 1980; Finkel, 1997; Milan, 2000; Norton, 2001). In the 1960s and 70s, changes in women’s position in society as a result of an emphasis on education and working outside the home, meant that the age of marriage has risen, as did the age at which women had their first child (Addelson, 1999; Cherlin, 1980; Milan, 2000). Historically, this has not always been the case. According to SmithBattle (2000) “adolescent childbearing was a common, nonproblematic feature of social life.... it was only with industrialization that adolescence emerged as a distinct life stage in which youth were prepared through formal education to select an identity from a range of

opportunities” (p. 29). Thus for the dominant culture there are increasing expectations that parents will promote adolescent children’s future well-being by supporting them economically until they are finished post-secondary training. This relationship assumes that the child will remain single and childless until a career is established or well underway. Parents likewise obtain social status by providing this opportunity for their children (Addelson, 1999).

Over the last 25 years, as a result of changing beliefs about the timing of marriage and motherhood, research was devoted primarily to the topic of preventing adolescent pregnancy and parenting (Arenson, 1994; Orton, 1999; Sukanich, Rogers, & McDonald, 1986; Williams & Vines, 1999; Unger, Molina, & Teran, 1999; Woodward, Fergusson, & Horwood, 2001). At the same time, sex outside marriage became more widely accepted. What becomes problematic for adolescent women today is that when it comes to reproductive choice, there is an inconsistent message that the choice to have sex does not appear to include the right to carry a pregnancy to term if the woman is a teenager, unmarried, or financially dependent. In the past, discussions about motherhood did not include concerns about marriage or financial status because it was assumed that these markers of adult status had already been reached when a woman married, regardless of her age. According to Montessoro and Blixen (1996), “ the phenomenon of adolescent pregnancy needs to be viewed within the context of an increasing female independence challenging traditional social norms and expectations about appropriate female behavior” (p.34). Thus for a number of reasons it is difficult to critically examine the research or our own assumptions about adolescent motherhood without understanding the historical and social factors that have shaped beliefs about the role of marriage and motherhood in

women's lives.

Where We Are Today

Research on the topic of adolescent motherhood continues to be funded. In the last twenty years it has shifted focus from the alleged moral inappropriateness of 'children having children', to the impact of teenage parenting on the stability of the nuclear family, the cost to the public health care system of low birth weight infants, and the perception of increased maternal/infant morbidity (Alpers, 1998; Arenson, 1994; Camarena, Minor, McImer, & Ferrie, 1998; Carey, Ratliff & Lyle, 1998; Furstenberg, Brooks-Gunn & Morgan, 1987; Joffe & Radius, 1987; Kalil & Kunz, 1999; Sukanich, Rogers, & McDonald, 1986). Research statistics contribute 'scientific' validity to the perception that adolescents having children are more likely to become burdens to society, and that their children are more likely to be less productive members of society than children of older, married, and better educated women. These assumptions form the building blocks of the present 'social construction' of adolescent motherhood. The emphasis here is on the interpretation of the modern day usage of the word 'adolescent', which implies economic and emotional dependency. A review of the literature for this research study examined quantitative and qualitative research studies, as well as a number of secondary sources that explored the social and historical construction of the roles of women in society over the previous century.

Review of Current Research

A review of research on the topic of adolescent pregnancy and motherhood was conducted for the years 1980-2002. This period represents a time of significant increase in government funding for research, and a resulting increase in the number and variety of

studies devoted to this area of social concern (Montessoro & Blixen, 1996). Social and political concerns of the past twenty years are reflected in the choice of research questions, and in the methods used to address those questions. On the topic of adolescent motherhood, these studies have focused on the determinants of health (economic well being, access to health care, substance use, education, and housing) and their value in predicting early pregnancy. The ability of researchers to generalize findings and predict outcomes are qualities that are valued in both quantitative and qualitative traditions. Yet it is difficult to make generalizations and conclusions about an experience that is so individually and socially complex.

Quantitative studies in this review primarily examined the relationship between the determinants of health and the risk for adolescent motherhood. Discussion and dissemination of results most often follows with suggestions for changes in government and social policy directed at equipping young women with the information needed to avoid pregnancy (Farber, 1991; Gillmore, Spencer, Larson, Tran, & Gilchrist 1998; Nord, Moore, Morrison, Brown, & Myers, 1992; Porter, 1990; Renker, 1999; Unger, Molina, & Teran, 2000). A criticism of this research has been that it fails to consider the importance of social relationships, the complexity of modern adolescent development, and the ways in which boys and girls are socialized differently (Ford-Gilboe & Campbell, 1996; Gilligan, 1982; SmithBattle, 1995, 1996, 1997, 2000; SmithBattle & Leonard, 1998). For example, much of the quantitative research reviewed infers that the act of becoming a mother at a young age is made independently of the context of the young girl's social and cultural environment. In a sense, suggesting that it is an independent and poor 'life-style' choice given today's middle class emphasis on education and economic well being

(Addelson, 1999; Bissell, 2000; Carter, 1971; Ford-Gilboe & Campbell, 1996; Gilligan, 1982; Mulhall, LeMay, & Alexander, 1999). Another body of research combines quantitative methods (tables, questionnaires, surveys) and qualitative methods (focus groups, in-depth interviews, group interviews). Using a small group of participants, and referring to national data banks or previous research findings containing sociodemographic information about similar populations, these findings create a more comprehensive portrait of the adolescent mother (Alpers, 1998; Arenson, 1994; Camarena & Minor, 1998; Mercer, 1980; Smith, Weinman, & Nenney, 1984). Key findings however are again most often directed toward identifying the presence of risk factors for pregnancy and suggesting preventative strategies.

In contrast, studies with a mainly qualitative focus consider contextual factors such as culture and ethnicity, and include the ways that significant relationships such as family, religion, and community impact the choices individuals make (Ford-Gilboe & Campbell, 1996; Furstenberg, Brooks-Gun, & Morgan, 1987; Mulhall, LeMay, & Alexander, 1999; Porter, 1990, SmithBattle, 1995, 1996, 1997, 2000; SmithBattle & Leonard, 1998). According to Sandelowski (1995), qualitative methods allow for a greater depth of understanding of the individual as opposed to the collective experience. The emphasis is on contextuality, rather than on cause and effect relationships and generalizability. Consistent with the aims of qualitative research methods expressed here, feminist oral history, according to Chanfrault-Duchet (1991) emphasizes the importance of relationships, and the personal and social complexity of life events. Thus in examining the experience of adolescent motherhood, feminist oral history and the in-depth oral interview can be used as a research method to examine the meaning of experience, “as

viewed through the distance between, or conformity to, the image of woman that is in current use in her family circle or social group... and the hegemonic social model [of women]” (Chanfrault-Duchet, 1991, p.80). The in-depth interview is the primary tool that is used in this feminist oral history research.

A number of important qualitative studies used the in-depth interview as a primary method of inquiry. These research studies place the individual within her family, cultural, and historical context, and examine how the choice to become a mother fits within the individual’s life-world (Arenson, 1994; Carey, Ratliff, & Lyle, 1998; Farber, 1991; Lesser, Koniak-Griffin, & Anderson, 1999; SmithBattle, 1995; SmithBattle & Leonard, 1998; Williams & Vines, 1999). Carey, Ratliff and Lyle (1998) for example, in a purposeful sample of 42 adolescent mothers chose to focus on ‘successful’ teen mothers, using in-depth interviews to develop a hypothesis, “about resiliency and strength in adolescent mothers” (p.350). According to the researchers, “adolescent mothers are the experts on the experience of their own resiliency. Their personal stories of creative adaptation and strength will enhance the understanding of the process of resiliency in adolescent motherhood” (p.349). Likewise, Farber (1991) conducted 28 in-depth interviews with unmarried adolescent mothers between the ages of 15-20 years from mixed cultural and ethnic backgrounds. Findings describe the importance of “family members and other significant adults in the decision process [to become a mother]” (p.697). In reviewing the literature, Farber (1991) states that current research, “does provide a reasonable assessment of relative risk of early motherhood in the general population...however, very little research on pregnancy resolution realistically portrays the complex nature of the many factors that influence a pregnant teen’s ultimate decision

to be a mother” (p. 699). In challenging previous findings, Williams and Vines (1999) conclude from in-depth interviews conducted with seven first-time mothers who had histories of childhood abuse, that contrary to expectations, all delivered healthy newborns. They suggest that, “not all adolescent mothers are at risk for maladaptive parenting” (p. 15), and that for some becoming a mother, “may promote personal growth and maturity” (p.15). Finally, SmithBattle’s (1995) research, which most closely resembles feminist oral history, states in her findings that, “the conventional wisdom that teenage mothering risks the future disregards the fact that the young mother’s experience and understanding of her past as well as her anticipation of the future are intimately tied to the social world she inhabits” (p.22).

SmithBattle (1995) and SmithBattle and Leonard (1998) review the social history of adolescent motherhood beginning with the 1960’s and trace the evolution of research on the topic of adolescent sexuality and social influences. SmithBattle (1995) brings attention to the fact that much of the research focused on women from impoverished backgrounds confirms the perception that all young mothers are failures, and that their children have generally poor outcomes including poor health, poverty, and unemployment. However, according to SmithBattle (1995), “this perspective privileges the scientific practices of unitizing and generalizing for explaining young mothers’ lives and has held enormous sway among policy makers and researchers” (p.23). In a recent research study, SmithBattle and Leonard (1998) extended previous research work with a group of adolescent mothers and looked at changes over time in the meaning of the experience. They did this using in-depth interviews to look at, “life history accounts of the intervening 4 years” (p.36). In their interviews, they emphasize the change that occurs

to a woman in which an image of the self as a mother is formed. This is not a process in which the self is at one point not a mother, and then by an act of biology, suddenly a mother, but rather through a gradual process mediated by, “socially embedded action” (p. 37). They suggest that “empirical-rational studies... [impose] normative ideals that differ substantially from the ways in which young mothers live and understand their lives” (p. 37). Thus it is important to understand how women make decisions, and how roles are created, through the interaction of the self and the unique social and historical context in which we live our lives. Reviewing a number of secondary sources related to the social history of women’s lives can further enrich this understanding.

Review of Secondary Sources

The body of literature examined as secondary sources reflects a growing interest by historians and the public in the everyday lives of women. Experiences related to pregnancy, childbirth, the family, sexuality and motherhood are prominent in this literature (Adams, 1997; Apple & Golden, 1997; Arnup, 1990; Cavanaugh & Warne, 2000; Comacchio, 1993, 1999; Creese & Strong-Boag, 1992; Gleason, 1999; Kunzel, 1993; Leavitt, 1986; Lewis, 1997; McLaren & McLaren, 1997; Mitchinson, 2002; McManus, 2000; Owram, 1996; Parr, 1990; Sangster, 2001; Strange & Loo, 1997; Strong-Boag, 1988S; Strong-Boag & McPherson, 1990; Strong-Boag & Fellman, 1997). Relevant themes include women’s economic dependency, beliefs and assumptions about the role of women and the family, women’s lack of control over reproductive function, the rise of professional ‘regulatory’ agencies, and the influence of state power in implementing legal sanctions that shape and regulate women’s reproductive choices. Leavitt’s (1986) history of childbirth practices emphasizes the unique role that women’s

reproductive function plays in determining the choices of roles for women that have been historically available. Leavitt (1986) states that, “historically, women’s physiological ability to bear children and men’s inability to do so have contributed to defining the places each held in the social order...by understanding childbirth we can understand significant parts of the female experience” (p.3). In addition, Strange and Loo (1997), Sangster (2001) and Butler (2002) examine the moral regulation of women’s private lives and the policing of women’s behavior through legally, culturally, and socially sanctioned surveillance. Another important source is Levesque (1997) who analyzes the history of the professionalization of social work and identifies the ways that social work developed as a legally sanctioned arm of society to enable the dominant class to protect itself against sexually errant women. In examining the role of the state in the moral regulation of women between 1920-1940 in Ontario, Hillyard-Little (1999) discusses how a government allowance for single mothers was distributed. Government workers were permitted to enter a single woman’s home at any time of the day or night to look for signs of male ‘visitors’. A woman could be denied benefits for any behavior that included visiting, dating, or being seen in the company of a man who was not a male relative. Unmarried women with children, (and this included widows, women who had been deserted by their husbands, as well as those with ‘illegitimate children’, were thus denied the mother’s allowance on the basis of society’s perception of moral decrepitude (Hillyard-Little, 1999). Other relevant works include Noddings (1989), Tuana (1993), and Nicholson’s (1999) analysis of the ways women have been evaluated on the basis of their sexual distinction from men through religious and historical texts. Finally, recent historical works have used gender as a lens through which to view men and women’s

place in society and how issues such as marriage, reproduction, contraception, and family configuration have shaped and been shaped by changes in the economy and technology over the past one hundred years. What emerges is how the sexual regulation of women has impacted their experience of motherhood and their ability to live as full citizens in Canadian society. Authors such as Parr (1990, 1995), Sangster (2001), Comacchio (1999), Apple and Golden (1997), Finkel (1997), Strong-Boag and Fellman (1997) and Wong and Checkland (1999) have been used extensively to help clarify and magnify the ways that the twelve women interviewed experienced motherhood between the ages of 15 to 20 years. It is hoped that this research will contribute to a growing body of literature that seeks to develop a richer understanding of how social and historical influences have impacted women's lives and how our current understanding of adolescent motherhood is constructed.

CHAPTER THREE

'Natural' Motherhood: Pre World War II Canada

According to Wilson (1991), women's economic dependence on marriage meant that many women married at a young age in order to achieve economic and social independence from their families. Wilson (1991) states that in the first half of the 20th century, "low wages paid to women made it difficult to be self-supporting. With few opportunities for independent living, marriage and motherhood were attractive alternatives to remaining in the parental home or doing domestic work for another family" (p.16). The Great Depression and the Second World War contributed to delaying marriage and childbearing for many women (Milan, 2000), however early marriages were not uncommon at a time when, "marriage was at once a civic duty and an individual imperative" (Comacchio, 1999, p.17). During the period of Confederation, the government of Canada encouraged young White European men and women to come West in order to settle the country, and to ensure European dominion over the vast geography of the prairies and the western territories. Comacchio (1999) says, "the great Northwest was considered 'unsettled' as long as it was not settled by white families.... taking up the cause with fervour, the Liberal government... actively encouraged immigration" (p.43). According to Comacchio (1999), "the ideal immigrant" (p.44), was a hardy and independent, "stalwart peasant in a sheepskin coat" (p.44) who settled Western Canada with his "stout wife and half a dozen children" (p.44). Resistance to the harsh climate and geography of the Canadian landscape meant that women, men, and children formed not only emotional bonds, but depended on each other for all aspects of

their material survival. Marriage and motherhood were central to the survival of individuals and families in early White European Canadian history.

In the first half of the 20th century, Canada accepted many immigrants from Europe. The cultural traditions of these immigrant families matched those of Canadians who had already settled. In many families, gendered roles were even more pronounced than in non-immigrant families. Comacchio (1999) comments on this phenomenon, “differentiation of family roles, and any sense of individual rights taking priority over family goals, were neither economically possible nor culturally acceptable in many immigrant families” (p.42). The importance of family ties was particularly significant for the survival of farming families. According to Danysk (1996), farming on the prairies depended on the heterosexual family structure as the basic economic and social unit of production, “the predominance of families ensured the entrenchment of institutions and fostered social stability” (p.157).

Gendered relationships based on rural traditions of interdependence were impacted by urbanization in the early decades of the 20th century as men traveled away from the home to factories, and women remained at home to care for children. According to Comacchio (1999), despite changing social and economic conditions, the acceptance of patriarchal control over the family remained strong in the first half of the 20th century. Comacchio (1999) concludes,

Thus, if some older patterns of family living were discarded, many were retained, if modified to meet new circumstances.... comprising a breadwinner father, a stay-at-home mother, and dependent children in school, the middle-class family model became a benchmark of personal respectability and national success. (p.47)

The importance of women’s role within the family was reinforced by their dependency on their husband’s income. For women who were not married, supporting themselves and

their children without a husband was almost impossible. For example, single mothers were often forced to place their children for adoption as a result of their inability to provide financial support for them (Kunzel, 1993; Sangster, 2001). Government support for single women did not exist until 1914 when The Canadian Patriotic Fund was established to, “preserve the family’s economic status in comfort and decency as a partial recognition of the services of the soldiers overseas” (Comacchio, 1999, p.68). The income from this allowance however, would not allow a woman and her children to live independently. Thus, single women with children depended on family support for their survival. This small government income was given only to women who could be proven to be of ‘virtuous’ character. This meant that it must be proven that they, “lived chaste lives and spent the allowances on necessities.... [and that] never married, single mothers need not apply” (Finkel & Conrad, 2002, p. 222).

Following the relative affluence of the 1920s, during which time unions promoted the ‘living wage’ for men, a downturn in the economy during the Great Depression meant that families had to cut back on consumption, move into smaller quarters, and depend more on family and friends for survival. Many men and women suffered emotional and mental distress when they were unable to fulfill gendered roles. It was not uncommon during this decade for women to supplement the family income through taking in boarders, producing, and preserving food. This allowed some women to stay at home and care for their children while maintaining the appearance of the one breadwinner family. In the 1930s, “all families ultimately relied more heavily on women’s traditional capacity to ‘make do’ and stretch household dollars” (Comacchio, 1999, p.126). Following the Depression of the 1930s, and throughout the years of the Second World War, women

continued to adapt to a depressed economy, and to restrictions in the production and consumption of household goods. As a result of the dependency of women on their male relatives' income, lack of sustainable jobs for women, and lack of government support for single mothers, viable alternatives to marriage and motherhood were rare. For young women, marrying and having children was an expected and 'natural' outcome of social maturation in pre-World War II Canada. Comacchio (1999) confirms that in Canada,

Most women of all ranks and origins stepped from the domain of their fathers or male guardians into that of their husbands....the result was a 'cult of domesticity' that tried to confine women to the private sphere, their social and familial roles made synonymous: they were to be dutiful daughters, wives, and mothers. (p.20)

Telling Stories

Connie's Story

Connie was born in 1921 in Hungary of Hungarian parents. She married in 1938 at the age of 17, and became a mother at age 18 in 1939. Connie's father had immigrated to Ontario ahead of the family in 1924, where he worked on the Welland Canal before studying to become a Presbyterian minister. Shortly after Connie arrived from Hungary by boat, her mother and brother died. Connie and her father moved to a farm outside Calgary in July of 1930. She was then nine years old. The year before, in 1929, a friend of Connie's father wrote to say he had met a woman at a national meeting of Hungarians in Winnipeg, and asked if Connie's father would be interested in corresponding with her. In December of 1930, Connie's father married this woman and brought her to his farm. Connie's father was then 54 years old and her stepmother was in her early 30s. They had no children of their own. It appears from Connie's story that her stepmother was familiar

with farm life, and that she taught Connie skills related to caring for a family including maintaining a house and caring for a husband and children. This was particularly important for Connie who married and became a mother during the Great Depression, a time of economic hardship in Canada. Connie's father travelled around Alberta to Hungarian Presbyterian communities on a regular basis and so was away from home frequently. Connie reports a close relationship with her stepmother, whom she describes as a 'pillar of the church' and a close friend and support during her own early years of mothering.

Connie lived in Calgary as a young woman following her marriage, maintaining her relationship with her family who lived on the outskirts of Calgary. She also had strong connections with her church community in Calgary. Connie's description of her upbringing and adult life indicates that she held traditional beliefs and values about the role of men and women in society, and that she conveyed this respect for traditional religious and cultural values to her children. Connie's husband worked in the restaurant business, and Connie ran a boarding house for single men in their home. Connie explains that this work supplemented the family's income and provided them with free accommodations. Connie was widowed when her son was 10 years old, and she remarried and had two more children in later years. For Connie, becoming a mother was what she expected, and she describes her role as a mother as something that came 'naturally' to her after the birth of her son, without conscious decision making process about whether she did nor did not want to be a mother.

Listening to Stories

Understanding Natural Motherhood

In listening to Connie's story, it is easy to understand how the family unit became the economic and social basis of human relationships, and how the form of these relationships was normalized. Connie describes growing up in the 1930s as a time when early marriage and motherhood were common. She explains that, "My friends had some children, and that's how it was. Because back in those days, it was nothing that girls got married at 16 or 17" (Interview transcript #12, Connie, p.19). Later, I asked her if she had friends where were married at a young age, and if this was unusual. She replied,

No, not in that time... really... in that time of the year in a young girl's life. I know I had a friend who was 16 and she got married, and she had children... there were a lot of my friends, around my age, and maybe one year older, or one year younger. Yes, they were married, and they had children also. (Interview transcript #12, Connie, p.18)

For women who grew up in rural Canada before the Second World War, advanced education and job training were not what was expected of a young girl. Connie left school in grade 8, and explains that this did not trouble her, "I only went to grade 8, dear, that was all... I [learned] through the school of... experience, never had time to go back to school" (Interview transcript #12, Connie, p.3). I asked Connie if she felt she had missed out on any important experiences by marrying and becoming a mother at a young age.

Connie responded,

I had nothing to give up, because I wasn't doing anything, I was just at home. I had nothing to give up.... Back in those days, I must say, there was no two people going out to work, if you understand what I mean. Not like now, the last fifteen, twenty years, couples have to work, and give up their families. Back in those days, it wasn't even heard about. (Interview transcript #12, Connie, p.20)

Comacchio (1999) explains that Connie's position within the home was reinforced

during the Great Depression by high unemployment rates. The liberal attitudes toward

women working outside the home that developed in the 1920s, returned to conservative beliefs about the role of women within the home in part in an effort to maintain what was thought of as the stabilizing influence of traditional gendered roles. Comacchio (1999) explains that during the 1930s, women did not generally work outside the home because “the paid employment of women was interpreted more vehemently than ever as a threat to the rightful position of men, to the family, and to capitalist society” (p.123). Being single also represented an economically and socially unviable state. Men and women married at a young age in order to relieve their parents of financial responsibility and to accommodate, in a socially acceptable way, the sexual maturation of boys and girls (Milan, 2000). Women could not support themselves outside marriage, and an important marker of male status was his ability to marry and support a family. The process of sexual maturation, marriage, and motherhood unfolded for Connie in a way that mirrored dominant beliefs about the ‘laws of nature’ and women’s reproductive capacity at that time in Canadian White European history. Connie explains that when she married, she did not anticipate the event of motherhood, it just happened as the natural outcome of marriage,

I just became a natural mother (Interview transcript #12, Connie, p.7)... well, you know, how can I put this, Margaret? When you don’t have any children, you don’t know what’s happening, but, when you have that baby, and they taught me in the [hospital]... how to diaper it, how to take care of the baby, it just came naturally because...it was my baby! That’s all I can say... it just came naturally... It just came with instinct... because I was a mother. (Interview transcript #12, Connie, p. 19)

Connie’s belief that her ability to mother came ‘naturally’, reflects beliefs about woman’s reproductive capacity as link with their social role as mother in pre-World War II Canada (Comacchio, 1999; Prentice, Bourne, Cuthbert-Brandt, Light, Mitchinson, & Black,

1996). Apple (1997) argues that while some women did occupy roles outside the home in the first half of the 20th century, the dominant role for women remained as wife and mother within the home. Apple (1997) explains that, “throughout the nineteenth and into the twentieth century... it was through motherhood that women were to find their identity and life fulfilment” (p.93).

Connie remembers how life flowed from childhood to adulthood,

All I can remember is my girlfriend who got married a little later than I, and then she had the baby, and we were still always constant friends. Also with her mother and aunt, and my mother, also you know, we were sort of a tight knit friendship. (Interview transcript #12, Connie, p.14)

When she became a wife and mother, her relationship with her friends and family continued, and was incorporated into her new status as a married woman. She enjoyed caring for her husband and son, and explains that this was a very satisfying experience,

I only cooked for ourselves, my husband and I and the child, not for the men [boarders]. And I had my work pretty well laid out you know, what I had to do, and I managed quite well, and I wasn't overworked or anything... all I can say is that I felt pretty good, and I was quite proud of what I was able to accomplish... back in those days, your rent took some part out of your earnings, but because we didn't have to pay any rent, I was able to enjoy my husband's wages, and I was able to live properly, that's all. (Interview transcript #12, Connie, p.13)

Living ‘properly’ in a way that reflected dominant beliefs about women’s roles, was valued in middle-class society at that time. The expression of women’s sexuality outside marriage was morally and legally restricted. The idea that Connie would have knowledge of sex outside marriage, or become pregnant without being married, was something that she was careful to clarify in regard to her own experience of marriage and motherhood. Connie explained to me that first she married, and then she became pregnant. This statement suggests that perhaps the pregnancy happened without a pre-understanding of the process by which she would become pregnant. Connie explained to me, “Well, I got

pregnant right after I got married, that's quite natural... because I didn't know what else to expect. That's how it happened" (Interview transcript #12, Connie, p.8). This linking of the social construction of marriage with the biological outcome of pregnancy serves to reinforce the idea that for Connie, marriage was a natural state for women, and would consequently be followed by pregnancy within the context of marriage. Prentice et al. (1996) explain that,

Certainly most women agreed about the importance of the family and of their own role in keeping it together....so focussed were women on their role as mothers that Nellie McClung felt she could safely declare that 'every normal woman desires children'. (p.163)

Another significant factor in reinforcing the importance of marriage and motherhood for women was that the family unit, consisting of a married man and woman and their biological children was also considered an expression of 'human nature'. Prentice et al. (1996) argue that "marriage represented a sense of place [for women], of creating a family of one's own, and of shaping and controlling the next generation" (p.163).

In this light, family relationships served to perpetuate and reinforce existing gendered roles. Connie's stepmother continued to support her emotionally and materially following her marriage..Connie remembers the importance of this relationship to her as a woman and a mother,

My mother lived out on the farm, but she would come in the car, you know, and we would socialize together. And it was quite, quite good, because it was good tight friendship. (Interview transcript #12, Connie, p. 14) She also was the pillar of the church, she was the treasurer of the church, of the ladies group for I don't know how many years, and she was always head of the ladies organization, making pastries, and noodles, they were selling them for bazaars... It was very interesting for me to grow up with her. (Interview transcript #12, Connie, p. 15) She lived out on the farm at the time, but she would come to Calgary and she would bring chicken, eggs and milk and what have you, to different people that used to buy it off the farm and then every time she would come in she would bring me butter, and what have you, and she would always visit me, anytime she came

in from the farm, she would always visit me. (Interview transcript #12, Connie, p. 21)

The personal and societal significance of giving birth and the social construction of motherhood remained central to the moral and cultural regulation of society in pre-World War II Canada. Along with reinforcement of these roles by family members, both Protestant and Catholic Churches maintained the moral significance of a woman's duty to her husband and children within the context of marriage. The Presbyterian Church played a central role in Connie's life. Connie's father was a minister, and her stepmother was active in church affairs. Connie explains that being a church member was an important life-long commitment to her, "My father was a minister, and the church was part of my life, all the time, even here in X____, it's still my... part of my life" (Interview transcript #12, Connie, p.14). Religious doctrine reflected social norms in regards to a mother's role in teaching her children acceptable moral and social standards of behavior. Connie's experience of becoming a mother, and the importance of her new role in instructing her children to proper moral and social values is revealed in this memory her son's early childhood,

I just enjoyed being a mother and he was such a good boy. Our church was just half a block away from where I lived and I used to go to church every Sunday morning and I'd take him and there would never be a peep out of him... There was another lady, that she had a boy... she used to go to the same church as I did, but her son was always screaming and hollering, and she had to take him out of the church, but I was able to sit there in church. I didn't stand up when we had to because it was pretty hard holding a baby... It was such a long time ago, such a long time ago. (Interview transcript #12, Connie, p.8)

The implicit message to women as delivered by family, community, religion, and state was that being a wife and mother was the acceptable and expected behavior for women, and that engaging in occupations outside the home were morally suspect

(McLaren & McLaren, 1997; Sangster, 2001). In this respect, women working for wages were thought to be more susceptible to moral indiscretion than women working in the home. Working outside the home was often linked to the practice of prostitution, and thus was not acceptable for young middle-class women (Sangster, 2001). While Connie did not work outside the home, she indirectly contributed to the family income by taking in boarders, which was not uncommon for immigrant families in the harsh economic times of the Great Depression. Connie explains,

I felt all right, I felt quite comfortable, really, because when the lady had moved out of the house and I was looking after the house, there were quite a few men living in... the house, like a rooming house, and I would have to make up the beds and clean the rooms... and for that I had free accommodations. I didn't have to pay rent or nothing, and that was a big help. (Interview transcript #12, Connie, p. 11)

Comacchio (1999) confirms that, “running a boarding house permitted women to contribute to the family income without working outside the home, a point of honor in many immigrant families” (p.41). Making the home comfortable for her husband and looking after her son was a source of satisfaction for Connie, and was a central role generally for women in society.

Contextualizing Natural Motherhood

Connie's experience of early mothering does not fit within our current understanding of the term 'adolescent mother'. For Connie, the term 'adolescent mother' suggested a young unmarried woman who is pregnant or parenting. Connie was careful to assure me that she was married, and then become a mother when I asked her if she would consider being interviewed. By way of emphasizing this point, she emphasized that she did not even think about motherhood until she was married, “Not really, not until I got

married, and then, like I say, the consequences was...I was married and that was the first thing that happened, I got pregnant!” (Interview transcript #12, Connie, p.18). This sequence of events, which happened in the ‘natural’ order of things for a young girl of that age, meant that although she married at only 17 and 18 years old, she did not consider herself an ‘adolescent mother’ in the way that we consider young unmarried parenting women today. Not being married and becoming pregnant for middle-class young women was rare and considered an individual and family disgrace. Finkel and Conrad (2002) explain that,

In the interwar years, the courts in some jurisdictions still acceded to requests of families to place ‘promiscuous’ daughters in mental institutions or reformatories. A single woman who became pregnant continued to face a dismal prospect. If they could afford to do so, pregnant unwed women tried to conceal their condition, and both public and private institutions were prepared to exploit them for their own ends. (p. 259)

The knowledge of sex and the sex act was not a topic of common conversation in the first half of the 20th century, particularly by unmarried women and young girls. This hesitancy is reflected in my interview with Connie when I asked her if she thought about becoming a mother when she was a little girl and she explained that this happened only after she was married and was then told by her doctor that she was pregnant. What this statement implies is that marriage was considered inevitable, and that it was neither necessary nor expected to think about becoming a mother before marriage. Becoming a mother was an event that happened ‘naturally’ - by instinct, as a matter of course as Connie explains. Commachio (1999) argues that women’s domestic roles were identified with moral virtue, and gave meaning to their day-to-day tasks, “for working-class women, respectability was both a source of identity and a crucial skill in itself. The respectable housewife, with her impeccable house, refined domestic skills, and well-behaved

children, became the icon of the age" (p.82). The story of Connie's experience of becoming a mother at the age of 18 reflects and contrasts with the experience of many women in pre-World War II Canada. Connie was younger than most women who married in the 1930s, however her rural and religious background and her lack of advanced education suggest that for her and her family, early marriage and motherhood were expected.

Like many immigrant families, Connie supplemented her family's income by taking in boarders, which was particularly common during the Depression. In addition, Connie's skills in housekeeping and rural living would have allowed her to stretch the family's cash income. In addition, her mother's contribution of farm produce was also an asset. Like the majority of women who were her contemporaries, becoming a mother and a wife for Connie was seen as something that happened 'naturally', part of the cycle of birth, survival and death. In other words, marriage and motherhood were not planned, did not conflict with other expectations or ambitions, and did not have to be consciously anticipated. While this was not universally true, for the majority of Canadian girls, these were the expectations that shaped their adult lives. The possibilities for women outside of marriage, given Connie's upbringing and social status, were few. Prohibitions against sex outside of marriage were widespread, and these beliefs were rarely challenged. 'Moral' transgressions by unmarried women that resulted in pregnancy were covered up as quickly as possible. The idea that becoming a mother was what God and Nature intended was the accepted doctrine of religious, social and legal institutions (Tuana, 1993).

The Meaning of Stories

Women and Nature, Motherhood and Women: Pre-World War II Canada

Canadian society before the Second World War reflected the ideals of White European settlers. Immigration policies were such that the government sought out people from countries that reflected existing social, cultural, and religious values. According to Milan (2000), while the size and configuration of the White European Canadian family was flexible and often included extended family, the basic composition of the family was the husband, wife and their biological children. Milan (2000) explains that,

Exceptions to the traditional family unit – men and women who never married, lone parents, childless couples and couples living common-law – always existed, but they were less likely the result of individual choice than of uncontrollable circumstances, such as the death of a spouse, obligations to ageing parents, or poverty. (p.2)

Mitchinson (2002), who studied the centrality of motherhood in women's lives in Canada during the first half of the 20th century argues that, “maternalism, a belief that mothering is central to the lives of women, was an ideology that most Canadians shared with others in Western society” (p.3). The ‘peace and order’ of Canadian society as described by some historians depended in important ways on social conformity: sex outside marriage was considered a threat to the stability of the family unit. As Comacchio (1999) says, “betrothal was a formal undertaking, upheld by the law. While these were middle-class practices, strong religious and social proscriptions against premarital sexuality, the severe stigma of illegitimacy, and the notion of ‘respectability’” (p.21) reflected dominant cultural beliefs and legitimized social regulation of sexual expression. The period before World War II in Canada represents a time when the influences of birth control, abortion, divorce, remarriage and blended families were less common than in the

post war era (Milan, 2000). Opportunities for women's self-expression, separate from their roles as mothers and wives, was strongly regulated due to expectations that the most important social role for women related to their reproductive function. Women realized their dependence on the economic unity of the family for the legal protection of their property which existed only through recognized associations with living male relatives (Cavanaugh, 1996). According to Cavanaugh (1996), "under English law a married woman controlled her separate property; however, she had no right to the matrimonial home usually held in her husband's name or to property or income acquired by joint labour with her husband" (p.190). Choosing to become a parent outside marriage was rare. According to Milan (2000), "the most common reason for lone-parenthood or remarriage in the early 20th century was the death of a spouse" (p.3). The sexual regulation of young women thus served the purpose of establishing relationships between men and women that were sanctioned by law and thought to be in the best interests of the women themselves in pre World War II Canada. For this reason, the period before World War II was chosen as a time when for the majority of White European Canadian families, marriage and parenting were expected to occur as soon as sexual maturity and the means to support a family, made independence from one's family of origin possible. While exceptions to this rule existed, they were much less common than after the war when changes in society accelerated the questioning of marriage and marriage *before* motherhood as women's only role in life. So strong was the relationship between marriage and motherhood before World War II that according to Mitchinson (2002), "a 1935 medical text argued that women who made a conscious decision not to have children or could not have children should not have the right to marry" (p.13). Becoming

a mother at an early age for married women was not unusual when mythologies about motherhood in the first part of the 20th century were being forged. What *was* unusual was the occurrence of motherhood outside marriage.

CHAPTER FOUR

Motherhood in the 1950s: Strong Chain, Weakening Links

Expectations around marriage and motherhood did not change substantially for White European Canadian women in the decade following the Second World War (Chalmers, 1996; Gleason, 1997, 1999). Wilson (1991) explains that, “in the comparative affluence of the early postwar period there was a strong desire to see family life return to ‘normal’....fulfilment as a woman had only one definition for American women after 1949 – the housewife mother” (p.23). As a result of the emphasis on ‘the family’ as defined by the dominant White heterosexual society, “the birth rate to teens in the United States reached a peak in the 1950s....in Canada, the birth rate for teens reached a peak in the 1960s” (Wong & Checkland, 1999, p.xv). While the Second World War brought opportunities for women to work outside the home however when the war ended, women were encouraged to return home and to a more subservient role. For some women, experiences in the workforce during the war years changed their expectations of homemaking and mothering and created conflicts with returning husbands and fathers. During the war, government advertisements portrayed women wearing trousers, carrying lunch pails, and working in factories - making their patriotic contribution to the war effort. Following the war, the same government agencies requested that women return to their homes, to their children and to their husbands. Restrictions were placed on the hiring of women in government positions, and daycare for children of working women was closed (Finkel & Conrad, 2001; Korinek, 2000). An advertisement campaign aimed at returning women to their ‘proper’ place in society was undertaken with the same enthusiasm that had encouraged them to leave their homes in the early 1940s. According

to Prentice, Bourne, Cuthbert-Brandt, Light, Mitchinson and Black (1996), “the Canadian media stereotyped women in the post-war years as happy homemakers who were dedicated stay-at-home mothers” (p.383). In exploring the intent of messages aimed at women by government and industry to persuade them of their domestic ‘obligations’ in the early 1950s, Prentice et al. (1996) speculate that, “the very vigour with which the ‘happy homemaker’ image was promoted by the media may well have been a reaction to women’s growing involvement in activities outside the home and, in some cases, their resistance to conventional heterosexual roles” (p. 384). As a result of the emphasis on family life as a sign of social and national stability, the image of the nuclear family with the male as head of the house and the woman as homemaker once again became the standard for middle-class society (Chalmers, 1996)

While popular television programs like “Father Knows Best” (Strong-Boag, 1997) promoted the view that the ‘normal’ family lived a life of domestic harmony, the concerns of women from economically disadvantaged backgrounds, including divorced, single, and older women were largely ignored. Prentice et al. (1996) argue that the early second-wave feminist movement which emerged out of existing women’s organizations in the first half of the century, helped to validate and expose the unhappiness and subordination that many women experienced as the result of their second class social status following the war. The popular feminist writer Betty Friedan is acknowledged by Strong-Boag (1997) as articulating the discontent that many women felt towards the ‘cult of domesticity’ that was created out of a sense of national insecurity about the state of the family in the 1950s. Strong-Boag (1997) observes that,

More than anyone else, Friedan helped women challenge the egalitarian claim of North American abundance. Ultimately, she argued, and many readers agreed, the gendered experience of suburbia betrayed women, consigning them to subordination and frustration within society and unhappiness within the family. (p.390)

Changes in the social construction of motherhood in the 1950s also reflected a growing interest in the 'science' of sexuality. The idea of a women's sexual expression as being separate from her role in becoming a mother was not widely discussed in the 1950s. Alfred Kinsey's 'Sexual Behaviour in the Human Female' (1953) is described as an important document in bringing the topic of women's sexuality into the popular press. According to Strong-Boag (1997), Kinsey claimed that women had, "a powerful libido, the physiological equivalent of male sexual response. Under the influence of such scientific authority, an active sexuality became increasingly accepted as the prerequisite of satisfactory personal and marital life" (p.379). The idea that women had individual interests, including sexual interests that competed with their domestic 'duties', or the expectation that they would marry and become mothers, followed broader trends in society that increasingly emphasized personal fulfilment as opposed to personal sacrifice. In response to these trends, women began to pursue activities outside the home including education, work, and involvement in political and social causes. At the same time, the majority of women continued to marry and raise children at an early age, particularly in rural communities. Women's roles, for the majority of White European Canadians, did not change significantly in the 1950s, however the links that bound women, marriage, and motherhood began to weaken.

Telling Stories

Karla's Story

Karla was born in 1934 in California to a middle-class family. She married at age 17 and had her first child at age 18. During her interview, Karla explained that she was pressured to marry because of her parent's concern that she might have sex before marriage and become pregnant. Unfortunately, Karla's husband was violent, abusive, and unable to find steady work to support the family. Karla divorced her husband when her daughter was 14 months old and moved into her parent's home as she was unable to support herself or her child on her own. Following her divorce, Karla worked as an office clerk, an occupation that she describes as low paying and demeaning. In her late 20s, Karla moved with her young daughter to the West Coast of Canada where her cousin lived. She continued to work in low paying jobs, and said that she felt exploited by employers who capitalized on her need to work to support her child. Karla's experience of sexual exploitation and harassment did not discourage her from finding meaning in her day-to-day struggle to survive. Karla became politically active during the 1960s in the civil rights and women's movements. She traveled to India during that time, and observed women and their very young children smashing bricks to pieces in order to earn an income. In reflecting on the meaning of her travels, Karla drew parallels between her own oppression as a woman and a worker, and that of other oppressed women in the world. Karla's political consciousness can be traced to her early experiences of marriage, motherhood, and divorce in the 1950s.

Nina's Story

Nina was born in 1940, and married at age 17. She became a mother in 1957, at the age of 18. Nina had two children before she divorced at age 20, and three more with her second husband. Nina was married a total of three times and divorced three times, but she recalls life in the suburbs in the 1950s with fondness. She says that she was married at the time she became pregnant, and that her motivation for marrying was that she wanted to have sex. Nina describes herself as coming from a conservative religious family whose values mirrored those of the dominant culture. Prior to her second divorce, Nina attended post secondary training and became financially independent before she divorced again in her early 30s. She married for a third time, and eventually became a successful businesswoman following her third divorce. Nina's choice of husbands allowed her to partake in the new consumer oriented society of the 1950s. Nina says that while she found the role of wife and mother rewarding at first, she eventually became bored as she began to challenge marriage and motherhood as her primary role in life. Through a combination of circumstances and choices, Nina's standard of living was not greatly affected despite being divorced and a single parent. Her ability to maintain this life-style was due in part to earning a wage that was above what the majority of working single women would have been. Nina had opportunities for sexual expression, educational advancement, and career development in a way that Karla did not. This was in part due to Nina's unusual ability to shape the roles available to women to meet her own goals and needs.

Listening to Stories

A Woman's Place: Stay at Home Mother

For young women growing up in the 1950s, being a mother and housewife was promoted as the ideal outcome of sexual and social maturity. As it had before the war, the role of marriage and motherhood symbolized women's transition to adult society, and usually occurred between the ages of 18 to 23 years. The independence that women gained in working in the war industry during the Second World War was downplayed as men returned from war and took up their places as leaders in society, and heads of families. Chalmers (1996) states that, "from the mid-1950s to the mid-1960s....with the economy booming, couples were marrying younger, having children sooner, or giving birth now to the families postponed during the Depression and the war years" (p.6). Nina recalls, "After the Second World War was over...the men came home and... a lot of the women... lost their jobs... because... they were replaced by the men who... they had replaced" (Interview transcript #10, Nina, p.1). Women were encouraged to fulfil themselves through bearing and educating children and maintaining a comfortable home for their husbands (Adams, 1997). This focus on the role of wife as stay-at-home mother defined what came to be known as 'the cult of domesticity' in the 1950s (Adams, 1997; Gleason, 1997, 1999). Along with housework and childrearing, spending money in the new consumer economy was promoted as one of the emerging expectations of modern society. Nina compares her experience of being a young wife and mother in the 1950s, within this context,

I was happy because that was kind of fulfilling, you know, the... female role image that was... what I grew up with.... it's great because... even though I can do it all, I wouldn't have minded if I had some Prince Charming who had just had a wonderful economic situation, and you know, I could just play the housewife

and go around decorating and, you know, buying what I wanted and you know, having the kids and having a great situation. (Interview transcript #10, Nina, p.2)

Through conformity to gendered roles such as raising children, caring for her husband and home, and shopping, women enforced and reinforced existing and emerging standards of 'normal' behavior. Women such as Karla, who could not meet these standards, were excluded from the category of 'normal' by members of society who determined acceptable standards of personal and public behavior. Gleason (1997) states that, "popular psychology's definition of normalcy and normalizing worked to level important differences between and across individuals, ethnic groups, and classes" (p.444). Karla's marriage to an alcoholic and unemployed husband, her subsequent divorce, and poverty meant that her experience of early motherhood was not recognized as the 'normal' experience of marriage and motherhood by the dominant class. Gleason (1997) explains the persuasiveness of this ideology, "discussions of normal families and normal family members were shaped not by objective, unchanging scientific 'truths,' but by the hegemonic values and priorities of the middle class in postwar Canada" (p.443). For Nina, marrying, having children and having a husband whose income allowed her to achieve a middle-class standard of living provided her with the social status that she anticipated as a young girl. For a time it was also a lifestyle she enjoyed. Nina recalls,

I don't know if I ever actually thought about a white picket fence, but... for me personally, I'm a very visual person and so I like... a lovely yard... I love architecture... a pleasing façade and that kind of thing... I like to be surrounded by beauty and certainly having your own home that you can decorate as you want... it's your little kingdom I think... a lot of women especially in those days... fulfilling those roles, that was their *raison d'être*... it was sort of how women defined themselves I think. (Interview transcript #10, Nina, p.6)

Strong-Boag (1997) explains that,

Between 1945 and 1960 nearly continuous prosperity, high employment, the extension of the welfare state, and the presumption of a limitless bank of natural resources generated income and homes for a better life, and, if possible, the lifestyle of comfortable homes and new products. (p.377)

The 'natural' role of women within the heterosexual couple promoted dominant social beliefs about the family, consumption of material goods, and the ability of the husband to provide an income for his stay-at-home wife and his children. Nina's impression of her own childhood as a reflection of these dominant values and beliefs, illustrates how her future role as wife and mother evolved,

Unless you were in a higher, a better educated family, but certainly in middle class families... they didn't push the women as much to be educated and have super jobs... in those days I think it was still, at least in my family, and I think pretty much in middle class America, it was... the girl goes off, and she's a nice girl, and she gets married and she has a family with Prince Charming. You know that kind of methodology... certainly when my mom was growing up... for me personally, with my family, it was very traditional. (Interview transcript #10, Nina, p. 1)

At the time that Nina and Karla became wives and mothers, expectations of obtaining advanced education and job skills were not yet widespread for middle-class girls. At the same time, for those women who wanted to pursue higher education and a career, few opportunities existed. Avenues for advanced education and work outside the home that had opened up for women during the war, dwindled as men returned from war to industry and also took up the seats in university that women had 'saved' for them (Finkel, 1997; Prentice et al., 1996). Due to this renewed emphasis on women's domestic roles within the home, it was not considered a threat to present or future economic security for women under the age of 20 to marry. Low divorce rates, high employment levels for men, and relatively high wages reinforced these expectations. Nina explains,

I don't think that there was any question that I was going to go to work when the kids were little. And I didn't have to; I was really fortunate in that... I think that's

the one thing where women in those days had it made, because... I think it was pretty much a general rule... if you have any kind of a fortunate situation at all... you would marry someone who could support you and the children... that was a theory, right? (Interview transcript #10, Nina, p.11)

Nina's choice of a husband who could support her and her children, and her ability to obtain advanced education and job skills following her marriage was unusual, and made her experience of early mothering much different than Karla's. Karla's socio-economic status during or after her marriage did not allow her to experience the affluence and economic security that was reported as the domestic ideal for women in the 1950s. In the competitive, consumer driven economy of the post-war years, a family in which the husband was not working, or not earning an adequate income, faced hardship. Work opportunities for women were limited and the social stigma against working women meant that when marriages, such as Karla's, included problems with violence and alcohol failed women and children often faced severe hardships. Divorce was a very difficult decision for most women. Finkel (1997) describes life for women involved in violent marriages, and the options they faced,

Violent husbands who beat wives and children existed in all social classes, and social conventions made it difficult for women of any social class to lay charges against their husbands or even to let friends and relatives know about the abuse they were suffering.... limited opportunities for employment gave many women pause before considering a divorce. (p.64)

Karla's recollection of the period just before her marriage breakdown illustrates the emotional impact of this experience. At this time, their domestic status, and their dependency on marriage dominated most women's lives,

It turns out my husband was alcoholic, and he came home drunk one night to his parent's house where we were staying, two o'clock in the morning, and dragging some stranger in, they were both drunk... and got his mother up and ordered her to cook breakfast for them...she's a fiery little French woman, and she said "No",

she said she wouldn't, and he raised his fist to her, and then his father came in and saw this, and of course booted both the drunks out of the house...then they told me...they said 'this is no marriage....leave this man, this is no marriage, we'll take care of you'. (Interview transcript #11, Karla, p.11)

Karla decided to leave her husband, and he subsequently threatened to kill her. She fled across the country and assumed a new name, eventually moving to Canada to start a new life. Between the time she left her husband and moving to Canada, Karla lived with her parents, who cared for her daughter while she worked as an office clerk. Her status as a single divorced mother was defined by the low status and wages of women in the paid labour force, poor working conditions for women, and society's disapproval of women who chose to live outside marriage.

Tearing the House Apart: Marriage and Motherhood Re-Examined

The majority of women did not leave their marriages, no matter how unhappy or unsafe. Public discussion about marital violence was not widespread or acceptable. Nevertheless, an increasing number of women began to challenge the traditional institutions of authority, including marriage, religion, as well as the right of men to exclude them from the workplace and fair wages. The growing challenge by women of male dominated institutions of authority and women's traditional roles is highlighted in Nina's critique of her own mother's subservience. Nina recalls,

Looking back... my mom was... the great cook and housekeeper... I could see that my dad made all the decisions... even though she was really bright and she had some great ideas... I'm pretty sure that when I was younger, I was watching... she was very... I don't want to say 'weak' because it's not really weak, but she wouldn't necessarily stick up for herself... my dad was real strong you know, and my grandmother too, and they would kind of... call their own tunes... so I think I got to... liking to be a cook and doing this and doing all the female things from her, but I definitely, from my dad and my grandmother, got more of a 'take-charge' attitude and 'stick up for yourself'... I think I was kind of

conscious of not wanting to be like her in that way. (Interview transcript #10, Nina, p.8)

For Nina, the growing focus on individual freedoms that arose in the 1950s had a profound impact on how she viewed her role within the family and society. Nina explains how she came to challenge existing beliefs about marriage and motherhood in her 20s,

Well... I grew bored with the situation and... bored with the person I was with... I'm not saying that that would happen every time, but I think it might... if you get married young. You... probably don't have any clue as to what it is that you really need or want, because, you weren't really who you are going to become... at least most people... I don't think before maybe 30... at least in the late 20s. I think by the late 20s... a lot of women are pretty well grounded in who they are hopefully, but... in your teens or early 20s, I think it would be a very rare person who would... have a real self-awareness of who they are, and what they want... certainly for me, I don't think I really had a clue what it was that I really wanted... so that's not very helpful... when you get married. (Interview transcript #10, Nina, p.10).... I was a good girl, I was going to go to heaven,everything was all outlined, and then... I started questioning. It was like, "Oh my god!", it took about 3 years, 3 ½ years to go through that, to where you know, to where you're... best friends are philosophers, whose books you're readingare Albert Camus and Bertrand Russell... the individual looking into the abyss sort of... and then I sort of out grew my second husband. (Interview transcript #10, Nina, p.4)

Nina acted on her need for individual fulfilment outside marriage, in part because of her ability to challenge dominant beliefs about women's roles, and in part because of fortunate economic circumstances and family support. For most women, this combination of circumstances did not exist. Strong-Boag (1997) observes that while many women were happy in their homes and content in their role as wife and mother, for some, "cheerful accounts contrasted markedly with those who remembered the suburbs as 'hell'. Days spent largely alone with demanding infants and lack of support from friends, relatives, and sometimes husbands were to be endured. The result could be desperation"

(p.393). Nina's experience also documents the process of disenchantment with life in the suburbs that many women began to express as the decade wore on,

For that period of time I was really happy and loved having the babies, and you know, I tried to do it all. I did all of the things that I enjoyed, cooking, and I like to keep a really clean house... [I] actually enjoyed doing all of the so-called female role things. However, this is terrible to say, but I got really bored with it. (Interview transcript #10, Nina, p.3)

In divorcing, Nina did not experience the social stigma or economic marginalization that many women experienced. Nina recalls,

I think for me there was a point where I realised that... I was most comfortable being able to call the shots in my life myself, because from a standpoint of making good decisions and stuff on a financial level or whatever level... I guess I trusted myself a lot more than I did anybody I was with. (Interview transcript #10, Nina, p.8)

In contrast, Karla's experience of divorce is probably more typical of the reality for most women. Differences between these two women contradict the impression of homogeneity of women's domestic experiences in the 1950s. Luxton (1997) states that, "generalized notions of 'mothers' tended to collapse all women together, obscuring the significant differences among women" (p.163). It was not unusual for women who left their marriages, or who were not supported by male relatives to experience poverty and social isolation (Hillyard-Little, (1999). Karla remembers her life after divorce,

The responsibility of... having another person to be responsible for... that wasn't easy, that was quite hard, just the worry. Would I lose my job or whatever? There was one job I had at the court recorders in N.W., I didn't sleep with the boss, the head court recorder, and I got fired. He made advances... he wanted me to work overtime at one point... I had already told him that I was going out for dinner and then to a... football game, and he came over and he wanted to give me more work. I said, "I'm sorry, you know I'm going out to" he said, "You stay, or else". I told him, "No". And so I got fired. (Interview transcript #11, Karla, p.14)

Saying 'no' to social convention, and to men and marriage in particular, had unpleasant and often unexpected consequences for women. Karla chose to reject her marriage

because of an abusive husband. This act of resistance and rebellion impacted her standard of living from that day forward. Women who were exploited for sex and domestic labour within the home also faced exploitation in the work force. According to Wilson (1991), the rising standard of living for middle-class families in the 1950s and the income needed to maintain those standards, meant that an increasing number of married women began to work outside the home. According to Finkel (1997), women who chose to work, either by necessity or by choice, faced many obstacles. Finkel (1997) describes how discrimination against women in the workforce was institutionalized,

Married women were fired in preference for single women who were presumed less likely to leave work within a short time to have a baby; pregnant women were denied leave from work to have their babies; few employers were willing to hire mothers of babies or small children. Government policies also attempted to discourage working wives and mother: federal funds for daycare, never more than token, were withdrawn along with tax concessions for employed wives; mothers who left the work force to have babies were automatically denied unemployment insurance. (p.64)

Motherhood: Making it Work

Karla explains that she did not feel she had a choice in leaving her marriage and seeking a divorce. She explains that divorcing when her child was 14 months old after her husband threatened to kill her was not what she expected when she married at age 18. Nor did she expect the poverty and low social status that followed this decision. In the 1950s, the Canadian and American governments began to implement social programs to “take care of the old, the sick, and the unemployed” (Finkel & Conrad, 2002, p.327). However, there was no public daycare, no federal pension plan, no unemployment insurance, no maternity leave, and no welfare available for women (Finkel & Conrad, 2002; Wilson, 1991). The courts looked unfavourably on women leaving the family home and offered little encouragement either in terms of enforcing support payments, or in

awarding the division of family assets upon divorce. Sangster (2001) explains that the “discussion of ‘marital failure’ in the pages of Canada’s premier social work journal focused more on the need for ‘good home management’ and responsible parenting, especially proper mothering, as the means to preserve the family” (p.73). The emphasis on a woman’s responsibility for preserving the integrity of the family meant that women were generally blamed for divorce. Social and economic sanctions thus served to make women question the feasibility of leaving their marriages. Womanhood, marriage and motherhood were so closely linked that a woman’s personal sense of identity and status within society depended on fulfilling her role as wife and mother. Indeed, in the immediate post war decade, being a woman, was synonymous with being a wife. Strange and Loo (1997) explain, “heterosexual marriage, [after the war] in short, was a way to demonstrate that life in general remained normal, as a Vancouver educator stated: ‘men should behave like men and women should behave like women’” (p.107). Karla remembers the early days of motherhood and how her life was affected by her divorce,

I thought it was wonderful, I didn’t know anything about responsibility or anything else. I just thought it was wonderful. I was very immature, which I think most 17-year-olds are, even if you don’t realize it at the time. I thought it was wonderful, having a baby... later on when I was a single parent... having a child, it really hit home... having the responsibility of the whole care, the support. (Interview transcript #11, Karla, p.6)

Women who were single and supporting a child were socially stigmatized and financially disadvantaged. Karla recalls that her life was difficult following her divorce, and that she found herself immersed in a day to day struggle for survival. The global context of life for single, older and impoverished women is revealed by Karla in this memory of a trip to India, made after her daughter was grown up,

It's funny, because when you get into working, you're just working to make living, you're working hard, you don't think about all the other stuff. You're just working; you're just there. Just like what I saw when I went to India, I mean people were in dire poverty...but... they're just there, chipping away at the bricks, smashing them into little pieces... the toddlers are there, helping mother...you're just in the middle of it I think, you're just 'doing it' you know. (Interview transcript #11, Karla p.15)

The Meaning of Stories

Troubling Marriage and Motherhood: Questioning the Ideal

Marriage after the Second World War was encouraged as a means of re-establishing a post-war equilibrium in Canadian society (Chalmers, 1996). While the marriage rate had fallen during the Great Depression to 5.9 marriages for every thousand people, it increased during the war to 8.9 marriages per thousand people and, according to Gleason (1997) to "10.9 marriages per thousand people" in 1946 (p.456). Gleason (1997) explains that, "the marriage rate was, by the end of the war, unprecedented" (p.456). The role of marriage and motherhood was thus a symbol of 'normal' Canadian family life (Gleason, 1997, 1999; Polatnick, 1997). Women's economic dependence on men, and the lack of available options for them such as education and career opportunities meant that the majority of young women graduating from high-school expected to marry (Adams, 1997). Chalmers (1996) explains that in the 1950s, "the world of men and women was one of power relationship in which 'every avenue' was 'entirely in male hands,' and the chief institution of the patriarchy's dominance was the family" (p.158). In this way, Karla and Nina's experience of early marriage and mothers was not unusual. What does not represent the experiences of the majority of women in this decade is the fact that they divorced and worked outside the home. These experiences indicate important social

trends that developed in response to the growing independence of women from marriage and motherhood as the only roles in their lives, as well as the ways in which traditional institutions of authority were questioned as the decade progressed. The increasing emphasis on the individual as opposed to the collective in determining acceptable behaviours, and growing opportunities and expectations for women to obtain advanced education and job skills, meant that women's choices expanded beyond early marriage and motherhood. Karla and Nina experienced early motherhood, work, and divorce in very different ways. This was due in part to differences in family background, socio-economic status, and personality. For some women like Nina, adjusting to the 'normal' expectations of being a wife and mother in the 1950s was made easier by a comfortable standard of living, and by family traditions that reinforced the status of women within the home. For others like Karla, rigid and unfair divorce laws, lack of education, and low wages meant that the adjustment to married life was a continual struggle, and sometimes filled with violence and humiliation. Society and the law penalized women who divorced, which created an underclass of poor, women-headed families who were largely ignored by the affluent and normalizing gaze of the 1950s. According to Gleason (1997),

Historians in Canada have begun to tackle and dispel many myths surrounding family life after the war. The notion that the 1950s marked a high point of social optimism, prosperity, naiveté, and innocence obscures many of the eras complexities and says more about the tendency to look back at this period with nostalgic eyes than about the period itself. (p. 450)

By the end of the 1950s, women were working in greater numbers outside the home, the divorce rate was climbing, and the birth control pill was introduced for use by married women. Women were beginning to move away from home before marriage, to

have sex outside marriage, and to look to personal fulfillment in education, career, and more individually determined goals. These factors all contributed to weakening the links between sex, marriage and motherhood. At the same time, the feminist movement of the late 1950s and 1960s promoted greater sexual freedom for women and challenged the authority of male dominated institutions to shape the quality and scope of women's lives and self-expression (Owram, 1996). The growing diversity of women's experiences of sex, marriage, divorce, and poverty in the 1950s meant that mothers in the 1960s began to question early marriage and childbearing as the ideal means of providing present and future economic and emotional security for their daughters.

CHAPTER FIVE

1960-1979: Mothers and Daughters, Adjusting to Changing Times

In the 1960s and 1970s, weakening links between the values and beliefs of the dominant class and the generation that was replacing them served to reframe society's evaluation of the kinds of behaviours that constituted 'the good woman' and 'the good mother'. The relationship between sex, marriage and motherhood were less well defined for women than in the 1950s (Owram, 1996). Daughters were creating their own definitions of womanhood and motherhood, and their perceptions were often different from what their mothers' had been. At the same time, mothers were questioning the path that they had chosen and the roles they had subsequently accepted and/or been assigned to. Women were expecting and demanding more choice in the way they lived their lives, in both the private and public spheres. Early marriage and early motherhood, which had been common in the decades before 1960, were increasingly recognized as an impediment to women's freedom to experience sex outside marriage, pursue education, and achieve career goals. In addition, the rising divorce rate meant that marriage presented a less certain future than in previous decades. Polatnick (1997) explains that, increasingly, young women in the 1960s and early 70s were, "enjoying a single lifestyle with a degree of sexual freedom unprecedented for women of their social background. Motherhood meant sacrificing these exciting new possibilities" (p. 398-399). Economics and technology also played an important role in redefining the relationship between marriage and sexuality. Coontz (2000b) argues that, "the expansion of a consumer society created new temptations and opportunities for women to earn their own wages. More effective birth control created the possibility of a recreational sexuality separated

from marriage” (p. 11-12). The 1960s and 1970s were decades of transition between traditional and emerging values concerning the roles of women in society. This was a period when members of the middle-class challenged existing values concerning sex, politics, religion, and social traditions. Chalmers (1996) comments on the social unrest of 1960s and its impact on existing values,

During a decade of growing social turmoil, a conspicuous fraction of America’s white, middle-class youth and its allies attacked - when they were not ignoring - the dominant institutions and social values. They not only questioned what the broader society said was reality; they took delight in scandalizing its morality and in dreaming up new ways to do so. (p.88)

The trend toward individual choice in private and public behaviors related to sexual relations symbolized a weakening in the influence of cultural and moral values as defined by European Christian beliefs of pre-World War II Canada. This change meant that in the late 1950s and 1960s, women and men were increasingly more likely to delay marriage and parenting and pursue options for personal fulfillment such as education and career training. However, for the majority of middle-class women, if pregnancy occurred, marriage was still expected (Wong & Checkland, 1999). Along with greater diversity and tolerance in attitudes toward sexuality, came the liberalization of abortion laws and birth control in the late 1960s. These changes however were felt unevenly across rural and urban populations, and between married and unmarried women. While the birth control pill was available in the early 1960s, it was only available by doctors prescription to married women and generally only in urban centers. According to Prentice, Bourne, Cuthbert-Brandt, Light, Mitchinson and Black (1996), “legal penalties for displaying and selling contraceptive devices remained in force until 1969” (p.381). In addition, the report by the Royal Commission on the Status of Women, which

recommended the legalization of abortion in the late 1960s was, according to Prentice et al. (1996), “pre-empted by the 1969 revisions of the Criminal Code, which retained the criminality of abortions, permitting them only when performed by a doctor in an accredited hospital under specified conditions” (p. 427). Thus conservative values prevailed in most Canadian institutions and families. Despite the limitations of these changes, words such as ‘the pill’, ‘condom’, and ‘abortion’ moved into the middle-class vocabulary, and signified the increasing acceptance of delaying, preventing, or terminating unplanned pregnancies. Liberal attitudes also served to raise concern about young unmarried women having sex outside marriage and becoming pregnant or deciding to have a child without marrying. According to SmithBattle (1995), “in the 1960s, teenage pregnancy began to be redefined as a social problem amenable to scientific scrutiny and interventions rather than a moral problem of sexual transgression” (p.22). During this transition period between the values of one generation and the next, young women experienced pressure by peers to have sex outside marriage, while at the same time they were not necessarily aware of, or able to access pregnancy prevention options. The impact of these changes, and the ways in which the 1960s and 1970s served as a transition period between past and present social norms, is revealed in conversations with Jen, Donna, and Helen who each had her first child in the late 1960s and early 1970s. These stories link traditional and emerging roles for women and illustrate the social and historical influences that have shaped our current understanding of adolescence, womanhood, and motherhood.

Telling Stories

Each of the three women interviewed in this chapter had her first child between 1968 and 1971. The experience of having a child in their teenage years for Helen, Donna, and Jen reflects the range of social norms and values of these two decades, as well as differences in class, culture, and religious and family background between these individuals.

Helen's Story

Helen was born in 1951 on the East Coast of Canada. She was the oldest of eight children. In 1969, at the age of 18, she came west to join her high school sweetheart who had accompanied his family to Alberta in search of work. Helen arrived in a small rural community in the mountains and married shortly after. Nine months later in 1970, she became a mother. For Helen, becoming a mother so soon after marrying was not expected. Both she and her husband had intended to obtain more education before starting a family. However, her religious beliefs meant that a pregnancy was accepted as God's will. Cultural and religious values meant that an important part of the experience of starting a family was sharing it with close family and friends. Geographic isolation from friends and family was an unanticipated hardship for Helen, and contributed to feelings of isolation and loneliness. This loneliness may also have also contributed to feelings of depression which Helen struggled with in the early years of motherhood. Helen reveals that the loss of family and community connections negatively impacted her experience of early marriage and motherhood, and that the emotional cost was not necessarily compensated for by increased material well being.

Jen's Story

Jen was born in Calgary in 1953 and moved to California in grade one. She returned to Calgary in 1968 at the age of 15. She became pregnant within that year in 1968, and had her first child at age 16 in 1969. When Jen's first child was born, Jen's mother was about 46 years old and was a single parent. Jen delivered her son in a ward for 'unwed' mothers in a Calgary hospital and was requested by a social worker to give her child up for adoption. Her mother was held financially responsible both for Jen and for Jen's son, whether or not her daughter was living with her. Because she wasn't married, Jen's son's birth certificate was stamped with the word 'illegitimate', which was a term in use at that time for a child born 'outside' marriage (Wong & Checkland, 1999). The term 'illegitimate' was symbolic of society's disapproval of women who had children without being legally married into the 1970s. Wong and Checkland (1999) explain that,

Illegitimacy was a bad thing, a social and personal evil. The introduction of terms like 'teenage pregnancy' (and 'teen parenting' subsequently) reflected a shift from an overtly moral or moralistic point of view to a more scientific, and perhaps a therapeutic one. (p. xviii)

Marriage at that time was the only legal context in which the father of a child was recognized. Being an unwed mother in the late 1960s, even though sexual norms were more becoming more relaxed, was unacceptable for middle-class women. The tradition of stigmatizing unmarried women who chose to become mothers, reflects a time when "unwed mothers were seen as 'weak and ignorant, strong-minded and wicked, or simpleminded'....wherever possible the unwed mother was encouraged to marry, even if the prospective husband was unsuitable" (Prentice et.al., 1996, p.297). Jen explains that society expected unwed mothers to place their children for adoption. The circumstance

under which this was achieved is portrayed in a dramatic account of Jen's meeting with a social worker in the hospital. At this time in Canada, unwed mothers were considered socially deviant and subject to sanction by society and the state. Coontz (2000a) explains how families who do not conform to dominate ideals have been marginalized, "individuals who cannot or will not participate in the favoured family form face powerful stigmas and handicaps. History provides no support for the notion that all families are created equal in any specific time and place" (p. 286). Jen was married when she returned to the same hospital 20 months later to deliver her next child at age 18. This time there was no social worker to demand that she give up her child.

Donna's Story

Donna was born in 1953 in London, England. She was raised in that city, and was not married when she became a mother there at age 18 in 1971. Donna grew up in a working class neighbourhood and was the middle child of three. Donna's father died when she was only a few years old, and it appears that her mother did not remarry. When Donna graduated from high school, she was intending to marry her steady boyfriend. Before this happened, however, Donna learned that she was pregnant. Although her doctor and her mother recommended an abortion, Donna chose to become a mother, even though her mother would not allow her to marry. Because her mother refused to sign for her to be married, Donna was forced to wait until she was 18 years old when she was legally allowed to make that decision. Following her marriage, Donna, her husband, and new baby moved into subsidized housing and the couple had a second child several years later.

Listening to Stories

Generations Adrift: New Stories Emerge

Listening to the experience of adolescent motherhood as revealed in the stories of Donna, Jen, and Helen confirms and contradicts dominant beliefs about adolescence, marriage, and motherhood in the 1960s and 1970s. Harmony between generations concerning views on women and sexuality was becoming less homogeneous as the 1950s came to an end. The civil rights and women's rights movements that were popularized in the 1960s and 1970s challenged the authority of white middle- and upper-class males to regulate social norms in a way that maintained and promoted their privileged position. Marks (2000) says of this era, "the interests of affluent, White, heterosexual males lay exposed, contested, and relativized from every direction, as numerous social movements broke through the complacency of the post-World War II era.... the politics of marriage-as-usual were also challenged" (p. 610). To many women, men's privileged role in society depended on women's subservience. Women's domestic slavery to housework and childrearing, as well as their economic dependence on their husbands' income characterized this subservience. The role of marriage and motherhood in enforcing women's lesser social status was a topic which was debated in small and large gatherings of women known as 'consciousness raising groups' (Polatnick, 1997). Political topics that related to women's second-class position in society were also critically examined in the media. Feminist writers such as Shulamith Firestone, Betty Friedan, and Simone de Beauvoir, illuminated the ways in which society, the state, and the law act to reinforce women's lower social status (Polatnick, 1997). Polatnick (1997) states that, "for the White woman, one of the most salient features of the 1960s was the lingering 1950s ideal

of the full-time housewife/mother and their own strong reaction against it” (p. 406).

Despite advances on behalf of women’s rights made by feminist writers and thinkers at the time, the majority of middle-class women continued to marry and become mothers during this period. Most mothers wished their daughters to marry if they became pregnant, and most daughters conformed to their parents and society’s expectations (Prentice et al., 1996). For a significant number of women, however, the message delivered by feminists at that time contributed to challenging assumptions about marriage and motherhood as the most ideal outcome of sexual activity. When expectations about the outcome of unplanned pregnancy and marriage conflicted between women and generations, sometimes between mothers and daughters, tension arose. Polatnick’s (1997) exploration of the diversity of views about marriage and motherhood at this time helps to situate changing views about women and motherhood in the 1960s and 70s. Polatnick (1997) states that this “reaction was supported by a sense of alternatives opening up for [women] in the wake of civil rights activism and new laws against discrimination” (p. 406). Polatnick (1997) further explains that the women’s movement was, “starting to have a major impact on the larger society [and made] a domestically oriented mother role seem stifling” (p. 406).

The shift in valuing education over early mothering is evident even in Helen’s story, where family and religious values continued to reinforce the expectation that women would marry and bear children as their primary social role. Helen reported that higher education and career goals were a concern for herself and for her parents. Both Helen and her parents would have preferred that she complete some post-secondary education before becoming a mother. Helen remembers,

My mom and dad were ah... they told me when I was going away... I had made up my mind that I was leaving home and was going to get married away from home...that at least go back to school... 'Always go to church'...my dad was always, 'don't forget to go to church'. I was leaving at the airport, and my... you know, they both said, 'try to finish, get education', because she said, 'it's too hard out there without it'. So she said, 'try not have any babies until you at least do that'. (Interview transcript #9, Helen, p. 7)

In the period between 1951 when Helen was born, and 1971 when her son was born, adolescence was increasingly becoming a time when young people obtained advanced education, moved away from home, and established careers. Although Helen's marriage was acceptable before the age of 20, she was nonetheless aware that her lack of education would hold her and her family back from obtaining the standard of living they otherwise could have had. Helen remembers being aware of this changing reality for young women and their families. She recalls,

I said to hubby, if we had waited a few more years we might have been able to provide better. But we didn't, we took that route and we stayed with it, and we never did get back to school. And we struggled, and we don't have jobs that pay a great deal of money, but it has always been enough ... always been provided. (Interview transcript #9, Helen, p.9)

Many young people became aware of the need for higher education in order to achieve the standard of living presented in the media, and which many had experienced themselves growing up in the affluent 1950s. The cost of this standard of living increasingly meant that both partners remained in the work force even after children arrived. According to Milan (2000), overall marriage rates and fertility rates declined during this period and the age of marriage rose steadily. Marriage and motherhood remained symbols of adult status, but the age of achieving this status was delayed. Milan (2000) explains that as a result of further economic changes, including a higher cost of living and lower relative wages compared to the cost of living, adolescence today has

become a distinct stage of development that does not include marriage or parenting.

She explains that, “social changes have eroded many traditional attitudes and practices; improved economic opportunities, especially for women, and the growing acceptance of non-marriage alternative, such as common-law relationships, have reduced the tendency toward marrying early, and in some cases marrying at all” (Milan, 2000, p. 7).

Differences in values concerning sex, marriage, work and family came to be known in the 1960s as the ‘generation gap’ (Chalmers, 1996). The stories of Jen, Donna, and their mothers reveals the impact of increasingly diverse experiences of marriage and motherhood on women during this important period of history in Canadian.

Mothers of Daughters: A New Concern for the Future

When Jen and Donna became pregnant in their teenage years they expected to marry. What was unusual at that time was their mothers’ resistance to this plan. Their mothers’ concerns may have been generated by an awareness of the increasing number of marriage breakdowns following the liberalization of divorce laws in the late 1960s (Finkel & Conrad, 2002; Prentice et al., 1996). It may also have been affected by the increasing need for women to achieve higher education in response to economic changes in society. It was becoming evident at that time that women who divorced often found themselves facing an uncertain economic future. Without the job skills to support themselves or their children, nor the legal means to secure support from the estranged spouse, an increasing number of single women and their children were falling into poverty. These factors all contributed to the reassessment by mothers of their daughter’s potential future well-being in regards to marriage and motherhood at an early age.

Donna's Story

According to Milan (2000), within a decade of introducing more liberalized divorce laws in the late 1960s, the divorce rate increased six fold. Abortion had also recently been legalized in Britain where Donna's son was born (Brooke, 2001). By recommending abortion for her daughter, Donna's mother may have seen a way of avoiding the social stigma of unwed pregnancy and the potential poverty of single parenting. At that time in Britain, the availability of birth control including abortion, "made it possible to separate sex and reproduction and suggested that sex confined to marriage was no longer necessary to preserve the family" (Lewis & Kiernan, 1996, p.5). The legalization of abortion in Britain in the late 1960s, while not universally accessible, meant that some middle-class women could obtain safe and legal abortions, thus avoiding unwanted motherhood (Brooke, 2001). For Donna, her mother's resistance to her marriage was punitive and not indicative of her awareness of larger social trends, or a desire to protect her daughter from an unhappy marriage. It is difficult to determine exactly what Donna's mother may have wished or not wished for her daughter when she denied her permission to marry, however it is clear that she felt strongly that marriage was not in her daughter's best interest at that time. Donna remembers that,

When I told her I was pregnant, she said to me "get rid of it", which, considering she sees herself as a very strict Catholic, was a bit of a surprise, to say the least.My mother is a very controlling woman, very controlling, she decided that I was going to get rid of it, and that was that. And I told her we were going to get married, and at the time, you couldn't get married under 21 without permission, but on Jan 1st of that year, they changed it and you could get married at 18 without permission. So I waited until my 18th birthday and a week after that, we got married. And I told her we were doing this, and she went "oh" she didn't for once she didn't have say in it. (Interview transcript #8, Donna, p. 2)

Donna recalls that she was using contraception when she conceived, and that it was not her intention to become pregnant at that time. She was also aware that abortion was an option. Unlike earlier interviews, the fact that motherhood could be planned or avoided by unmarried women, introduced the idea that reproduction was a choice to be made by the individual, rather than being the natural outcome of God's will. For Donna, it was not motherhood that was rejected, but the timing of motherhood. The use of contraception in controlling the timing of motherhood was related to changes in the way that women perceived their roles in society. The idea of motherhood as a choice is revealed in this passage from Donna's experience of becoming a mother at age 18,

He was obviously an accident, the condom didn't work. We realized that as soon as we found it broken, that it was a possibility. So, it didn't come as a shock. And we were figuring to get married anyway, so we just basically did. So, as soon as I got it confirmed my biggest worry was telling my mother. (Interview transcript #8, Donna, p. 5)

Jen's Story

While mothers may not have encouraged their daughters to engage in sex outside marriage, their concern for their daughters' future meant that they did not necessarily object to the use of the birth control pill, which became available in the 1960s (Finkel, 1997). The availability of an effective and easy to use form of birth control became an important tool in separating sex from reproduction, and reproduction from marriage (Brooke, 2001). Finkel (1997) states that, "the availability of better contraception, especially after the birth-control pill became available in 1960, contributed to the erosion of the view that lifelong bearing and raising of children was a woman's destiny" (p.228). However, while birth control allowed women greater sexual freedom, it was not as widely available, nor as well understood by young women as it is today. Thus, for Jen, who

became pregnant at age 15, the pressure to have sex combined with a lack of knowledge about birth control methods, lead to unplanned pregnancy. Jen recalls how sex fit within the social fabric of teenage life in the late 1960s. It was expected she says,

To be part of the crowd...I don't know what the word is...kind of to be part of the crowd that you know, that you had sex...there little, very little information around about as far as birth control... I vaguely remember that we had one class in grade 7 or something, where they talked a little bit about condoms... that's all I ever remember hearing about, um, any form of birth control. And at that time it was more linked, my sense is it was more linked to disease, like you know, syphilis and gonorrhea, or something like that. (Interview transcript #7, Jen, p.15)

Within her peer group, Jen was expected to have sex. This expectation was in part a result of more liberal attitudes toward sex outside marriage, and the popularization of women's roles outside marriage and motherhood by the media. At that time, it was difficult and in some cases illegal for single women to obtain the birth control pill (McLaren & McLaren, 1997; Prentice et al., 1996). For an adolescent of 15 who would have required her parent's permission, obtaining birth control would have been very difficult. As a result of these and other factors, Jen and Donna's pregnancies were not planned, yet both Jen and Donna's mothers remained convinced that marriage would not be in their daughters' best interests. What is important to understand from these stories is how the meaning of marriage and motherhood was different between generations at that time, and represented conflicting concerns and interpretations about present and future well being for women. It is evident that Jen's concern for her own and her son's present and future well being directed her to marry. At the same time, her mother's concern for Jen led her to refuse permission for her to marry. In addition, both Jen and her mother were positioned in opposition to dominant norms represented by the authority of the state represented by the social worker who visited Jen the day after her son was born. At this

time in Canadian history, women who were not married were not generally admitted to the general maternity ward, but rather were segregated in wards for 'unwed' mothers. Jen recalls the emotional impact of a dramatic scene between herself, then a 16-year-old unwed girl, and the social worker that came to place her child for adoption because she was not married. Jen recalls,

Well, they actually came and the nurse came and got me, and pulled me out of my room, took me to a little office, where we sat down and this, um, social worker started to, um, basically interrogate me on how I was going to care for this child, this was like the morning after I had him, and he was in intensive care, and I really wasn't clear on what was going on, so I was pretty emotional anyway, and, um, she had the papers lying right out on the table, and was trying to get me to take a pen and to sign it. And I eventually after, probably say 20 minutes of this, I went hysterical and I guess I must have been screaming or something, because the nurse came and took me back to my room, and asked her to leave. (Interview transcript #7, Jen, p.17)

For Jen, the desire to mother was greater than the stigma of not being married. Jen's mother supported her right to refuse to have her child adopted. Jen's mother's ability to interpret the role of motherhood as separate from the role of wife was possibly instrumental in her daughter's ability to challenge the authority vested in the social worker. At the time that Jen was first interviewed by the social worker, her mother was not present, however, later she did meet with the woman to confirm her daughter's decision not to have her child adopted. This confrontation between Jen, her mother, and the social worker, demonstrates the increasing resistance to authority by individuals that characterized the 1960s, and the diminishing influence of a single definition of who should mother. Jen recalls that with the written promise by her mother that she would support both her daughter and grandson, Jen was allowed to take her child home from the hospital. When Jen married six months later, the term 'illegitimate' was removed from

her son's birth record. Jen, now 49 years old, reflects on the use of pejorative terms such as 'illegitimate' and 'bastard' which were commonplace in 1969,

Well, you know, there was just sort of that, I mean it wasn't an accepted thing. Like now....it's not that big of a deal to have somebody have a child out of wedlock, and I don't think they refer to it like that anymore....but then, that was really a different thing.... I married his father when my son was six months old...[and] we had to go through a process, and I was given a government document that made him 'legitimate', so that was...that was really different. (Interview transcript #7, Jen, p.3-4)

Legitimizing sex outside marriage did not happen overnight. Acts of resistance to social norms by women such as Jen's mother served to shape changes in attitudes toward women and sexuality over these two decades. Mothers of daughters in the 1960s and early 1970s may not have understood how rebellion against social norms would ultimately affect their own or their daughters' lives, but their resistance signaled a growing awareness of the possibility that women could choose their own futures.

Growing Through Experience: Bridging the Generation Gap

In the excerpt below, Jen senses that she was living in a time of transition and tension between her own values and those of her mother. At the same time, she does not indicate that either of them had an understanding of the significance or impact that these tensions would have on their futures,

I've actually been thinking about it a lot the last little while since, um, since you originally contacted me.... it was just a real kind of different experience in that, you know, at that time it was in 1969 so the world in a big flux at that time, and I had been living in California just outside of San Francisco, and had come back to Canada in early, I guess it was late '68, and then I got pregnant here and so it was the age of the hippies and all that was going on, so it was a different kind of time period, um, for some people, but for other people very much sort of stuck in the 50s kind of mentality that you know, at 16 you didn't have a child, and you sure as heck didn't have a child out of wedlock. (Interview transcript #7, Jen, p.1) She [her mother] was quite a bit older, she was 40 when she had me, but... I don't know if there was that sort of... as she was growing up...that sort of sense of dramatic change in the way the world was, and....my sense is, just reviewing a

little bit about the history, that...it wasn't as dramatic as it was for me when I was a teenager. And so it was exciting, and ah, and scary, and sort of having to sort of walk that fine line between my mom's values and... the values of the generation coming up. (Interview transcript #7, Jen, p.14)

Jen recalls only that her mother did not want her to marry. While she sensed her mother's concern, she did not understand her resistance to her marrying the father of her child at that time,

Well, she was just very supportive... she was just concerned about my welfare and me, but at 16...you don't see that's what would upset your parents... I could still see the father of the baby, but I wasn't going to marry him and that wasn't going to be what... she wasn't going to be the one that was going to consent to that. (Interview transcript #7, Jen, p.6)

Later, when Jen's mother developed Alzheimer's disease and Jen became her guardian, she was looking through her mother's papers for some legal documents and it was at this time that she became aware of the many complex and personal factors underpinning her mother's objection to her marriage. Jen recalls,

I had always had this, her interpretation of what their marriage was like, and that it was... was very much a marriage based on love and everything else... But going through those documents, uh, I found that her marriage certificate, and my brother's birthday and she was obviously pregnant when she married my dad. (Interview transcript #7, Jen, p.6-7)

Jen's mother perhaps did not have the option not to marry when she became pregnant. The social stigma against unmarried mothers in the 1940s was extreme. Unmarried mothers were sometimes placed under house arrest in homes for unwed mothers and labeled by the courts as juvenile delinquents (Sangster, 2001). Becoming a mother in 1940 was associated with becoming an adult, and that meant being married. By the late 1960s, mothers of daughters were becoming concerned about the stability of marriage, particularly for young women who did not have advanced education. In the

past, early marriage and motherhood had provided women with a strong measure of financial security and social status, but this was changing. Jen remembers,

For my mom, I mean, if you had premarital sex, you know, you're the town slut kind of thing, but um, for my circle of friends and people I knew, and for what I can make of what was happening in society, it was that if you didn't have premarital sex, you know, there was something wrong with you. (Interview transcript #7, Jen, p.14)

The stories of Jen, Donna, and Helen are woven together with the stories of their mothers' experience of marriage and motherhood linking values related to women, marriage, and motherhood over changing social and historical contexts. Jen's and Donna's mothers' resistance to their marriages challenged dominant ideologies about the centrality of marriage in women's lives. That challenge in turn served to shape and define the dissatisfaction that many women were experiencing in relation to the idealization of women's reproductive roles. Many women who were, or became mothers in the 1960s expressed that they did not feel valued by society for their work in the home and as mothers. At the same time, alternatives to marriage and motherhood had not taken shape for young women who became sexually active and were reaching adulthood in the late 1960s. The expectation of greater sexual freedom, but the lack of alternatives to marriage and motherhood, meant that for most young women who became pregnant outside marriage, social pressure meant that they did marry. Jen recalls,

There was still the influence of the, you know, the 50s, of 'the proper way to do things' and that kind of stuff, so I felt kind of, um, once I was pregnant and once I started to show, when my pregnancy started to show, you know, I'd just get a lot of looks on public transit, and walking down the street, and that kind of thing. (Interview transcript #7, Jen, p.2)

The impact on individual lives of this tumultuous period in history can be felt in Jen's words as she recalls becoming a mother at age 16,

It's interesting 'cause when I was filling out that questionnaire that you sent with the demographic information...it was very strange...when I had to put down my age, of how old I was to actually write it down...on a piece of paper. I mean, I obviously know when I was 16, but to actually have to write down how old I was, and just when I did that the other day, it really kind of hit me of how just young I was...you know, looking back on it now, I got pregnant and...I decided to keep the child and I did what I needed to do. But, I never really, you know, all these years, really, really thought about how young I was, until I did that the other day, yeah. (Interview transcript #7, Jen, p.23)

The Meaning of Stories

Healing Rifts: 1960-1979

In the 1950s and 1960s and into the early 1970s, the majority of teens who became pregnant married before the birth of their child. Of those that were not married, 90% gave their children up for adoption (Caragata, 1999). However, the literature indicates that an increasing number of women did not marry, and kept their children (Brown, 1980; Chilman, 1980; Furstenberg, 1991; McLaren, & McLaren, 1997; SmithBattle, 2000; Wong & Checkland, 1999). While it was still an expectation for women to marry if they became pregnant 'before it showed', some middle-class teens and their parents questioned this convention. By the end of the 1970s the media had created an image of an 'epidemic' of pregnant and parenting teens (Addelson, 1999; Montessoro & Blixen, 1996; Wong & Checkland, 1999). This 'epidemic' was seen as an alarming trend indicative of women rejecting marriage and traditional female roles. The reality was that women were marrying at a later age, and that the number of pregnant teens was actually decreasing. What *was* increasing was the number of women in their teenage years who were pregnant, and not married.

Unmarried women having babies outside marriage began to be seen in the late 1970s as a threat to social order, convention, morality, and as a burden on the public purse (Bulter, 2002; Chilman, 1980; Furstenberg, 2001). It was this concern that prompted government spending on programs and research to prevent, predict and control adolescent pregnancy and motherhood (Montessoro & Blixen, 1996). These issues have become magnified and formalized over the past 25 years in public health programs, parenting programs for teens, and support for adolescent mother's education and job training (Peters, 1999). Peters (1999) explores how issues surrounding teens, their children, and poverty have come to challenge Canadian social values,

The notion of a younger single mother is, in many cases, a litmus test of when and how responsibility is assigned between family and the state. It involves negotiations of boundaries between collective and family responsibility in that most public of private places, the way in which the state provides for families and children. (p. 3)

Themes related to public and private responsibility and accountability for women having children outside marriage were just beginning to be raised when Jen and Donna had their first child. Concern about early motherhood has now been set within the context of the need for economic security, and the increasing failure of early marriages. Differences between women's experiences of marriage and motherhood that began to emerge in the 1950s, accelerated in the 1960s and 70s. The impact of this diversity is reflected in the controversy that arose in the late 1970s concerning unmarried women under the age of 20 choosing to become mothers. Ways in which young women have experienced adolescent motherhood since 1980 are explored further in interviews with six women who had their first child between 1980 and 2000.

CHAPTER SIX

1980-2001: Multiple Images of Motherhood

The single parent family, particularly the single adolescent mother and her child, makes those who long for the return of the 'traditional family' of the 1950s, uncomfortable. This so-called 'traditional family' configuration is, according to Gleason (1997, 1999), Luxton (1997), and Nicholson (1999), no more traditional than the family form which it replaced in the prosperous years following World War II. The idea that a man, a woman, and their biological children living in single family house expresses something essential about human nature, is largely a social construction of the affluent society of the 1950s and 1960s according to Thornton and Young-DeMarco (2001). The interdependence of family members that was common in the first half of the 20th century was in part due to the limited ability of individuals or families to provide for all their material needs individually. The exchange of goods and services between family members and between families in a community was important in helping the individual survive difficult economic times such as during the Depression and the Second World War. Today personal ownership of consumer items and the means to obtain them is increasingly seen as basic for survival. The existence of family life increasingly represents a group of individuals who are dependent on each other in very different ways, and for very different reasons than the grouping of individuals who formed the family unit 50 years ago. Nicholson (1999) says, "the 'traditional' family possesses no more claims to 'naturalness' or historical universality than do 'alternative' families. In addition, what constitutes 'traditionality' itself keeps changing. The 'traditional' family of the

1950s is not the same as the one of the 1990s” (p. 78). According to Peters (1999), Canadian society has changed dramatically over the last 50 years. The social, political, economic, and sexual revolutions that occurred in the 1960s and 1970s have redrawn social boundaries in a way that society now reflects an acceptance of greater diversity in personal and public behaviour than in pre-1950s society (Amata, 2002; Cherlin, 1980; Coontz, 2000a; Edwards, 2001; Marks, 2000).

In the first half of the 20th century the family unit was considered a cornerstone of individual and community stability. It is this family configuration against which the adolescent mother-headed family is compared. Women who bear children without the financial means to support themselves raise questions about personal responsibility as defined by middle-class expectations of economic independence. According to the literature, a greater number of adolescent mothers are poor compared to their older married counterparts (Clark, 1999; Kaufman, 1999; Maxwell, 1997). Economic dependence on state funds helps to create a stereotype image of young unmarried women’s experience of motherhood in a way that does not account for the contextual richness of their individual lives. Peters (1999) says of Canadian attitudes toward these young people, “their attitudes to single parents, and early parenting in particular, reflect all of their ambivalence, confusion, and resistance towards these changes [in the nuclear family]” (p. 4). The focus of attention on adolescent women and sexuality, and unmarried adolescent mothers in particular reflects the ways in which beliefs about the appropriateness of women’s sexual expression continues to be debated. Enduring negative attitudes toward women who deviate from expected norms of behavior reinforce the stigma attached to unmarried adolescent mothers.

Although the number of teens having children has declined steadily since the 1950s, according to Wong and Checkland (1999) and McLaren and McLaren (1997), the number of unmarried adolescent women who become pregnant and keep their infants has increased in the last 25 years. Objective 'scientific' studies usually conclude that the majority of these women fall below the poverty line, and have lower levels of education and job skills than their peers (Furstenberg & Hughes, 1995; Nord, Moore, Morrison, Brown, & Myers, 1992; Woodward, Fergusson, & Horwood, 2001). While older married women's experiences of motherhood are described from the perspective of multiple experiences including articles about fitness, finances and marital relationships, little discussion is given to the equally diverse experiences of mothers under the age of 20. Instead the discussion about motherhood and adolescent is almost exclusively focused on poverty, poor parenting skills, and lack of education. The dynamics between the young mother and her child, the woman and her family, and the unique ways in which she frames her new role in relation to the present and future possibilities it might present are largely absent. The interconnection between the new mother and her new life as a mother that are present in stories about older married women and their families is often not represented in stories about adolescent women and their new role. Having a child at any age creates relationships, not only between the mother and child, but between the mother and society. SmithBattle (1997) explains that we, "become who we are by relationships that form us in subtle, often invisible ways" (p. 145). Each woman interviewed expressed the importance of positive and negative relationships in her life, both in her formative years as she developed her understanding of herself as a woman and a mother, and later, when she found out she was pregnant and became a young mother. Narratives by women

who became mothers in their adolescent years encourage us to challenge the ways that economically determined standards of worth are used to assess the personal and social value of women and motherhood. SmithBattle (1997) explains,

A spirit of humility and openness to the unpredictable course of a human life is largely absent in the social scientific accounts of adolescent mothering. Although the life-course of a person cannot be predicted, the shape and mystery can be grasped retrospectively through interpretation of detailed narratives. These narratives create a space for recognizing others that may sharpen our moral imagination and responsiveness. (p. 149)

Wong and Checkland (1999) describe how the increase in the number of unmarried adolescent women who are parenting raises alarm about social justice in Canada and the distribution of public funds for disadvantaged single parenting teens,

At times it is hard to tell what concerns people more: that young women are becoming parents too early (too early for what? For their own good? their children's? society's?); that they are doing it as *unmarried* or single parents (which may be seen as a problem inherently - as illegitimacy - or because of its consequences in so-called social costs); or that they are doing it before they are economically ready to be self-supporting (and hence become what some call dependent on state resources). (p.xv-xvi)

Barb, Willa, Colleen, Cindy, Ellen, and Linda each had the option to terminate their pregnancy but they did not. Before the late 1960s, choosing to be an unmarried mother would have been outside the realm of possibility for almost any working or middle-class woman. Social and economic sanctions against such a decision would have made such a choice extremely rare (Comacchio, 1999). While the stigma of unwed motherhood remains strong, social and economic conditions in the last 20 years have made the choice to mother outside marriage a consideration for women of all ages, including unmarried women under the age of 20. Despite negative messages from society about their choice to mother, the ideal of motherhood for each woman is revealed as one

of women's most important private and public identities, and remains a powerful symbol of self-fulfillment.

Telling Stories

Willa's Story

Willa was born in 1965, the middle child of three girls and two boys. She is now 36, and became a mother at age 15 in 1980. She was not married to the father of her child and did not continue her relationship with the father following the birth of her son. Willa grew up on her family's farm in rural Saskatchewan and describes herself as a sheltered child who led a protected life. Willa's father was the breadwinner in the family and her mother cared for the children and the home. Willa recalls that when she became pregnant she was living with her parents, attending the local high school and dating a popular boy. She describes her relationship with her boyfriend as one where "he split up with me on Friday, partied all weekend, and would come and get back together with me on Monday, and this was... the routine" (Interview transcript #6, Willa, p.2). Willa and her friends engaged in the typical activities of young teenagers in the early 1980s including partying, drinking, gossiping, buying clothes, and worrying about their hair. Becoming a mother and marrying was not on her mind at age 15. When she 'went all the way' with her boyfriend, Willa says she was not aware of the availability of birth control in her small town and did not think much about it in terms of her own sexual activities. She knew that having sex was 'bad', and getting pregnant even worse. She was conscious that becoming pregnant would bring disapproval from family and community. She was confused about what to do about her pregnancy and waited until she was over five months pregnant to

reveal her condition. At the time that Willa became pregnant, pregnant teenage girls were not required to leave school, however Willa felt uncomfortable with the gossip directed at her by students and teachers, and her mother enrolled her in a program for pregnant unmarried teens in a nearby city. Here she was able to be around other girls her age and to continue her schooling.

Barb's Story

Barb was born in 1973 and raised in a mid-size northwestern Canadian community. Barb finished high school and married the young man she had been dating for several years. The next step after marriage for Barb was starting a family of her own. Barb became a mother in 1992 at age 19 and is now 28 years old. When her child was three years old she divorced her first husband and has since remarried. Barb's son lives with his father and stepmother in a nearby community and visits with Barb and her husband on the weekends and holidays. Barb is a working mother and runs a day-care from her home. Finishing high school, marrying, and having children is what her parents expected, and what she came to expect as the 'natural' order of her life. Despite the early break-up of her marriage and the subsequent remarriage, Barb sees her present life as reflective of the traditional family values in which she grew up.

Colleen's Story

Colleen was born in 1973, the youngest daughter and youngest child of a family of five children who settled in western Canada from Quebec. She is now 28 years old, and had her first child at age 18 in 1991. Her parents separated when she was 15 years old. After her father left Colleen remained at home with her older sister who was also still in high school. Colleen's mother worked in the home but, because her mother suffered

from depression, Colleen took on the majority of housekeeping duties. While her older sister 'rebelled', Colleen was 'the good daughter'. Colleen's older sister "went out, and she partied, and she got herself into a lot of trouble, that kind of thing. Whereas myself, I would do the grocery shopping, and I would cook" (Interview transcript #4, Colleen, p. 3). Colleen described herself as an excellent student and she planned to go to medical school upon graduation. When she found out she was pregnant at the end of grade 12 she was already registered in university. Colleen decided that she would carry the pregnancy to term, despite the stigma attached to pregnancy outside marriage by her family and community members. Colleen says that she and her boyfriend were planning to marry at some point, and that she was taking the birth control pill at the time she became pregnant. Colleen hid her pregnancy from friends and neighbours because she did not want people talking about her or labeling her a 'bad' girl. Becoming pregnant rather than pursuing an education and a career was not the life that Colleen or her family had planned. Colleen graduated from university with a science degree, but was not able to pursue her dream of entering medical school. Instead she entered another health care profession. Colleen expresses the view that early motherhood compromised her career ambitions, but feels that it was more important in the long term for her and her partner to provide economic stability for their child as quickly as possible.

Cindy's Story

Cindy was born in 1981 and is now 20 years old. She became a mother at age 19 in 2001. She grew up on the East Coast of Canada in a small close knit family of four. Cindy recalls that she and her girlfriends often talked about the kind of person they wanted to marry, and about having children. She says she wanted to have a lot of

children, but realized as she got older that she needed to have a good education, a good job, and to travel before she settled down to marriage and a family. Cindy moved far from home in her mid-teenage years and like many young people was looking for adventure and new experiences. Cindy had a steady boyfriend at the time she became pregnant, but that relationship did not last. It was not in her plans at that time to become a mother, and she does not explain how birth control failed in this instance. Cindy did not discuss abortion or adoption as an option in deciding the outcome of her pregnancy. She returned to work when her daughter was a few months old, and was living with her sister at the time of the interview. Cindy says that her family was supportive throughout the pregnancy and birth, and that they did not pressure her to marry or give up her child for adoption. Cindy expressed that the support of her family was very important to her. Shortly after our interview she returned to her hometown to be closer to her family.

Ellen's Story

Ellen was born in 1983 and is now 19 years old. She became a mother at age 16 in 1999. Ellen came from a small northern community and moved south not long after her daughter was born. She now lives in student housing and is pregnant with her second child. Ellen is not married, and has a 'troublesome' relationship with her daughter's father. Ellen admits that in her experience, some teenage mothers are not ready for the responsibility and commitment that come with motherhood. Ellen is working on her university degree and says that this is due to becoming a mother at a young age. Ellen believes that education is necessary in order to escape the poverty that often accompanies young single motherhood. She describes being a good mother as meeting her child's needs ahead of her own wants, and being responsible for providing a safe and stable

home environment. Ellen does not associate good parenting with marriage. It appears from her story that Ellen came from a home that reflected a similar parenting style to her own. Like Cindy, Ellen's family supported her throughout her pregnancy and the period following her daughter's birth. Ellen is not particularly concerned with society's definition of a 'good woman', or that she is not living with the father of her child. She is concerned about being a 'good mother'. Her priority is to provide a safe and stable home for her children, and to improve their quality of life through education and obtaining a profession.

Linda's Story

Linda was born in 1984 and is now 18 years old. She became a mother at age 17 in 2001. She comes from a small community in rural Canada and has a younger brother. Linda had not finished high school, nor was she attending high school when she became pregnant. Linda does not mention the father of her child in her story, and at the time she became pregnant she was single and unemployed. Linda was planning to travel the country with friends before she became pregnant, and was disappointed when she had to give this plan up. Until her son was born and she saw him placed beside her, she was not sure about the role of motherhood in her life. Linda says that she felt resentment that becoming a mother meant the end of her freedom. She remembers her own childhood as one that included caring for her brother and other younger members of the family. She recalls that she learned a lot from this experience, and that becoming a mother was always in her future plans. As a teenager she liked to party, to drink, and to take drugs. All this changed when she became pregnant and she became aware of how her lifestyle might negatively impact the fetus. Although she had not yet decided to mother, she was

concerned about her health and the health of the child she was carrying. The sight of her newborn son's hands and feet touched her, and she decided that she wanted to raise him herself. With the help of her mother, Linda began to plan a future in which she finished high-school, obtained employment, and made a stable life for her herself and her son.

Listening to Stories

Trying to Be Good and Trying to Be a Mother

Being a good mother, a good wife and a 'good woman' were synonymous for most White European Canadians in the first half of the 20th century. Luxton (1997) explains that marriage was the cornerstone of this ideology, and few deviated from that norm, "there [were] well-defined social norms about what familial relations [were] appropriate for having children and varying degrees of social sanction or penalty for violating them" (p. 162). The assumption that a woman who mothers outside marriage is not a 'good woman' or a 'good mother' is challenged through the stories of Colleen, Cindy, Ellen, Linda, Barb, and Willa.

In the past it was believed that women's sexuality was contained and controlled by marriage (Tuana 1993). Over the past 20 years, the availability of birth control and the emphasis on education and job training has meant that priorities for youth have changed. This change suggests that the outcome of sexual activity for teens should be controlled through the use of contraceptives. Adolescent developmental milestones no longer include marriage and motherhood. Contraception is not used to prevent motherhood; rather it is used to ensure that plans for the future are carried out and not derailed by

events that would impede education and career opportunities (Addleson, 1999). As a result of these changes, the ideal of motherhood has come to be reserved for the mature woman who is ready to provide herself and her children with a middle-class standard of living, and is married and living with the biological father of her children (Luxton, 1997). SmithBattle (2000) explains why adolescent motherhood is thus not consistent with this conceptualization of motherhood, “adolescent childbearing in our culture is an offence against planning; it represents a dramatic neglect of the ability to judge the present in terms of a perceived future” (p.30). Young women are expected to make ‘socially responsible’ decisions regarding the use of contraception. The decision to mother is one that many ‘adults’ do not feel adolescents have the ability and, in some cases, the moral right to make.

Ellen was not married when she had her first child at age 16, while Barb was married when she had her son at age 19. These two women’s views on the appropriateness of adolescent childbearing outside marriage reflects the diversity of ways that motherhood has come be defined over the last 20 years. Ellen comments,

I think part of it was just hard because, because you’re not an adult yet when you’re 16. I was 15 when I got pregnant, but at 15 you can’t even get your ears pierced without your parent’s permission, like you can’t do anything. You can’t make any decision for yourself. But then all of a sudden you can make all these major decisions for someone else, and you still can’t make them for yourself. Like I could sign an organ donor card for my daughter if I wanted to, but I need my parents’ signature on my own until you’re 19 (Interview transcript #2, Ellen, p.1). I don’t know if it’s the unmarried thing or the teenage thing because most of the same people don’t think that there is anything wrong with having sex when you’re older. (Interview transcript #2, Ellen, p.7)

Unlike Ellen, Barb sees the decision to marry and become a mother as a different kind of decision than one to become an unmarried teenage mother. Such a decision, according to Barb, must be discouraged in order to save the adolescent, her child, and society from the

negative outcomes of teenage mothering (outside marriage). Barb explains her perspective,

I don't know it's maybe a stereotype...they don't think about it, they keep the child, and you know, the child ends up getting raised by grandma because mom's too busy living the rest of her teenage life, and hits 20 and you know, perhaps gets pregnant again, and you know, a case like that. And I think there is a lot of that. (Interview transcript #5, Barb, p.5)

For Barb, unmarried teen pregnancy is a result of poor planning, a poor upbringing, failure to use contraception, and just bad judgement. She believes that society should impose consequences to encourage social responsibility by unmarried women. According to Barb, the government offers too many supports to single teen mothers and in a way, this encourages them to act irresponsibly. According to Barb, if young unmarried women choose to become mothers, they should expect to work. If they choose not to, their income from the government should be cut off. Barb explains that,

They [the government] give these great programs, like they help pay for day care and stuff if you want to go back to work or school. There's 'if' -- why not say 'you have to'? We're not going to give you money no more. You're a certain age person, [and] we're going to take you in, and do an evaluation test on you, and we're going to put you through school and we're going stop this cycle, we're going to show your kids that you're not sitting on the couch, you're going to school. So when you're done school, you're going to go work! And your kids are going to see that! And we're going to pay for your day care. Like, a lot of people have reasons as to why they can't go to school and work, and it's usually because 'I can't afford day care', or they can't afford school because... it doesn't fit their 'life-style'for some girls, I wonder if it's a way out. (Interview transcript #5, Barb, p. 25)

For Barb, and many other middle-class Canadians who are according to Nicholson (1999), 'nostalgic' for the traditional family of the 1950s, adolescent mothers fail to teach appropriate social values, particularly the values of economic independence, to their children. They are, according to Barb, a bad example to their peers, and to their children. Barb feels that when children do not see their mothers working as a result of having had

them out of wedlock, and therefore not finishing school or obtaining work experience, it can lead to problems for their children both at school and later in life. These problems arise because of the negative example of their mothers, whom Barb considers socially irresponsible by having children without being married. Barb explains,

There's a reason why most of these people [children of unwed mothers] aren't educated and they aren't working, it's because, it all comes back to how they were raised....one of the biggest loop holes they use in court systems now is you know, someone does something bad, wrong, and they'll say, 'well, you know, what he was, he had a bad child life'. (Interview transcript #5, Barb, p.29)

Teen Sex Over Time: Redefining Motherhood

Ellen wonders if the image of the 'bad' girl and the 'pregnant teenager' will ever be erased from the social mythology of Western middle-class society. She feels that society still fears women's sexuality, and particularly the teenage woman's sexuality. This is one reason that 'adults' stereotype young unmarried mothers and don't want to hear about their individual experiences of motherhood, or find out what they might learn from them about mothering. According to Wong and Checkland (1999), the image of 'children having children' - implying children having sex - is disturbing to many who have lingering associations about the immorality of sex outside marriage. Ellen responded to this question thoughtfully,

I don't know. I have been trying to figure out what they've been talking about when they, when people talk about teenage pregnancy. Some people think it's wrong to have sex when you were a teenager in the first place, which is... I don't know if it's the unmarried thing or the teenage thing because most of the same people don't think that there is anything wrong with having sex when you're older, although there are a lot of people who do, but, they seem to think if you get pregnant and they have this... stereotype of what you must be like, and the thing is that it's hard because a lot of people have sex and they don't all get pregnant, and why are you only biased against the ones who get pregnant? They say, you know, 'well, it's her fault because she was a slut or she fucks around' or whatever she did. (Interview transcript #2, Ellen, p.7-8)

In this statement, Ellen challenges the ways in which beliefs about women and sex are shaped by a particular social and historical context. In the past, having a child in the teenage years was not unusual, as long as the woman was married. Ellen elaborates on the social and historical changes and the diversity in women's lives today in relation to being a mother,

Remember that when you are raising children there is no absolute [right]... Most of our cultural beliefs are just cultural; it's not necessarily right or wrong. And I think it's the same thing as having children when you're young, it's just a cultural belief that that's wrong, it's not an absolute wrong... our society is different, we're more removed from ourselves in a way, we are more consumer-driven and we're more... we like stuff, materialistic... We don't have the same kind of social set up as other cultures, where they don't have that emphasis on parenting the same way... And children just turn out, and there's not an emphasis on getting a job the same way there is and going to high school and University and what not. Because... you know... you just do what you do... and it's the way Canada use to be before I was born, and when having children when you were young was still normal. (Interview transcript #2, Ellen, p.18-19)

SmithBattle (2000) confirms that, "historically... adolescent childbearing was a common, nonproblematic feature of social life with well-established, coherent cultural traditions for guiding new mothers in the skills and meanings of parenting" (p.29). Kelly (1999) also observes that it is not the act of reproduction that is criticized today, but the age and marital status of the mother. According to Kelly (1999), teen mothers "represent adolescent female sexuality out of control.... teen mothers represent rebellion against parents and other adults.... for those distressed about poverty and child abuse, teen mothers represent both the cause and consequence" (p. 52). Thus, given the degree of concern expressed in the literature and by the media, the use of birth control to prevent pregnancy and motherhood represents the most socially responsible action on the part of unmarried teenage woman. According to Riessman (1998), "medical practice becomes a vehicle for eliminating or controlling problematic experiences that are defined as deviant,

for the purpose of securing adherence to social norms” (p.48). It is this desire to define normality as a reflection of what the majority of people appear to be doing that excludes the experience of adolescent motherhood from the experience of motherhood of older, married women. The pathologizing of adolescent behavior in general over the past 50 years has implications for the ways that adolescent motherhood is pathologized today.

Choices and Consequences

The availability and use of contraception has increased for young people since the 1970s when Jen and Donna had their first child. Addelson (1999) states that since the late 1970s, “sex and childbearing became matters of choice even for the very young. The claim was that education and birth control technology would insure rational choice and eliminate ‘unwanted pregnancies’” (p. 82). Willa, who became a mother at age 15, states that she did not know about accessible contraceptives. She recalls that,

Mark’s father was my first boyfriend and we went all the way, and I think probably on the first or second time that we actually ‘went all the way’. I became pregnant. So, I grew up in a small town, everyone asked me why I didn’t abort or give it up for adoption, or use birth control, or even condoms, and it was such a small town, in Saskatchewan, that there wasn’t gosh... there wasn’t a drug store to buy condoms, and these things were all kind of like... they were way out there! Abortion would have been like asking for the moon on a silver platter, like who ever would of thought of that? That was really big-city kind of stuff. (Interview transcript #6, Willa, p.1)

Assumptions that very young, rural, adolescent women had the option to use contraception rather than to become mothers are based on beliefs about the appropriate role of sex during today’s pre-adult stage of development, and on assumptions that may be out of touch with the reality of small town life. Disapproval of adolescents who fail to use contraception in the prescribed way, forms a basis for the stigma that accompanies the image of the unmarried pregnant and parenting teen and contributes to idea that

adolescents in general are not capable of making 'good' (according to adult criteria) decisions about reproduction in general, and becoming mothers in particular. According to Wong and Checkland (1999), "adolescents are poised between the legally full autonomy of adulthood and the dependent, non-autonomous status of childhood" (p.xvii). Thus, the choice to mother is given ambiguously by adult society to their adolescent 'children' who represent "a group towards which political, ethical, and social theory have generally been ambivalent" (Wong & Checkland, 1999, p.xvii). For the young women interviewed, the stigma of pregnancy and unwed motherhood created by this ambiguity about the right of individuals to make their own choices about sex, contraception and reproduction is a powerful factor in determining the quality of their experience of becoming an adolescent mother.

Everyone is Looking at You, What are They Thinking?

Luxton (1997) explores why many Canadians today feel comfortable in their disapproval of unmarried teenage motherhood. She explains that "getting married, having children in the context of marriage, and living as a nuclear family is still so widely accepted in Canadian society as the way people should live, that it often seems 'natural'" (p.164). For the young women interviewed who had their children in the last 20 years, the experience of becoming a mother was, like generations of women before, also considered to be a natural event. This is despite their unmarried status. Cindy remembers thinking of herself as a mother at a very young age,

I always wanted children... in the future. I always put a career first, children after...get married, and then have children....even as a young I girl I remember wanting children...you know, [when someone asked] 'what do you want to be?', I said 'I want to be a mom and have like 10 babies'... and that type of thing.
(Interview transcript #1, Cindy, p.1)

For Cindy and other women interviewed in this time period, becoming a mother was what they expected. What was *not* expected was the criticism, spoken and unspoken, that they received from strangers. Colleen remembers,

They put me in this room, and this nurse came in who was pregnant. She was probably, I would say her early thirties, and she came in and basically kind of ordered me to do this and that, was really not very supportive in a sense that, here I was 18 and scared, we were both young, and we didn't... we needed more support and direction, and not coming in and just saying 'do this, do that, and put this gown in and get into bed, and I'll be back in'... it was very cold... in front of us... I was just, felt like garbage, I felt again, that she did that just because I was a 'bad teenager' that got herself pregnant. Of course that's what you think, they're punishing me now. (Interview transcript #4, Colleen, p.19)

In addition to society's disapproval, these adolescent women with the exception of Barb and Ellen, felt that they had failed to live up to personal and family expectations. When Cindy found out she was pregnant at age 19, she was not married. She did not have the means to support herself and her child, but she believed that she had the right to choose motherhood rather than abortion or adoption. Cindy explains how she felt when she first learned about her pregnancy,

When I found out, I remember the first words that came out of my mouth was 'what are they going to say'? That's what I said to my doctor, and you know, basically, just everyone I knew, worried about what everyone around me was going to think. (Interview transcript #3, Cindy, p.4-5)

Cindy, like the other women interviewed, was aware that being pregnant meant that obtaining an education and reaching career goals would be made difficult by choosing to mother. All commented on their own and their parents' concern for prematurely becoming a mother before education and career goals had been met. Cindy recalls how strangers reinforced her own appraisal of her 'deviant' status. Cindy and her sister were having dinner one evening when,

Two older ladies sat and stared at me with disgust on their face, for, oh probably, a good ten minutes, talking back and forth and looking at me. Just total looks of disgust. I was so, almost, like, well I was upset by it, obviously it's not a nice feeling. It was kind of humiliating. I didn't know if I was going to get through my dinner. Like I just felt like going to the bathroom and crying. Because I felt like I shouldn't be there. (Interview transcript #3, Cindy, p.13)

As generations collided in their beliefs about the suitability of unmarried women to mother, the judgement of the older generation appears to have had a powerful impact on this young woman's experience of herself as a pregnant woman. It is not difficult to imagine the pain that this young woman from a closely-knit family from Atlantic Canada experienced as she tried to go about her daily activities,

I found it very difficult being young and pregnant in public... the looks, you'd hear people talking, like you couldn't even walk out into the grocery store without someone stared at you, or look at you. And you just know what was going through their mind. Even though they don't know anything about me, or my life circumstance what so ever, they're very quick to judge. (Interview transcript #3, Cindy, p.12)

Making the Choice to Mother with Mother's Help

Cindy was aware that her social status was compromised by being unmarried and being pregnant. In a difficult decision making process, she decided that becoming a mother was more important than compromising her own values and beliefs. Cindy chose to endure the disapproval of society rather than have an abortion. For Cindy, the experience of becoming a mother was, "The normal thing to do... you grow up and have kids". It was something she thought of "from early on... I always kind of liked the thought of being a mother, I just... I can't explain it!" (Interview transcript #3, Cindy, p.1). While Cindy's family did not condemn her choice, they, like other families, had concerns about how becoming a mother would affect their daughter's future, especially the way that future education and career goals might be impacted. They were also

concerned about future possibilities for her to marry and have more children. McLaren and Vanderbijl (1998) explain that, “knowledge about how gender is culturally organized and how [the] future may, in fact, be radically dependent on familial contexts – on who one love[s], with whom one live[s] and with whom one has children” (p. 128). Cindy’s assessment of her family’s response to her pregnancy confirms this concern. Cindy claims that her family,

[Had] always wanted more from me... like they wanted me to go further, do the university thing, and go and get an education, get a good job, and never depend on anyone, and then start a family, not... as my father would say [doing it] ‘the hard way’. (Interview transcript # 3, Cindy, p.5)

In Cindy’s experience of adolescent motherhood, doing it the ‘hard way’ included enduring the disapproving gaze of strangers. Her own happy childhood memories sustained her and helped her understand how the transition to motherhood could be both rewarding and demanding. Cindy felt that what was important to her about her decision was the act of mothering, not the opinion of strangers. Cindy recalls,

Even if you’re young or old, the transition into motherhood, when you have a baby, everything, I think that’s the same whether you’re 20 or 40, your life is going to change totally, turn upside down. Whether you’re young or old, your life’s basically going to be put on hold for a bit. (Interview transcript #3, Cindy, p.11)

As in other families, Cindy’s family was supportive of her decision to mother. Cindy, like the other women interviewed, stated that her mother’s support was essential to surviving pregnancy and early motherhood. For Cindy, experiences of her own childhood were a model for the way she saw herself as a mother. Cindy says that times with her mother were very positive when she was a child, she says that they, “Were just interactions with her [mother] ...what we used to do...a lot of outside things, like I remember playing with flowers and leaves, playing in the garden, that type of stuff, riding our bikes, going for

walks” (Interview transcript #3, Cindy, p.2). Zannettino (2000) explains how the image of the self as a mother emerges from a time before consciousness. She explains how being a mother becomes a strong symbol of self-identity as a girl observes and experiences her own mother. Thus, as in Connie’s time, the intention to mother appears to be ‘natural’ for these women, despite their unmarried status. Zannettino (2000) states,

Who we are now as women and as (m)others is embedded in all that has lived in the lives of women, and culture, before us. Thus, what we know as women and as mothers about (m)otherhood is all that has been inscribed in our psyches by our foremothers and their foremothers. Thus, we can hardly differentiate between these inscriptions and what we ‘truly’ know about or desire from the maternal. (p.120)

For Ellen, the transition to motherhood was described as a confirmation that the decision to mother was right for her. She questions that being a mother in the adolescent years is a significantly different experience than it is for older women. Ellen comments that,

I don’t know if it just happens to teenagers... your child becomes part of who you are... I think it’s just part of me now, which makes it not as bad as anyone thinks it would be, and it’s not as hard as anyone thinks it would be, because it’s just a part of you, it’s nothing that I would consider changing necessarily, because she’s here and, I hear people, I hear people say especially to teenagers, if they could go back into it differently, they would, and I don’t really feel that. (Interview transcript #2, Ellen, p.32)

The choice to become a mother and her right to make that choice is a clear message in Ellen’s telling of becoming a mother, “For one thing it was a choice that I made. I could have given my child up for adoption, or I could have gotten an abortion if I had wanted to, but I didn’t” (Interview transcript #2, Ellen, p.14). Initially her family was surprised and disappointed, but in the end they supported her and encouraged her. The importance of this support is also measured in the confidence that Ellen expresses in her ability to parent,

One thing I read...in a book was a true story about a teenage mother written by herself, like *Riding with Boys in Cars*is that she had a child when she was young and when she was a bit older, she was thinking about her life with her child and she was thinking, 'was it possible she was so young when she had her child that she didn't have her own identity yet enough?', and she hadn't become enough of an individual or whatever, that she just let her child become part of her identity. That's what I can see, and I think that's something that could happen. I don't know if it just happens to teenagers, but I just see it. I see it in myself. (Interview transcript #2, Ellen, p.32)

The Meaning of Stories

Many Mothers, Many Stories: 1939-2001

Ellen's perception of the 'naturalness' of becoming a mother echoes the 'naturalness' that Connie expressed in her experience of marrying and becoming a mother. Ellen comments that, "getting pregnant is a natural thing that happens when you have sex. It's the basic point of sex I think" (Interview transcript #2, Ellen, p.7). Similarly, Connie explains, "Well, I got pregnant right after I got married....that's quite natural" (Interview transcript #12, Connie, p.8). The assumption that women who have a particular marital, economic, or social status are more capable or deserving of becoming mothers, or that the experience of motherhood has less value personally or to society is challenged in stories of Ellen, Colleen, Cindy, Linda, Willa and Barb. A caring family and caring professionals can provide support for a young woman's ability to parent by demonstrating respect for the woman's choice to mother, and by affirming commonalities with other mothers, even those who are older, married, or from different social or cultural backgrounds. This support and insight, expressed during the woman's pregnancy, birth of her child, and post natal experiences has obvious benefits to the mother and child, and to society. The short and long term advantages of positive self-esteem and positive parenting

practices have been well documented (Furstenberg & Hughes, 1995). In the last 20 years, the context in which motherhood occurs has become increasingly diverse for all women. Being unmarried, and being under the age of 20 is only one variation of what it is to be a mother in the 21st century.

The decision to mother or not to mother for most middle-class women over the past 20 years has evolved from virtually the only means of women's entry into adult status, into an individual decision to respond to the desire to mother. Marriage over the past 20 years has become only *one* context in which motherhood occurs. The individual's perception of choice in combination with a positive image of the self as a mother meant that Colleen, Cindy, Willa, Ellen, Linda, and Barb embraced the experience of motherhood despite the stigma of unmarried motherhood. While being a mother is expressed in terms of joy and satisfaction, negative images of unmarried motherhood also served to shape the way that motherhood was experienced. Willa, at the age of 15, expected to give birth to 'a monster' as the result of the stories she had heard about girls how get pregnant 'by accident'. She was surprised then when,

I looked over him and my first thought when I saw him, I thought 'oh, he's not a monster at all', I don't understand all the fuss, and that really was my first thought that I thought, 'I don't understand what they were all carrying on about', and it's not that I had something bad conjured up... but I was just so relieved that he was so beautiful. (Interview transcript #6, Willa, p.4)

CHAPTER SEVEN

Discussion, Conclusions, Insights

Discussion

Parr (1995) explains that for the historian ‘the definitive’ remains elusive, “always at some distance beyond our reach” (p.354) and that conclusions are always tenuous. This is because, “the writing of history represents a distinct cognitive process precisely because it is constructed around the understanding that things are not over, that the story isn’t finished: that there is no end” (Parr, 1995, p.355). This ambiguity is consistent with past and current understandings of the definition and the experience of motherhood. While some argue that there are certain ‘core’ meanings associated with motherhood, or that motherhood is either ‘natural’ or ‘unnatural’ for women, descriptions of both motherhood and women remain bound by the particular social and historical context from which they emerge. Mothering is but one of an infinite number of human activities and as such, it is the work of the historian to, “take human activities presumed eternal, or inevitable, or natural, and to trace the processes by which they have been made and changed through time” (Parr, 1995, p.356). It is this shifting understanding and the layering over time of changes in understanding adolescent motherhood that is the focus of this discussion.

Within the life-span of Connie, the oldest research participant, society’s understanding of motherhood was socially and historically influenced by the increasing participation of women in the work force and in higher education, rising divorce rates, the use of birth control, and changing views about human sexual expression. The accumulation of these influences changed understandings of motherhood but not

necessarily the importance of motherhood in the participant's lives. The increasing diversity of women's private and public experiences meant that while marriage and motherhood for Connie in 1939 could be described for most White European Canadians as women's (only) 'destiny', today it is but one role among many. Between 1939 and 2001 motherhood continued to play a central role in women's lives and still today young women like Ellen continue to describe becoming a mother as 'natural' despite not requiring marriage as a pre-requisite. In interpreting social and historical differences in the participants experiences of motherhood it becomes clear that there is no longer one accepted definition for motherhood despite the fact that motherhood continues to be a role that young girls dream about, talk about, plan for, and excitedly anticipate. While the context for motherhood has altered dramatically over the past 62 years, becoming a mother remains a potent symbol of self-identity.

'Natural' Motherhood: Pre World War II Canada

Connie came to Canada as a young girl with her mother and brother. Her father had already arrived in Canada, and when her mother died her father remarried and brought Connie and her stepmother to a farm outside Calgary. Connie, like many young women at that time, had limited education, was trained in rural domestic life-skills, and assumed that she would marry and become a mother as soon as this was suitable. Like most other young Canadian women, this assumption became a reality. Connie enjoyed her role as wife and mother and a member of her church over her entire lifespan. Connie's understanding of motherhood as 'natural' reflects the belief that for women, reproductive capacity and the ability to mother were linked in a way that did not focus on personal choice, pre-contemplation, or concern about competing roles. The belief that the ability to

mother comes to women by 'instinct' is revealed in Connie's story and is confirmed in the literature (Tuana, 1993). Legal and religious laws, and values that linked women's destiny to marriage and their reproductive capacity reinforced the bond between marriage and motherhood. Economic restrictions against women working, and laws that excluded women from higher education as well as most careers meant that women and most middle-class Canadians, such as Connie, believed that marriage followed by motherhood was what nature intended. In reference to this assumption, Comacchio (1999) states that, "marriage was the only socially sanctioned context for sexuality. Sexual relations between married people entailed parenthood as a matter of course....married women were expected to get pregnant shortly after their weddings" (p.22). Before World War II in Canadian society, the fact that a married woman became a mother under the age of 20 was immaterial; what was significant was that women married before becoming mothers. Other options were rarely contemplated or even available.

Motherhood in the 1950s: Strong Chain, Weakening Links

Motherhood in the 1950s presented challenges to the dominant view that women would marry and become mothers to the exclusion of all other interests and roles. The experience of the Second World War meant that women began working outside the home in greater numbers. The rise of the consumer society created a greater emphasis on material wellbeing, and thus the need for greater cash income. While the domestic role was stressed for women following the war, some authors suggest this was a reaction by authoritarian institutions to women's discontent with enforced domesticity. Despite the restrictions against women working outside the home including low wages and restrictive divorce laws, an increasing number of women did divorce and did enter the workforce

thus challenging the notion that marriage was a pre-requisite for personal as well as sexual expression.

The motherhood experiences of Nina and Karla reflect these post war era trends and also foreshadow the feminist and civil rights movements that exploded in the 1960s. Karla and Nina both married before the age of 20 and had their first child in their late adolescent years. Both women expected to marry and become mothers. Unlike the majority of women in 1950's, both women eventually divorced and worked outside the home. Karla was married to a man who was alcoholic and abusive. She had limited education and was not able to find work to support herself and her child. As a result, like most women who divorced during the 1950s, she was without the benefit of fair divorce laws or government support to provide a minimum standard of living. Karla relied on family to survive. Her work experience reflects the demeaning working conditions and wages that many women faced in the 1950s (Wilson, 1991). The belief that husbands would support wives meant that the expectation that women needed to earn a 'living wage' did not exist. Sexual harassment was also a factor in Karla's experience of single parenting and working in clerical positions. For Karla, women's lower social status as reflected in low wages and limited opportunities to advance meant that they were not seen by men as worthy of the respect that male workers could expect. Being a woman, being a single parent and having to work for a living was considered a marker of second class social status. Social status as a mother was derived through marital affiliation, and unmarried mothers were often poor, badly treated in the work force, and socially ostracized from heterosexual coupled society. Karla's experience of oppression as a woman and her reflections on the meaning of her struggle resonate with important civil

rights issues raised by the women's movement in the 1960s. In the 1950s, divorce, work and single parenting were uncommon but became more common in the 1960s as the link between sex, marriage and motherhood weakened, and as opportunities for women outside the home increased.

Nina became a mother at age 18, following marriage at age 17. Nina also divorced and worked outside the home after obtaining advanced education and job training. Nina's higher socio-economic status and her ability to mould the roles available to women to meet her own needs meant that following divorce Nina realized her dream to become economically independent from marriage. Nina's experience of early marriage and her expectations of motherhood were not unlike the majority of women at that time. What *was* different was her desire for economic independence, and her awareness of other possible roles for women. When Nina realized marriage no longer met her needs, she left the marriage.

Despite obstacles, both Nina and Karla describe being a mother as a positive experience. Motherhood meant that caring for their children was their most important responsibility. However, their experience of work and divorce meant that unlike Connie, being a mother had to be balanced between other roles such as working and struggling for survival as a single parent. Finkel (1997) states that the, "gender ideal of this period was quite clear: men were to go to out to work for income, while women were supposed to have babies and take care of the home" (p. 64). Finkel (1997) explains that divorce was rarely an option for women because of the punitive social and economic conditions under which single women and single mothers were placed. Finkel (1997) states that, "divorces were expensive and grounds for divorce were restricted to adultery.... limited

opportunities for employment gave many women pause before considering a divorce”

(p.64). For these reasons, when Nina says she decided to divorce because she was ‘bored’, it is probable that she had substantial financial support from her family in place before making that decision. For Karla, the decision to leave a violent abusive marriage must also have been difficult because of her limited ability to earn an income and her family’s limited ability to support her and her child. Regardless of the reason, divorce in the 1950s was an indication to society that a woman had failed her personal and social responsibility to keep the family together according to dominant norms at the time. Failure to meet gendered expectations could mean social isolation, exploitation in the workplace, and poverty. Few women had the kind of positive self-affirming experience that Nina had in divorcing and working outside the home in the 1950s; Karla’s experience was much more typical.

1960-1979: Mothers and Daughters, Adjusting to Changing Times

The 1960s and 70s were times of rapid changes in women’s lives. The introduction of the birth control pill in the early 1960s, the liberalization of divorce laws, greater access to legal abortions, and the ability of single women to obtain birth control (Prentice et al., 1997), meant that sex, marriage and motherhood became increasingly distinct choices. Economic changes also meant that young people needed more education and job training to maintain a middle-class life style. As a result of these factors, the expectation of marriage and motherhood for women at an early age diminished and the period of time young people were dependent on their parents lengthened. At the same time, young people demanded more freedom and autonomy from parental beliefs and expectations. These demands included freedom from the expectation that sex would occur

only within the context of marriage. More young women chose not to marry and to have sex outside marriage. Limited access to birth control for some women, the choice not to use it, or lack of understanding about birth control meant that more unmarried women were becoming pregnant. Women in general began to question the expectation that they would marry, or stay married. Mothers of daughters also questioned the value of marriage versus education to secure future economic well being. Concern about the ways that motherhood restricted personal freedom also came into the debate about the suitability of marriage for young women.

The stories of Jen, Donna, and Helen confirm that motherhood remained an important role but one that was not so strongly linked to marital status in the 1960s and 1970s. For Jen and Donna, becoming pregnant without being married was still considered a personal and social disgrace. It is perhaps for this reason that both women, although under the age of 20, wanted to marry when they found out they were pregnant. Both women had the option to use birth control or give their child up for adoption but chose instead to keep their child. This indicates that motherhood was more important to them than the stigma of unmarried parenting. Donna and Jen's experiences reflect the social and historical tensions of the late 1960s and 70s that led to questioning the value of marriage for young women, although the majority of women did marry in their early 20s. In contrast to existing trends, both Donna and Jen's mothers did not advocate marriage. Jen says that she understood that her mother was 'concerned for her wellbeing' when she became pregnant and yet she did not want her to marry. Previously, parents considered marriage and motherhood as the only means of securing a woman's place in society. Options for daughters who became pregnant outside marriage were particularly limited.

For most mothers in the late 1960s, looking after a daughter's well-being meant encouraging her to marry. The preference of the young woman and man was not generally considered in the face of the disgrace of unwed pregnancy. The idea that a mother would support her daughter to have a baby, but not support her to marry defied social convention at that time. Jen's mother's statement that she would not sign for her daughter to marry but would respect her decision about the pregnancy, reveals the ways in which the role of marriage was beginning to change in the 1960s and early 70s.

Motherhood remained an important role for women, but the role of marriage was perceived differently than in previous decades. For Helen as well, becoming a wife and mother was expected. Yet, when she found out she was pregnant shortly after her marriage, Helen expressed regret that she had not obtained more education. She says that she and her family had expected her to complete some post-secondary training before becoming a mother. Helen recalls that she realized at the time that lack of education would be a disadvantage to the family's future economic wellbeing, indicating a change in the perception of the exclusivity of marriage and motherhood in women's lives.

This change in perception is even in conservative families such as Helen's. While Helen explains that her parents were happy to hear she was pregnant, they also expected that she would work following her marriage and becoming a mother. Competing responsibilities and roles served to diversify the ways in which women mothered, and to redefine the activities, priorities and behaviours that described motherhood.

The association of unmarried adolescent mothers with poverty, drug use, and delinquency began to emerge in the late 1960s and early 70s. Most parents of young women associated sex outside marriage with immorality, while an increasing number of

young women did not. Jen recalls that her mother was disappointed with her when she found out she was pregnant because, “Well that I had done something that wasn’t right. I had had sex and I was 16 years old and I got pregnant” (Interview transcript #7, p.5). Older generations clashed with younger ones concerning the role of sex outside marriage. Gradually this stigma declined as long as pregnancy did not result. What appears to have replaced the moral stigma of sex outside marriage was the stigma of poverty and unmarried motherhood. The belief that poverty was either the cause or the result of unmarried motherhood became an increasingly popular focus of research and literature related to unmarried adolescent motherhood. Young women from middle-class families who had been raised to assume that a successful life included advanced education and career, felt disappointed in themselves for not achieving these goals before becoming a mother. The script that predicted education and career attainment for youth had replaced the script that predicted marriage and motherhood at an early age in Pre World War II Canada.

1980-2001: Multiple Images of Motherhood

For the six women interviewed between 1980 and 2001, the links between sex, marriage and motherhood reflect increasing diversity in the ways that women experienced motherhood in the face of changing economic and social realities in women’s lives. Ellen, Cindy, Colleen, Willa, Barb, and Linda all expected to become mothers however only one was married when her child was born. One did not expect to marry, and four put education and career goals ahead of marriage as pre-requisites for becoming a mother. Cindy explains that she always wanted to be a mother, but after her education was complete, and having married. Colleen, who expected to go to university before

becoming a mother explains that rather than marriage, it was her education that was her priority after finishing high school with top honours. When Colleen found out she was pregnant, it was her educational opportunities that she feared would be compromised. The importance of education for young women was also recognized by society at large, as is evidenced in the statement of a friend of the family who came to console Colleen and assure her that she could still attend university, despite becoming a mother.

Each woman interviewed mentioned the choice to become a mother as being a personal one. Each woman declined the alternatives such as abortion or adoption as an alternative to motherhood despite personal and family disappointment with not finishing their education. Concern about marriage by either the young woman or her family is not raised by five of the six women (one was married at the time her child was born). What also stands out in these stories is the way in which these women endured the disapproval of 'strangers' including nurses during their experience of being pregnant and becoming a mother. The lack of empathy and punitive treatment of the nurse in caring for Colleen at this vulnerable time of her life is perceived by this young woman as punishment for becoming pregnant without being married. The nurse, who is also pregnant but in a more powerful social position, appears to feel justified in ordering the younger woman about in an uncaring and insensitive manner that indicates a sense of moral superiority. Rather than finding common ground in their experience of becoming mothers, the nurse's actions and words appear to punish this unmarried woman for having a child without being married. Colleen's response indicates that while the links between sex, marriage and motherhood may have weakened for some, there were many in 1991 that still believed in marriage as the only legitimate context for motherhood. The majority of women over the

past 21 years continue to become mothers, however, many have divorced, remarried, live in blended families, do not marry, or do not live in heterosexual coupled households. Regardless of this diversity of domestic arrangements, the stigma against *unmarried* mothers remains.

Despite being criticized in public for being pregnant, young and not married, Cindy describes motherhood and her feelings about her daughter in a way that resonates with the experiences of many women. Cindy recalls her daughter's first smile with a sense of joy and accomplishment. She remembers jokingly her mother's words to her that, "It's a thankless job" in evaluating the job of being a mother. "It's worth it" though she says, and, in this way identifies herself with dominant views about the nature of motherhood, her own experience of being mothered, and with past and present mythologies about motherhood, regardless of her age or marital status.

Conclusions

The impact of changes in the economy, the introduction of the birth control pill, advances in women's education and career opportunities, divorce, and changing views of women and sexuality meant that marriage and motherhood as women's only role in society was, since 1939, increasingly challenged. Along with the diversification of women's roles came a diversification in the definition of motherhood and the context in which motherhood occurred. For each woman interviewed the meaning of motherhood was different but the commitment to motherhood was desired, welcomed and, as revealed in later interviews a difficult but unequivocal choice. Through listening to the stories of these 12 women and analyzing them using a feminist oral history lens, I came to

understand how the particular personal, social, and historical context of each woman impacts and is impacted by dominant views of what it means to be a mother. Throughout the interviews, tensions and harmonies between dominant ideologies about women's roles in society serve to confirm or contradict specific outcomes of the experience for each woman. While each woman in the period between 1980 and 2001 expected to mother, the lack of agreement between them on the context in which motherhood should occur reflects larger social trends that confirm the diversity of domestic relationships in which motherhood occurs for women today. For Connie in 1939, becoming a mother was the 'natural' outcome of adult maturity in part because her own life and circumstances reflected those of the dominant class. For Nina and Karla, early experiences of growing up and marrying also conformed to existing societal paradigms. However their experiences diverged from the middle class mainstream because they chose to end their unhappy marriages in divorce. Karla and Nina's stories from the 1950s heralded changes in women's roles in the 1960s and 70s unhinging the previous requisite of marriage with motherhood. At the same time, the social stigma of unmarried motherhood meant that most women married if they found themselves pregnant. Again, the stories of Jen and Donna, and their mothers' resistance to marriage in the late 1960s introduced tensions between generations and revealed yet another set of changes in women's lives and experience of motherhood. While divorce and working outside the home challenged the view that women should remain married and at home in the 1950s, these trends accelerated in the 1960s. Greater access to birth control, the liberalization of views regarding sex outside marriage, and women's decreasing dependence on marriage for social and economic status meant that marriage as a requisite for motherhood became less

universally expected. Finally, between 1980 and the present an increasing number of all women chose to mother without marrying often because they may not see the advantages of marriage for themselves or their children. According to Clark (1999) this is due in part because of the reduced stigma attached to unwed mothering, and to the belief by some young mothers and their families that early marriages as a result of pregnancy, “may be difficult to sustain” (p.12-13). The stories of the six women interviewed in this time period indicate that with love and support and self-confidence, young unmarried women can experience motherhood in ways that are equally meaningful to that of older women.

The recognition that reproductive choice is the right of all women means that the decision to mother must be supported and respected regardless of marital or economic status. This analysis supports the idea that understanding how women experience motherhood is as important as assessing marital or economic status if we desire to give compassionate care. This understanding is enhanced through examining our personal and professional biases and assumptions. For example, how does our particular social and historical context influence the way we think about appropriate female roles such as motherhood and marriage? The use of feminist oral history in the analysis of the stories of these 12 women serves to explore and expand this inquiry. Researchers use feminist oral history for a variety of researcher purposes. These include the role of social advocacy for voices of people who otherwise would not be heard in the public forum, recording the history of people who’s stories are not usually written down, recording stories about everyday lives that have not previously come to the attention of historians, and contributing to the existing body of knowledge about the use of oral history as a

legitimate historical methodology. Reinharz (1992) summarizes the value of feminist oral history as it is applied in this research study, “when feminist oral histories cover extensive portions or profound experiences in an individual’s life, they assist in a fundamental sociological task – illuminating the connections between biography, history, and social structure” (p. 131). The in-depth interview, which is used as a research tool in feminist oral history has been used extensively for example by SmithBattle (1995, 1996, 1997, 2000) in her research which records ‘alternate’ stories of the experience of adolescent motherhood. While SmithBattle’s research incorporates an introduction to social and historical factors that have influenced our evaluation of adolescent motherhood in the present, she has not interviewed women over such an extensive historical period, nor does her analysis included a focused examination of how nurses are themselves influenced by their own particular social and historical context. The process of reflection on the meaning of the experience of adolescent motherhood within the historical periods identified in this study, serves to expand and extend the work of other historians in the field of feminist history. This research study therefore builds on the work of SmithBattle and others who use in-depth oral interviews to expand and increase knowledge about how the experience of early mothering influences and is influenced by the particular social and historical context in which it occurs.

Personal Meaning: Personal Practice

When I first began interviewing the twelve women in this research study about their experience of becoming a mother, my assumption was that becoming a mother was a choice that a woman made among many other choices. This perspective was informed by

my own experiences and the ideas expressed by feminist writers in the 1960s about the meaning of motherhood and the role of marriage in women's lives. These writers deeply influenced my view of marriage and motherhood and what it meant to be a mother. Before embarking on this research project, I did not consider how my own values and beliefs about motherhood were socially and historically constructed nor where tensions about who should mother and within what context were formed. Like Jen and Donna who had their first child in the late 1960s, sex, marriage and motherhood were separate options to me and the timing of each was a matter of individual choice. I was aware however that I had personal and professional experiences in which assumptions about the appropriateness of adolescent mothering were raised. I developed the belief that listening to stories of the experience of becoming a mother under the age of 20 and understanding how changes occurred over time might reveal more about current understanding/misunderstandings in nursing. It is often difficult within the space of an interview, or within the space that nurses have to interact with young pregnant and parenting teens during labour and delivery, to place the decision to mother within the context of other considerations that a young woman has made. However, creating a supportive environment in which young mothers feel confident and respected in their ability to mother means being part of creating a society in which mothers and children are respected as valuable members of society regardless of marital, economic or social status. As Mayor Larry Campbell of Vancouver said, we want to live in a society where "there are no disposable people" (McLintock, 2003).

As a researcher I believe that the social and historical context in which women mother has a profound effect on the experience of motherhood. The experience of

motherhood is both a private and public act and one in which nurses often play an important role. While motherhood was once an event that occurred almost exclusively within the context of marriage, changes in women's lives over the past 62 years have meant the decision to mother is now a reflection of the values and beliefs of the woman making the decision to mother rather than an expectation of the outcome of marriage. For these reasons, it is important for nurses to understand historical changes in the way that society evaluates what it means to be a woman and a mother.

Beliefs and assumptions about what it means to be a nurse have also changed over the past 62 years. While certain 'nursing' perspectives might once have been identified as typical of all nurses 62 years ago, today, the emphasis on the individual has also meant that each nurse brings with her a unique perspective that is shaped by the particular social and historical context in which she lived. Nursing practices are thus individually situated and nurses expect to have these perspectives respected. In working with young women who may or may not be married, be financially independent, or from a similar cultural background, it is important to examine the ways in which our attitudes towards women at this vulnerable point in their life are formed and how they influence our care. While I have gained some insight into the experience of adolescent motherhood over the past 62 years, my focus has been on women from White European backgrounds, and from the dominant social class. Directions for future research might be to examine the ways in which nursing practice has approached adolescent motherhood, again using feminist oral history to understand how social and historical changes have influenced nurses over time.

Ellen reminds us,

I don't know. I have been trying to figure out what they've been talking about ...when people talk about teenage pregnancy. Some people think it's wrong to

have sex when you were a teenager in the first place...I don't know if it's the unmarried thing or the teenage thing because most of the same people don't think that there is anything wrong with having sex when you're older...but, they seem to think if you get pregnant...they have this...stereotype of what you must be like, and the thing is that it's hard because a lot of people have sex and they don't all get pregnant, and why are they only biased against the ones who get pregnant? I mean, you know, getting pregnant is a natural thing that happens when you have sex. (Interview transcript #2, Ellen, p.7)

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Appendix A

Consent Form

Research Project Title: **UNDERSTANDING THE EXPERIENCE OF ADOLESCENT MOTHERHOOD, 1939-2001**

Investigator: Margaret Scaia
Masters Student, Faculty of Nursing
University of Calgary

Supervisors: Ms. Carol Ewashen, Dr. Geertje Boschma, Ms. Carol Rogers

Sponsor: Faculty of Nursing, University of Calgary

This consent form, a copy of which has been given to you, is only part of the process of informed consent. It should give you the basic idea of what the research is about and what your participation will involve. If you would like more detail about something mentioned here, information not included here, you should feel free to ask. Please take the time to read this carefully and to understand any accompanying information.

1. The purpose of this research study is to discover and understand the experience of adolescent motherhood between the years 1939-2001. Interview will begin with women who were in their teenage years and gave birth in 1939. They will include women who are now 18 years of age and have recently given birth. I am interested in hearing about the experience of being an adolescent mother from women who have recently had this experience, and from those who have reflected on it over a lifetime. The research study will consider how historical and social changes have impacted the experience of adolescent motherhood over the past 60 years. Your interview will be used as a primary source of information in examining the meaning of this personally and socially important event. It is hope that this study will proved nurses with an understanding of the uniqueness of the experience, and in turn will result in more sensitive nursing care of adolescent women having children.

2. You have indicated that you are interested in talking about your experience of another when you were a teenager. This study would involve one, possibly two interviews at a time and location of your choice. Your comfort level will dictate the length of the interview, but it will not likely exceed one hour. I will request to record our conversation on a tape recorder. The interviews will be in the form of a conversation. There is no set questionnaire for the interview. You are not obliged to answer or respond to any topic that you are not comfortable with. After the interview, I will listen to the tapes, and write down exactly what you said. During and after the interview you will be guaranteed confidentiality. Also, although the risks to you are considered bot be very low, before the interview begins you will be given the name and contact number of a medical practitioner

who will be able to make an appropriate referral should you experience any undue emotional strain during or after the interview. You may stop the interview at any time.

3. Following the interviews, and after you have read the transcript of those interviews, you will be offered an optional release form that will allow me to deposit your interview and /or transcript on the interviews in the University of Calgary Archives. This would allow faulty and students engaged in similar research to listen and learn from these tapes and/or transcripts (see Addendum to Informed Consent? Optional Release From for Depositing Taped Interview and/or Transcript in University of Calgary Archives). You will have several options in depositing your tapes and transcript in the archives. These include depositing tapes with identifying information (in which case confidentiality and anonymity will be under strict regulation of the University of Calgary Archivist in terms of use of these tapes and/or transcripts for future research purposes), or depositing only a revised transcript which does not contain any identifying information. The conditions under which these tapes may be listened to are under the strict control of the University of Calgary Archive regulations. These regulation follow the guidelines of ethical approval for research from accredited post-secondary institution. The identification key of your tape and transcript will be deposited by the University of Calgary Archivist. You will be given a copy of these interview tapes, a copy of the transcript, and a copy of the informed consent form. You will also be given a copy of the addendum if you choose this additional option. You may also place a time restriction on the use of the interview tapes and transcripts after I have completed my research. For example, you may state that you do not wish to have these tapes accessed for five years, or whatever length of time you deem appropriate. Regardless of the option you choose confidentiality will be guaranteed and tapes and transcripts will be kept in a safe place, under lock and key and accessible only by me and those directly involved in the research. The results of this research may be published and /or presented in public. Your name will not be associated in any way with the published results and a pseudonym will be used at all times. If you choose not to have the tapes and transcript deposit in the archives, they will be kept me for three years, and then erased and the transcript destroyed. You can withdraw at any time from this study with no penalty.

4. All costs associated with equipment or other expenses required for the interview ill be borne by the researcher, there will be not be any monitory or other form of payment for the interview. It is assumed that you are participating in the research project on the understanding that you are making a personal contribution to scholarly research.

5. In order to participate in this study, you will be asked to sign a consent form indication that you have understood the information provided and that it has been explained to your satisfaction. Therefore your signature indicates that: I understand that the taped content of the interview ill be typed. I understand that the typed copy will not contain my name or any identifying information. The researcher will keep a code with identifying information separate from typed information. I understand that I will be provided with a copy of the transcripts for review so that I can be satisfied that the information is correct, an that it is the information that I wished to share. I am aware that publication of the interview, in whole or in part is a possibility. Any comments I make here could therefore become

public record, but will not be attributable to me in any way. My identity will be protected. Therefore, my signature indicates that I agree to my discussion being cited in the written documents or presentations that Margaret Scaia produces from this research project.

Your signature on this form indicates that you have understood to your satisfaction the information regarding participation in the research project and agree to participate as a subject. In no way does this waive your legal rights nor release the investigator, sponsors, or involved institutions from their legal and professional responsibilities. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time without jeopardizing your health care. Your continued participation should be as informed as your initial consent, so you should feel free to ask for clarification or new information throughout your participation. If you have further questions concerning matters related to this research, please contact:

Margaret Scaia, RN, BScN @ (403) 762-5846

Supervisor for this project: Carol Ewashen @ (403) 220-6259

If you have any questions concerning your rights as a possible participant in this research, please contact the Office of Medical Bioethics, Faculty of Medicine, University of Calgary, at 220-7990

| | |
|--------------------------|------|
| Participant's Signature | Date |
| Investigator's Signature | Date |
| Witness' Signature | Date |

A copy of this consent form has been given to you to keep for your records and reference.

Addendum to Informed Consent

Optional Release Form for Depositing Tape Interview and/or Transcript in University of Calgary Archives

Research Project Title: **UNDERSTANDING THE EXPERIENCE OF ADOLESCENT MOTHERHOOD, 1939-2001**

Investigator: Margaret Scaia
Masters Student, Faculty of Nursing, University of Calgary

Supervisor: Ms. Carol Ewashen, Dr. Geertje Boschma, Ms. Carol Rogers

Sponsor: Faculty of Nursing, University of Calgary

I have read and signed the attached Informed Consent Form. I have also listened to the tape of my interview and read the transcript of that interview. In order to preserve the information for future research after Margaret Scaia has completed her research on the experience of adolescent mother, the tape and/or transcript can be deposited in the University of Calgary Archives. It is understood that the University of Calgary Archives will, at the discretion of the University Archivist and Co-ordinator, allow qualified scholars to listen to the tape and read the transcript in order to potentially use them in connection with their research or for the educational purposes of the university. The identification key of the tape and transcript will be kept by the archivist. The archivist will use discretion in allowing access to these tapes/transcripts based on ethical approval for research of accredited post-secondary institutions. The copyright will reside with the University of Calgary Archives. It is further understood that no copies of the tape or transcript will be made and nothing may be used from them in any published form without the permission of the University Archives. Therefore my signature indicates that (you may choose one of the following options):

- a) I agree that the tape and transcript of my interview will eventually be deposited in the University of Calgary Archives for the purposes described above. In choosing this option, I agree that the identity of persons other than myself mentioned in this tape and transcript will be protected. Their true names will not be used.

Participant's Signature

Date

Investigator's Signature

Date

- b) I agree that only the transcript, which has no identifying information and does not include my name, will be deposited in the University of Calgary Archives.

Participant's Signature

Date

Investigator's Signature

Date

The following additional restrictions apply to the use of the tape and transcript:

I agree that the tape and transcript of my interview can not be accessed by anyone for a period of _____ years after being deposited in the University of Calgary Archives

Participant's Signature

Date

Investigator's Signature

Date

Appendix B

Poster for Recruiting Participants

YOUR STORY IS REQUESTED

Where you a teenage mother between the years 1939 to 2001?

I am a masters of nursing degree student at the University of Calgary interested in the stories of women who experienced childbirth when they were teenagers. These stories form an important and unique part of women's history and have not been widely told in the past. I would like to invite you to contribute your story to a growing interest in this area of women's lives. The recording of your story will be done over one, possibly two hour long interviews using a tape recorder. A written record will be made from the recording. Confidentiality and anonymity will be guaranteed. You may end your participation at any time. No costs will be incurred by you. You may choose to not talk about any issues that your are not comfortable talking about. The interview will be in the form of a conversation at a time and place that you choose. All questions related to the interview, the recording process and the research study itself will be answered to your satisfaction before, during and after the interview. A signed consent form will be requested for participation in this study. If you are interested in obtaining more information about this project, please contact:

_____ at _____

You will then be given the name and contact number of the researcher.

Appendix C

Demographic Questionnaire

Date of birth of narrator: _____

Date of birth of child: _____

Date of birth of other children: _____

Age at birth of first child: _____

Support people at time of birth: _____

Circle: child born at home / child born in hospital / other _____

Health of narrator at time of birth: _____

Health of child at time of birth: _____

Primary care person of child following birth: _____

Living arrangements at time of child's birth: _____

Education obtained at time of child's birth: _____

Current education attained: _____

Occupation at time of child's birth: _____

Current occupation: _____

Current domestic living situation: _____

Number of children living: _____

Current health issues: _____

Other comments related to birth: _____
