WOMEN, WORK AND CHILDCARE:
AN INTERGENERATIONAL STUDY OF TWO
GENERATIONS OF MOTHERS

Thesis Submitted for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy at
The University of Leicester

by

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November 2006

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Abstract

The rapid increase in the rate of female participation in the labour market in the post-war period is a well-documented trend. However, the experiences of mothers balancing paid work and childcare responsibilities have received academic attention only in recent decades. Working class mothers, who have a long history of combining paid work and domestic responsibilities, have been neglected in the literature. There has also been a lack of research examining the impact of intergenerational transmission on the values and practices of mothers within families. This thesis addresses this gap by examining the childcare strategies of two cohorts of working women: grandmothers and mothers.

Grandmothers and mothers in fourteen family chains were interviewed and their strategies for combining paid work and domestic responsibilities were examined. It is argued that these strategies have changed across time and the complexity of childcare strategies has declined reflecting changes in government policy. The younger generation have benefited from policy changes aimed at encouraging mothers to return to the labour market.

It is also argued that the role of intergenerational transmission is of key importance in understanding mothers' decisions about combining work and childcare responsibilities. Indeed, the behaviour of mothers was influenced by their own mothers' actions, either positively, by 'mimicking' their role or negatively, by avoiding the reproduction of their mothers' behaviour.

Whilst intergenerational ties were found to be important, the role of grandmothers as providers of childcare was not as important as argued elsewhere. An important finding of the thesis is that very few grandmothers provided childcare because most continued to be economically active.

It is concluded that the changes to policy stemming from the Labour government's National Childcare Strategy have had a positive impact on working mothers' lives but further changes are still necessary to address the childcare needs of all families.

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Introduction

In the past two decades, we have revolutionised how we care for children in the first three years of life. In 1981, only 24% of women returned to work within a year of childbirth, while in 2001 it was 67%, and the proportion is expected to continue rising. Childcare has become a boom industry. The vast bulk of that expansion has been in private day nurseries; since 1997 alone, the number of places has doubled, and it has quadrupled in a decade. Just over 200,000 children under three now attend a day nursery. It comfortably outstrips all other forms of non-family care for under-threes.

The revolution is visible all over the country; old petrol filling stations on busy roads are converted into nurseries, while others are tucked into the basements of expensive office blocks. They open at 7.30am and close at 6pm to accommodate the ever-lengthening working hours of busy parents...And, of course, they cost the earth - a full-time place in a central London nursery can cost well over £1,000 a month. Nurseries have become parents' ideal choice of childcare, second only to grandparents.

(Bunting, 2004:2, The Guardian)

The rapid increase in the rate of female participation in the labour market in the post-war period is a well-documented trend (Crompton, 1997, 1999; Dex, 1985, 1988; Martin and Roberts 1984; Yeandle, 1984). The composition of this female labour force, in particular the rise in the number of mothers returning to employment relatively soon after giving birth, has also begun to receive attention in the literature (Brannen, 1988; McRae, 2001; Smeaton, 2006). The majority of studies of mothers in employment are, then, relatively recent, examining the experiences of women facing these challenges towards the end of the twentieth century. Indeed, the much debated challenges with which mothers are faced - balancing paid work, childcare and

domestic responsibilities - are presented as a new phenomenon (Lindars, 2003). As Armstrong (2006:1.2) argues 'that working-class women in the UK have been 'flexible' for many years in combining employment with motherhood is disregarded in recent debates which tend to construct 'flexibility' and 'balance' as new challenges'.

Certainly in recent decades the percentage of mothers in paid employment began to increase significantly, especially amongst those with children under five (Brannen and Moss 1998). The length of time women spent out of the labour market for domestic reasons also continued to decrease during this period (Martin and Roberts, 1984). The increased workforce participation has been accompanied by a change in attitudes towards working mothers. Newell (1993), for example, has argued that the increase in the number of married women in employment has taken place in conjunction with a change in attitude towards working women, particularly towards women with children. However, Himmelweit and Sigala (2004:456) argue that disapproval of mothers who work full-time continues.

These rising rates of female employment imply that in the past very few women, let alone mothers of young children, participated in paid employment. A widely held belief is that historically women with young children did not participate in paid employment. Instead their role was one of homemaker concerned only with domestic tasks such as housework and childcare. Lindars (2003:4), for example, suggests that 'Society has changed, fifty years ago it was normal for men to work whilst women stayed at home to look after the children'. Whilst Gerhardt (2005:10) argues that 'while most families had a stay-at-home parent in the 1960s, now only 30% do … our culture has shifted away from a child-centred family towards a work-centred family'.

However, contrary to the argument above, in this thesis it is argued that a significant proportion of women have always worked. The increase in the number of women in the labour market since the post-war period is not in dispute but it is argued here that the 'housewife' model or ideological mother was a role which has always been far from realistic for the majority of women. As others have suggested, historically this role has been reserved for only middle class, affluent women

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(Brannen and Nilsen, 2006; Sharpe, 1984; Gerson, 1985) and a significant proportion of working class women have always sought and carried out paid work. Brannen and Nilsen (2006:336) argue that 'mothers have long contributed to income generation, albeit often on a discontinuous and part-time basis'. Hakim (1993:97) elaborates this point, arguing that the common belief that levels of female employment have been increasing in recent decades is a myth. She argues that the overall levels of female employment have not increased significantly since the middle of nineteenth century and the number of women in full-time employment has remained static since 1881...' (Hakim, 1996:61-2). However, she goes on to explain that a major change in the female workforce has taken place and this is the role of part-time work, which has seen a huge increase, from 0.8 million in 1951 to 5.1 million in 1995...'(p.63).

The role of part-time work is highly relevant to any discussion of women and the labour market and its importance is heightened further when the focus turns to mothers in the labour market. The concept of part-time employment and its role in women's working lives has attracted significant interest in the sociological literature. Part-time work has been described as the perfect solution for mothers who need, or wish, to combine the commitments of family life with paid employment. Warren and Walters (1998) provide a useful account of the key conceptual debates relating to part-time employment, for example, the tendency for part-time work to be lower status than full-time work and characterised by 'dead-end' jobs. Nevertheless, part-time work has played an important role in facilitating mothers' entry to the labour market. Some commentators have argued that women with children and domestic responsibilities actively 'chose' part-time work (Hakim, 1996), where others have argued that entry to part-time work is nothing more than a 'constrained choice' (Walsh, 1999) made by women with domestic responsibilities.

Part-time work is an important strategy for many women aiming to combine labour market participation with childcare responsibilities. Whilst there is a large literature devoted to examining the role of part-time work in women's lives much of the work is quantitative and based on survey research (Warren and Walters, 1998). The qualitative work in this area has tended to focus on women in high status jobs (Brannen, 1992) and, consequently, the experiences of women working in lower status occupations have been neglected. This thesis contributes to Walters (2005:194)

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plea for more 'in-depth qualitative research ... on the ... work orientations in lower level occupations'.

Part-time work clearly plays an important role once women become mothers and 'exchange' previous full-time employment for a combination of part-time work and the negotiation of domestic responsibilities. The birth of children undoubtedly makes the pursuit of paid work more complicated, as women have been, and continue to be, seen as the main source of parental care and few fathers provide childcare assistance (Evetts, 1988; Brannen and Moss, 1991; Scott and Duncombe, 1992). It is usually the mother who has to fit work hours around the care of the children and strategies such as working evening shifts so that the father can care for the children when he returns home, so called 'shift parenting', (La Valle *et al.* 2002; Dex 2003) and a reliance on grandparents, other relatives and friends at different times are common.

Nevertheless, there remains a lack of qualitative research which focuses on the constraints which childcare places on employment opportunities and the way these mothers overcome these constraints. Longitudinal studies, such as the National Child Development Study and the 1970 British Cohort Study, provide valuable cohort data, and national surveys such as the 10 yearly population census, the Labour Force Survey and the British Household Panel Survey, are a source of invaluable statistical data which include information about women and work. With the exception of Gerson's (1985) study of working mothers in the USA, and more recently Brannen *et al's.* (2004) UK-based study, there are few detailed, qualitative intergenerational or cohort studies of women attempting to combine both paid work and domestic responsibilities.

There is, however, a general tendency for research in this area to focus on women in higher status, professional jobs, as they are more likely to be users of formal childcare provision and are more likely to return to the same employer after childbirth and are, therefore, easier for researchers to contact (Brannen, 1992). As such there has been little research carried out which examines the childcare preferences of women employed in lower-status, poorly paid jobs. Neither has there been much research which focuses on the role of intergenerational influence on

childcare preferences. This thesis aims to address both of these previously neglected aspects of the debate around mothers, employment and childcare strategies.

Some of the more recent literature on motherhood does take more account of the ways in which childcare responsibilities and preferences can impact on work decisions (Backett-Milburn *et al.*, 2001; Brannen et al., 2004; Vincent and Ball, 2006). This increased interest has coincided with a range of policy changes relating to childcare. As Pascall (1994:21) has argued, although women's labour force participation has increased this has been 'against a background of unchanging childcare policies' and indeed, policy rhetoric has been that 'family care is best'. Pre-school provision in the UK has historically been amongst the lowest in the EU (EOC 1989), although since the inception of the government's National Childcare Strategy in 1998 the situation has drastically improved. As Vincent and Ball (2006:2) suggest, since the end of the 1990s, 'childcare has been transformed as a policy issue. It has shot up the government agenda'. Since 1997 there have been a number of government policies and legislative developments such as the National Childcare Strategy (NCS) and the Sure Start programme, the parental leave directive, the children's tax credit, and the Work-Life Balance initiative all aimed at work and family life and at helping parents to return to work/remain in employment.

As a direct consequence of these policy initiatives some one million extra childcare places were created between April 1997 and March 2004 (Daycare Trust, 2004). Historically, however, state funded provision, particularly for children under three years old, has been limited. Furthermore, the cost of private care, in the form of childminders and private nurseries, can be prohibitive. Indeed, Lindars (2003:2) suggests that parents in the UK 'face the highest childcare costs in Europe'.

Even for those who can afford the fees, places are often limited. This applies even in the current climate which has witnessed a proliferation of both childminders and new private nurseries and a consequent improvement in the provision of private care. Brannen and Moss (1998) suggest that there was a five fold increase in the number of nursery places available between 1986 and 1996 and in the same period a three fold increase in the number of childminder places. Data from Social Trends (2001) and Ofsted (2003, 2005) outlined in Table 1.1., indicates that there was a

significant increase in the number of registered childcare providers between 1987 and 2005. The table illustrates that the growth in number of registered day nursery places has been immense, with numbers expanding from 32000 in 1987 to over half a million places some eighteen years later. Much of this increase can be directly attributed to the implementation of the Labour governments NCS and the pledge to increase childcare places and to guarantee a part-time nursery place for all children aged three and four (Hansard, 2004). Whilst the increase in the number of nursery places has been substantial the provision of childminder places has also more than doubled in the same period. However, the figures for childminder places have fluctuated during the last two decades. In 1987 childminders provided a higher number of childcare places than nurseries and continued to be more important providers in terms of number of places up until the end of the 1990s. Since then the number of childminder places has decreased overall with a significant decrease taking place between 1999 and 2003. This period correlates with the increase in formal nursery provision and the introduction of measures such as child tax credits.

Table 1.1 Growth in the Provision of Formal Childcare in England

	1987*	1999*	2003**	2005**
Registered Day Nursery Places	32000	235000	398000	542900
Registered Childminder Places	159000	360000	307500	319700

Source: *National Statistics (2001) Social Trends 2001, No. 31, London: HMSO
** OFSTED (2003, 2005)

For both types of care costs have remained high and affordable only to those in higher status, well paid jobs. The high cost of formal childcare has been widely believed to be the reason why women in low income groups have not utilised such provision when it is available (Dex, 2003). However, recent research suggests that for many parents, particularly those in low income groups and the self-employed, formal care strategies are actively rejected in preference to informal home-based care (Baines *et al.*, 2003; Bell and La Valle, 2003; Vincent and Ball, 2006). However, for this particular group of parents it is not the high cost of childcare which is a barrier to use. Those who choose informal childcare do so 'actively' 'feeling they can trust the carers, but not necessarily anyone else. to care for their child properly' (Dex.

2003:66). Clearly if this is the case, then there are important policy implications to be considered. Increasing the availability of low cost formal childcare provision may not have a great impact if parents have a preference for family care.

Two Cohorts of Mothers

The growth in the provision of childcare and the increased number of mothers in the labour market has clearly changed the way that mothers combine work and family life. Earlier in this chapter the role of work in mother's lives in the twentieth century was elaborated and it was argued that the role of paid work in mothers lives is not a new phenomenon. It follows, therefore, that mothers have always relied on some kind of childcare provision, even before the rapid development of private formal care from the early 1990s onwards. One question this thesis seeks to examine is the type of childcare that women born around the time of Second World War utilised in order to combine work and family.

It is important here to explore, briefly, the time periods which are the concern of this thesis. Mothers from two specific cohorts were selected as the sample for this research. The first group of mothers, who are now grandmothers, were born around the time of the Second World War. The oldest was born in 1935 and the youngest in 1955, however, most of the group were born in the 1940s. For the majority of these women, their children were born in the 1960s and early 1970s. The mothers in the second cohort are the daughters of the older cohort, the majority of this group were therefore born in either the 1960s or 1970s. The oldest was born in 1957 and the youngest in 1977. Their children, who are the grandchildren of the oldest cohort, were born in the 1990s and into the early 2000s.

Hakim's controversial, yet influential, approach to explaining women's labour market position, 'preference theory' makes a distinction between women born before 1960 and those born after 1960. Smeaton's (2006) recent work in which she analysed the work return rates of mothers in two longitudinal cohort studies, the NCDS and BCS was also based around this distinction with the NCDS cohort of mothers born in 1958 and the BCS cohort born in 1970. Smeaton (2006:6) explains that there is an important difference between the contexts in which these two cohorts became mothers

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because the younger group, born in 1970, 'will have benefited from the ability to choose their lifestyle, afforded by greater affluence and an expansion in the educational and employment opportunities available to them'. In addition this group have benefited from a range of changes in legislation, not least the Employment Protection Act of 1976, which gave women the right to maternity leave and to return to their employers after giving birth (Smeaton, 2006:10). Later policy changes, such as those relating to the National Childcare Strategy will also have benefited those in this cohort with children born towards the end of the 1990s.

This difference in time periods between the two cohorts is one of the central themes in this thesis. Clearly each group of women became mothers at different periods in history and the external influences on each cohort differed considerably. As the preceding discussion has suggested, the grandmothers in the study would not have been entitled to maternity leave and most were not able to return to the jobs that they held prior to having children. The lack of childcare provision in the 1960s and the pervading attitude that mothers should not participate in paid employment outside the home meant that this group of women faced very different constraints to their daughters some quarter of a century later.

This study aims to examine the factors which influence the decisions made by mothers who are currently facing the challenge of balancing family and work commitments. In order to assess the impact of measures such as changes at policy level, the childcare practices of contemporary mothers are compared with the childcare practices used by their mothers, now grandmothers, some thirty to forty years earlier. A key question this research seeks to examine further is the extent to which childcare strategies have altered to reflect increased formal provision and changes at policy level, or if mothers now tend to continue using the often informal strategies adopted by their own mothers. This research aims to elucidate women's choices about childcare, their awareness of choices available to them at different time periods and the factors which have influenced the decisions made.

Intergenerational Transmission between Cohorts

This thesis also seeks to examine how far the patterns established by mothers of one generation are reproduced within families and through generations. The focus here is in on patterns of intergenerational transmission of values and practices around mothering or 'the process of transmission between family members of different generations and the negotiations and reciprocities these imply' Brannen *et al.* (2004:1). For example, if a mother from the grandmother generation used informal care strategies are her daughters more likely to use similar types of care or have the external influences of each specific time period, such as the increased availability of formal childcare, played a more significant role? As suggested above, mothers often express a preference for informal care believing it to be 'better' than formal care. How important is intergenerational influence to this decision?

Brannen (2003) has suggested that intergenerational ties are vitally important in childcare and work decisions. She asks 'how far do different patterns of intergenerational relations represent strategies which family members adopt and how far do they occur as a consequence of habits and dispositions?' (Brannen, 2003:10.4). Wheelock and Jones (2002) found evidence to suggest that intergenerational ties are of extreme importance, impacting on decisions relating to care of the children in a number of ways. First, because maternal grandmothers were seen as 'the next best thing' for childcare when the parents were unavailable and second because 'the shared values and 'ways of doing things' between mothers and daughters is one of the social reproduction mechanisms through which the gendered provision, organisation and management of childcare was reinforced' (Wheelock and Jones, 2002:451).

Research Questions

The key aim of this thesis is to examine the strategies used by women across two generations to combine motherhood and paid work. This study has two unique strands: first, an intergenerational component, which highlights changes in childcare strategies and employment opportunities over time and within families; and second, the research maps 'formal' childcare provision against the employment decisions of two generations of women. The thesis is based upon qualitative data collected through

semi-structured interviews with thirty women, all of whom were mothers and some of whom were also grandmothers.

The central question which this study seeks to investigate is:

How have strategies of combining paid work and childcare changed across time and within families?

Three subsidiary questions are also addressed:

1) How have childcare strategies changed between generations?

2) How do other factors such as financial considerations, geographical mobility, attitudes towards childcare and the level of local childcare provision impact on the choice of childcare?

3) Has the increase in formal childcare provision such as nurseries and childminders had any impact on women's employment and childcare choices and behaviours?

Structure of the Thesis

The thesis is structured in the following way. The next chapter, chapter two, is the first of two literature review chapters. The chapter provides an historical account of women, work and childcare. The literature concerned with the rising rates of female employment in the twentieth century is discussed and the chapter highlights the lack of consideration of childcare issues within much of this literature.

Chapter three provides a second literature review chapter and here the focus is on the conceptualisation of childcare and the understanding of women's choices relating to childcare and employment. The chapter highlights the policy approach to childcare, suggesting that successive UK governments have, until very recently, viewed childcare as a private matter to be resolved within the family unit. For this

reason the availability of publicly funded childcare has been lacking and has seen little growth in parallel with women's increasing participation in the labour market. The growth in childcare provision that has taken place has been in the form of private nursery-based care or care provided by childminders in their own homes. The chapter concludes that the constraints faced by mothers entering the labour market can, in part, be attributed to the low levels of affordable childcare provision.

Chapter four outlines in detail the methodological approach taken in this thesis. Data collection for this thesis was facilitated by the use of semi-structured interviews with individual members of family chains of grandmothers and mothers. The chapter provides a justification and discussion of the research process. The sample taken for this thesis consists of a number of different 'chains' of women from particular families, comprising grandmothers, born in the 1940s, and mothers, born in the 1960s. The sample of thirty mothers and grandmothers was selected according to a number of criteria:

(a) that the pivotal respondent (grandmother) had a daughter who also had at least one child;

(b) that both the pivotal woman and her daughter worked while one or more of their children was of pre-school age.

Data were collected by means of in-depth semi-structured interviews with each respondent. Within the interview questions focused on a number of key themes such as childcare and employment strategies, domestic responsibilities and intergenerational influences on mothering behaviour in respect of childcare and employment.

Chapter five is the first of three results chapters in which the empirical analysis of the data collected through the interviews is presented. This chapter focuses on the orientations to work of the women interviewed. In doing so, the chapter begins to answer the plea of authors such as McRae (2003) and Walters (2005) for more, detailed, qualitative data which provides an understanding of women's choices about employment and childcare decisions; particularly women employed in lower status and part-time work.

The second results chapter, chapter six, examines the extent of the transmission of mothering values and the provision of support between mothers and grandmothers. The chapter argues that the role of grandmothers in relation to the provision of childcare is less important than previously suggested (Wheelock and Jones, 2002; Vandell et *al.*, 2003) which is partly due to the older generations continued participation in the labour market.

Next, chapter seven, the final results chapter, highlights the strategies used by mothers and grandmothers to enable them to participate in the labour market. The chapter examines the actual strategies used and the reasons behind their adoption. The data are analysed according to the type of childcare used by women of each generation and it reveals a number of interesting themes. First, that the older generation, the grandmothers, appear to have had more complex childcare arrangements than their daughters, the mothers in this sample. Second, that for the mothers in the younger generation childcare arrangements do appear to have simplified and formal care has become more accessible. This increased accessibility has been facilitated through initiatives such as tax credits which make formal care more affordable. Finally, the chapter argues that although women of both generations believed that family based care was the best solution to the childcare dilemma, formal care, in particular nursery care, was seen as desirable. The attractiveness of formal care was justified by reference to the perceived social and educational benefits of formal nursery-based care but only if this form of provision was not used on a full-time basis.

Finally, chapter eight provides a conclusion to the thesis and offers a number of suggestions for further research which builds upon the findings of this work. The chapter begins by highlighting the key findings of the thesis, focussing on the historical context of childcare and mothers' employment, the role of intergenerational influence, the impact of issues such as geographical mobility and local childcare provision and the relevance of recent policy initiatives. The implications of the research for future policy related developments are then outlined. The chapter, and the thesis, end with a number of suggestions for further research in this area.

Chapter Two

Women, Work and Childcare Strategies: An Historical Account

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Introduction

Since the end of the Second World War the number of women in paid employment has increased dramatically. This is a trend which has been widely documented in the literature (Martin and Roberts, 1984; Arber and Gilbert, 1992; Crompton, 1986, 1997; Crompton *et al.*, 1990, 1996; Dex, 1984, 1987, 1988). At the time of the 1951 Census some 26% of married women of working age were engaged in paid employment. By 1971 this figure had risen to 49%, reaching 71% by 1991, almost three times as many women as in the early post-war period (Hakim, 1993). Such rapidly rising rates of female employment suggest that in the past very few women participated in paid employment. As Truman (1992:106) comments, '...from discussions of women as a wasted resource it would appear that some believe that many women in Britain do not work at all'. However, as Charles (1993:55) argues, 'contrary to popular belief, women have always been an important part of the workforce'. Hakim (1993:97) elaborates this point, and goes as far as to suggest that the common belief that levels of female employment have been increasing in recent decades is a myth and, in reality, '...there has been little or no substantive change in the overall level of female workforce participation since 1851 and possibly before, until the late 1980s'.

Whilst there is a huge body of literature which outlines the impact of increasing numbers of women in the workforce over the past century (Brannen and Moss, 1998; Crompton, 1999, 2002; Crompton *et al.*, 1996; Dex, 1987; Glucksmann, 1990, 2000; Hakim, 1993, 1996, 2000) there is little detailed qualitative research which focuses on the constraints of childcare. This is surprising given that a large proportion of the increased numbers of women working outside the home are also mothers (Dex *et al.* 1996).

This chapter begins by charting the growth in the number of women in paid employment over the last century and particularly since the end of World War Two. The chapter argues that although the increase in the number of women engaged in paid employment is well-documented, there are very few accounts which pay due regard to the constraints of childcare. In particular, studies that examine the childcare strategies of working women in the early post-war years are rare. Nevertheless, there are a few and these are examined. The chapter then draws upon the limited relevant literature to illustrate the childcare strategies used by women during this period. More recent literature which does account for the complexities of this aspect of women's lives is then examined. The chapter ends with a discussion of the dominance of the male breadwinner model and its influence on women's decisions about work. The chapter concludes that childcare is a gendered responsibility and women's employment choices have always been constrained by motherhood.

Women and the Labour Market in the Post-War Period

Glucksmann's key works (1990, 2000) are amongst the few which examine the experiences of employed women in the first half of the twentieth century. As Glucksmann (1990:5) explains, although many women were engaged in paid employment prior to and during the war years, the majority were single and young women. During this time period, married women in certain types of employment faced barriers which prevented them taking up any form of paid employment. For example, some occupations, such as those in teaching or the civil service, operated marriage bars that prevented married women from being employed (Myrdal and Klein, 1956; Rees, 1992). In addition, part-time work, subsequently so important for married women with children, did not exist. However, she goes on to show how the number of married women who were engaged in paid work began to increase even before the end of the Second World War and expanded further with the introduction of part-time work a decade later.

Without doubt part-time employment has been a highly significant factor in the increase in the number of women in the labour market in the post-war period (Walsh, 1999; Warren and Walters, 1998; Walters, 2005). Indeed, Hakim (1996:61-2) attributes almost all of the massive growth in female employment to the

introduction of part-time work, stating that '...women's full-time employment rates have been virtually stable since 1881 ... overall the only increase in female employment since the 1950s ... is the massive expansion of part-time jobs'. Martin and Roberts (1984:1) reiterate this point, suggesting that 'almost all the growth in employment from the 1950s can be attributed to the increase in part-time work'.

However, although the evidence above points to an increase in the numbers of women in paid employment, Rees (1992:14) urges caution in the use of such figures commenting that 'official statistics have built in to them value loading about what should count at a number of levels: they are socially constructed'. She argues that because of this, the way in which official statistics are collected has meant that they often 'under-record' and 'under-value' women's work, focusing instead on patterns and trends in men's employment. For example, Rees highlights the way in which the paid work undertaken by married women was often ignored in census counts during the nineteenth century as married women were seen simply as being married women and not as workers. She goes on to illustrate that part-time, seasonal and home-based work were also under-recorded in the past and continued to be so, into the twentieth-century. Rees (1992) restates Hakim's (1985) argument that the widely quoted increase in women's labour force participation in the past century is attributable to historical under-recording rather than to a dramatic rise in the number of women engaged in paid employment since 1945. Indeed, Hakim (1985) argues that the economic activity rate for women in 1861, which was 43%, was as high as the rate recorded some one hundred years later (Hakim 1985:43; Rees, 1992:14). Further to this, as early as 1894 Heather-Bigg (1894) was arguing that women had always worked and that patterns emerging at the end of the nineteenth century were not unusual, even then:

> 'The popular impression seems to be that women today are taking a larger share of the world's work than they ever have done before – that this is a new departure, the outcome of the factory system. As a matter of fact the share taken by women in the work of the world has not altered in amount, nor even in intensity, only in character'. (Ada Heather-Bigg, 1894 from Tilly and Scott, 1978:5).

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However, evidence suggests that the increase seen in the post war years is extraordinary. Dex *et al.,* (1996) show that the economic activity rate of women in Britain, particularly mothers, has increased in the post war period, 'roughly doubling' in a fifty year period. Using data from the Women and Employment Survey (WES) (Martin and Roberts, 1984) it is possible to establish general trends for women's employment during the second half of the twentieth century. The data used in the study was compiled through interviews with a representative sample of all women of working age in Great Britain. One of the strengths of this particular data set is that in contrast to available statistics for this period, such as the Census of Population, the Labour Force Survey (LFS) and the General Household Survey (GHS), the WES focuses on women directly covering issues which relate to their labour market position. The data reveal that in 1984 some 63% of women were economically active, 35% working full time and 28% working part time. When these data are examined according to the number of women with children who were economically active then different patterns emerge. For example, amongst women with children aged between 0 and 4 years only 7% worked full time and 20% part time. As the age of youngest child increases so does the percentage of women working and for women with children aged 11-15 some 17% were working full time and 35% part time (Martin and Roberts, 1984, tables 2.2 and 2.6).

Duffield (2002), using data from the LFS illustrates that just over 20 years after the publication of the WES, the number of women employed full time had risen from 35% (1984) to 57% and the number of part-time women employees had increased from 28% to 44%. However, age of youngest child continued to impact upon the propensity for women to be economically active, and women with young children tended to work part-time but as the age of the youngest child increased the likelihood of the mother working longer hours also increased.

What emerges most clearly from statistical data on women's patterns of employment since the end of the Second World War is the complexity of women's relationship with the labour market, a relationship characterised by movements into and out of full and part-time employment often dependant upon domestic roles. Certainly the increased availability of part-time work and the removal of marriage bars by many employers in the post-war period facilitated the move into, or in many

cases back to, the labour market for married women and mothers. As Dex *et al.,* (1996:71) suggest part-time work proved to be of particular significance for mothers seeking employment which allowed them to combine paid work and domestic commitments, not least childcare responsibilities:

> 'Taking a part-time job has been a way of combining employment and the responsibility for childcare. At least part of the reason that a woman has chosen the part-time option is to structure her job around the availability of her partner or a close relative to provide free or cheap childcare. Childcare is then affordable, despite the low earnings which most part-time jobs offer'.

Clearly childcare has been and remains a major issue for women who wish to combine family life and employment. However, it is striking that much of the literature concerning women and employment, such as Hakim's work (1996, 2000), pay comparatively little attention to childcare.

Hakim (2000) takes a different approach to understanding women's 'choices' about work and it is argued here that her approach is not particularly useful in contributing to an understanding of the complex decision-making process many women experience. Her highly controversial approach, 'preference theory' argues that women have genuine choices about work and family life and that it is women's life-style preferences which determine their choices. She differentiates between groups of women using three classifications based upon general preferences towards work and family, stressing choice and paying little attention to the existence of structural constraints. The first of her categories of women are those she classifies as 'home centred'; that is, women who have chosen to place domestic responsibilities above all else. At the other extreme are 'work-centred women'; those who put paid work above domestic responsibilities. In the middle of these two groups she places 'adaptive women', the category that she suggests captures the majority of women. The definitions of women in this category are those who actively seek to combine work and family and those with unplanned careers. She suggests that these women are the group who are most responsive to policy and their patterns of labour market participation reflect relevant policy changes.

Hakim's approach has many limitations. For example, she is disparaging about the mothering skills of work-centred women suggesting that for this group '...their main priority in life is some activity other than motherhood and family life...' and for those who are mothers they '...have children in the same way as men do: as an expression of normality, and as a weekend hobby...' (Hakim, 2000:164). Hakim suggests that some adaptive women '...acquire good educational qualifications more as an insurance policy than in the expectation of using them, in case their marriage ends in divorce or widowhood and the woman is obliged to earn her own living for a while' (Hakim, 2000:166). She cites the example of a teacher, indicating that many women chose this career as it allows them to be at home with children outside school hours. She is equally negative about the free will of those she classes as 'home-centred'. Hakim comments that women '...who work hard at an interesting job when young, can at any time switch to the marriage career if the right opportunity, that is man, comes up' (Hakim, 2000:161). She uses two extreme and untypical examples of this, which she calls 'classic examples'; the first, of the young fashion model who marries a rich man giving up a career which held only short term prospects and the second, a professional women who '...realises that she does not have the talents or determination to rise very far and drops out of the labour market to become the model wife' (Hakim, 2000:161).

Hakim's work is not without critics and the limitations and weaknesses of 'preference theory' have been widely and prominently discussed (see, for example: Bruegel, 1996; Ginn *et al.*, 1996; Crompton and Harris, 1996; McRae, 2003; Houston and Marks, 2003). McRae (2003) and Houston and Marks (2003) have examined the relevance of Hakim's work to the women in their studies. Both found consistencies with Hakim, for example, Houston and Marks (2003:212) like Hakim, cite evidence that 'the majority of first-time mothers would prefer not to work full-time'. Similarly, McRae (2003:332) found evidence to support Hakim's argument that 'employment careers are centrally important for only a minority of women'. However, McRae (2003:334) suggests that although Hakim's work is very important it is 'not based on good enough evidence to support its claims' and she concludes that contrary to Hakim's argument, for many women decisions about work and childcare are not based on preference or choice, rather on necessity. Similarly, both Ginn *et al.* (1996) and Crompton and Harris (1998) have challenged the validity of Hakim's work.

Crompton and Harris (1998:119) indicate that although they do not dispute Hakim's general claim that women 'make choices' about work, they contend the idea that 'women's 'orientations to work' (or choice) is the major independent variable explaining women's employment patterns'. They go on to show how women's employment decisions and outcomes are dependent upon 'available opportunities' and certain structural constraints such as those relating to childcare.

The constraints of combining motherhood and work have also been recognised by others (e.g. Brannen, 1988, 1992, 1998; Brannen and Moss, 1988, 1998; Sharpe, 1984, 2001; Backett-Milburn et al., 2001; McRae, 2003). However, much of the work in this area is primarily based on survey data such as the National Child Development Study (NCDS) and the 1970 British Cohort Study (BCS70) which provide valuable cohort data and national surveys such as the 10 yearly population census, the Labour Force Survey and the British Household Panel Survey (Hunt, 1968; Martin and Roberts, 1984; Dex et al. 1996; Brannen and Moss, 1998; McRae, 2003). However, as McRae (2003:332) suggests, these studies may not be 'the best source for fully exploring the interactions between women's lifestyle preferences, their employment choices and the cost or availability of childcare' (2003:331). She highlights the need for 'personal interviews' with mothers to determine in more detail the reasons for their lifestyle choices. One reason for her plea is that, with the exception of work by Sharpe (1984) and Brannen (1992), there is little detailed, qualitative research which looks at the childcare choices made by working mothers over time.

Childcare Strategies in the Post-War Period

Accounts of women's work in the early part of the twentieth century pay little attention to domestic responsibilities. Brown (1992), for example, provides a detailed discussion of women's work during the Second World War. He highlights the way in which married women in particular were mobilised to 'fill in' whilst the men were away at war. This was a time period in which state-provided nursery provision was widely available (see Summerfield (1984) for a more detailed discussion of nursery provision during World War Two). However, Brown (1992) does not discuss the coordination of work and childcare during this time.

Whilst authors such as Glucksmann (1990, 2000) have published detailed studies of married women's work these are disappointing in their lack of consideration of childcare. Glucksmann (2000), for example, discusses in detail women's work over the life course in the weaving industry and in casual work in Lancashire during the 1930s. She gives only a brief account of childcare strategies. Using personal narratives taken from interviews, she paints a fascinating picture of women's employment in the weaving industry. Individual women's lives are described in detail. However, childcare is barely dealt with even though interview extracts suggest that such arrangements in this group were particularly complex. For example, Glucksmann (2000:63) describes the way in which many of the full-time weavers combined domestic and employment commitments explaining that '...they "farmed out" their children with relatives or neighbours whom they paid, sometimes collecting them every night but more often bringing them home only for the weekend'. Another strategy of which Glucksmann found evidence was limiting the number of children in the family to one or two, thereby easing the constraint of childcare responsibilities.

It is clear from the strategies that Glucksmann describes that childcare issues were enormously important for this group of women, many of whom appear to have taken extreme measures to combine work and home. However, it is disappointing that such strategies are not examined in more detail. Glucksmann (2000) provides us with a fascinating glimpse of the practicalities of juggling family and work amongst weavers in the early part of the century. Although it is hinted that the practice of leaving children with relatives on a full-time basis during the week was relatively widespread amongst this group, it is not clear how common this pattern was elsewhere. Indeed, Glucksmann suggests that both this, and the practice of limiting the number of children born to each family, was limited to the community of female weavers. However, as already indicated, Glucksmann does not pursue this area of the womens' lives.

One of the few early accounts of women's work decisions which does consider childcare constraints is Jephcott et al's. (1962) work. Their research was carried out in Bermondsey, south-east London in the 1950s and focused on the married female employees of the 'Peek, Frean and Co.' biscuit factory, a major local employer.

Jephcott *et al.* found that within their sample there existed a very high percentage of working mothers who had to make a set of complex arrangements in order to combine home life and waged work. The quote below describes the typical working life cycle of a woman:

'A generalized picture showed the mother as leaving full-time work on the birth of her first child; doing an evening job while her youngest child was under school age; changing to the 9.30am-4.00p.m. short day shift when he (sic) started school; to the afternoon one when he moved on to secondary school; and finally, as soon as he left, choosing according to her inclination between morning, afternoon or full-time work'. (Jephcott *et al.* 1962:140)

Jephcott *et al's* (1962) work is invaluable as it provides a fairly thorough account of childcare strategies in the early post-war period that are not examined in great detail elsewhere in the literature. They found that women were able to combine domestic responsibilities with work by working part-time, often in the evenings and at weekends, and by enlisting the help of their partners with childcare. As such Jephcott *et al* (1962:167) found that fathers provided much of the care: 'when the wife worked on the evening shift, it was the husband who regularly undertook the care of the children – an act of partnership which tied him for five evenings a week'. Alternatively, some women took on early morning cleaning jobs while the children slept, enabling them to return home in time to get the children ready for school. These arrangements allowed mothers to earn money whilst the father provided (free) childcare, so called 'shift parenting', (La Valle *et al.*, 2002; Dex, 2003).

For the women in Jephcott *et al's* (1962) study, day-to-day minding of the children did not pose a problem. It was the school holidays, illness and emergency situations which were harder to cope with. In these cases women were able to make use of flexibility in the workplace which allowed them to change shifts as necessary during school holidays and granted unpaid leave for illness, evidence perhaps of early family friendly flexible work practices. It is interesting to note that in Bermondsey at this time there were also a number of childcare facilities available. These included four day nurseries, a nursery school, council run play centres and youth groups. However, the women tended to spurn the formally provided care, particularly the day

nurseries because of the high costs, the required full time attendance and the association of nurseries as being for women in need.

The spurning of institutional care in Bermondsey reflects patterns identified by Boris (1994) in her account of women working at home in the USA in the early 1900s. Boris's book, *'Home to Work'* describes the ways in which homework; the taking in of work such as dressmaking, was widely used by mothers as a means of earning money whilst remaining located in the domestic sphere. Boris (1994:107) suggests that amongst certain groups of women, such as Italian women, there was a 'cultural preference for mothers to stay at home with children' and paid work was often carried out at home. The distrust of institutional childcare, partly because most nurseries and childcare facilities were run by charities and partly because of the pervading view that family care was best, was an important reason to work at home. In addition, options for family care were limited for many of these mothers as large-scale immigration had destroyed kinship networks of female relatives who would otherwise have helped with childcare. For many women homework was the preferred strategy as it allowed them to 'fulfil their duties as mothers, they could look after the children, care for illnesses and cook' (p.177).

In the early post-war years home work was also found to be a strategy used by mothers in London (Young and Wilmott, 1957) to enable them to combine paid work and domestic duties. Young and Wilmott (1957) found home work, or as they labelled it, 'out work' such as typing and making dresses, boxes and toys, to be one of the key strategies used by mothers to combine work and family. Alternatives to 'out work' included the option of arranging 'special' working hours and getting help with childcare from other family members.

A slightly later study of women's employment patterns during the post-war years, which was published, is Klein's (1965) book, 'Britain's Married Women Workers'. Like Jephcott *et al.* (1962) Klein examined working patterns in some detail and within the study childcare is briefly considered. The section which focuses on childcare begins by explaining that:

'Children are, naturally, the overriding factor in making women 'housebound'. Both their number and their ages have a strong bearing on a woman's ability and willingness to take up employment away from home' (Klein, 1965:52).

She found that for working women who had young children, half did not have to arrange childcare because either the mother was employed only during school hours, the father stayed at home whilst the mother worked or the children looked after themselves or each other. For those women who did have to make arrangements relatives and friends were mentioned, special arrangements were made for school holidays, mothers took their children to work with them or, for a few, nurseries were used. It is evident here that Klein discovered women making complex arrangements to allow them to work outside the home but, as she comments 'since some respondents mentioned several kinds of arrangement it is impossible to get a clear-cut impression' (of childcare strategies) (Klein, 1965:57-58). It is disappointing that Klein does not focus in more depth on childcare arrangments as the evidence provided is fascinating.

Hunt (1968) built upon the research of Jephcott *et al.* and Klein (1965) in her government commissioned 'Survey of Women's Employment' which aimed to 'elucidate the reasons why women, particularly married women, enter or do not enter the labour market and to what extent their decision might alter with circumstances' (Hunt, 1968:1). Her research provides more information about this slightly later time period and what is of particular note is the detailed attention Hunt pays to childcare strategies. Hunt asked respondents a series of questions about childcare arrangements and the impact of these on work decisions. Indeed, the final report includes a chapter entitled 'Looking after the Children'. She points out that at that time there was little 'factual information' available regarding the childcare decisions of working mothers. However, one of her key findings which has relevance to this thesis was the number of women who were able to arrange childcare at no financial cost by 'enlisting the help of other members of her family', in particular grandmothers (p.15). Hunt explains that for many working mothers at this time their own mothers played a significant role in caring for the children whilst the mother worked. She predicted in 1968 that this was a pattern that it could not:

'be assumed that when the present generation of children has grown up their mothers will be as willing to accept responsibility for their grandchildren. A grandmother who has worked for many years herself may not feel inclined in her fifties to give up her own job in order to look after her daughter's (or son's) children '(p15).

She also predicted that increased geographic mobility of families would decrease the availability of local 'within-family' care. This appears not to have been the case, however, and many working mothers continue to enlist the help of their family and friends in caring for the children. This informal, or complementary care (Wheelock and Jones, 2002) provided by grandparents, other relatives and friends was vitally important for the women in Hunt's (1968) study and such patterns of care remain crucial to women (Wheelock and Jones, 2002; Sharpe, 1984; Jephcott *et al.*, 1968; Woods *et al.*, 2003). Brannen *et al.*, (2003:166) suggest that 'many women with a dependent child receive help from their own mothers particularly in the form of …childcare'. Mothers and mothers-in-law tended to play the greatest role but sisters and aunts were important for some women and 'shared care'; that is two friends taking turns to care for each others children while one mother goes to work was a strategy for some (Sharpe, 1984:106). Clearly geographic proximity and 'a network of related households [is] an enormous asset' (Jephcott *et al.*, 1968:144) in facilitating childcare arrangements based on family care. This is a persistent feature of childcare that will be discussed in more detail below.

Martin and Roberts (1984) study, carried out almost twenty years after Hunt's, examined the practicalities of childcare for working mothers in the early 1980s. They found that working mothers held a relatively disadvantaged place in the labour market, employed in part-time low level jobs and combining this with motherhood by using informal and often unpaid childcare provision. The women in the sample cited husbands most frequently as their main provider of childcare, followed by their own mothers. Crucially, Martin and Roberts discovered that 'the use of formal institutional care such as crèches, day nurseries or nursery classes was relatively rare reflecting their limited availability' (p.39). The discussion below expands upon these ideas showing how informal care (or complementary care) provided by family and friends is the childcare strategy of choice for certain groups of women, namely working class

women employed in part-time, generally low status jobs with hours which dovetail with the availability and working hours of partners, parents and friends (Hunt, 1968, La Valle *et al.,* 2000). Indeed, as early as 1968, Hunt found evidence to support the theory that women would rather have their children cared for by another family member than by non-family members because they 'did not like the idea of their young children being cared for in a nursery or by others' (Hunt, 1968:102). Middle class women who work full-time in high status jobs, those who are geographically more mobile and women with children under the age of 5 are more frequent users of formal care (Dex *et al.,* 1996) for reasons which are detailed in the following discussion.

The work of Jephcott *et al.* (1962) Klein (1965) Hunt (1968) and Martin and Roberts (1984) stand out as unusual amongst the accounts of women and work in the twentieth century because of their focus on childcare. Many other studies of women's working lives later in the twentieth-century, whilst acknowledging the issues around childcare, do not consider it as of central importance to women's work decisions (McRae, 2004; Walters, 2005). Most notably, Hakim's (1996:51-2) work gives little consideration to childcare constraints. Hakim justifies this omission by suggesting that women are concerned with childcare issues for only a fraction of their working lives, thus the impact of childcare responsibilities on employment decisions is limited. She suggests that a woman with one child will spend 'only' the first 4-6 years engaged in full-time childcare, increasing to ten years for those women with two children. However, this does not take account of factors such as school hours or school holidays when childcare provision, although not a full time responsibility, continues to be a necessity for some years (Sharpe, 1984). In addition, this does not recognise that the years in which women are responsible for childcare and may be out of the labour market cover the same period during which important career progress can be made (Dex, 1984; Joshi, 1984).

Towards the end of the twentieth-century the number of mothers engaged in paid employment increased further and more studies concerned with childcare strategies began to emerge (Brannen, 1988, 1992, 1998; Brannen and Moss, 1988, 1998; Hochschild, 1990; Sharpe, 1984, 2001; Backett-Milburn *et al.,* 2001). Brannen's (1992) work on childcare strategies is one of the earlier detailed qualitative

studies of childcare strategies over this period. She examined the way in which employment decisions of dual earner households were affected by the birth of a first child and the associated childcare considerations. Brannen's sample was selected on the basis of childcare decisions and included women whose children were cared for by relatives and childminders or in a formal nursery environment. However, although the study aimed to include equal numbers of women in higher status occupations and women in lower status occupations it proved very difficult to find sufficient women in lower status roles who had returned to work after childbirth. There is a general tendency for research in this area to focus on women in higher status jobs, perhaps as they are more likely to be users of formal childcare provision and are more likely to return to the same employer after childbirth and are, therefore, easier for researchers to contact (Brannen, 1992).

Sharpe's (1984) work is a notable exception to this. Sharpe interviewed mainly working class white women from cities across the UK, the majority of whom were working either full or part-time and using a range of childcare options. She uses detailed quotes from her interviews with the women to illustrate the way in which mothers reconcile the conflicting demands of paid work and childcare. She examined the way in which these mothers chose 'convenient jobs', often part-time low status work, which enabled them to balance domestic and employment commitments.

Both Sharpe (1984) and Brannen (1992) carried out their research at a time when the percentage of mothers with young children who were in paid employment began to increase further, especially amongst those with children under five (Brannen and Moss 1998; Twomey 2002; Woods *et al.* 2003). Alongside this there was an associated decrease in the length of time spent out of the labour market after childbirth for many women (Martin and Roberts, 1984), an increase in family friendly employment practices and improved childcare facilities (Woods *et al.,* 2003) and changing attitudes towards working mothers (discussed in more detail in Chapter 3) (Newell, 1993).

Childcare and Household Relationships

A theme which emerges from all but the most recent studies of women, work and childcare is the almost subversive way in which women have combined work and domestic responsibilities. For example, Glucksmann's (1990, 2000) work illustrates how in the pre-war period, women weavers sent their children to live outside the family home for the working week, making them invisible. Similarly, Jephcott *et al* (1962) found evidence of women going out to work whilst their children were still in bed. Whilst Boris's (1994) study found homeworking to be a widespread practice used to combine work and family, because this strategy enabled mothers to care for their children and simultaneously earn money. In all these studies, women made their own 'private' and often hidden or invisible arrangements for childcare.

This is, in part, due to the influence or 'hold' of the male breadwinner model of family life, which has been so powerful in Britain and the USA for much of the last century (Fincher, 1996). The traditional 'male breadwinner model family', denotes a situation in which women are committed to motherhood and responsible for domestic and unpaid duties and men have responsibility for financial provision. As the model promotes the ideal of full-time motherhood, it is not concerned with childcare arrangements for those women who are economically active through either choice or necessity. Childcare concerns have, therefore, been historically seen as being a private matter to be arranged within the family context and without any outside help. This, in turn, has historically enabled the state to leave such arrangements in the private realm rather than intervening by providing state funded care (Fincher 1996).

This model has formed the basis of government policy and has also shaped ideas of masculinity, femininity and gender roles for much of the post-war period (Crompton and Harris, 1998; Duncan 2003; Innes and Scott 2003). The model has also led to the notion of an 'idealised mother' who stays at home and dedicates herself to childcare and domestic pursuits rather than participating in the labour market. Such an approach does not accommodate the idea of a woman being able to fulfil the task of motherhood whilst simultaneously taking employment outside the home. It is also interesting to note that this ideal promotes a way of life which is realistic for very few women. As Sharpe (1984:22) points out:

'although women's preoccupation with and dedication to the care of their children has a time-honoured quality, many have never been involved in the full time childcare that has come to characterize ideal motherhood for much of the past century. In fact full-time mothering has had an inconsistent history …and the opportunity for full-time mothering has never been accessible to all women in the same way at the same time…working class women …either worked outside the home or took in work, and many relied on older children and other relatives to help with childcare…It was therefore the emerging middle class that conformed most closely to the idealized model of mothering at home set within a romantic cameo of happy family life'.

Gerson (1985:3) adds to this description explaining that the concept of a housewife is only a recent development. Historically such a position was untenable for any one other than the rich:

'The child-centered (sic) housewife is actually a relatively recent historical development and is a social position that has generally been reserved for the more privileged members of the female population'.

However, it was this ideal which was supported by government policy and permeated public opinion throughout most of the twentieth-century. As Myrdal and Klein (1956:179) commented in the early post-war period 'it is not government policy to encourage the employment of young mothers'. Jephcott *et al.* (1962) found that for working class women during the mid to late 1950s reconciling the demands of paid employment and domestic responsibilities was complicated by what Edwards *et al.* (2003:310) call the 'moral and social …views' of what was acceptable behaviour for 'the good mother' (Lewis, 1991). They found that for working mothers at this time the:

'major problem ….was not …her housekeeping but the proper care of her children while she was out. Public opinion, strong in Bermondsey, discouraged her from work as long as she had a child below school age' (Jephcott *et al.*, 1968:167).

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As Lewis (1991:196) suggests, the 'good mother' would never work outside the home whilst she had young children and she would never allow her job to take precedence over her family commitments. For mothers conforming to such notions, the use of formal paid childcare is not acceptable and working outside the home whilst their children are very young is also not acceptable. As Duncan (2003:5) argues, decisions about balancing paid work and family responsibilities are based upon 'moral and socially negotiated (not individual) views about what behaviour is right and proper, and this varies between particular social groups, neighbourhoods and welfare states'. This is well illustrated by Jephcott *et al's* (1962) research which found that it was, in certain circumstances, socially acceptable for mothers to work dependent on certain constraints:

> 'in Bermondsey the use of an institution, however admirable, was a reflection on the home, whereas to have the child minded by a known individual was not...perhaps there was an implied reproof merely in the dejected look of their battery of prams, with never a mum at the handle end'.

And consequently:

> 'official provision for minding played only a minor role, despite the area's long tradition of the mother going out to work'. (Jephcott *et al.* 1962:143).

There is evidence to suggest that the moral view of what constitutes 'good mothering' has weakened at the same time as the number of mothers in paid employment has grown. For example, recent research by Brannen *et al.* (2003:180) found that older generations, even when it was they who cared for their grandchildren whilst the mothers worked, did not tend to criticise their working daughters or daughters-in-law. This was true even in cases where the grandmother had not worked when she had young children and where she 'disagreed in principle with mothers working'. Such changing attitudes have occurred at the same time as the male breadwinner model has begun to be seen as an increasingly outdated approach in modern Britain (Crompton and Harris, 1998; Duncan, 2003).

By contrast, the 'adult worker family model' or 'dual earner model' whereby both parents are responsible for providing for the family financially and childcare is purchased to enable this, forms the basis of recent government policy. This is well illustrated by the government's 1998 National Childcare Strategy (NCS) which aimed to increase formal childcare provision and offer tax incentives to enable more parents, mothers in particular, to enter the labour market (Brannen, 1992; Duncan, 2003; Edwards *et al.* 2003). The NCS is largely based upon economic models which assume that financial incentives are the most important motivation for work decisions and assume that parents 'take individualistic, cost benefit type decisions about how to maximise personal gain' (Wheelock and Jones, 2002:443) and ignores other constraints. According to Wheelock and Jones (2002) this is a short-sighted policy as it does not recognise the extent to which parents choose informal care over formal care, a pattern discussed in more detail below. For some women, taking up paid employment is not an option if the preferred mode of childcare (often informal care) is not available regardless of levels of provision and financial incentives.

Duncan (2003:4) also criticises the adult worker model suggesting that it is an 'ideal model' which is far from reality for most families who do not operate in this way. He argues that one reason why the adult worker model has not permeated more widely is because gender divisions remain firmly embedded both within the family and the workplace. Men continue to be seen as the providers of financial resources through employment and women continue to be seen primarily as carers.

Conclusion

This chapter has shown how for working mothers, the balancing of childcare and paid employment has always been problematic. There is evidence to suggest that early in the last century women took extreme measures to enable them to maintain their position in the labour market (Glucksmann, 2000). Certainly issues around childcare such as cost, location and availability have, and continue to, act as major structural constraints on women's work decisions (McRae, 2003:331). The continued dominance of the male breadwinner model and the associated notion of

idealised motherhood further complicate women's, particularly mothers, position in relation to the labour market. In particular, the moral obligations espoused by the male breadwinner model continue to influence mothers' childcare preferences and decisions about work because social attitudes in the UK still tend to disapprove of mothers taking paid employment outside the home (Himmelweit and Sigala, 2004).

Clearly, the birth of children makes the pursuit of paid work more complicated, as women have been, and continue to be, seen as the main source of parental care and few fathers provide childcare assistance (Evetts, 1988; Brannen and Moss, 1991; Scott and Duncombe, 1992; Crompton, 2002). The provision of care remains a 'gendered responsibility' (Brannen *et al.*, 2003:179) and, as Smeaton (2006:21) argues 'role demarcation within family boundaries has changed little, with women continuing to perform most household and childcare tasks'. Therefore it is usually the mother who has to fit work hours around childcare responsibilities. As Windebank (2001:283) suggests 'the vast majority of women ... perceive themselves rather than their partners to be ultimately responsible for managing childcare in the sense of gathering information on childcare alternatives, making childcare arrangements and subsequently maintaining them'.

In the next chapter is it argued that the moral obligations espoused by the male breadwinner model continue to influence mothers' childcare preferences and decisions about work. The chapter goes on to examine the development of childcare provision in the UK and debates around the formal and informal approaches to childcare which have been touched upon in this chapter are developed further in the next chapter.

Chapter 3

Conceptualising Childcare and Understanding Women's Choices

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Introduction

The increased participation of women in the labour market over the last century is well-documented in the literature (Martin and Roberts, 1984; Dex, 1987; Brannen and Moss, 1999). However, as suggested in the previous chapter, there is a lack of literature concerned with the strategies used by women to balance work and domestic responsibilities, particularly responsibilities relating to the care of children. Similarly, until the advent of the Labour government's National Childcare Strategy in 1998, childcare suffered from a lack of consideration at policy level. In policy terms, women's strategies for combining work and caring have, until recently, been seen as private, family and individual decisions and not the concern of the state. As Pascall (1994:21) has argued, although women's labour force participation has increased this has been 'against a background of unchanging childcare policies'. As a consequence, government support for working mothers, in the form of childcare provision designed to relieve women of their caring duties during working hours, has, historically, been lacking (Windebank, 2001).

In the past ten years, there has, however, been a considerable shift in policy and there is now far greater support for working families in the form of increased accessibility to formal, affordable childcare, tax credits and early years grants. Vincent and Ball (2006:30) suggest that these considerable changes have come about because the 'rising number of mothers with small children who were returning and or wanting to return to the labour market was a phenomenon that demanded a response'.

Childcare lies at the heart of women's domestic responsibilities and the constraints imposed by childcare on women's decisions about work are now widely recognised (Dex *et al,*. 1996; Crompton and Harris, 1998). However, as Cotterill (1992:611) has argued 'feminist debates have been relatively muted with regard to childcare and concerns with women's double burden of domestic and paid labour have paid little attention to the lack of public policy to support working mothers'. Therefore,

whilst childcare is frequently mentioned in the literature on women and employment, there are few systematic accounts of the childcare options available to working parents. Indeed, it has been argued that even 'the very term childcare has a dispiriting and dutiful heaviness hanging over it ... it is as short on colour and incisiveness as the business of negotiating the wet kerb with the pushchair' (Riley, 1983 cited in Vincent and Ball, 2001:634).

This chapter begins with a consideration of social policy relating to childcare. Next, the history of the development of childcare policy and provision in the UK is detailed. The chapter goes on to offer a definition of the terms childcare and informal and formal care. These terms are widely used but there are many different meanings attached to them. The chapter, therefore, clarifies matters by providing a definition of the two types of care. Alongside this, the childcare options available to women when selecting appropriate and satisfactory care are outlined. It is argued that for many women, choices about childcare, whilst influenced by low levels of provision and the high costs associated with private care, derive largely from ideological beliefs based upon what it means to be a 'good mother'. Therefore, the role of policy is somewhat limited given women's expressed preference for family-based childcare. Finally, the chapter begins to examine the role played by intergenerational influences in determining mothers' childcare choices, a key and distinctive feature of this thesis.

Childcare: The Policy Perspective

Historically, there has been a lack of formal childcare provision in the UK, especially when compared to provision in other European countries (Vincent and Ball, 2001). Pre-school provision in the UK is amongst the lowest in the EU (Phillips and Moss, 1988; EOC 1989; Charles, 1993) and the UK has, in the recent past, been 'near the bottom of the EU "childcare league"'(Lewis, 2003). The cost of the limited formal care which is available is also the highest in Europe (McRae, 2003:331). As Himmelweit and Sigala (2004:455) argue: 'The UK is unique among European countries in the way its youngest children are looked after. There is practically no state provision of childcare, childcare fees are particularly high, yet the UK has one if the highest employment rates in Europe for mothers of pre-school children, almost as high as those in Scandinavia'.

One reason for the lack of state involvement in childcare provision is that in Britain, in contrast to other European countries such as France and Sweden, the strong male breadwinner model has underpinned government policy since the end of World War Two (Scott, 1999:21). Such a model assumes a household in which there is a male in full-time employment and an economically inactive female who is dedicated to household work and care of the children. Used as a basis for government policy, this model absolves the state of childcare responsibility because it is underpinned by the notion that women, in particular mothers, are available to perform domestic duties such as childcare on a full-time basis.

The dominance of the male breadwinner model has been strengthened by government pronouncements since the Second World War that mother-centred care is best for the 'normal' development of the child; both emotionally and physically. In the 1950s Bowlby's (1955) key work *'Maternal Care and Child Health'* warned that women who went out to work while their children were young put them at risk of maternal deprivation and long term delayed development. Such views pervaded public opinion at the time and, according to Gregson and Lowe (1995), Bowlby's ideas remain influential:

> 'Long after John Bowlby's (1955) pronouncements about the importance of the natural mother and home-based care to 'normal' child development, the best form of childcare in Britain is still considered to be that provided by a child's natural mother ...and ...the best place for the child is still considered to be the child's home'. (Gregson and Lowe, 1995:230)

The lack of formal childcare provision for very young children in the UK is partly explained by Bowlby's (1955) work which stressed the importance of maternal care for the first three years of a child's life. The idea that anything less than full-time maternal care for children under three years old may harm the development of the child continues to hold currency (Lewis, 1991; Gatrell, 2005; James, 2005). Indeed Gatrell (2005:116) quotes a report from the Institute of Directors in 1997 which suggested that a household in which the mother stays at home and dedicates herself to the care of the children 'is simply the most suitable arrangement for the emotional and physical development of a child, particularly between the ages of 0-3...Day care actually threatens youngsters'

development' (Malthouse, 1997, quoted in Gatrell, 2005:116). Elsewhere in the media similar views continue to be propounded. Bunting (2004), writing in the *Guardian*, cites evidence that 'day nurseries for children under two can lead to increased incidence of antisocial behaviour and aggression' and that 'group-based care can have damaging effects on some aspects of emotional and social development for the under two age group'.

It is of interest to note that the events of World War Two forced a 'suspension' of the male breadwinner model due to the absence of men and the associated need to recruit women to the labour market. During the war the number of state provided nurseries expanded quickly to provide childcare at a time when women's labour was required (Summerfield 1984). At the end of the war, these nurseries were rapidly disbanded. This was rationalised by:

> 'emphasizing the "dangers" of collective childcare provision ... the Ministry of Health was able to both constrain the development of quality collective childcare services in Britain and to reconstitute childcare as a home-based, full-time, private and female concern' (Gregson and Lowe, 1995: 227).

With the exception of the war period then, policy rhetoric has long been that 'family care is best' and because of this, pre-school provision for children in the UK has been largely 'child focused, based on a notion of the at home mother'. As such, the UK government has been slow in its development of childcare policy (Lewis, 2003) and decisions about employment and domestic responsibilities have been left as private, family and individual based decisions. Within this model, the decision to work is seen as an individual choice 'made by a self sufficient, autonomous family unit from amongst the provision made available by a private sector market' (Vincent and Ball, 2001:634). As Lewis (2003:221-222) argues:

> 'successive post-war governments had assumed that childcare would remain the responsibility of mothers, supplemented if necessary by one-to-one provision in the form of kin or childminders. This was held to be more in tune with the child's needs than a day care centre or nursery because it most closely resembled mother-care'.

Similar patterns emerge in the USA where, it has been argued, 'the lack of a coherent national childcare policy ... is a reflection of cherished beliefs related to maternal care: that mothers (as opposed to fathers, or society) are individually responsible for the care of children, and that at-home mothers provide the best care' (Walzer, 1997:225).

In contrast to the UK and US, countries such as France and Sweden have had more proactive government approach to supporting working parents. The French government's approach has been designed to enable mothers to participate in paid employment 'enjoying continuous and full-time or long hours part-time career paths' (Windebank, 2001:273). In France, the male breadwinner model has a weaker hold on policy and, as such, childcare provision is subsidised and supported by the state. Mothers in France can expect access to free nursery provision once their children reach the age of three. Subsidies and tax allowances are available to families who chose home-based care such as the service of a childminder. Similarly, when children start school, care facilities are provided before and after school as well as in the school holidays (Windebank, 2001).

In the UK there has been little in the way of state-funded provision, particularly for children under three years old. Childcare for this age group has continued to be seen as a private responsibility outside the realm of government responsibility and, as Fincher (1996: 146) has argued, the

'view that childcare is a private matter became very solidly entrenched during the Thatcher administration (and continued under Major), bolstered by a restatement of values of individualism and the 'naturalness' of women devoting themselves to domestic duties in the home'

It was not until the mid 1980s that childcare provision began to increase at a rapid rate in response to the increased numbers of women entering the labour market (Vincent and Ball, 2001). This rapid expansion of childcare provision was mainly provided by the private sector. Day nursery provision in particular experienced a marked increase, which has included the emergence of a number of commercial nursery chains. Brannen and Moss (1998) suggest that there was a five-fold increase in the number of nursery

places available between 1986 and 1996 and in the same period a three-fold increase in the number of childminder places.

However, the costs associated with private childcare are traditionally very high and affordable only to those in higher status, well-paid jobs. Such high costs have been widely believed to be the reason why women in low-income groups have not utilised such provision even when it is available (Dex, 2003). Indeed, the most likely group to use formal childcare are mothers who have a higher level of education and work long hours. Lewis (2003:232) argues that it is women in this category who 'fuelled the expansion of private-sector day nurseries from the 1980s'. Even for those who can afford the fees, places are limited, especially for babies aged nine months or younger.

However, alongside the growth of market-led provision, government policy towards childcare has also begun to change, in part as an attempt to address the UK's high levels of child poverty (Himmelweit and Sigala, 2004). As part of this strategy, the government aimed to facilitate the transition into employment for socially excluded groups such as 'workless households' and lone parents, through the provision of affordable and accessible childcare (Innes and Scott, 2003; Lewis, 2003). In 1998 the Labour government launched the first ever 'National Childcare Strategy' (NCS) the UK had seen. It identified three key issues in childcare provision: the variable quality of existing provision; the high cost of care; and the lack of available places combined with poor local provision of information.

Vincent and Ball (2006:30) argue that childcare has risen so rapidly up the policy agenda because

'early years care and education is a productive policy area for New Labour ... initiatives here can theoretically address several agendas: increasing social inclusion and in particular combating child poverty, revitalizing the labour market, and raising standards in education. The provision of childcare is seen as having the potential to bring women back into the workforce, thereby increasing productivity as well as lifting families out of poverty'.

Whilst these policy changes can be seen as a move forward for the UK government, there are fundamental issues which still need to be addressed. Although the government clearly recognises the role of relatives in the provision of childcare for working parents, most elements of the NCS are based upon a rational economic model of behaviour and decision making (Moss, 1999; Wheelock and Jones 2002). For example, offering parents tax credits such as the Working Families Tax Credit to utilise mainly market-provided formal childcare provision.

Alongside the inception of the NCS in 1998, the Labour government also launched its Work-Life Balance campaign (Bonney, 2005; Dex and Bond, 2005). This campaign aimed to encourage employers to implement work-life balance measures, such as flexible working, in an attempt to encourage parents to participate fully in the labour market. Policies associated with work-life balance include measures such as increased and enhanced maternity leave entitlements and giving employees the right to request part-time hours, parental leave, home-working and flexitime (Bonney, 2005). This policy development has, Smeaton (2006:12) argues, provided 'greater choice for women wishing to assume the two roles of home worker and paid employee'. However, she also argues that this is not necessarily as positive a development as it may seem on first impression. This is because,

'Government policies are implicated in the working trends among young mothers with the wide range of labour market programmes and maternity policy initiatives introduced during the 1990s interpreted as reflecting a government agenda designed to promote labour market needs rather than those of the family' (Smeaton, 2006:20).

In addition, little attention has been given to factors such as the type of childcare families prefer or the preferences of children themselves (Moss, 1999; Riley and Glass, 2002). As Riley and Glass (2002) highlight there is a need for more studies which focus on childcare preferences to complement existing studies of childcare availability and types of childcare. This is highly significant because recent research suggests that for many parents, particularly those in low-income groups and the self-employed, formal care strategies are actually actively rejected in preference to informal home based care (Bell and La Valle, 2003; Baines et al., 2003). As Dex (2003:66) comments, for this

particular group of parents it is not the high cost of childcare which is a barrier to use. Those who choose informal childcare do so 'actively' 'feeling they can trust the carers, but not necessarily anyone else, to care for their child properly'. Others reject formal nursery care because of the perceived institutional nature of nurseries and the associated relinquishing of parental care which such formalised care may bring (Westwood, 1984:238). The finding that most families prefer family-based childcare to any other form of care is corroborated by US research (Riley and Glass, 2002). A number of important policy implications flow from this research finding. Increasing the availability of low cost formal childcare provision may not have a great impact if parents have a preference for family care. In fact:

'policies designed to assist families in caring for their own infants (e.g. lengthened leaves, shortened work weeks) would match parental preferences more than expanded non familial infant-care options' (Riley and Glass, 2002:15).

This chapter now goes on to examine in more detail the types of care available to mothers and the preferences they express.

Informal and Formal Childcare Provision: An Overview

In this section of the chapter, an overview of childcare provision is provided. The section begins by defining terms which are widely used in the literature but which lack clarity. First, the term childcare itself is examined. Second, the term 'informal care', which is often used to describe unpaid childcare provided by relatives is examined and types of care that fall within this term are discussed. Third, 'formal care', a term used to denote care provided by non-family members and usually involving payment of fees is examined. The chapter moves on to examine childcare preferences in greater detail and to provide a discussion of mothers' choices about childcare.

It is rare for studies which include a consideration of childcare to provide any definition of the precise meaning of the term 'childcare'. The term is widely used with the presumption that its meaning is understood and that it is unproblematic (see, for example, Gregson and Lowe, 1995; Holloway, 1998). Family studies literature emanating from the USA provides the most developed definition of childcare.

However, even here there is no single understood meaning. For example, Uttal (2002:31) defines childcare as being 'non-parental' care, whilst others such as Vandell *et al.* (2003:375) define childcare as 'non-maternal' care'. The crucial difference here lies with the role of the father. Uttal's (2002) defintion is based on the premise that care provided by the father should *not* be considered as 'childcare'. Conversely, Vandell *et al.* (2003) include care provided by fathers alongside all other types of care not provided maternally.

However, for the purposes of this thesis childcare is taken to be *any type of non-maternal care*, since it is well-documented that women tend to take the prime responsibility for childcare. As Windebank (2001:283) articulates, 'the vast majority of women ... perceive themselves rather than their partners to be ultimately responsible for managing childcare in the sense of gathering information on childcare alternatives, making childcare arrangements and subsequently monitoring them'. McKie *et al.* (2001) trace this back to the lack of policy provision of care arguing that:

'in Britain the dearth of statutory provision and regulation has resulted in much childcare being sourced by women and provided by partners, grandparents, other family members and friends. While the provision of private commercial childcare is increasing it remains the responsibility of parents – most often mothers – to find such provision, assess the quality of care and pay for it' (McKie et al. 2001).

The importance of the role of the mother in navigating childcare decisions means, then, that it is logical to conclude that any care not provided by the mother which enables the mother to have 'free' time can be classified as childcare.

Having clarified the definition of the term 'childcare', attention now turns to classifying different types of childcare. Much of the literature emanating from the UK differentiates between types of care using the terms 'formal' and 'informal' childcare to classify types of care. However, like the term childcare, these widely used labels lack precision of meaning. One reason for this lack of clarity may be attributable to the complexity of childcare provision. In order to give some indication of the complex nature of childcare provision it is perhaps worth highlighting a study carried out in 1998 (DfEE, 1998) which aimed to better understand parental decisions with regard to

childcare. In the study some *twenty-six* different types of childcare were identified, illustrating the breadth of provision of available.

The expression 'formal childcare' is usually used to describe childcare provided by institutions or individuals operating on a commercial basis which is market-based and involving monetary exchange (Paull and Taylor, 2002). However, this definition is somewhat narrow as it does not take into account either state-provided or voluntary institutions (Wheelock and Jones, 2002).

The definition of 'formal care' refers to care provided by those outside the family. It usually involves monetary exchange and is based either in institutional settings or in another family home (childminders). This category includes nannies and au pairs who usually live in the family home. Most carers included here hold formal childcare qualifications, with the exception of au pairs. The group includes the following:

1) Nursery: institutional care provided away from the home and usually paid for by the parents. Fees can be high and highest use is found amongst middle class families (Vincent and Ball, 2001).

2) Childminders: usually care for children in the childminder's home. A paid service often provided by another mother. This facility can be of particular use when children reach school age as many childminders operate school drop off and collection systems, taking children to school in the morning, collecting them and caring for them at home until the child's parents can collect. Childminders are the main providers of formal childcare (Vincent and Ball, 2001).

3) Play groups and pre-school groups: provide childcare for a few hours a day when children reach the age of approximately 2 years. The pre-school groups operate in order to introduce children to the school environment before starting school (Paull and Taylor, 2002).

4) Nannies: a highly qualified employee of the family who can live in the family home. Infrequently used service as very expensive (Gregson and Lowe, 1994; Cox and Narula, 2003).

5) Au pair: an unqualified carer who lives in the family home. An affordable option as the au pair is paid only pocket money. Au pairs are often foreign students keen to learn English, as such they are usually unqualified (Cox and Narula, 2003).

By contrast the term 'informal' care is usually used to denote care provided by relatives and friends, but as Wheelock and Jones (2002:444) comment, a standard definition of informal care does not exist in the literature. Whilst they use the term 'complementary childcare' to describe childcare provided by relatives, friends and neighbours, excluding resident partners and fathers, other studies include partners in the definition of informal care (Paull and Taylor, 2002). In general terms, the types of care included in the definition of informal care include: care provided by partners (usually fathers), grandparents, other relatives and friends. Such care does not usually involve any financial exchange. However, this again cannot be assumed (Wheelock and Jones, 2002).

For the purposes of this chapter, the term 'informal care' is used to describe care given by family members and friends, including partner care. The term also includes family care which involves monetary exchange. Most carers who fit this category lack formal childcare qualifications. The types of childcare included under this umbrella term are categorised according to the identity of the carer:

1) 'Shared care' or 'shift-parenting' - a system by which mothers and fathers are in paid employment but work a shift system whereby one parent works while the other cares for the children and vice versa (Gowler and Legge, 1982; La Valle, 2002).

2) Grandmother care - a system whereby the child's grandmother cares for the grandchildren whilst the parents are at work. Either the paternal or maternal grandmother can fill this role but usually it is the maternal grandmother who is involved in this way (Cotterill, 1992; Wheelock and Jones, 2002).

3) Relatives and friends – this is where other relatives, usually female, provide care which is usually unpaid and irregular. Friends may also provide this function.

Perhaps more useful are the definitions provided by Riley and Glass (2002:4) in their discussion of childcare in the USA. They use a simple dual classification to differentiate between types of care: familial and non-familial care. Familial care 'is defined as care provided by one's partner or by a relative or friend, whether in or out of the respondent's home' and non-familial care is 'defined as care by a paid sitter in the respondent's home, a day care center, or a family day care home'. These definitions can easily be translated to the UK picture, for example, familial care would mirror this description and non-familial care would include care provided by paid baby sitter, childminder, day nursery, play group.

Elsewhere in the literature, childcare is defined according to the location in which the care is carried out. Truelove (1996) attempts to classify types of childcare provision in Canada based on the location of the childcare. She has developed four distinct categories of care:

1) 'In home care' – here she is referring to care which takes place in the child's own home but is provided by any carer, e.g. parent, relative, nanny, friend etc. in that particular environment or location.

2) 'Unlicensed family child care homes': Truelove defines this as a situation whereby a child is cared for in a different family home, for example, the family home of a woman who cares for her own children and other people's children within the location of her own home. In this case, such care is unregulated by official bodies.

3) 'Licensed family care homes': this category replicates the above category with the important exception that licensed care homes are inspected and regulated by the state.

4) 'Child care centers': this includes childcare facilities located outside a family home and inspected and regulated by the state.

She goes onto to subdivide these categories into formal and informal types of childcare, indicating that care which takes place in the child's home or in an alternative unlicensed domestic setting denote types of informal care. Categories 3 and 4, care which takes place in licensed family homes and institutional settings, denote types of formal care. This categorisation of childcare types according firstly to the location of the care and,

based on this, the division between formal and informal care provides a useful starting point for developing a typology of childcare in the UK. Spatial definition of care is an important distinction and as Gregson and Lowe (1995:230) suggest, some groups of women attach a great degree of importance to the location of the care provided. They illustrate how for households employing a nanny to care for their children the 'location of the nanny within the parental home ... proved to be critical' to their childcare preference 'quite simply, the parental home was cited ...as the best place for the care of young children'. The significance of domestic space is important to the development of an understanding of childcare rationalities and this idea is discussed further later in this chapter.

In Table 3.1 a typology of childcare is provided. This table organises the definitions used by different studies and classifies childcare according to a number of criteria such as: the age of the child, temporal patterns of care, the provider, cost, spatial location and the identity of the carer. The typology shows how for certain categories the definition is less clear, so for example, the category 'domestic setting' is placed between categories as in some cases a family home is used for formal care (e.g. nannies employed in the home) and in other cases the family home is the setting for informal care (e.g. care provided by relatives and friends).

Table 3.1: A Typology of Childcare

Formality of care	Informal Care		Formal Care
Age of child	Ages: 0+		Pre-school 0-5 years
Time available	All hours (includes Unsociable hours)		Standard hours (8am – 6pm)
Support network	Familial		Non-familial
Finance	Unpaid		Paid
Location	Domestic Setting (child's own home)	Domestic Setting (other than child's home)	Non-domestic Setting (e.g. institution)

Having established the definitions of key terms relating to childcare this chapter now moves on to examine trends in the use of childcare.

Understanding Women's Choices

This section begins with a discussion of formal childcare and its role in resolving the conflict between home and work. The chapter then moves on to look at the role of informal care, highlighting, in particular, the importance of grandparents in this provision. It is argued here that a combination of factors: family childcare preferences, ideological rationalities and a lack of childcare provision, play a key role in determining choices relating to childcare and eventual care outcomes. Childcare choices are complex and mothers construct equally complex rationales for choosing one type of care over another. Himmelweit and Sigala's (2004:462) description of the complexity of the views of mothers in their research is illuminating:

'some mothers believed that they themselves should be the child's main carer. Some did not trust anyone who was not a family member to look after their children; others would trust only childminders who had been personally recommended; yet others would trust nurseries but not individual childminders'.

They go on to suggest that not only the issue of trust but also issues around child development inform the eventual choices made. They argue that

'there were fears that a wrong selection of childcare could put the child in danger, set back the child's cognitive, social and psychological development, impair the parent-child relationship or cause problems at the mother's workplace. On the other hand, good childcare could be beneficial to a child's development' (Himmelweit and Sigala, 2004:462-463)

The preceding discussion attempted to clarify the concept of childcare and to outline the types of provision from which parents can 'choose' appropriate care for their children. Significantly, the discussion aimed to differentiate between types of formal and informal care, establishing a framework for the following section which aims to provide an understanding of women's choices about these different types of childcare.

(a) Formal Childcare Strategies

Given the preceding discussion which focussed on the high cost of formal childcare, it is perhaps not surprising that until recently formal childcare was a little used strategy. Himmelweit and Sigala (2004) using data from the BHPS (1991) revealed that the percentage of women using formal care was low, at only 13%, but this, nevertheless, represents an important strategy for certain groups of women. The number of formal childcare places and the use of these places has been increasing in recent years, an increase fuelled mainly by growth in the private sector. This change in patterns of formal childcare use has been accompanied by a shift in policy and a change in attitudes towards the use of formal childcare. These trends are discussed in depth below.

The landscape of formal state provided childcare is complex. This complexity is due, in part, to the historically adhoc development of pre-school provision both public and private which has resulted in what Lewis (2003) calls a 'mixed economy of care'. Labour's National Childcare Strategy of 1998 focused explicitly on the promotion of early years *education* rather than childcare. This strategy targeted certain groups of families, mainly those living in disadvantaged areas and those on low incomes. Alongside targeting provision to disadvantaged groups the government also pledged to provide free part-time early education places for all 3 and 4 year olds. For four year olds these places have taken the form of part-time places in primary school reception year classes. For three year olds the picture is more complicated and provision has either been through a subsidy for those using private day nurseries effectively subsidising 12.5 hours of nursery care per week. Nevertheless, the NCS has resulted in formal childcare places becoming more accessible to all. Without doubt this shift in government policy has also contributed to a shift in the wider perception of formal care. This is illustrated by Smeaton's (2006:12) finding that there has been a shift in the morality of motherhood between recent generations. Using survey data of women born in 1958 and women born in 1970, Smeaton examined the attitudes and behaviour of the two cohorts. She found that far fewer of those in the younger generation of mothers agreed 'that pre-school children suffer if a mother works' than the generation born in 1958. This suggests that attitudes towards and perceptions of formal care have changed over time.

This is further illustrated by examining changing attitudes towards formal childcare in recent decades. The lack of formal care provision during the post-war period suggests that working mothers of the time were accessing alternative means of childcare. Literature dating from that period, (Jephcott *et al.*,1962; Klein, 1965; Hunt, 1968) highlights the important role of family members in the provision of care and the lack of usage of formal facilities even where these existed. In the post-war period until the 1980s, the use of any formally provided childcare had largely negative connotations. As Jephcott *et al.*, (1962) found, institutional childcare provided by nurseries was perceived as being for mothers and families 'in need'. Oakley (1976:199) reiterates this position describing 'day-nursery care for babies ... (as a) means of childcare used by economically underprivileged mothers'. However, the perception of nursery care does appear to have shifted in recent years and this change in attitudes has taken place in parallel with the increased provision of formal care. Vincent and Ball (2006:117) argue that

'the discourse around the most appropriate care for pre-school children over two has changed radically over the last 40 years. Non-family care, recently seen as necessary only for those with the most incompetent mothers, is now officially a 'good thing' for this age group'.

The growth in availability of formal childcare facilities is a trend which has been well documented in the literature (Brannen and Moss, 1988; Vincent and Ball, 2001, 2006; Dex, 2003; Lewis, 2003). Less well-documented are the patterns of use of such care, in particular the reasons why many mothers do or do not use formal childcare facilities.

Uttal's (2002) suggests that the increasing use of formal childcare facilities can be explained by rising rates of female employment resulting in a decreased pool of women available to act as childcarers on behalf of other family members. She also attributes the increase in the number of formal childcare places to increased levels of geographical mobility. This change has resulted in fewer women living in close proximity to their family, which in turn means that they are less likely to be able to call on family members for childcare support (Gatrell 2005).

Studies which have examined the usage of formal care argue that levels of use of this type of care are influenced by a range of factors such as the lack of state provision of childcare places and the high cost of private sector provision (Windebank, 2001; Dex, 2003). This is supported by findings which suggest that users of private sector, formal care are most likely to be highly educated women in dual career households who work full-time and therefore require a high time commitment from the carer (Brannen and Moss, 1998; Vincent and Ball, 2001). Women fitting this profile are also most likely to be able to afford such care.

Table 3.2 provides a typology of formal and informal childcare users and illustrates that there are clear divisions between the profiles of user groups. For example, users of formal childcare are more likely to be older mothers in dual career households with a high level of education. These mothers are also likely to be highly geographically mobile with a lack of local kinship networks. By contrast the users of informal childcare tend to be younger mothers on lower incomes working in lower status occupations with irregular work hours. This group of women tend not to be geographically mobile and therefore are more likely to have strong local kinship networks to rely on.

Table 3.2: Characteristics of Formal and Informal Childcare Users

	Formal Care	**Informal Care**
Characteristics of mother/family	High income	Low income
	Work standard hours (part-time or full-time)	Frequent non-standard working hours
	Older mothers	Younger mothers
	Highly educated	Low level education
	Dual career households	Single parent
	High geographic mobility	Low geographic mobility
	Lack of local kinship networks	Strong local kinship networks

Another factor that has been shown to influence women's choices about childcare relates to the perceived educational and social benefits of formal care to the child. There is, for example, significant evidence to suggest that some mothers choose formal childcare places for their children because they themselves value the educational opportunities available to their children in such a setting. Respondents in Vincent and Ball's (2001) study of middle class mothers highlighted the importance of pre-school childcare in preparing the child for school both socially and educationally. In Holloway's (1998) research there was a clear class-based differential in this respect. Whilst the mothers in her study all highlighted the need to 'prepare their children for school' in terms of getting them used to being away from home for certain hours each day, only the more affluent 'middle class' mothers spoke of a need to prepare their children educationally through the use of nursery based care (Holloway,1998:37). Nevertheless for both groups of mothers there was recognition that it would be beneficial to use some kind of childcare from around the age of three. Brannen et al. (2004:73) suggest that amongst parents they found there was 'still a wariness of non-family care, at least until children had reached a certain age when some form of part-time group experience is considered ... normatively appropriate: typically this is now around three years of age'.

Nursery care, then, is often chosen by mothers who attach importance to the perceived educational benefits of this type of environment. This type of formal care is also often seen as beneficial once children reach a certain age. At this point the benefits of group care in a school type environment are perceived to be important in 'socialising' the child before full-time school commences. This viewpoint has been widely propounded by the media. For example, Bunting (2005:226) suggests that

'there are clear signs that while for children over the age of three, nurseries advance cognitive skills and socialisation, before that age they have a damaging effect on emotional development, leading to more anxious and aggressive behaviour'

Indeed, nursery care frequently receives high profile negative publicity through television programmes and newspaper articles. For example, an article in the *Guardian* in July 2004 had the headline 'Fear on nursery care forces rethink' and

emphasised negative aspects of nursery care. The article suggested that 'The government is reconsidering its strategy on childcare in the face of mounting evidence that day nurseries for children under two can lead to increased incidence of antisocial behaviour and aggression' (Bunting, 2004). The following month *BBC* television broadcast a documentary about nurseries, 'Nurseries Undercover – The Real Story', further fuelling a distrust of this type of childcare. As Ball and Vincent (2005:562) suggest, this programme highlighted standards of care in three 'apparently reputable' nurseries. The programme showed that neither levels of hygiene or the provision of care met even basic levels in the case study nurseries.

As suggested in the preceding discussion, class-based divisions in childcare practices are significant in determining care outcomes. For example, during the 1970s Oakley (1976:199) argued that whilst day nursery care was used by 'economically underprivileged mothers, the practice of employing nannies or au pair girls to care for babies was 'an upper-class method' of care'. Such class divisions in childcare preferences remain widespread (Roper, 2006; Vincent and Ball, 2006) with nannies and 'more exclusive private day nurseries' (Ball *et al.*, 2004:491) at one end of the spectrum and state provided nurseries at the other. As Ball *et al.*, (2004:491) argue

'Childcare may not, at first sight, seem to be a key arena of class reproduction but ... that is exactly what it is. Childcare opportunities and choices are strongly stratified and very closely tied to family assets'.

For example, Gregson and Lowe (1995:229) describe the way in which the middle class women in their study sought care for their children with childminders who 'were identifiably middle class ...like themselves, with similar attitudes and ideas, particularly in relation to childcare'. They found that middle class women 'chose not to place their child in the care of a childminder whom they perceived to be in a different class position to themselves'.

Indeed, the act of choosing a carer who 'resembles' the mother is highly significant. Not only do mothers have a tendency to seek out carers who are similar to themselves they also try to develop relationships with carers which mimic familial ties. For example, Vincent and Ball (2001:644) found that women described their carers

using similes of the family such as 'she's like a second mum'. The personalising of the relationship between the carer and the parent, behaviour that Gregson and Lowe (1995) refer to as 'false kinship' has been identified in other studies. Uttal (1997), for example, has also highlighted the 'significance of shared values' particularly for mothers whose children spend long periods of time in the care of others. Within this culture of shared values specific childcare practices were of key importance. Shared attitudes between the parent and the carer in respect of 'basic' issues such as discipline and feeding were important in forging bonds. Uttal (1997) found that these shared values assumed such importance that, regardless of other factors such as affordability and location, mothers would reject childcare which did not match their outlook on childrearing.

Class-based tensions are played out visibly when attention is turned to the role of childminders. Vincent and Ball (2006:120) describe difficulties associated with what they term 'different class-based values and practices' which emerged amongst the mothers in their study when they were seeking suitable childminder places. They focus here on the tensions which arose around practices such at the types of food offered by childminders and the use of the television in the domestic space.

The role of childminders is fascinating. For some women, as suggested above, childminders provide a good care compromise because a single carer looks after the child in a domestic setting. In this sense, childminder care is the care choice which most closely resembles the ideal of home-based 'mother care'. As Vincent and Ball (2006:118-119) have argued 'part of the appeal of home-based care is that it offers a (partial) re-creation of the mother-child relationship; the warmth and privacy of the home are set against the cold, public arena of a nursery'.

For some mothers the 'home environment' provided by childminder care is highly significant because it replicates the ideology of motherhood; that is one to one care provided in a home environment, as closely as possible. However, for other mothers the domestic setting represents a major concern. Many mothers have negative perceptions of childminders and 'general attitudes to childminding still tend to provoke concern rooted in images of noisy, messy homes, full of crying children who are given insufficient attention' (Sharpe, 1984:115). Nevertheless, Vincent and Ball (2006:117) found that amongst their respondents the childminder environment was often perceived

as the most appropriate providers of care for babies and pre-verbal children, particularly when contrasted with institutional nature of day nurseries. The discussion below moves on to examine the role of informal childcare provision as a childcare strategy.

(b) Informal Childcare Strategies

The preceding discussion has examined perceptions and patterns of use of formal childcare facilities, primarily nurseries and childminders. Although the recent increase in the use of such facilities is significant, informal childcare practices remain the childcare preference of most mothers. The importance of informal childcare is examined in more detail in the following section.

The most striking trend emerging from published data on childcare decisions is the over-riding importance of informal childcare strategies. For example, Windebank (2001) cites evidence from the British Household Panel Survey (1991) which reveals that almost two-thirds (61%) of households with children under 12 years old arranged childcare exclusively within the nuclear family unit. This was facilitated in the following ways: 28% of women worked while the children were at school, negating the need for any other care; 23% of women relied on care provided by their partners; 6% of mothers worked at home; and in a further 4% of households the children looked after themselves. A further 22% of mothers used care sourced from outside the nuclear family but within the category of informal and unpaid care, for example, relatives, friends and neighbours (Windebank, 2001). As highlighted in the preceding discussion, this leaves only 13% of mothers accessing paid and formal care in the form of nurseries and childminders; indicating that this is clearly a far less important means of provision.

Clearly then, informal care plays an invaluable role in facilitating the participation of mothers in the labour market. Such care is usually cheaper and more flexible than formal care and, importantly, this flexibility 'allows easier management of the interface between childcare and workplace settings' (Skinner, 2003:2). Certainly informal care 'plays a major role in plugging the gaps in formal childcare' (Skinner, 2003:2). These gaps exist for a number of reasons such as an insufficient number of childcare places for children under 3 and a lack of formal provision for parents who are employed for non-standard hours. However, the most important aspect of informal care is that it is the

childcare strategy of choice for the majority of women and the reasons for this preference are outlined in the following section.

Without doubt the lack of public policy relating to state provided childcare and the lack of state provided childcare provision has had an important influence on women's decisions about childcare since the end of the Second World War. As argued earlier in this chapter, the assumption has been that care is a private matter to be resolved within the family. Accordingly state provision has, until recently, been very limited. Indeed, until relatively recently informal care was the only option for many women because nursery care in its current form is a very recent development.

As Cotterill (1992:603) argues, the lack of social policy relating to childcare has been due to the '...implicit assumption made by policy makers that relatives are an available resource' prepared to provide support to working parents when necessary. Thus the lack of formal care, combined with little availability of low cost formal care, has meant that many women have relied heavily on kinship networks, in particular grandmothers, for childcare assistance (Brannen and Moss, 1991; Cotterill, 1992; Sharpe, 1984; Yeandle, 1987). As Gowler and Legge (1982:149) describe, 'the preferred solution (to childcare problems) seems to be leaving the baby with granny (if the grandmother is not herself employed or vehemently disapproving of young mother working outside the home)'.

As argued in Chapter Two, there is a great deal of evidence to suggest that informal childcare is the strategy of choice for the majority of mothers (Bell and La Valle, 2003; Baines et al., 2003). Even amongst those mothers who are formal care users, the preference appears to be family-based informal care. Indeed, so accepted is the view that family care is best, that Halliday and Little (2001:428) found that in their research 'respondents often had great difficulty articulating why they used their family in preference to formal groups and services, suggesting it was something so well defined and accepted that it should not need to be articulated'.

Brannen et al (2004:73) have argued that even though contemporary mothers perceive the benefits of formal childcare, such as increased socialisation and educational opportunities, there remains 'a wariness of non-family care'. Similarly,

Houston and Marks (2000:9) found that although some 78% of mothers in their research were using some kind of formal childcare 'the women showed a clear preference for children to be cared for by other family members such as grandparents... Across all groups of women there was a very strong view that maternal or family care was preferable for pre-verbal children'.

Certainly care provided by grandparents has been central to the facilitation of employment for many women both historically and to the present day (Brannen *et al.,* 2004) and this care strategy is receiving increasing attention from academics (Cotterill, 1992; Wheelock and Jones, 2002; Vandell *et al.,* 2003). As Table 3.2 outlined, informal care, such as grandparent care, is most likely to be used as a childcare strategy amongst families who have lower incomes, where the mother works non-standard hours, is younger, less educated and single. Wheelock and Jones (2002) found a high level of reliance upon grandparent care in their research carried out in Tyneside. They explain that population mobility is low in this region and as such close kinship networks can be sustained. Perhaps not surprisingly given this characteristic of the local population, Wheelock and Jones (2002) found very high numbers of families using what the authors term 'complementary' childcare, sourced mainly from grandparents. By contrast, other research has shown that amongst women with higher population mobility, such as women in higher status, professional careers, access to informal support is lacking and there is, therefore, a far higher reliance on market-based care amongst such groups (Yeandle *et al.,* 2002; Reynolds et al. 2003).

Although such care arrangements mean that families do not usually have to pay for childcare, other non-financial costs can be associated with family care. Cotterill (1992) highlights the way in which kinship networks are usually based on a system of reciprocity whereby help is given on the basis that later the 'favour' will be returned. She cites the example of a mother-in-law caring for her grandchildren who can later expect reciprocal care for herself, provided by her daughter-in-law.

The importance of kinship ties and reciprocity within families are highly significant as family are usually the 'preferred source of assistance both in times of crisis and in long term reciprocal exchanges' and this appears to be particularly true in the case of childcare (Cotterill, 1992:605). However, Scott and Innes (2003:9.2) found

that amongst their respondents kinship, and its implied reciprocity meant that, 'it was considered that things could be legitimately asked of families that cannot be asked of other people' and, as such, that non-familial informal care was not widely used amongst their respondents. As Young and Wilmott (1957:39) suggest kinship ties as so strong that

'the daughter's labours are in a hundred little ways shared with the older woman whose days of child-bearing (but not of child-rearing) are over. When the time comes for the mother to need assistance, the daughter reciprocates ...by returning the care which she has herself received'.

Care provided by grandmothers is, however, differentiated between the maternal and paternal grandmothers and some women express a preference for their mothers, rather than their mothers-in-law, to provide the main grandparent care. One reason for this pattern is that women invariably have responsibility for organising childcare arrangements (Uttal, 2002; Wheelock and Jones, 2002) and are more likely to arrange care with their own mothers. Consequently, maternal grandmothers appear to be the main childcare providers from within the family (Cotterill, 1992; Ferri and Smith, 2003). According to Cotterill (1992:606) a further reason for this pattern is that the mother-daughter tie is seen as a special one, somehow more 'natural' than relationships with their mothers-in-law.

The importance of this special kinship link between mothers and daughters is well established (Young and Willmott, 1957; Allan, 1996; McGlone et al., 1999). For example, Young and Wilmott (1957) found in their classic community study that the mother-daughter tie, 'based on mutual aid and support' was particularly strong. The role of mothers in offering both emotional and practical support to their daughters when they themselves become mothers is also well documented (Phoenix, 1991; Oakley, 1992; Mitchell and Green, 2002). As Mitchell and Green (2002:4) suggest, traditionally for new mothers, ''Mum' was...an important source of support, as demonstrated by the constant exchange of services and help, such as washing, shopping and baby-sitting'.

For many women, then, mothers are key carers. However, it is not only mothers who are important in this role. Wider female kinship networks have also been shown to

provide women with an important source of support. As Oakley (1979:46) suggests:

'...The way we live now most women have only their husbands to turn to ... Yet the strain is too much for the nuclear family to take; mothers, mothers-in-law, sisters, aunts, can be saving graces...'.

In Phoenix's (1991) study of young mothers she found that 'women's own relatives were more likely than anyone else to provide them with practical support' (1991:174). Likewise, Mitchell and Green (2002:12) suggest that 'kinship networks, especially female networks frequently provided an important source of informal support – practically, emotionally and financially'.

Clearly then family based childcare is highly significant for many different and varied reasons, practical, emotional and ideological. However, an important trend identified by Hofferth and Phillips (1987) in their US based research, revealed that the use of childcare provided within families has been declining in recent decades while the use of formal facilities has been increasing. Whilst kinship networks have traditionally proved a vital source of support for mothers, particularly amongst those mothers and daughters who live in close proximity, social changes such as increased geographic mobility have resulted in less face to face contact between family members (McGlone *et al.*, 1999). Middle class women, by virtue of different career trajectories and increased geographic mobility, are less likely to be as closely involved with their own mothers as working class women (Allan, 1996) and consequently more likely to be reliant on formal care.

Other women may themselves be acting not only as carers for their children but also for elderly parents or parents suffering from ill-health. In a study of childcare practices in Glasgow, Innes and Scott (2003) found that within many families there were incidences of poor health amongst the grandparent generation resulting in adult children caring for their parents rather than receiving help with childcare from the older generation. A pattern, which they suggest, 'is a growing issue for working-class women' (Innes and Scott, 2003:6.9).

Finally here, Brannen *et al* (2004:72) found that mothers in their research had

some anxieties about relying on grandmothers to provide childcare. Women in their research felt it was 'an unfair imposition' to expect grandparents to act as childcarers once they had reached retirement age and the mothers worried that grandparents would 'feel obliged to provide care'.

Conclusion

This chapter has argued that historically childcare has been treated as an individual matter to be resolved within the family. As such there has been a lack of explicit policy relating to childcare and a lack of state involvement in childcare provision. Indeed, as Gregson and Lowe (1994:230) suggest 'the best form of childcare in Britain is still considered to be that provided by the child's natural mother (and) the best place for that child is still considered to be the child's home'.

Towards the end of the twentieth century the increased demand for childcare began to be met by childcare providers operating in the private sector. Care provision increased accordingly but the cost of care has been high and childcare has been far from universally accessible. The Labour government's 1998 'National Childcare Strategy' has gone some way to addressing the childcare needs of all families but the key aim of increasing the availability of low cost childcare may not be the solution if mothers express a preference for other, usually informal types of care.

This chapter provided a typology of childcare (see Table 3.1) as a means of clarifying what is a complex picture of care provision. The landscape of childcare is a bewilderingly complicated mix of private and state provision, formal and informal provision, paid and unpaid care, part-time and full-time and so on. Indeed, as highlighted in the chapter, there are as many as twenty-six different types of care provision. This chapter has attempted to clarify some of the most widely used terminology relating to this sector.

Given the complexity of the childcare market it is perhaps not surprising that mothers construct equally complex rationales for their choices relating to childcare. These choices are underpinned by ideological beliefs about the most appropriate care for children. This leads some mothers, for example, to choose formal nursery based

care, arguing that this is the 'best' environment for children, whilst others chose childminder care believing that the domestic setting is the one which most closely resembles the ideal model of a mother at home. The chapter therefore provides a discussion which begins to disentangle and clarify the rationale behind women's choices and decisions about childcare.

The final part of the chapter focussed on a particular type of informal care, which is care provided by grandparents, in particular, grandmothers. The role of grandmothers in the provision of care and in the transmission of intergenerational values about childcare is a central theme of this thesis. With the exception of Gerson's (1985) study of working mothers in the USA, and more recently Brannen *et al's.* (2004) UK-based study, there are few detailed, qualitative intergenerational or cohort studies of women attempting to combine both paid work and domestic responsibilities. A key question this thesis seeks to examine further is the extent to which childcare strategies have altered to reflect increased formal provision, or if mothers now tend to continue using the often informal strategies adopted by their own mothers and facilitated by them.

Brannen (2003:10.4) has suggested that intergenerational ties are vitally important in childcare and work decisions. She asks 'how far … different patterns of intergenerational relations represent strategies which family members adopt and how far … they occur as a consequence of habits and dispositions?' Wheelock and Jones (2002) found evidence to suggest that intergenerational ties are of extreme importance, impacting on decisions relating to care of the children in a number of ways. For example, maternal grandmothers were seen as 'the next best thing' for childcare when the parents were unavailable. In addition, the influence of maternal grandmothers and 'the shared values and 'ways of doing things' between mothers and daughters is one of the social reproduction mechanisms through which the gendered provision, organisation and management of childcare was reinforced' (Wheelock and Jones, 2002:451). The role of intergenerational transmission represents a key question that this thesis aims to examine, and this theme is revisited in Chapters Six and Seven. The next chapter, Chapter Four, presents the research design and methodological approach used in the process of data collection for this thesis.

Chapter Four

Research Design and Methodological Approach

Chapter Four

Research Design and Methodological Approach

Introduction

The previous chapters have provided a review of the literature pertinent to this study. In this chapter an account of the methodological approach is provided alongside a discussion of the justification of the chosen approach. The chapter begins by providing an outline of the sample who provided the data for this research. This section is followed by a discussion of the methodological approaches to data collection and provides a rationale for the approach taken in the study: the semi-structured interview. This is followed by a description of the geographical context and location of the research and fieldwork. The process of data recording, transcribing and analysis is then recounted. Limitations of the approach, such as issues of memory and recall, are outlined in the final section.

The Sample

This thesis aims to find out more about women's employment and childcare decisions and to examine the extent to which social and cultural reproduction through and across generations impacts on women's decisions about childcare. With this aim it was important to locate a sample which 'fitted' the profile required: maternal family chains made up of grandmothers and mothers with the prerequisite that both links of the chain had been, or were, active in the labour market as mothers of young children. Therefore, a sample of women was sought with the following criteria used as a guideline:

1) Women in the sample were all mothers and/or grandmothers;

2) Grandmothers were all mothers of at least one daughter. Those grandmothers who fitted the criteria but only had male children were excluded from the study

as were women of the grandmother generation whose daughters did not have children or whose daughters did not work;

3) Both mothers and grandmothers must have participated in the labour market when their children were growing up, ideally working whilst at least one child was pre-school age;

4) In addition, at least one of each of the grandmothers' children had to be female, with her own children and an employment history since motherhood;

5) Where the grandmother had more than one daughter fitting this criteria attempts were made to interview all daughters.

The original aim of this thesis was to include three generations of females: a grandmother, mother and daughter, from each family chain in the interview process. The three generations would have included a grandmother with an adult daughter and at least one granddaughter old enough to be interviewed. However, it was decided at a very early stage of the research, prior to the commencement of the fieldwork, that it was not feasible to interview granddaughters and this group were eliminated from the research plan. The reason for this decision was twofold; first, it proved difficult to identify female family chains with members in each category. Second, in the families where each female chain was 'complete', the granddaughters in all but two families were deemed too young to take part in a meaningful interview, as all were under ten years old. It was decided that the value of these granddaughter interviews would have been limited given that none of the potential interviewees were yet mothers themselves; therefore to ask about future childcare arrangements was rather an abstract request. Whilst there are a number of studies which have asked young women to discuss their career and family plans and aspirations for the future (see, for example, Marks and Houston, 2002; Davey, 1998; Tuck et al., 1994; Sharpe, 1984) the participants in these cases were all of secondary school age. It is questionable how much meaningful data could be gleaned from girls of primary school age when asking them about plans for the distant future.

In one of the two identified family chains where the granddaughter was old enough to take part, the grandmother who was the 'gatekeeper' for this family became seriously ill and was unable to take part in the study. This meant it was no longer possible to contact the other family members. In the other family chain the existence of a granddaughter aged over 10 years old was discovered at a very late stage in the research when the decision to omit this group had already been made. The omission of this group from the research in discussed in more detail later in this chapter.

The majority of the women who were interviewed for this study were initially identified through an ESRC funded research project entitled 'From Young Workers to Older Workers: Reflections on Work in the Life Process' carried out at the Centre for Labour Market Studies between 2001-2004 (see Goodwin and O'Connor, 2005 and O'Connor and Goodwin, 2004). The project was a restudy of an earlier project originally carried out in Leicester in the 1960s which had involved over 800 interviews with school leavers at the time. In 2000 these data were rediscovered and some of the original respondents were traced and re-interviewed. Although both male and female school leavers were interviewed as part of the original project, it proved much more difficult to trace and re-contact the female participants. Many of the women had changed their surname on marriage and so use of the telephone directory, which had been the most successful mechanism used in tracing the men, was successful in identifying only one of the women. The eventual sample for the restudy was made up of 90 men and 10 women.

The 10 women who were traced were found by various means. For example, one female respondent was discovered only when her husband was traced and she recalled that she had also taken part in the original study. The website 'friends reunited' was the source of two of the original female respondents, a number of women responded to an advert in the local newspaper, and finally, one woman was traced through a male family friend who had also taken part in the 1960s study. The original intention for this thesis was to interview the female respondents a further time with a focus on their childcare strategies. However, of the 10 women identified only one

individual fitted the criteria used for this research. Amongst the other nine women, two had given up work on becoming a mother, four had sons rather than daughters and three did not have any grandchildren. The individual who did fit the criteria also agreed to a follow up interview, however, before taking part in the study she fell seriously ill and had to withdraw.

The individuals who were successfully traced and re-interviewed for the Young Worker Project re-study, primarily males, were asked detailed questions about their employment histories. They were also asked for brief details about their family life and, if relevant, work histories of partners were noted. It became apparent that many of the wives of the men in the study had equally fascinating work histories and a significant number of these women had worked in paid employment when their children were growing up. During some of the interviews the comments of the women were followed up and exploratory questions were asked about childcare. It is from here that the inspiration for this thesis came. As the earlier chapters revealed, although the numbers of women in the labour market has increased rapidly in recent decades, it is widely assumed that historically few women actively participated in paid employment. However, many of these women, from largely working class backgrounds, appeared to have complex work histories with parallel complex childcare patterns.

It seemed logical, therefore, to use this group as the sample for the study. Therefore, the sample for this thesis was recruited by means of convenience sampling (Bryman, 2004). The interview data collected during the ESRC project interviews enabled a filtering process to take place and only women who fitted the criteria for this study (outlined above) were re-contacted. The women, who had been asked if they were interested in taking part in a study about women and childcare at the time of their husband's interview, were sent a letter (Appendix 1) which outlined the aims of the thesis. Only the women who had expressed an interest in taking part at the time of their husband's interview were contacted in this way. A follow-up telephone call was made a few days after the letter was sent. At this point the interviews were arranged. In addition, an evening presentation was held to celebrate the completion of the ESRC

funded project (April 2005). All respondents and guests were invited to the University of Leicester to learn about the findings of the research project *'From Young Workers to Older Workers: Reflections on Work in the Life Process'.* At the end of the presentation the women in the audience, the majority of whom were the wives of the men in the study, were asked if they would be interested in taking part in further research. The rationale for seeking to recruit in this way was that some of the women had been identified as fitting the sample criteria for this thesis but had not been asked about taking part in an interview. Slides outlining the research aims, the sample criteria and relevant contact details were displayed (Appendix 2).

From a potential sample of some seventy women, ten were identified as fitting the sample profile. A further five women were identified from personal contacts at a local school and workplace. The final sample is outlined in Table 4.1 and as the table illustrates the final sample consisted of two distinct groups of respondents. The first group, or the 'pivot' generation were the wives of the men who took part in the original project or women from broadly the same age group identified through personal contacts. These women were mainly born in the 1940s and began their families in the 1960s. The second group are the daughters of these women, mainly born in the 1960s and who have had children themselves, mainly in the 1990s and into the 2000s. All respondent names have been changed for reasons of confidentiality and data protection.

The majority of the women interviewed were white (three of the younger generation were of dual heritage) and most had left school with few or no qualifications. Amongst the older generation there were two single parents, both of whom had brought their children up without a partner for the majority of time. There were three unpartnered mothers in the younger generation. Only the women in one family chain (the Ball family) were educated to degree level, with Hilary Ball holding a first degree and a teaching qualification and Fiona, a research scientist with a higher degree. One other respondent from the younger generation held a first degree and a teaching qualification (Kirsty).

Table 4.1 The Interview Sample

	Family Chain	Grandmother (year of birth)	Mother (year of birth)	Grandchildren (year of birth*)
1)	Anderson	Diane (1950)	Sarah (1969) Sonia (1971) Vicky (1971)	Charlotte (1990)
2)	Ball	Hilary (1938)	Fiona (1961)	Molly (1996)
3)	Boddy	Pauline (1942)	N/A	N/A
4)	Chapman	Sandra (1949)	Becky (1973)	Daniel (2003)
5)	Fry	Maggie (1932)	Ruth (1969)	Megan (1997)
6)	Hodges	Gill (1947)	Layla (1977)	Ellie (2000)
7)	Hughes	Maureen (1935)	Helen (1957) Lousie (1960)	Caitlin (1998)
8)	Maclean	Eileen (1946)	Jo (1974)	Mia (2000)
9)	O'Loughlin	Cheryl (1955)	Vanessa (1972)	India (1993)
10)	Parker	Liz (1949)	Debbie (1968) Natalie (1971)	Reece (1989)
11)	Seabrook	Pat (1945)	N/A	N/A
12)	Smith	Marilyn (1948)	Alison (1970)	Chloe (1994)
13)	Talbot	Brenda (1946)	Kathy (1973)	Sam (1999)
14)	Utting	Peggy (1941)	Kirsty (1963)	Amelia (2003)

(* only the date of birth of the oldest grandchild is noted here)

As the table illustrates there were two cases in which the daughter was not interviewed. In the case of the Boddy family, this was because the grandmother (Pauline) was reluctant to provide contact details for her two daughters. After a number of requests the information needed to set up the interviews with either one or both of her daughters was not provided and it was therefore decided to abandon this part of the family chain. In the case of Pat and Jenny Seabrook, Jenny had been present at the evening event and had actually persuaded her mother to take part in the study and had agreed to participate herself. Jenny's contact details were provided by Pat after her interview and contact was made and an interview time, date and venue was agreed.

However, on arrival at the agreed venue, in this case the respondent's home, there was no response even after a thirty-minute period. Follow up telephone calls were made to a mobile telephone number and a letter was sent but neither strategy was successful. Pat had two other daughters who also fitted the criteria and could have been interviewed. However, Pat acted as a 'gatekeeper' and denied access with the comment:

'you wouldn't want to interview them, they've got their own business with the taxis and they've just done the same things, taking their kids to work with them and sharing it'.

(Pat, age 59, cleaner, three children)

Despite reassurances that this would make for an interesting interview, contact details were not provided and this element of the family chain had to be abandoned.

Data Collection

Interviews were arranged by telephone and respondents were given complete flexibility as to when and where the interview should take place. Times and dates were suggested and evening and weekend appointments were offered. A number of possible venues (their home or workplace, the university or another convenient location) were suggested to respondents. The majority of interviews took place in the respondent's home with the exception of three interviews, which took place at the University of Leicester due to respondent preference, and two interviews which took place in the home of another family member. In one case a daughter was interviewed in her mother's home and in the other case the mother was interviewed in her daughter's home. All the interviews took place between March and September 2005.

Each interview lasted between one and two hours and all interviews were recorded. Two slightly different semi-structured interview schedules were used as question guides (Appendix 3 and 4). The first of these schedules (Appendix 3) was designed for the interviews with grandmothers and the schedule included a number of

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questions which were not applicable to the younger generation, for example questions about care of grandchildren. The second schedule (Appendix 4) included slightly different questions in some sections and some questions, such as those about grandchildren, were omitted. Each interview began and concluded with a standard script (Appendix 3 and 4). All respondents were provided with a letter explaining data protection guidelines (Appendix 5) and these were reiterated at the beginning and end of the interview.

The data for this thesis was collected through means of a semi-structured interview. As May (2001:120) suggests, 'Interviews yield rich insights into people's biographies, experiences, opinions, values, aspirations, attitudes and feelings'. Semi-structured interviews, in particular, are a valuable technique because:

'interviewed subjects' viewpoints are more likely to be expressed in a relatively openly designed interview situation than in a standardized interview or questionnaire' (Flick, 2002:74).

The use of a questionnaire was eliminated at an early stage of the research design. It was felt that this approach to data collection was not suited to this type of research. As Brannen *et al* (2004:5) suggest:

'There is a trade-off to be made between depth and breadth: between understanding and developing theory in particular conditions and on the basis of specific cases and making inferences to the wider population ... understanding a complex social phenomenon, a strategy based upon 'thick description' of a small number of case studies (Geertz, 1973), is preferable to the 'thin description' which is generated by studying a large number of cases'.

In addition one of the key aims of this research is to respond to McRae's (2003:331) plea for 'personal interviews' with mothers to more fully explore 'the interactions between women's lifestyle preferences, their employment choices and the

cost or availability of childcare' As McRae (2003) argues, whilst there are a range of valuable studies in this areas the majority are based on survey data such as the 10 yearly population census, the Labour Force Survey and the British Household Panel Survey (Hunt, 1968; Martin and Roberts, 1984; Dex *et al.* 1996; Brannen and Moss, 1998; McRae, 2003). With the exception of work by Sharpe (1984) and Brannen (1992), there is little detailed, qualitative research which looks at the childcare choices made by working mothers over time and this thesis aims to contribute to the qualitative research on this area.

Life history interviews (Bryman, 2004) or biographical interviews were considered as a potential approach to data collection early on in this research. It was thought that this method would be effective in eliciting the information required e.g. how daughters of working mothers perceived their childhood when reflecting on it and the extent to which this may or may not have influenced their childcare decisions. However, it became apparent that this method would result in the collection of large amounts of unnecessary data, largely irrelevant to the research aims. Indeed, childcare arrangements and memories of experiences of childcare when growing up account for relatively short periods of the individual life history. For the purposes of this thesis it was therefore necessary to use a slightly more structured interview tool, such as the semi-structured interview.

Finally, here, the collection of work histories was also considered. This approach was used in a pilot interview and, as a result of the pilot interview the approach was abandoned. The reason for this was that the work history approach became little more than a kind of 'memory test' for the respondent who was asked to provide quite complex facts about previous employment, stretching back some thirty years. It became apparent that structuring the interview in this way would involve considerable time for respondents to recall and 'work out' dates of employment. It was decided that such details were not pertinent to the research and added very little additional context to the individual's account. The original intention had been to ask each respondent to discuss their employment status at the time each of their children

were born and to identify their childcare strategy during each employment period. It quickly became clear that work histories and domestic life did not dovetail neatly in to periods bound by clear dates and/or employers and this approach served only to confuse both the respondent and the interviewer.

The Interview Schedule

Two separate interview schedules were designed (Appendix 3 and 4). The schedules were very similar although one was designed as a guide for interviews with grandmothers and the other was designed for interviews with mothers. As described above, each interview began with a scripted explanation of the research, the researchers credentials and an assurance of data protection. The format of the interview was also explained at this stage. Although these were semi-structured interviews with a pre-determined set of questions and topics to cover, each interview was different. Questions were asked in different orders according to the way that each respondent answered the early questions. However, each interview included questions in the following key topic areas: family life, work history, childcare strategies, domestic responsibilities, attitudes towards women, work and childcare, intergenerational influence and basic biographical details. In designing the interview schedule, the research instrument used by Lawler (2000:177-180) was used as a guide. Lawler's (2000) interview schedule was structured around a series of themes that included a section focussed on 'intergenerational transmission' and another on 'mother-daughter relationships'. The interview schedule used for this thesis used a similar structure, although the questions asked differed considerably.

Both the interview schedules began with questions about the respondent's family life. Grandmothers were asked about their children and grandchildren (ages, gender, name) and the mothers were asked the same questions about their children. These questions were designed to be asked in this order so that the interview began by focussing on an 'easy' topic. It was hoped that this would help to relax the respondent before commencing the key questions. These questions about family composition were

also helpful as an aide memoire for the interviewer. Having provided details about children and grandchildren all the women were then asked to describe their employment situation when they first became pregnant. This led logically on to asking questions about the women's work and childcare intentions prior to the birth of their first child and then to ask women to describe what actually happened. The interview ended by asking the women for basic biographical data about education and plans for the future. Once the interview had concluded each interviewee was asked if she had any questions about the research project. This often opened up interesting discussions on aspects of the women's lives which were not covered in the interview.

A letter of thanks (Appendix 6) was sent to each respondent a few days after the interview had taken place. The letter reiterated the confidentiality of the interview process and provided contact details of the researcher and brief information about the next stage of the research.

Gender, Employment and Childcare in Leicester: the Historical Context

It is useful to provide here a brief historical overview of the relationship between employment trends and gender in Leicester at the time when the pivot women left school in the early 1960s and the contemporary landscape of the city.

The choice of Leicester as a location for the research was, in part, due to the original 1960s project being carried out in the city. However, Leicester is also an interesting location for the subject of this thesis because the traditional industries based in the city had, historically, employed high numbers of women, for example, as overlockers in the hosiery industry (Brown *et al.,* 1964). Leicester is an industrial city and the women in this sample were mostly working class in background. This provides an interesting contrast to other research on motherhood and childcare, such as Vincent and Ball's (2006:6) work, which focuses specifically on 'professional and managerial middle class users' [of childcare] in 'two distinctive middle-class localities in London'.

At the start of the 1960s, when most of the women in the grandmother generation left school, Leicester offered excellent employment prospects for unqualified school leavers because of the wealth of low skilled jobs available in the local key industries of engineering, textiles and clothing and footwear manufacture. In the mid 1960s these 'three industrial groups dominated manufacturing industry in Leicester' (Pye, 1972: 375).

According to Ashton and Field (1976), young people unable to obtain a place at a grammar school were unlikely to leave school with any qualifications and would leave as soon as possible, usually at the age of 15. For the most part the women included in the sample fitted this profile. They were perceived as less academically able and expected therefore to leave school at the earliest opportunity in order to take low skill jobs requiring few or no qualifications, often in hosiery or footwear manufacture. The prevailing attitude was that these women would give up work once married and settled with a family because there was little reason for them to return to the job market given the type of low status jobs previously held. They were, however, expected to enter the labour market for the intervening period. Most of the women interviewed for this thesis fitted this profile. All except one of the grandmothers left school at the age of 15 or 16 and entered low skilled work in hosiery and footwear factories, offices and shops.

By the 1980s, the period when the daughters of the pivot generation were leaving school, employment prospects in Leicester had changed dramatically. The traditional industries in Leicester were hit very hard by the recession in the 1980s. Hosiery and boot and shoe factories, which traditionally employed many female school leavers, were disappearing rapidly throughout the 1980s. Only one of the younger generation secured employment in a textile factory on leaving school. She attributed this to the fact that her mother already worked in the factory. She also explained that although she began her working life in a traditional Leicester industrial setting of a hosiery factory, the wider changes in the local labour market had a direct impact on her own career path:

My mum worked at Benjamin Russells and her best friend was the manageress and she said "oh does Alison want to come and temp for us?" as you do, you think "oh yeah". So I went straight to Benjamin Russells just before my 16th birthday and I stayed there for quite a few years. And then I moved to Kemptons and then that closed down and then I got into temping, office work, which I'd never done before in my life, I'd never... I'd always been a factory worker.

[HO'C: Do you think you were one of the last school leavers to go into that sort of work?] Yeah cos it was dwindling off because Benjamin Russell's they were quite a big employer, it's like Corah's, you get Corah's and Benjamin Russell's and then they started to like go downhill and then Kemptons took over them, we weren't at Kemptoms very long before that more or less closed and you could tell the whole hosiery industry was on its way down. So yeah I think there weren't very many hosiery places left by the time I left.

(Alison, age 35, office worker, two children)

Alison's move into office work, based in a call centre environment on the outskirts of the city, reflects the type of job in which most of the women in the younger age group were employed. The traditional Leicester employers such as hosiery factories, which had a highly feminized workforce had fallen in to decline during the 1970s. As such, once the younger generation of women left school there were few jobs remaining in this sector and jobs in the service sector had begun to predominate.

Data Recording and Analysis

The majority of interviews were taped on a standard tape recorder (Sanyo Talk Book Pro) using 90-minute cassette tapes. These were then sent for transcription by a third party. The use of the tape recorder, whilst successful for the most part, did result in a number of problems common to the use of this technology. For example, on one

occasion the tape recorder had developed a fault which was only evident when listening back to the interview. In this case the tape recorder seemed to stop and start throughout the interview distorting some of the speech. On another occasion the tape recorder though apparently operative did not record any sound at all. In both these cases detailed notes including verbatim quotes were taken during the interview using a mode of shorthand and the technique of writing up notes on exiting the field proved invaluable.

Towards the end of the data collection period a digital voice recorder (Olympus DS-2300) was acquired for the purpose of recording interviews and this proved to be very successful. The sound quality was vastly superior compared to the original tape recorder and the device allowed the recorded interview to be downloaded to a computer and the file emailed to a transcriber. This bypassed the need for sending cassette types by post and speeded up the overall process of transcription.

Permission to use the tape recorder was granted by all interviewees at the start of the interview and in each case respondents were told that recording could be stopped at any point during the interview, on their request. Whilst none of the respondents explicitly objected to the use of the tape recorder or voice recorder, and the recorder appeared not to influence responses or 'inhibit' responses to questions (May, 2001:137), there were occasions when respondents referred to the tape recorder. One of the respondents, when asked a question she was slightly uncomfortable with, asked, 'who's going to listen to the tape?' Reassurances were offered and the interview continued. For other respondents no reference was made to the tape recorder but, once the interview had drawn to a close and the tape recorder was turned off the respondents appeared to relax and talk in a noticeably more relaxed manner. This may have been because the recording device had been switched off but it could also be attributable to the act of completing the interview and answering the 'set' questions. Indeed, a number of interviewees only asked personal questions of the interviewer at the end of the interview once the recorder was switched off. This may, however, have been more to

do with the final question, which asked respondents if they had any questions, than to the recorder being switched off.

Shortly after each interview was completed a set of interview notes were written up as part of the data analysis process. Pole and Lampard (2002:190) suggest that such 'ongoing interpretation of the data as they are collected' plays an important role in the data analysis process. In this case the notes made after each interview acted as a brief summary of the encounter and facilitated the identification of key issues raised in interviews. These notes, together with the process of reflecting on each interview soon after it had taken place, also ensured greater familiarity with the data as the research progressed.

Each successfully recorded interview was transcribed in its entirety. After transcription interviews were coded thematically (Strauss, 1987) and interviews were analysed according to these themes which covered topics such as generational influence, childcare preferences and orientations to work (Appendix 7 and 8). Each transcript was coded individually and the key themes and issues extracted. The typed transcripts included counter numbers from the tape recorder to more easily identify certain points of interest on the tape. Listening to relevant sections of the tape after transcription was made easier by the inclusion of the counter numbers.

Limitations of the Interview Method

One of the limitations which became apparent as the interviews progressed was that of recall or memory. Amongst the pivot generation it sometimes proved difficult to elicit detailed information about their childcare arrangements. In many ways this is hardly surprising, these arrangements may not have been thought about again since they were operative some thirty to forty years earlier. The time scale of events can then account for problems of recall. This argument is further strengthened by the accounts of the younger generation. This group were currently involved in the complex world of childcare and often faced difficulties in arranging appropriate care. Amongst this group

the recounting of childcare arrangements, particularly current or recent arrangements appeared lucid and detailed in contrast to those of the pivot generations. As Brannen *et al.* (2004:4) elucidate when describing their interviews with multi-generational families:

> 'It is, for example, very different for a great-grandmother, possibly in her 80s, to speak about her experience of early motherhood compared, say, to a mother currently caring for a young child. The former is in a different life course stage, her memory may be less clear ... the experience of an event at the time, and 50 years later how you think you experienced that event may well not coincide'.

However, explaining the pivot generation's difficulty in recalling events of many years earlier is less convincing when other parts of the interview transcript are examined. It appeared that certain life events could be recounted in great detail, regardless of the length of time which had elapsed. So, for example, one respondent recounted in great detail her experience of becoming pregnant in her 40s – some 20 years earlier - yet she had difficulty in recalling the detail of the childcare arrangements made when the child from that pregnancy was born. This can be explained to some extent by the 'unique' experience of falling pregnant at what is an unusual age whereas, by contrast, childcare arrangements were perhaps part of the humdrum nature of everyday life and therefore difficult to recall in any detail.

Plummer (2001:235) labels this type of selective recall as 'narrative memory', whereby 'the narratives people tell about their past...and where highly selective stories dredged from the past somehow seem to have taken on a life of their own'. He suggests that 'it could be, for instance, that memories are simply our most habitually told stories, our best stories. It is what we have said so often that we literally come to believe it as true (even when not)' (Plummer, 2001:234).

It is also important to highlight here three distinct groups of family members who were not interviewed for this research yet who could be seen as 'stakeholders' in

the decision making process of the mothers and grandmothers. The first of these groups are the husbands and partners of the women of both generations. Men were purposely excluded from the original research design because the focus of the study was on women. However, obviously the majority of the women talked about the role their husbands and partners had played in their own decision making process. It became apparent that it would be interesting to examine this subject through the perspective of male members of the family group.

The second group consists of the mother-in-laws and in some cases the father-in-laws of the women interviewed. Undoubtedly this group played a more peripheral role, than husbands and partners, yet in many cases their roles were highly significant. For example, a number of mother-in-laws played an equally important role in the provision of childcare as the grandmothers yet they were excluded from the research design. Indeed their role was not fully recognised until the fieldwork was well underway.

The final and perhaps most important group here are the children or the 'end users' of childcare themselves. Whilst the perspectives of the adult children (i.e. the younger generation of mothers), were central to the research question and the research design, their children, that is, the pivot women's grandchildren, were excluded. The reasons for their exclusion were outlined above. However, it is worth noting that as Pole *et al.* (1999:40) point out 'there is a relative absence of children from sociological research'. Without doubt, sociological research on childcare which focuses attention on the experience of children, from their own perspective, is lacking and the views of children are under-represented.

Conclusion

This chapter has established the methodological procedure followed for data collection in this study. A distinctive feature of this study is its intergenerational component. Whilst it may be relatively straightforward to recruit a sample of either

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mothers or grandmothers the focus on family chains makes this process rather more complex. Brannen *et al's* (2004) work is one of the few existing intergenerational studies of families and caring. They suggest that researchers involved in the process of recruiting family chains are heavily reliant on key links or 'gatekeepers' in the chain to ensure access to other family members. Successful negotiations with one family member, however, does not necessarily result in access to others family members. They suggest that unless the family in question has 'frequent contact and close intergenerational relationships' (Brannen *et al.,* 2004:14) then the negotiation of access may be a lengthy process.

Brannen *et al.* (2004) were faced with a more complex task as their research focused on multi-generational family chains which included both men and women. The research carried out for this thesis was concerned only with mother and daughter chains and for the most part these two links of the family chain were in close and regular contact. Most contact began through the grandmother of the chain and, in most cases the grandmother contacted her daughter either during the initial interview or shortly afterwards. For the most part, this made it rather simple to successfully follow up contacts with daughters who had usually been well briefed about the research in advance by their mother. As suggested early in the chapter this approach proved unsuccessful only on two occasions. In one case the grandmother was reluctant to provide contact details for her daughters. In the second case, the grandmother suggested that her oldest daughters would have little to say and the younger daughter declined to be interviewed.

Indeed, the main difficulty experienced in recruiting a sample was associated with the necessarily rather stringent selection criteria. In restricting the sample to mother and daughter chains where both 'links' had worked when at least one of their children was of pre-school age, a number of promising contacts could not be included. For example, it proved relatively easy to locate chains of grandmothers and mothers but in a number of cases one or other of the women had not participated in the labour market when her children were of pre-school age. In two cases the mother from the

younger generation although planning to return to work, was on maternity leave with her first child at the time the fieldwork took place. In numerous cases a grandmother was identified who fitted the criteria but her own children were either all male or, where there was a daughter, she did not have children.

The initial sample was recruited from the pool of respondents who had taken part in a previous departmental project (Goodwin and O'Connor, 2005; O'Connor and Goodwin, 2004). Interviews carried out during that project acted as a useful 'screening' tool for recruiting participants for this study. Through interviews with men it was possible to identify families in which the female chains fitted the criteria for this thesis. However, this method of recruitment proved less successful than anticipated as so few of the female chains were eligible for this research. Personal contacts comprised the remainder of the sample.

The intergenerational component of this study raised a number of fascinating methodological issues. For example, the original intention was to collect work and childcare histories from each of the women. As suggested above, this proved impossible, primarily because of issues around recall of events. This was particularly the case for the grandmothers who found it difficult to recall the chronological order of often rather complex employment histories. Adding a chronological account of childcare strategies to this history proved impossible, especially for those women with more than one child. Such an approach may have worked more successfully with the younger generation whose employment histories were more recent, however, even in these cases issues of memory and recall were evident. Many of the mothers began to explain a childcare strategy they had used and quickly became confused as to the order of events they were describing.

Finally here, it is important to highlight a further aspect of intergenerational studies which concerns the influence of the differing historical context in which these two generations became mothers. Perhaps the most important aspect of the historical context relates to the undisputed increase in women's labour market participation. For

the younger generation, policy changes such as enhanced maternity rights and the increasing availability of childcare have made participation in paid employment 'easier' than it was for their own working mothers.

In addition to this trend, Brannen *et al* (2004:51) also highlight the impact of the changing nature of the labour market. For most of the grandmothers who participated in this research employment opportunities when they became mothers, were based mainly within the manufacturing sector. Mothers in the younger generation were more likely to be employed in the service sector and in non-manual jobs and this has resulted in increased occupational mobility amongst women. As Smeaton (2006:9) suggests, the younger generation who were born in or around the 1970s 'will have benefited from the ability to choose their lifestyle, afforded by greater affluence and an expansion in the educational and employment opportunities available to them with implications for patterns of employment in the period following childbirth'.

The thesis now moves on to present the data collected for this research. The following three chapters provide a detailed analysis of the interview data and link the findings of the research to the wider literature on women, employment and childcare strategies.

Chapter Five

Mothers' and Grandmothers' Orientations to

Work and Family

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Mothers' and Grandmothers' Orientations to Work and Family

Introduction

This thesis focuses on the employment decisions and childcare strategies used by two generations of mothers; first mothers born in or around the 1940s who are now also grandmothers and second, mothers born in or around the 1960s. Whilst many of their concerns are enduring, for example, the need, or desire, to combine family life and labour market participation, external factors and influences have changed over time and it is important for this thesis to outline some of the changes which have taken place to put the findings that follow in context.

This chapter is the first of three chapters which present the empirical findings of this research. The three results chapters focus on three distinct concepts: in this chapter orientations to work are examined; in chapter six, mothering values and resources form the basis of the discussion; and finally, in chapter seven, the focus is on childcare practices. In each chapter the discussion is framed by an emphasis on the impact of intergenerational transmission on each of the concepts.

The purpose of this first results chapter is to examine, in depth, the mothers' and grandmothers' orientations to work and family, looking in particular at motivation to work and commitment to family in the context of temporal changes. In this chapter it is argued that structural constraints such as a lack of childcare facilities were important to the grandmother generation and continue to be significant for the younger generation of mothers. Whilst an element of 'choice' about employment was apparent amongst both generations, this continued to be outweighed by the constraints of factors such as the availability of childcare, the range of opportunities for mothers in the labour market and ideological thoughts and beliefs about motherhood.

The chapter also argues that over time some constraints have weakened, for example between the two generations the availability and affordability of childcare has begun to improve and suitable labour market opportunities have increased. This has resulted in a significant difference between the experiences and attitudes of the two cohorts of mothers. The chapter begins by examining the different experiences of the two generations in more detail.

Two Generations of Motherhood

As suggested in the preceding discussion, this chapter argues the importance of the time period in explaining both the attitudes and actions of the two groups of women being studied in this thesis. For example, the grandmothers became mothers in a very 'strong male breadwinner' society (Lewis, 1992) with a prevailing attitude that mothers should stay at home and devote themselves to domestic chores and childcare. Since this period there has been a perceptible shift in policy and the younger generation of women entered motherhood at a time when government policy had begun to be aimed at encouraging women back to work after having children (Smeaton, 2006).

This change in policy is well illustrated by legislation relating to enhanced maternity leave provision and employment law. For example, the Employment Protection Act of 1976 fundamentally changed women's employment rights after childbirth by introducing legislation that enshrined 'the right of women to return to their original jobs within seven months of birth' (Smeaton, 2006:10). Prior to this act employers were not obliged to hold jobs open for women who left to have children and certainly amongst the women of the grandmother generation this lack of opportunity had an impact on future work decisions.

These legislative changes have taken place at a time when there has also been a simultaneous increase, albeit slight, in the provision and availability of childcare, mainly fuelled by the private sector (Daycare Trust, 2004). As outlined in the literature earlier chapters, much of this increase in childcare places was initially fuelled by the

private sector. During the 1980s, for example, this increase was of benefit only to women in high status occupations because the prohibitive costs of care meant that women in lower status jobs could not afford such facilities. However, in more recent years, in particular since the inception of the National Childcare Strategy in 1998, the provision of financial support in the form of tax credits for families using childcare have begun to make childcare more accessible for all (Duncan *et al.*, 2003; Smeaton, 2006).

Therefore, by contrast to the grandmother generation, it is argued that for mothers in the younger generation entry to the labour market has become 'normalised' because government policy has become focused on the 'obligation of adults to participate in paid employment ... mothers with pre-school children are not excluded from this obligation, even if they are lone parents' (McKie *et al.,* 2001:234). Yet at the same time 'the ideological connection between mothers and caring ...continues to underpin public, social and employment policies and notions of the family' (McKie *et al.,* 2001:234). Mothers continue to face the double bind of being expected to participate in the labour market and provide care for their children. Although for the women of the younger generation some of the structural constraints faced by the grandmothers, for example, the lack of childcare availability, had begun to be eroded, their return to the labour market after motherhood was not a simple process.

These issues are clearly illustrated by quotes from women in both cohorts of mothers. Diane, one of the grandmothers, had not planned to return to work after her daughter was born because she felt that mothers were 'supposed' to stay at home:

> If it had been up to me, I wouldn't have gone back to work. No. I didn't have a career or anything, you know. And I was, you know I was a '50s girl, a 1950s girl, and to some extent, certainly if you had young children, you weren't expected to go to work. The value judgement was that you stayed home with your children at least until they went to school. So that was all at odds with my

experience and also what I thought should happen.

(Diane, age 55, health care worker, four children)

Diane explained that during the 1950s, the period in which she was brought up women were not expected to seek employment outside the home and this belief contributed to her attitude at the time her children were born. This was mirrored by other respondents from the grandmother generation such as Eileen and Pauline, quoted below, who both suggested that going back to work after having children would have been unusual at that time:

I just left, because in those days you just left, no maternity leave, you gave your notice in and that was it six weeks before. [HO'C: Had you thought about going back to work at that time or not?] No. No it wasn't something you'd think about, it wasn't done, it wasn't particularly thought about so no, you were just at home. [HO'C: You just stayed at home?] Spent time with them, yeah. I went back part-time when they were about two and a half I think.

(Eileen, age 59, office worker, two children)

I got married and left work to have my first baby and that's why I left that job. I had three children and stayed at home to look after them which was more the done thing then. It was becoming the thing to do to go out to work but nothing like it has become now.

(Pauline, age 57, office receptionist, three children)

[HO'C: Did you plan to go back to work after Philippa was born?] I hoped. I hoped. I was desperate to do some work. I felt unfulfilled. I was 22. I'd graduated and had nothing, it was at home with the baby. I wasn't desperately unhappy but I'd given up quite a good life really, I used to do a lot and all of that stopped, it wasn't just the work, and your social life stops – although we were happy. [HO'C: And then after that did you have a chance to go back to work or not?] No way. There was no way you could find childcare for two

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children, a toddler and a baby, no way. It was just the way it was and you accepted it.

<div align="right">(Hilary, age 67, teacher, four children)</div>

By contrast, Alison, a mother from the younger generation described her own return to work when her daughter was only a few months old because 'then you didn't really stay off':

[HO'C: So when you went off on maternity leave, Chloe was born, did you think about staying off for longer?] No, because then you didn't really stay off, nobody really stayed off for like six months. I think then it was just your normal - you had your six weeks before and your 13 weeks after or something like that.

<div align="right">(Alison, age 35, office worker, two children)</div>

Alison's comment above suggests that returning to work after maternity leave had become more 'normalised' between the generations. One of the explanations for this normalisation of mothers returning to work soon after childbirth can be linked directly to changes in legislation relating to maternity leave and motherhood. As suggested above, women of the grandmother generation were not entitled to state or employer support in the form of maternity leave or jobs being kept open and it was expected that most women would not return to work after childbirth. This is well illustrated by Marilyn's experience:

[HO'C: So you were still working as normal up until he was born?] Yeah I was at work, yeah. Yeah, I just didn't go back. Well my dad worked there you see, I worked with my dad and he told them when he went in on the Monday that I'd gone in hospital and that I wouldn't be in and then it just went from there. Well I had him then so I couldn't go back. [HO'C: So you didn't go back?] No.

<div align="right">(Marilyn, age 57, nursing assistant, two children)</div>

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By the time the women of the younger generation became mothers, legislative changes had become embedded in employer and state policy and women had begun to be provided with maternity leave, maternity pay and a guarantee that their job would be kept open for their return. The rights of mothers in the workplace have continued to improve slowly over the last few decades and recent changes have included the right to request to return to work on a part-time basis, an extension in the period of paid maternity leave, the provision of unpaid parental leave and entitlement to working tax credits as a financial incentive (Bonney, 2005; Smeaton, 2006). As Jo and Helen's quotes below suggests, this has, without doubt, had an impact on women's decisions about work:

> And I mean you have your tax credits, we got tax credits which were great, a real help, yeah because I couldn't have done it otherwise. [HO'C: You couldn't?] No. I couldn't have put them in nursery. The nursery they go to is quite expensive. So when they were both at nursery together it was £800 plus and I only came out with £800. So even then the margins were quite, even with the tax credits the margins are quite small.
>
> (Jo, age 31, office worker, two children)

Helen, whose daughter was born in 2000, commented that:

> I had to look into the maternity pay and maternity leave and all that but I knew that they were quite flexible because, you know, you know people that have gone off and gone on maternity leave, so I hoped that I could work part-time when I got back because other people had done it and you just have to get it sorted out yourself don't you? I think I told them when I was a few months pregnant and said to the boss 'I'd quite like to come back part-time'. But as I say it's company policy really to be flexible, I mean it's only in the last couple of years isn't it that this flexible working's come in with the government, but they were always quite good in that way. So yeah I said that I wanted to come back part-time when I

came back and while I was off we sorted it out and what hours I was doing etc.

(Helen, age 49, secretary, one child)

Helen's comment is interesting because it is evident that she had a high level of awareness of changes to government policy with regard to issues such as flexible working. She was aware that her employers operated a system of flexible employment and Helen ensured that she was able to benefit from this. Becky's outlook was similar. She had not taken advantage of the option to request flexible working patterns when she returned to work after her first child was born because she had been worried about losing her position at work. However, she planned to request more flexible working hours once she returned to work after the birth of her second child:

[HO'C Did you always plan to go back to work full-time then?] Yes definitely, I'd seen other police officers go back part-time but have to do a different role whereas those that had gone back full-time went more of less in to their old job and I did notice that, that was quite apparent. [HO'C: So did you think about going back part time?] No, I wanted to go back full time to keep the position I'd got but it's something I'm going to bring up this time (after maternity leave), whether I can stay in the same role but go back part time.

(Becky, age 32, police officer, one child)

Other respondents ensured that they could gain the maximum benefit from maternity leave, both financially and in terms of time off work. As Callender *et al* (1997) suggest women's decisions about maternity leave are influenced more by the financial implications than by the length of leave entitlement. Louise's viewpoint, quoted below, fits clearly with Callender *et al's* (1997) findings. She explained that she had worked out both the financial implications of her maternity leave and the impact on her time off work, before making a decision about when to return to work, although ultimately it was the financial aspect which forced her decision:

I finished work at the end of March and then I got about five weeks off I think before I had her and then I just worked out that I was going to have so much maternity leave and then come back. I worked it out I was going to come back just before Christmas but I wasn't physically going to come back because then I was going to have holiday and Christmas holiday and then all of January off because I'd got a lot of holiday from before. So I sort of worked it out that I could be off a little bit longer but I'd started getting paid again. I wanted to have as long as possible as I could off to be with her but I worked it out on the money really.

(Louise, age 44, office worker, one child)

Natalie, from the mother generation, explained that she had planned to make use of the social security system to finance her period of maternity leave:

[HO'C: And when you became pregnant what happened, did you think about staying on at the job, did you stay on?] No because I knew that I'd be entitled to the year when you can actually claim Working Allowance it's called now, Job Seekers Allowance or whatever it's called now. So I planned to have that year off with her.

(Natalie, age 34, bar worker, three children)

The preceding section has provided a brief background to the different time periods and concurrent attitudes at the time the two groups of women became mothers and entered paid employment. Having shown that the women were operating in two contrasting social contexts; the grandmothers at a time when mothers were expected to stay at home and the mothers whose return to the workplace has become normalised, the chapter moves on to look at motivation for seeking paid work.

Mothers' and Grandmothers' Orientations to Work

Women's motivation for seeking paid work after motherhood is well documented in the literature. Key writers in the area fall into two broad camps, first those who argue that women's orientations to work can be attributed to 'personal choice' or 'preference' (Hakim 1996, 2000) and second, those who argue the importance of the social and economic constraints faced by women (e.g. Crompton and Harris, 1998).

In the following section of this chapter the factors that influenced respondents to seek paid employment and enter the labour market are examined. It is argued that both mothers and grandmothers were motivated to seek paid employment by a range of factors which can be categorised as being either 'pull' or 'push' factors. For example, women of both generations highlighted the significance of factors such as financial or social need, which can be categorised as 'push' factors, in explaining their personal motivation for seeking paid employment. Conversely, evidence of 'pull' factors was lacking. Few of the women explained their motivation for entering the labour market as being attributable to 'pull' factors such as the attraction of work or the personal need for a 'career' type job. For all the women interviewed family life held key importance and none of the women were prepared to compromise on what they saw as the needs of their children. None of the respondents explained their motivation to work in terms of the lure of the workplace and 'career'. Explanations were more likely to focus on the negativity of non-work, for example, the boredom associated with being at home.

A distinction is again made between women of different cohorts and the section concludes that the grandmother generation and the mother generation often had similar motivations to work. However, there were also important differences between the cohorts when examining motivation to work. It is apparent that pure financial motivation for work was much stronger amongst the grandmother generation whereas social motivations for work were more important for the younger women.

Table 5.1, below, presents a typology of motivation to enter the labour market based around what are termed here as 'push' and 'pull' factors and their impact on each of the generations. The following discussion begins by outlining the push factors which the respondents described and which are categorised, according to generation. in Table 5.1. The two key push factors: financial and social motivation to work, are looked at in turn below, beginning with a focus on financial motivation to work.

Table 5.1 Motivation for Seeking Paid Work amongst Respondents

Motivation to Work	Grandmothers	Mothers
Financial	Liz, Maggie, Cheryl Brenda, Pat, Gill Eileen, Maureen, Marilyn Sandra, Helen, Pauline	Debbie, Helen, Jo, Layla
Social	Cheryl, Brenda, Pat, Hilary	Kirsty, Jo, Debbie, Becky Fiona, Alison, Sarah Vicky, Sonia, Ruth, Layla, Louise

(a) Financial Motivation to Work

Whilst there are a number of studies which examine the motivation to work amongst women in what can be termed high status jobs, there are few studies of mothers' employment motivation which highlight the experience of women of lower occupational status. The following section provides an account of the explanations given by this group of respondents when explaining their own motivation for entering the labour market.

As Table 5.1 above suggests, women of both generations explained that their motivation for securing paid work was based, in part, on financial need of some description. For some of the women the financial need was stronger than for others;

some worked out of necessity whilst others worked to finance 'family extras' such as holidays. What is striking about the data presented in the table is the dominance of financial motivation amongst the grandmother generation as compared to the mother generation. The quotes below outline the importance of this factor for the women in the older generation. Liz, one of the grandmother generation, explained that she worked when her children were young purely for financial gain. She explained she went back to work when her first child was six weeks old because she needed the money; indeed her wages were used to pay for food when her children were very young:

[HO'C: At the time, did you think you would go back to that job?]
I did. I did go back to it. [HO'C: You did go back. And did you plan to go back to it?] No, not really, it was just shortage of money, I went like twilight shift. Just brought that little bit back, so I could feed them (the children) actually.

(Liz, age 56, nursing assistant, four children)

Liz's need to work had continued throughout her employment history. Although she remarried, her second husband earned little and this meant that she had to continue working, in her terms 'as the main breadwinner':

Now mine is the main money and I still have to go to work, I haven't got any choice. [HO'C: Yours is the main income?] Yeah. [HO'C: And how do you feel about that?] Resentful. [HO'C: Do you?] I do, yeah, I really do. Well it's like, well I'm the breadwinner because my husband's wage is terrible. And he knows how I feel but I can't go anywhere else that I'm going to earn the money I'm earning there because it is good money and I am the main breadwinner. It's like everything on me, if I pack in work we've lost everything. I think it should be the other way round because I think we have enough to put up with. But he's quite happy just plodding along doing what he's doing, but to me that's not fair, not fair. His money is the spending money. It's my money that pays the bills and takes us on holiday. I mean I work more now than I've ever done.

(Liz, age 56, nursing assistant, four children)

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None of the other women talked about the money they earned as providing for such basic needs as Liz's. Other women, particularly of the grandmother generation, described their wages as being used to finance 'extras' for the family. Gill, for example, explained that her money was used for her children and Eileen kept her wages separated from the household money to enable her to save for exceptional items:

I don't know, I suppose you were reasonably well off, but when I think about it we couldn't have gone on holiday. And you know I always dressed the kids nice and, you know, we always had a holiday. Yeah, you realise that you know there is more out there, you know, and we can afford more and you can do more. [HO'C: So what do you think was your main motivation to work?] Money.

(Gill, age 58, cleaner, four children)

[HO'C: So what would you say at the time motivated you to go and get work?] Money. [HO'C: If money hadn't been an issue for you do you think you would have gone out to work?] Erm, if money hadn't been an issue at all I don't think I would have gone doing that sort of work, no, I would have gone out and sought other interests. It's just natural that as soon as you need more money, you think about going to work. [HO'C: Was your money was used for extra things or was it used for basic essentials?] It was always used for essential things. I remember very first when I saved, going out, this one morning or two mornings a week I saved and I actually said "I've got some money and I'm going to save it to buy a new car with" and I did actually put the money separately. It didn't just fill in the gaps, it tended to get put to one side for something, for things in the house or for a holiday. Things we wouldn't have afforded otherwise but pretty essential, I mean you need a holiday and you need a new car.

(Eileen, age 59, office worker, two children)

Sandra, below, also suggested that the money she earned was useful as it helped to finance holidays for the family. Sandra's comments are interesting because she makes a direct comparison between her family life when her children were young and couples

'today' who she perceived as having far more money. She also mentions 'child benefit' as being a means of support for mothers which had not been available to her, again highlighting the distinction between the cohorts as a result of policy changes:

It was only really for my own benefit that I went out. I mean we weren't rich, we weren't well off – not like they are today with two good incomes coming in, but we were satisfied with a lot less in life and we realised that we'd got to forfeit. I always ran an old banger of a car but we didn't have two nice cars. We didn't want a lot did we? If we did want a good holiday then I went out temping didn't I? We wanted to go to Canada before Martin was born so I went out temping for a couple of months and got the money, because we didn't have any spare cash. My work was sometimes more or less full-time but a supplement to get the money, there was no spare cash then and you didn't have the family allowances that - I don't know, it's called child benefit now, that they do now.

(Sandra, age 56, retired accounts officer, three children)

Pat's rationale for working was similar as her wages were also used to enable the family to take holidays:

[HO'C: What would you say motivated you to go back to work after she was born?] Well, mainly money wise I wanted to still take my children on holiday each year and every little helps then don't it?

(Pat, age 59, cleaner, three children)

Well we were hard up really but it helped out like, we needed some money really and I just felt it was the best thing.

(Maureen, age 70, retired cleaner, two children)

If we'd had more money I probably wouldn't have worked when the kids was young but I would have gone back eventually just to get out and about sort of

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thing but not when they were little I don't think I would of.

<div align="right">(Pat, age 59, cleaner, three children)</div>

By contrast to the women of the grandmother generation quoted above, few of the mothers of the younger generation were as emphatic in explaining their motivation to work as purely financial. Only Helen, Debbie, Layla and Jo suggested that financial motivation was key to their orientation to work. Helen made this clear in her response:

[HO'C: Did you think about not going back to work?] Oh no. I was always going back to work. [HO'C: Why do you think that would be?] Finance. Oh yeah, I wouldn't go if I didn't want the money, not now no.

<div align="right">(Helen, age 49, administrator, one child)</div>

The younger generations apparent lack of financial motivation to work is perhaps, surprising, given that other studies have argued that issues such as the increase in house prices since the 1990s and increasing levels of consumer debt have served to push mothers back to labour market soon after childbirth (Smeaton, 2006). However, policy changes since the grandmother generation became mothers may mean that financially contemporary mothers receive more support. For example, measures such as child benefit and tax credits make a contribution to the family budget, income which the grandmother generation did not benefit from.

This section has illustrated that for this group of women, particularly the older generation, financial need, whether for basic provisions or to fund family 'extras' served as a strong 'push' factor in explaining the reason for seeking paid work. However, it is significant to note that as a push factor money was far more important amongst the grandmother generation than the mother generation. Amongst the younger generation of mothers social reasons for working assumed more importance than financial motivation. The following section examines the importance of social reasons for seeking paid work in more depth.

(b) Social Motivation to Work

Hunt and Roberts (1984) found that although money was an important factor in motivating women to work, this was followed in importance by the social aspects of employment. Amongst this group of women there is a clear division here. For the grandmothers financial reasons for working ranked highly, far higher than for the younger group who appeared to be motivated more by the social aspects of working life.

As Table 5.1 reveals, social reasons were important to the majority of the younger women yet were mentioned as important by only four of the grandmothers. This distinction may emerge partly due to recency of experience. The younger mothers could clearly recall their feelings of boredom when at home with young children, or in some cases mothers were currently experiencing this, and mentioned this in their explanations. The older women tended not to focus on this aspect of motherhood, perhaps because this seemed less important over time. This is not to say that the younger women were not motivated to work by the prospect of earning money. However, social reasons appeared to be as important as financial ones.

Natalie and Layla, mothers from the younger generation, for example, both commented that although the prospect of earning money was important to them they also wished to have a chance to 'use their brains' and 'get out of the house':

[HO'C: So what would you say made you go back to work, was it just money?] Money and sanity. Two babies under the age of two – yeah, money and sanity and because I like to go out to work, I like working and it was a job where I met an awful lot of people, no I quite enjoyed it. Because I'd been a bit numb and brain dead with the kids and everything and so meeting all these people and obviously going to college a couple of days after, you get a completely different social life as well, so yeah it was good.

(Natalie, age 34, bar worker, three children)

[HO'C: What would have been the reason you would work?] The money really. I think you do need to, I think a mum needs to do a day or something for themselves, I do think that you do need that but it's more sort of needing the money really. I think, you know, we'd manage on his money without a doubt but it's things that you like, the holidays and things that you need that little bit of extra for and I've always worked, I do get very bored. Yeah, I do get very bored very easily.

(Layla, age 28, hairdresser, two children)

Other women, such as Alison, quoted below, also mentioned the potential boredom of being at home all day without a job:

Oh yeah, I knew I'd go back, I don't think I could ever not work – for my own sanity reasons. I don't think I could be one of these that sit at home, it's not my personality, I can't sit there just watching daytime telly.

(Alison, age 35, office worker, two children)

Debbie, Fiona and Becky also explained that they were motivated to work in part because of the boredom they felt when staying at home:

[HO'C: And what made you go back to work?] Boredom. I've always worked. I've never had a big length of time off and I'd just go stir crazy on my own. So it was just a break from everything else, money as well and had the extras for the kids and things like that.

(Debbie, age 37, care home worker, two children)

[HO'C: Did you ever think you might not go back to work, before she was born?] I thought I might go part-time but I didn't think I'd never go back to work. I would have always worked even if we had loads of money, it's good for me anyway. I'm the sort of person that has to have something to be involved in otherwise I get miserable and bored and I don't like that. Because I did try

giving up work once, I gave up for about four months, I was bored, I always think about that time, I was just desperate to get back to work

(Fiona, age 44, research scientist, two children)

[HO'C: So what would you say motivated you to return to work?] After about two or three months off I wanted to go back and have some adult conversation, and not being horrible to the family but just get away from them for a little bit and then come back and it just seemed the quality time with them then was better than being with them 24/7. I missed them when I went back to work, it was hard, but I've got quite a good support network at work anyway so it was nice.

(Becky, age 34, police officer, two children)

Only two respondents from the grandmother generation referred to boredom as a reason for seeking work outside the home:

[HO'C: So can you remember at the time what prompted you to look for work?] Money. Mainly money because we were absolutely skint, but I also enjoyed work as well. You know, it's nice to do something away from the kids. And even though I was at home I felt better in the brain. I felt I needed something too: the money and also something to stretch my brain a little bit, even though it didn't really but it was something to do.

(Brenda, 59, office worker, two children)

[HO'C: So then what triggered you to go back to work?] Money initially and then I needed a bit of my own life really. I mean I think I had to work because of my own, I need to use my brain probably. But I wanted still to give the kids things that if I didn't work I wouldn't have been able to have given them. [HO'C: If money had been no object at all would you have worked or not?] Yeah I think I would.

(Cheryl, age 50, personal assistant, three children)

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As these quotes illustrate it was the younger generation who stressed the social aspects of working outside the home. Few of the grandmothers justified their decisions in this way. As suggested above, this may be because the experience of being 'bored' at home looking after young children was a recent one for the mothers whereas the grandmothers were further away from that stage of their lives. Hochschild's (1997) American based research is of relevance here. The working mothers in her study explained that employer policies such as family friendly practices and part-time work had made work an attractive option when compared to the perceived boredom of staying at home to perform domestic tasks.

However, it may also be that the younger women felt that they had more choices and options associated with the world of work. This group of women had not been in a position of having to give up work once pregnant and most had planned to return to employment while their children were still relatively young. Indeed, a number of women in this group talked about their plans for the future and their willingness to undertake further training and education in order to secure better employment later in life.

Given the life stages of these two groups of women; the older group having retired already or approaching retirement and the younger group having longer periods of economic activity ahead, it is perhaps not surprising that the older group did not refer to having sought or undertaken any type of further job-related training. However, the idea of investing time now to reap the career benefits later was raised by a number of the younger women who had combined motherhood with studying either before or since entering the labour market. The evidence here suggests a move towards the increasing polarization of work with the younger generation more likely than the grandmothers were, to 'pursue further education, acquire career aspirations and attract enhanced salaries which enable the childcare and other forms of support necessary for the combination of careers and caring' (Smeaton, 2006:6). This increased focus on achieving qualifications and developing career aspirations links clearly with the

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increase in the labour market opportunities and increased occupational mobility amongst women between these two generations of mothers (Brannen *et al.*, 2004).

Debbie, quoted below, is an example of this. She explained that she had been taking on additional responsibilities at work and this included undertaking formal qualifications to improve her occupational status:

When Kyle started school I started to work days and nights and then I went from that to I started teaching last year, I went from college back to Uni and got all my teaching qualifications. When I started to do days they put me on classroom support where you're supporting the tutors and then work approached me to see if I'd go and do this short course for a start, introductory to teaching and I went from that to do the 7407 which was a year's course. Yeah, I'm doing nights and I do my NVQ 2 in between. Yeah. I'll go for that. Because I'm the only one in the college that can. I've been trained in every department so I do senior shifts, I can do the office because I've got all my typing, I teach, I do support, do night time – lots.

(Debbie, age 37, care home worker, two children)

Both Sarah and her sister Vicky also decided to go back to studying after they had children and this had ultimately led to both of them securing jobs when their children were a little older:

Yeah, I went back to study when he was two. [HO'C: What made you do that?] My brain was going dead. I needed to get out. I needed to get out. I found I had post-natal depression quite badly and I didn't want to leave the house, the phone would ring and my heart would stop so, you know, feel panicky and I thought 'you know, this has got to stop' and so I went to college. [HO'C: So what would you say your main motivation for working is now?] Financial. no, not really, personal reasons, it's all about me. It makes me feel better, that means I

can take that home. I'm better as a mum because I feel better about myself. I feel productive.

(Sarah, age 31, training manager, three children)

Well, I had three children in three years and then I had the other little boy, so yeah you didn't think about careers, jobs, you just, well, you didn't sleep let alone think about work. [HO'C: When did you start thinking about work?] I knew that I wanted to go back to study because I enjoyed studying. So I don't think it was work that motivated me, work's never been something that I've desperately wanted to do, but to go back and study. I've always thought about that but it's "how do you get back into study" especially when you've got children etc., etc.

(Vicky, age 31, training manager, three children)

You go to work for a reason and you do go to work for your own self-esteem and, you know, you just think you could perhaps sit at home and do nothing and claim benefits or something – I'm not that type, I wouldn't do that but I've just always wanted to aim higher, I've always wanted to be that bit, you know, to feel that I do my job to the best, you know, because I just get so fed up and I like to see my life going somewhere and I'm always looking into the future.

(Layla, age 28, hairdresser, two children)

Finally here, Jo was working part-time in an office and studying for a degree on a part-time basis. She planned to train as a teacher once her children are old enough for her to combine a job which requires high commitment with family life:

[HO'C: So when they're both at school what are you going to do then? Have you thought about that?] Erm... it will be nice with the money. All this time I have been studying as well, which was a thing when I gave up work you know I always knew I'd study and I thought "that's mine" you know "I'll have the kids, I'll do the studying then when I've had the children and they're about to go to

school then I'm ready to come back out and do training, do what I want to do"
sort of thing. So I always had that sort of plan, yeah.

<div align="right">(Jo, age 33, office worker, two children)</div>

Ideology of Motherhood and the Role of Part-Time Work

However, despite this apparent shift in attitudes and the evidence of greater commitment to work, the ideology of motherhood so apparent amongst the older generation, continues to permeate the attitudes of the younger generation of mothers. Women of both generations valued their domestic commitments over and above employment orientations. Amongst the grandmothers there was a tendency towards 'seeking employment with hours that were consistent with their ideas about motherhood, especially the importance of 'being there' for children' (Brannen *et al.*, 2004:69) and spurning jobs which would require them to arrange any non-familial childcare.

For the women of the grandmother generation this can be explained by a number of factors. First, the prevailing social attitudes at the time when they became mothers; second, the lack of opportunities for progression in the labour market during that time period and third, the lack of any system of support, such as childcare facilities and financial incentives such as maternity leave and tax credits.

In contrast the women in the younger generation would certainly seem to have entered motherhood at a time of greater opportunity for mothers. This was a period when 'the growth in the availability of reduced-hours positions and more widespread penetration of flexitime opportunities, commensurate with the expansion of the service sector, provide greater choice for women wishing to assume the two roles of home worker and paid employee' (Smeaton, 2006:12). Indeed as Brannen *et al.*, (2004:207) argue, social attitudes have also changed and the younger mothers 'employment is seen as acceptable … in the context of their increased educational qualifications, the advent of careers for women and the increased costs of parenthood'. Nevertheless, issues such

as how to balance work and home life and the need to 'be there' for the children, which were important to the older generation remained highly significant amongst the younger generation.

One way in which women of both generations reconciled this issue was to seek part-time, rather than full-time work. Whilst women's work orientations and the role of part-time work have clearly received detailed attention in the literature, much of the attention on women's labour market activity has focused on either women in high status, typically full-time, employment (Brannen, 1992) or the role of part-time work and the 'negative repercussions that are associated with female dominated part-time employment' (Warren, 2004:101)

Walters (2005) suggests, for example, that much of the literature that examines women's part-time work has been concerned with women in high status employment and women employed in low status part-time work have not received the same attention. Similarly, Brannen (1992) points out that much of the literature which focuses on mothers' orientations to work is based on research with women in high status jobs whilst McKie *et al.* (2001:245) suggest that the 'benefits' of part-time work are less important for middle class women who are able to afford childcare and therefore combine full-time work and family life. As Crompton and Harris (1998:125) argue, professionally trained women in high status employment are often able to adopt 'family friendly practices which enable them to combine work and family'. Such opportunity is lacking in lower status jobs.

Combining part-time work with part-time childcare emerged as being significant for a number of the women and part-time work and flexible work was important to nearly all the women interviewed. The following quote is representative of the views of a number of the women who did not want either full-time work or full-time childcare. Here, Jo explains that she felt that by working part-time and only using a nursery part-time she was able to achieve a 'balance' between family and work.

[HO'C Why do you think you didn't want to go back?] Initially I wanted to be at home with her. I couldn't imagine putting her in a nursery. I didn't have family to look after her, his mum is at work full-time, my sister lived too far away. But I just could not imagine her as a baby going into nursery, I just couldn't imagine how they could look after a baby the same as I would. But once they're in nursery I think I was happy they were in there, what they were learning and how they were getting on. And because it was part-time, I think full-time I would have struggled with, I don't think I'd have ever stuck with full-time nursery. It was always just four days a week or two days and I did still have them as well at home quite a bit as well, so it was a nice balance.

(Jo, age 31, office worker, two children)

Jo's quote is interesting because she talks not only about balancing work and home but also about her initial desire to stay at home with her children or, as 'second best' to use family-based care. Ultimately neither of these options were available to her. She found that she needed to work for financial reasons and she could not use family care as none was available. Her compromise was to work part-time hours and only use part-time childcare.

As Warren (2004) has suggested part-time employment has often been heralded as a means of helping families to combine and balance the conflicting demands of work and family. Indeed, the role of part-time work in women's lives is well-documented (see Warren and Walters, 1998 for a detailed review). Literature in this area tends to focus on factors such as the disadvantages of part-time work, for example, the low status of part-time work and the downward occupational mobility often experienced by mothers when returning to the labour market part-time after childbirth (Dex and Joshi, 1999; Warren, 2004; Walters, 2005).

The focus of this thesis is, for the most part, on women in lower status, often part-time employment. One of the key findings here, however, is that many of the women appeared to have consciously chosen to work part-time once they became

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mothers. The justification given for this was that their obligations to their children remained of key importance and therefore the grandmothers' and mothers' working lives were purposely tailored to 'fit' around family obligations. Amongst the grandmother generation there were much higher levels of job mobility and the evidence suggests that if the working hours no longer fitted with domestic commitments women would leave that employment and seek more suitable working hours.

Amongst the younger generation mothers did not generally enter work which would prevent them from spending a certain amount of time with their children. For example, the daily school run was highlighted by many mothers as something they would not willingly forsake. Those women who worked part-time, who were the majority in both generations, frequently described part-time work as suiting them because it allowed them to ensure that they could combine work and care. As Edwards *et al.* (2003:310) suggest:

'...people do not view care simply as a constraint on paid work. Rather they feel morally obligated to care, and often wish to do so. Further more, when it comes to dependent children, there can be non-negotiable, and deeply gendered, moral requirements to take responsibility for children's needs and to place these first'.

Certainly the moral obligation to care, as described by Edwards *et al.* (2003) influenced some women very strongly. Debbie's quote below is perhaps the most extreme example of this moral obligation. Her decisions and behaviour appear to be deeply rooted in moral obligation and her sense of what is 'right' and 'acceptable' mothering behaviour:

[HO'C: Has it always been you that drops off and collects from school?]
Yeah, always. I always took them and always picked them up. I was always here, not very often I wasn't. [HO'C: So what sort of hours do you work now?] It varies. School holidays I cut my hours right down so I'm here and I normally go back on to nights so I'm here. On a bad week I can do anything up to 60

hours but I'm still here, I'm still here when they come home from school and when they go. Well just recently I've been doing 17 hour days. I've been doing – and this just shows you - 9 to 3, so I take him to school, pick him up, come home and then I'm back at 10 at night, do waking nights back for half 7 in a morning.

(Debbie, age 37, care home worker, two children)

Debbie's situation is highlighted again in Chapter 6 where her active avoidance of the repetition of her own mother's behaviour, in this case leaving Debbie to make her own way to and from school and returning to an empty house, is discussed. This attitude, in part, explains Debbie's emphatic response in this case. However, she had a clear idea of what constituted parental responsibility and she perceived this as ensuring that she was able to provide exclusive care for her children and also work extremely long hours.

For some of the women who worked part-time a theme that emerged as significant was the importance attached to being able to play an active role in their children's school life. For example, a number of mothers had chosen to work part-time 'school hours' so that they could be there to collect their children from school. As Windebank (1999) argues, this act appears to have a strong emotional attachment for mothers:

'this ideal of mothers being able to both take their children to and collect them directly from school ...appears to be an act which is invested with a certain amount of emotional symbolism in the sense that the sight of the mother at the school gates can be reassuring for children' (Windebank, 1999:15)

Alison, for example, had devised and negotiated working hours which enabled her to collect her children from school every day. This was arranged at the expense of the mornings which she deemed to be less important to her and her children. She therefore stared work early in the morning, leaving home by 7am so that she could

leave work by 3pm and meet her children from school. Importantly she also felt that this pattern would ensure that the children's teachers knew that she was the mother and could speak to her if necessary:

I've always made sure that I've been there school-wise for Chloe and Joseph. Even though I don't get to take them in a morning because I got out so early, I always make sure I am there to pick them up so I am involved within the school and I go to like everything that they do for the school, parents evening, all them – I never miss anything like that.

[HO'C: So you're always there in the afternoon?] Yeah. Because I can tell with Joseph, if he comes out in a funny mood I can see if there's something wrong and if I have got any concerns I know that the teacher is there for me to talk to, whereas in the mornings, nothing can happen in the mornings because he's not even started. I didn't want the teachers not to know who I was, you know, because they see their nan all the time. So they see her in the mornings and me after school.

(Alison, age 35, office worker, two children)

Jo's rationale for working school hours was similar. She felt that the act of taking children to and from school was very separate from the school day itself and therefore was a parental responsibility:

I don't see it [dropping off and collecting children from school] as being part of school. I mean even though you don't see the teachers every day, you could actually could go in, you know, you could arrange to go in a bit later at work I think if you needed to see a teacher I'm sure or something like that. Perhaps it's just that sense of looking after them that makes it important, I suppose.

You know, letting someone else to do it once or twice or a few days, or half and half I think I would be fine with. I think it's this thing again of letting - it's

almost like letting another mother do it for you isn't it, it's your role sort of thing. I guess they don't need you when they're at school – well you're not there anyway are you. When they're out of school that's the time when they need you. So I do like taking the kids to school and I like being a kind of hands-on mum.

(Jo, age 31, office worker, two children)

Sarah had changed her working hours because, as she explained, both she and the children had found it difficult when she was not able to be there in the afternoon:

Yeah, because I was going to just limit my hours, two and a half days per week, so then I could pick them up two and a half days, but it was too much travelling because my job was driving anyway, it was too much travelling. And we'd got used to "how are you, did you have a nice day at school, let's read a book together" you know, as opposed to dragging them off "oh hurry up, let's get home" you know, horrible. So I said "OK, forget it, I'll work between school hours and that's that". [HO'C: So was it important for you to be there then to pick up?] Yeah. Well that was the one thing that I missed even when I was working, was not having quality time with the kids and not being able to pick them up.

(Sarah, age 31, training manager, three children)

Layla also found it hard to combine work and childcare commitments with school hours:

I did use a childminder when I had to be at work for half past eight so I used to drop her off in the morning but Ellie was getting stressed and she kept saying to me "mummy, why don't you take me to school". And it's hard. I hated that and I'd never, ever do that again. I felt guilty because I thought "I'm putting her out". I just felt like I was putting her out and it's an awful feeling, it's really horrible.

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So when I went back to work last year, I used to take her to school in the morning then go off to work and then I used to come and pick her up and even take her back to work with me or drop her off at my mum's. [HO'C: And how did you feel doing that?] I felt happy because I was taking her to school and picking her up. But I didn't feel happy if ever I didn't pick her up and somebody else did. I thought "I can't ask her what day was like" you know.

(Layla, age 28, hairdresser, two children)

At the time of the interview Louise's daughter was only two years old, yet Louise had already thought carefully about how she would combine part-time working hours and school hours in the future. As the quote illustrates, she was prepared to schedule rather complex working hours to ensure that she could be there to drop her daughter at school and collect her in the afternoon as much as possible:

A 5 hour day would be, I would drop her off at school and get into work say half past nine and then the other day come in at half eight and leave at like 11 or something – so a really short day so I could go and pick her up. So my idea is, so that I get to drop her off and pick her up at some point in the week, you know, at least two or three times. [HO'C: So is that an issue for you?] As long as I get to do that at least, yes, I must. I don't want to either not take her in or not pick her up. [HO'C: Why do you think that is?] Because I just think it's really important. I don't want her going to school and then come running out with a picture and I don't get to see her when she's all excited and things. I might get bored with it later, OK, time after time but I've just got all these visions of her coming out with little things.

(Louise, age 44, office worker, one child)

Brannen *et al* (2004:99-100) suggest that the act of being able to take children to school and collect them after school was, amongst their respondents 'a central value of motherhood'. They also found that this was an act which was clearly 'transmitted

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from one generation to another'. The mothers in their study recalled their own mothers performing this role and, as such, they wanted to replicate the pattern. The influence of intergenerational transmission of ideas about childcare was also confirmed by this research. However, it was not always positive aspects of behaviour which were transmitted from one generation to another in this study. Indeed, some of the women explained their mothering values as being a reaction against the way they themselves had been brought up. This theme is examined in detail in the following chapter.

It is argued here that for these mothers, participating in the school run was an act which was 'invested with a certain amount of emotional symbolism in the sense that the sight of the mother at the school gates can be reassuring for children' (Windebank, 1999:15). Rather than giving up work they found ways to ensure that they behaved in ways which can be identified as 'socially expected' and which reflected the perceived behaviour of mothers who do not work, i.e. by being visible during 'important' times of day. As McKie et al. (2001:237) suggest:

> 'For many women engaged in caring tasks some of the pleasures of caring may derive simply form feeling that their behaviour is legitimate because it fits socially expected gender activity. The converse of this is the often reported guilt felt by working mothers who believe they are neglecting their 'duty' to care for their children'.

Conclusion

This chapter has highlighted the importance of employment for both generations of mothers. The chapter began by examining the motivation to work amongst women of both generations. For women of both generations employment decisions were expressed as an individual preference bound by issues such as financial and social needs. However, work preferences were also clearly bound by expectations of idealised motherhood. All the mothers and grandmothers expressed a higher level of commitment to their family life than to their working lives.

Differences in orientations to work were apparent between the generations. For example, the grandmother generation became mothers when prevailing social attitudes suggested that mothers should be at home with their children. This may explain why the grandmothers justified their decision to work as being motivated by financial need rather than for the intrinsic rewards of working life. It is also possible that the grandmothers were motivated by financial need because of the lack of support in place at the time. Changes to legislation on issues such as entitlement to paid maternity leave and child benefit only benefited the younger generation.

In contrast to the grandmothers, the mothers justified their motivation to work through an emphasis on social factors such as a need to spend some time away from domestic responsibilities such as childcare. Changes in policy, such as the increased accessibility and affordability of childcare and increasingly enhanced maternity entitlement have, perhaps, made the transition back to work after childbirth easier for the younger generation.

Indeed, it has been argued that the turnaround in government policy since 1997 has been so significant that as Smeaton (2006:20) suggests, current 'government policies are implicated in the working trends among young mothers with the wide range of labour market programmes and maternity policy initiatives introduced during the 1990s interpreted as reflecting a government agenda designed to promote labour market needs rather than those of the family'. This is the first time since the Second World War that government policy has been focussed on encouraging women to work rather than espousing the value of a mother's place is in the home.

Nevertheless, mothers themselves are not committed to employment at the expense of their domestic responsibilities. Women's decisions about working hours and childcare strategies are still influenced by a desire to 'be there' for their children, as much as possible. The 'moral obligation' of mothers to care for their children is

enduring and one of the ways that women achieve a balance between working and caring is by working part-time hours and using part-time childcare.

Brannen *et al.,* (2004:208) suggest that 'for many women in older generations, the importance of mothers 'being there' for children was interpreted in their own biographies as requiring women to find employment that 'fitted' around the family, meaning short hours and/or working only at certain times'. This pattern does not appear to have changed to a great degree as the women of the younger generation still aimed to fit their work around what they perceived to be the needs of their children. However, the role of formal childcare, which was not significant for most of the grandmother generation, has given the younger generation a new site for negotiation. The evidence from these interviews suggest that as well as finding employment which fits around family obligations, the younger generation also had to reconcile with themselves the number of hours that they made use of formal childcare provision. None of the women were prepared to use full-time formal childcare and this topic is discussed in more detail in the next chapter.

The next chapter of this thesis builds upon many of the issues raised in this chapter. In particular, the following chapter explores in more detail the transmission of mothering values across generations and the provision of support within families.

Chapter Six

The Transmission of Mothering Values and the

Provision of Support Between Generations

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Provision of Support Between Generations

Introduction

This chapter presents the analysis of women's childcare strategies and employment decisions. The chapter begins with an examination of the key theme of this thesis which is the process of intergenerational transmission between mothers and daughters, focussing explicitly on this in relation to values regarding childcare and employment strategies. With the exception of Brannen *et al's*. (2004) work, little has been written about the transmission of mothering values between generations; this chapter starts to fill this gap. Next, the chapter examines practices of intergenerational transfer of resources and argues that the importance of grandmother care, emphasised as being of central importance by a number of studies (Brannen and Moss, 1991; Cotterill, 1992; Sharpe, 1984; Wheelock and Jones, 2002) is perhaps already in decline as predicted by writers such as Utall (2002) and Gatrell (2005).

This thesis aims to examine the extent to which values about childcare and childcare practices are transmitted between mothers and daughters. Such processes of intergenerational transmission between female family members contribute to an understanding of the way in which 'women through their understandings and actions appear to identify with or distance themselves from the practices adopted by their own parents' (Brannen *et al.*, 2004:26). Whereas Brannen *et al.* (2004) focus more broadly by looking at parental practices, this thesis focuses only on transmission between mothers and daughters. The rationale for this decision is based upon what Wheelock and Jones (2002:451) describe as the 'shared values and "ways of doing things" between mothers and daughters [which] is one of the social reproduction mechanisms through which the gendered provision, organisation and management of childcare are

reinforced'. In the following section, these patterns of mother and daughter intergenerational transmission are examined in more depth.

The Intergenerational Transmission of Childcare Values and Practices

This thesis presents evidence of the intergenerational transmission of childcare values and practices, which challenges Brannen *et al's*. (2004:112) assertion that few mothers born in the 1960s or 1970s 'drew upon older generations for role models in making employment decisions'. Brannen *et al.* (2005) suggest that mothers born in the immediate post-war period tended to follow 'traditional models of full-time motherhood' in contrast to the next generation for whom, they suggest, 'their own agency in shaping motherhood' was key to their actions. They support their argument by referring to the increase in the number of mothers entering work in the 1990s, which 'normalised' the process of mothers of young children entering the labour market. Brannen *et al.* (2004) argue that women born in the immediate post-war period were part of a generation for whom taking paid work was unusual and 'being a housewife was ... commonplace' (p.78). The daughters of this generation, then, when they themselves became mothers, faced very different issues because, by the 1990s, increasing numbers of mothers were entering the labour market rather than staying at home to raise their children (p.78). However, this thesis argues that historically it was not uncommon for mothers to work (Dex, 1996; Hakim, 1985; Rees, 1992) and many women born in the 1960s and 1970s did not have mothers who were stay-at-home 'housewives' (Sharpe, 1984). As argued in Chapter 2, the model of 'idealised motherhood' has always been unrealistic for all but the most privileged women, regardless of the perceived societal norms of the period, in this case the 1960s/70s (Sharpe, 1984; Gerson, 1985; Lewis, 1994).

For almost all of the women interviewed for this research, both mothers and grandmothers, paid work had played a key role not only in their own lives but also in their mothers' daily life. Therefore, the pattern identified by Brannen *et al.* (2004), whereby women of the post-war generation expected to become models of ideal

motherhood whereas their daughters tended to shape their own domestic and employment decisions is questionable. The table below outlines the family chains of women who took part in this research.

Table 6.1 Grandmothers and Mothers: Intergenerational Chains

(a) Grandmothers	(b) Mothers	(c) Grandchildren of (a) children of (b)
Diane	Sarah, Sonia, Vicky	Charlotte, Lauren, Niamh, Caleb, Raphael, Sol, Rosa, Seth
Hilary	Fiona	Molly, Maddy
Pauline	N/A	N/A
Sandra	Becky	Daniel
Maggie	Ruth	Megan, Phoebe
Gill	Layla	Ellie, Jamie
Maureen	Helen, Louise	Caitlin, Connie
Eileen	Jo	Phoebe, Mia
Cheryl	Vanessa	India
Liz	Debbie, Natalie	Kyle, Reece, Ashleigh, Matthew, Leah
Pat	N/A	N/A
Marilyn	Alison	Chloe, Joseph
Brenda	Kathy	Sophie, Sam
Peggy	Kirsty	Amelia

In this analysis a framework has been developed which categorises the mothers interviewed according to the decisions made about employment and childcare. It is argued that many mothers and grandmothers were directly influenced by their own mothers' behaviour either following their mothers' example or actively rejecting the

reproduction of their mothers' behaviour. This analytical framework is outlined in Table 6.2, below.

Table 6.2 A Typology of Intergenerational Employment and Childcare Values

Mimics	Coincidental	Resisters
Actively and consciously reproduced their own mothers' behaviour in terms of employment and childcare decisions.	Either mirrored or rejected their mothers' behaviour but described this as coincidental or suggested that it had no direct influence on their own decisions.	Actively and consciously rejected their mothers' patterns of behaviour relating to work and/or childcare strategies.
Layla Sarah Vicky Alison Fiona Sue Ruth Diane Gill Liz	Jo Becky Brenda Cheryl Maggie Sandra Helen Louise	Natalie Debbie Sonia Fiona Gill Kirsty

This table shows three distinct categories of mothers: mimics, coincidentals and resisters. Those women classified as 'mimics' are those who actively and consciously followed their own mothers' roles with regard to combining work and childcare responsibilities. By contrast the group of mothers at the opposite end of the spectrum are 'resisters', that is they have actively avoided following their mothers' example. Finally, in the middle of these two groups are women who perceive their behaviour in

relation to their mothers behaviour as either purely coincidental or those women who made no link between their own patterns of behaviour and their mothers – even when the behaviours bear close resemblance. The following discussion examines each of these typologies in more depth and illustrates the ways in which women referred to their mothers when describing their own decisions. The chapter looks first at those women whose behaviour fits the 'mimic' typology outlined above.

The Influence of Grandmothers on Childcare and Employment Decisions

(a) Mimics

A number of women interviewed described their mothering behaviour and attitudes as having been directly influenced by their mothers'. Layla, (born 1977) for example, justified her adversity to using formal childcare in the form of a nursery or a childminder by referring to the way in which she had been brought up herself. Layla's description of the way she is bringing up her children fits with the findings of Wheelock and Jones (2002: 456) whose respondents stressed the benefits of 'shared family values ... in terms of having the same ideas about rearing children'. Layla explained her decisions about combining family life and employment in a similar way:

'I think the way I've been brought up is that mums are there and, you know, my mum juggled it with us, she managed to work and still get dinners on the table, so I think it's from my mum really. I think a lot of it is how you've been brought up. I've always known my mum to be there and my mum would always get us dinner on the table. And sometimes I think I feel guilty because if it's convenience then I'll think "oh God I can't do that because I've got to go back to the salon" or "I've had to do this – or it's had to be chips" something like that. I am similar to my mum; I do look after the family and look after us that way. I know that I bring my children up the way that my mum brought us up'.

(Layla, age 28, hairdresser with 2 children)

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Indeed, Layla's life as a mother had very closely followed her mother's own life and a striking similarity between them was the way in which they had organised childcare by either working at home or taking their children to work with them, a theme which is discussed in more detail below.

Alison (born 1970) described and justified her actions in a similar way. She appeared to have accepted her mother's paid employment as being part of 'normal' life: 'Mum went to work… everyone does'. Alison had therefore participated in paid work throughout her adult life, taking only the minimum amount of time out when her two children were born. She suggested that this pattern would continue down through the generations and she expressed hope that her daughter would have the same outlook as her and her mother:

'I think I've got the same outlook as my mum. I think mum working when we were kids to be truthful it gives you a proper perspective on life. Mum went to work and I go to work, you have to work, everyone does. I can't remember who looked after me; I can't remember her not being there either. It didn't affect me enough to notice. I haven't done anything wrong by going to work. I'm here for them like my mum was for me. Hopefully it'll follow on through the generations, I've got the same outlook as my mum and Chloe will hopefully have the same outlook as me'.

(Alison, age 35, office worker, two children)

Similarly, Sarah (born in 1974) reflected on the experience of having had a working mother in a very positive light. Sarah talks about the influence of her mother being a single mother with four children yet simultaneously managing to develop a successful career:

[HO'C: Do you think that the fact that your mum worked had an influence on what you've done?] Yes, because she set the example, and that's the only example that we had. So when you're growing up and you see your mum, she

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was knackered all the time, the house was a mess, because you sit there and she'd say "leave me alone" and she might not have had the time to go in sort of the direction but she's slogged her guts out working. She went into nursing the same kind of age that I went back to work with my kids – she was about 25/27 before she decided to go back to work so it's a bit like we've followed the same pattern, that's very much the same pattern as what she did. So to be able to see her progress and now, OK, there's 20 years of hard work I've got from her through sheer determination and it's very inspiring to see that.

(Sarah, age 31, training manager, 3 children)

Indeed Sarah, like Layla, followed her mother's experience very closely, having children at a young age and staying at home with the children until they reached an age when she deemed them to need more stimulation. Pauline and Gill, both respondents from the grandmother generation were even more emphatic in their explanations of their own parenting behaviour, fitting clearly in to the category of 'mimic'. They both made a clear and direct link between their behaviour and the 'role model' their mothers provided:

I worked up to as long as I could then I had Julie and I stopped work then, I didn't go back. Then I had my 2nd one, Dawn. No, I didn't think I'd go back, I don't think it's right. What anybody else does that's up to them but I brought both my girls up till they were in senior school then I went back to work part-time but only if it fitted in with my working hours. They had breakfast, went to school, I saw them off to school and when they came home at 4 o'clock I was back at home. I only worked till three; I used to do 9 till 3.

[HO'C You seem to have quite a strong opinion on that. Where do you think that comes from?] My mum. My mum was in a position where she didn't have to go to work because dad looked after her really well. He provided – we didn't have a lot but what we did have kept us just nice so my mum never, ever worked.

My dad wouldn't let her go to work. Her job was to bring me up and to look after the home and that's how I've seen my job.

(Pauline, age 63, two children, childminder)

[HO'C: Did you plan to go back to work after your children were born?]
I don't think I did. Coming to think about it, I don't think I even thought about work afterwards, possibly because my mum had always been at home for me so I did stop work, yes, like my mum had done and I didn't really go back to work even after Jason.

(Gill, age 58, cleaner, four children).

Liz also implied that her behaviour had followed her mother's behaviour. Her mother had worked as a part-time cleaner, working in the early morning and again in the evening, but Liz recalled that her mother had always been around for her and her siblings until they were old enough to 'look after themselves'.

Yes. My mum worked when I was growing up, yes she did. She cleaned at the school but she'd done it before we went to school and again in the evening after we'd got back home and that. Because we were all a bit grown up by then, you know, we could look after ourselves. So she went before we went to school and about an hour and a half after we finished school, yeah and I suppose that really that's what I've done as well, tried to fit in work and the kids in that sort of way.

(Liz, age 56, nursing assistant, four children)

Liz, like her mother, had tried to ensure that her own paid work did not impinge upon her ability to 'be there' for her children, by taking on work at home and later on by actively seeking night shifts.

Like with Justin, well how old would he have been then, Justin? I think 8 or 9 and he started to say, "mum I don't want to go – I don't like going to childminders". He hated it. So it was get the paper, rethink my job and a job

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came up nights. So it was still in hosiery but it was socks, I was doing socks and it was 10 till 6. Night time. So I went for that. So then I'm always here for him. And I've done nights ever since. Well I didn't have to go there until 10. He was basically in bed before I went to work and he was still in bed when I got home. When he'd gone to school, when he was in school, then I'd go bed but I knew I had to be awake to go and pick him up. [HO'C] Pretty hard going isn't it? It's not been easy; no it's not been easy, no. And I've done nights since then because it's worked for Justin.

(Liz, age 56, nursing assistant, four children)

(b) Resisters

By contrast a number of the women, defined here as 'resisters', reflected on their mother's decisions in a less positive light, a process defined here as 'inverse' intergenerational transmission. As Sharpe (1976:192) suggests, amongst the school girls in her study, those with mothers who worked full-time argued that once they had left school, married and had children they 'would make sure that they were waiting at home when their children came back from school'. The women categorised here as 'resisters' have, as Sharpe's schoolgirls' suggested in the 1970s, reacted against their mothers' patterns of work. For these women, their efforts appeared to have been focussed on avoiding the social reproduction of mothering through generations. Often interviewees spoke about their own childhood experiences, for example, coming home to an empty house and the way in which this had influenced their own parenting decisions. In the following extract Debbie describes the way in which she was left to come home from school alone and prepare a meal for her parents on their return from work:

[HO'C: Can you remember what happened to you when you were a child?] Yeah. Left. Yeah. I remember it like from a young age going to school but I mean I know it was different years ago. I can remember going to school and there was nobody there and coming back and having to get the dinner prepared

for when they come in because she had to work. And having to do things before you went out and not being allowed out until mum come home or dad come home. I just remember a lot of the time being on your own.

[HO'C: Do you think that influenced you with your kids?] Definitely, because it was.... it wasn't very nice. I can't remember whether we had a key or somebody looked after a key till we'd get home and let us in, I can't remember. I just remember mum working lots. She always worked.

(Debbie, age 37, care home worker, two children)

For Debbie the experience appears to have had a dramatic influence on her own employment decisions. Whilst she had worked throughout her two son's lives she made 'morality-based' decisions on how to combine work and childcare. This is encapsulated by her suggestion that: 'we don't even have babysitters...I've never had an outside babysitter coming in. No, I'd never do it'. This mirrors trends identified by Mitchell and Green (2002) who found that the young mothers they interviewed distanced themselves and their 'good mother' parenting practices from those women around them who they perceived to be 'bad mothers'.

Debbie's efforts to avoid repeating her mother's childcare strategies led her to make complex arrangements to ensure that she was at home for her children, by working nights, sharing care with her partner or accepting employment solely because it fitted her childcare needs:

I mean it's like, we don't even have babysitters. Have you ever had a babysitter Reece (comment addressed to her son)? I mean family have them, my mum, but I've never had an outside babysitter coming in. No I'd never do it. Never even thought about doing it. Yeah, I suppose it is going back from when I was young and mum and dad being out all the while and being left at home, you know. If we can't get anybody to have them we all go out together or stay in. I wouldn't just

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have anybody coming in; well not now that he's older but even when he was younger.

(Debbie, age 37, care home worker, two children)

For Natalie the influence of her mother on her behaviour appeared similar. When Natalie was asked if having a working mother had influenced her decision to work, she explained 'I suppose we don't know any different, it's like you have to go (to work), if you want anything you've got to go out to work for it rather than just expect to get it'. She went on to explain that although she worked while her oldest two children were growing up and that she continued to work after her youngest child was born, she always tried to ensure that she met the children from school or that she was at home when they arrived home because of her own experience of coming home to an empty house:

[HO'C: Was it important to you to go and collect them and take them to school?] Yes. It still is now even though Leah is 14, it's still important. I think it's because I never had that. I think at Ashleigh's age I had a key to let myself in and obviously I was the youngest of the three and I was the first one home and walking into an empty house by myself. I didn't like that and I didn't want that to happen to my kids. Don't get me wrong, sometimes you have to do it don't you but I'd say nine times out of ten I'm here, or I'm there to pick them up, especially obviously to pick them up, yeah. But yeah I'm usually home. I usually see you off to school don't I (talking to children in background) and then I'm usually home when they come home.

(Natalie, age 34, bar worker, 3 children)

Some of the women such as Gill (age 58), Fiona (age 44) and Vicky (age 31) are interesting because their profiles straddle two categories. Gill, for example, is categorised above as a 'mimic'. She talked about her mother having not worked and the way in which this influenced her own work decisions, in particular her decision not to work when her children were very young. However, when asked about her role as a

grandmother, she can be categorised as a 'resister'. Her mother did not help her with her children and Gill had made a conscious decision not to replicate this pattern. It is important to her to be available to look after her grandchildren, even though she herself still works in paid employment:

I look after Jamie on a Wednesday afternoon at the minute so that Layla can go to work. Wednesday afternoon into the night sort of thing, yeah. [HO'C: After you've finished work?] Yes. The other week she helped out in her brother's café shop, which I work in. I work from 7 in a morning till 12 dinner really, but that week I stayed on and I had Jamie while she helped him out in the afternoon you see. [HO'C] So is that just like an informal thing, does she pay you or do you just do it? No, it's informal. Yes, yeah. You know because when I think back, I never had that help, you know so I want to make sure that I can be here for my grandchildren and help out in that way.

(Gill, age 58, cleaner, four children)

Both Fiona and Vicky can be classified as 'mimics' in terms of their values about work, their mothers had worked while the women were growing up and they believed that this had influenced their own decisions about work and career. For example, Fiona explained that both her parents 'were very keen on us when we were younger to get an education because they saw that as important for all their children, for our future careers'. However, both could also be described as 'resisters' because their negative experiences of mothering had also influenced their own behaviour as parents. Fiona, for example, recalled the stress that her mother's work had created for her and her siblings. When asked what she could remember about her mother working Fiona said she remembered 'hating my mum being at work'. She felt that her mother had not even been happy herself in trying to balance home and career:

I always think about my mum and what she was like. She enjoyed her work but she didn't seem that happy. I've tried to not do the same thing, to not be grumpy and tired when I get home. Also I didn't like going to the neighbour after

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school and I remember that. I think it's partly because mum and the job she was in, she couldn't have done anything like pick us up from school or take us in the morning. She didn't come to sports days, she didn't come to anything that we had on at school, she was just never there and that's something I've tried to avoid.

(Fiona, age 44, research scientist, two children)

She described her unhappiness at the way in which she and her siblings were left in the care of a neighbour before and after school:

I think perhaps because it was such a thing that we did after school, going to the next door neighbours and we hated it so much and it's stuck in our minds. Well the next door neighbour she was quite a nice lady but she was quite, well, very strict and she had three children of her own and there were 7 of us altogether and it was quite a small house and we weren't allowed to do anything other than watch TV, there were no biscuits or food and I remember always being starving when we were there.

Although her mother has then influenced Fiona and she expected to have a 'career' in the same way as her mother had, she has also gone to great lengths to avoid subjecting her children to the experiences that she remembered in a negative way. As such the flexibility of her current job is highly significant as this, combined with her husband's equally flexible job, enabled her to ensure that she was always able to attend school functions and her children are always able to come home after school. Fiona's strategy has been to avoid using childminders and this appears to be directly related to her own negative experiences:

I tried to avoid being like mum was because whenever they need me I make sure that I'm here and that's because of the way my mum was.

(Fiona, age 44, research scientist, two children)

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This had directly influenced her own choice of childcare for her children. She actively avoided the use of childminders because of her own negative experience. Fiona, therefore, 'fits' in the respect with the 'resisters'. However, she also talked in some depth about the way in which she has been positively influenced by her mother and she attributes much of her parenting behaviour and values, for example her attitude towards the importance of education, to her mother.

Vicky's recollection of her childhood appeared to have influenced her mothering behaviour in a similar way and describes her resistance to reproducing certain aspects of her mother's behaviour as being a 'reverse influence'. Whereas she believed her attitude to work (outlined above) had been positively influenced by her mother and she had 'mimicked' her behaviour in that sphere, she had resisted replicating her mother's behaviour in other ways:

I've got a thing about being organised and my mum did influence this. It wasn't that she was disorganised but we would arrive late at school and we'd wait for mum for over an hour at home time for her to come and get us. And there wouldn't be money for a trip but she'd try and get it, you know, that kind of thing. So now, with Caleb, his homework is done the day he gets it, all of that. And Caleb's quite anxious in those ways so I understand where he's coming from and that and I try and stop his anxiety straight away by doing the things that I know will make him feel better so that's having an effect, like a reverse influence from my mum as I'm trying not to do what she did with us .So I'm much more aware of things. Like I constantly say to Caleb 'are you happy, how do you feel. how are you in the house, how are you?' you know constantly "are you lot alright?" and I think well why didn't my mum think of something but she wouldn't have the time to because she was so busy.

(Vicky, age 31, trainer, four children)

The influence of the current grandmothers was even stronger for some of the mothers in the study. The extract below is from Sonia, who is classified here as a

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'resister'. She explained that she deliberately chose not to work when her daughter was growing up, a decision she links directly with her experience of having had a working mother:

> I didn't pay for any childcare. I didn't pay for any. But also I didn't live a life that required that I needed childcare really. If I wanted an odd evening out, I didn't leave her for the night until she was over three, so that just wasn't how I was thinking about being a mum. [HO'C: So that was a conscious decision to do that?] Absolutely. And only because I know my mum had worked and so she was not in the house.

> [HO'C: Can you remember?] Absolutely. I really can. I can remember. I can't remember being given to a child minder at six months; I can't remember that at all, no. But as an older girl I remember because things changed and a lot of responsibilities came my way and because it was just too expensive to expect anybody, to pay someone to come in and take care of four children and a house and be a single mum and so actually a lot of it fell to me to do because I was the eldest girl, which was really interesting. My brother was actually the eldest. Yeah, helpless boys you see. So no, I just absolutely was not going to do that myself. And you pay, you know the consequences are that I am much further behind in my career now than my mum probably was at the same age as me, she's much further on than I was, do you know what I mean?

(Sonia, age 36, civil servant, 1 child)

(c) Coincidentals

The women who did not identify a pattern of social reproduction between their own actions and their mothers' behaviour when they were growing up, are identified as 'coincidentals'. Amongst this group are women who do not believe that their mothers' actions had any direct influence on their own life decisions. For example, in this category are women who have developed complex strategies to enable them to combine

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childcare responsibilities and employment, which mirror the strategies adopted by their mothers, nevertheless the younger generation ascribe this as purely coincidental. Jo is one example of this type of mother. She had given up work to be at home when her first child was born but during that period she had begun to take on work at home to earn extra money. She had taken on work as a typist based at home which is exactly the same strategy her mother had taken. Later Jo had managed to work only in part-time jobs which enabled her to drop off and collect her children from school. Although she could remember her mother working she did not think this has influenced her own decisions:

No. I know mum worked but I've got a clear picture of her being there, being with her in the holidays or perhaps one day we'd go in to work with her, yeah, but no she was always pretty much there. I remember I used to come home from school when I was probably at primary school but mum was always there, you knew she'd be there and that. So it never interfered, so I never got the sense, I never got the feeling of mum being out to work, that sort of feeling. She worked but no, she was around. She was always there after school, yeah, there at the weekends and things like that, yeah I don't remember her going to work really or saying "mum's going to work now", no.

(Jo, age 33, office worker, two children)

Becky is a similar case. Her mother had worked throughout Becky's childhood but although Becky recalled being looked after by her grandmother she did not think that her mother's employment history had influenced her:

Well my mum did work and I remember that we used to sometimes go to my grandma's house but mum was always here for us, I don't remember her not being around. So the fact that she worked, well I don't think that's really influenced me that much.

(Becky, age 32, police officer, one child)

Brenda (born 1946), had taken paid employment from the time her youngest child started primary school. She had always tried to fit her work around her children's school hours and she recognised that her own mother had similar work patterns. However, whilst Brenda recognised the similarities between her and her mother's employment history, when asked about her mother's employment she described this as coincidence rather than suggesting that her mother had influenced her own employment patterns:

Yes my mum did work. She worked in the shoes. She made little tiny baby shoes and the factory was two doors away from where we lived. And then she worked in a school as a dinner lady – well a cook. And then she worked at the University when she was retiring age in one of the labs. So in a way similar thing really, yeah. [HO'C: do you think that has influenced what you've done?] Well no not really, no, it's just coincidence I think. When I was very young I remember her not being there because I remember being looked after by a lady across the road, but my mum was only across the road as well in the factory. I also remember going to work with my mum during the school holidays, in the factory; I loved that because they used to give you something to do. I mean you're looking at a long time ago obviously; it would be in the early '50s. But I do remember being looked after by a lady across the road but not for any length of time, I don't know why it was suddenly there or I don't know.

(Brenda, age 59, office worker, 2 children).

The Intergenerational Transfer of Resources and Support

This chapter now goes on to examine in more depth the way in which intergenerational transfer of values and ideals impacts upon the transfer of resources, for example, do grandmothers who believe that family care is 'best' provide childcare to facilitate their daughters' participation in the labour market? How far do women's 'actual' childcare strategies reflect their own values?

The importance of kinship networks in the provision of support to family members is well documented (Attias-Donfut and Wolff, 2000; Finch, 1989; Pilcher, 1995). Financial support, for example, is often provided by older generations to members of the younger generation and in turn, the younger generation may provide 'in kind' support, such as caring for older generations. Finch (1989:30) argues that the role of relatives in the provision of support to other kin, especially between parents and children is of great importance to many individuals and families. The flow of support is usually strongest in a downward direction from parent to child. In addition, gender is significant and 'the strong mother/daughter bond both structures the forms of support given to descendants (childcare of grandchildren) and support given to ascendants (care tasks for disabled elderly parents)' (Attias-Donfut and Wolff, 2000:44).

It is not only tangible, measurable resources such as the provision of care and/or financial support which can be transmitted between generations. Jones (2000:154), for example, highlights the importance of family in the intergenerational transfer of 'social and cultural capital in the form of skills, social networks, aspirations and values'. She talks about an 'intergenerational contract', 'potentially reciprocal over time', characterised by the older generation providing resources, both material and non-material which can represent 'an investment which pays dividends when the parents become older and need care themselves' (Jones, 2000:154). Reciprocity, for example, the repaying of favours granted, is an important concept in understanding exchanges of goods or services within families because 'though reciprocity can take different forms, it is widely seen as being central to the dynamics of kin relationships' (Finch and Mason, 1993: 34). Finch and Mason categorise types of reciprocation as being either in the form of direct repayments, e.g. providing childcare for a sibling's children and the sibling, in turn, providing care when required or indirect repayment, whereby goods and services of different natures are exchanged, for example, childcare provision exchanged for decorating. The balancing out of support given and 'repayment' provided is fraught with difficulty and a situation can arise which leaves 'one party in the position of a net giver or a net receiver' (Finch and Mason, 1993: 49), and this is examined in more detail below.

(a) 'Doing What I Can to Help...'

The extent of provision of what Finch (1989:30) terms 'practical support', for example, childcare provided by maternal grandmothers enabling their daughters to participate in paid work, is a key question of this thesis. In the following discussion the extent of practical support offered by the older generation in the form of childcare is examined. What emerges from the discussion below is that in fact, very few mothers provided the level of childcare which daughters required in order to enable them to participate in paid employment. Grandmothers tended not to be used as a main source of childcare; indeed it was only in two family chains that familial care was the sole type of care used. Nevertheless, grandmothers did provide an important source of support for their daughters. The following section begins by examining patterns of care provided by grandmothers.

Hilary's description of her role in helping her daughters balance their obligations focuses on the 'unconditional' provision of care between family members (Finch and Mason, 1993; Brannen *et al.* 2004). Hilary's comment characterises a number of the responses from grandmothers talking about their role in supporting their children:

> But they really know that I do what I can and if they ask I can't say no. I think that comes from my family... well my mother was exactly the same and all those, they came from Wales and we were families that did whatever they could – my mother did for both of us. So it comes down through the generations I think. An example, a role model.
>
> (Hilary, age 67, teacher, four children)

What is interesting about Hilary's comment is that she refers to the downward transmission of resources, in this case families 'doing whatever they could' to help others in the family. Although the data collected here does not provide evidence of the upward flow of resources, namely provision of care for elderly relatives, there is

evidence of mimicking patterns within families. Again Hilary's comment about role models introduces this idea of mimicking the support offered in previous generations. Indeed, many of the women in the older generation described the way in which their own mothers had provided childcare at some level. Now they, in turn, provide some care for their own grandchildren. As Attias-Donfut and Wolff (2000:45) suggest,

'Parents have a higher probability of helping children after having received transfers from their own parents in the past, but they also tend to favour the same way of transmission that they themselves have benefited from'.

Sandra and Becky (mother and daughter), for example, both talked at some length about the childcare which Sandra provided for Becky's son. This is an interesting case because the grandmother, Sandra, worked when her children were growing up and she relied on her mother for childcare. She categorically stated that she would not have used a childminder but that she paid her mother for the care she provided as she wanted to 'ease her own conscience', a theme examined later in this chapter:

I didn't want anybody else looking after my kids. I could trust my mum. I don't think anybody looks after your own children as well as you do, and the second is your mum because she knows how I like them to behave and brought up. I think childminding now is a lot stricter; it's a lot more regulations, but then they weren't really regulated. I wouldn't have entertained it [work] if mum hadn't have had the children but I did say that I would pay her the same as a childminder because I didn't think it was fair, and that's me being independent not mum wanting any money. It relieved my conscience because really I didn't have to go out to work; it was more for my own benefit because I was going nuts at home. I needed something else to talk about besides who's walking and who's potty trained, you know.

(Sandra, age 56, retired accounts officer, three children)

However, even though her mother had facilitated her employment throughout the time her children were growing up, she initially made it clear to her own daughter that she did not want to look after her grandchildren on a regular basis. When talking about the regular care she eventually did provide for her grandson she explained:

That's been more forced on us than anything. I mean he's absolutely gorgeous and if I don't see him every day I sort of pine to see him but before Becky was pregnant I said "don't rely on me for looking after the baby" because Martin had not long left home and I said "I want a bit of freedom". I'd retired; I want to just go out. But when it came to it, and I knew she would feel the same as me, "I don't really want my baby to go to a childminder mum". And then she couldn't get anybody… because she worked shifts, there's not a nursery that will take her while she was working shifts, so it ended up with us having him, didn't it? I mean it was quite a strain at first because we were getting up at five in the morning because she had to be at work, you know, so she use to have to bring him round. And some nights, when she was on nights, of course we had him over. So it wasn't just childminding it was extra to that when you're looking after a baby overnight.

(Sandra, age 56, retired accounts officer, three children)

When Becky was looking for childcare for her son, she was reluctant to ask her mother to help out:

'I didn't want to put the pressure on mum initially, she had made it clear that she wouldn't look after him, so I went down that avenue to say "this is my option mum, how would you feel looking after Daniel" and mum was the same… she didn't want him to go to nursery'.

As Sandra commented in the quote above, 'But when it came to it, and I knew she would feel the same as me, "I don't really want my baby to go to a childminder mum"'. Although Sandra resisted becoming involved in providing childcare for her grandson,

the values that she had transmitted to her daughter about child-rearing meant that she had little choice but to provide the required care. Both mother and daughter had such a strong aversion to employing nursery care or a childminder that ultimately the options for Daniel's care were limited:

> You hear such horror stories don't you about how the kids are mistreated. I know they pick bad ones when they do a television programme but I wouldn't like a little baby to go. I mean Daniel's only been a few times and he's played with things and he picks up colds and coughs and various things.

Finch (1989:180-1) describes behaviour which resembles that of Sandra and Becky as a process of 'bargaining and negotiation' or 'negotiated commitments', that is, the emergence of 'an understanding ... between two people that there are certain things which they would do for each other if necessary'. She goes on to suggest that within families there is often an implicit understanding of which individual will be called upon to provide support if necessary. This concept provides a useful framework for understanding the way in which support within families is operationalised. In the case of Sandra and Becky it appears that Becky implicitly understood that the 'obligation, duty and responsibility' felt by her mother would mean that she would ultimately and without much discussion, provide the required care.

Overall, the provision of support in order to maintain intergenerational mothering values was demonstrated in very few cases by grandmothers providing childcare in order for their daughters to participate in the labour market. The trend identified in most generational chains was that both generations 'agreed' that formal care should be avoided but the older generation appeared to do little to maintain these values. As with Becky and Sandra, other daughters also relied on their mother's sense of 'obligation, duty and responsibility' in providing care only when it was unavoidable.

In some cases this sense of obligation and duty also appeared to impact upon mother-in-laws as much as mothers meaning that some mother-in-laws played a central

role in the provision of childcare. One of the grandmothers, Marilyn, described her understanding of how her daughter Alison's mother-in-law came to be the main childcarer for her grandchildren: 'Carolyn, that's my daughter's mother-in-law, said "nobody else is having my grandkids, I'll have them". However, Alison felt that she was actually helping her mother-in-law by employing her as a child carer. As the quote below illustrates, Alison and her husband felt that by asking his mother to look after their daughter they were helping her, as prior to this 'she'd got nothing to get up for'. This arrangement suited Alison because her previous childcare arrangement had not been successful:

> And then I got my mother-in-law and I used to pay her for it. She used to work at the school that they all went to but she left there because of ill health and all that but she weren't very well, because she lived on her own she were getting a bit down because she'd got nothing to get up for basically so we come up with the idea of looking after Chloe. And then obviously Chloe, by the time Chloe was at full-time school, before Joseph come along, so she didn't necessarily have both of them at once, Chloe was at full-time school and then she started looking after Joseph when he was a baby.
>
> (Alison, age 35, office worker, two children)

This is one example where, as described in the methodology chapter, it would have been valuable to include mothers-in-law as interviewees.

Alison was one of the few mothers who directly reciprocated for family-based childcare through financial payment. Alison paid her mother-in-law a small amount of money, though an amount she considered to be the 'going rate' for childcare, whilst her mother-in-law was providing full-time childcare:

> I did pay her, yeah, I insisted because in my eyes I'd have to pay somebody and just because she's my mother-in-law, why should she not be earning that little bit extra. She was doing a job, I mean children are hard work at the end of the

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day and they are time consuming and yeah we did pay her, I think it were £25 a week and that was taking Chloe to full-time school and then having Joseph.

(Alison, age 35, office worker, two children)

It is interesting to note that once Alison's children started school, her mother-in-law though still of vital importance, was no longer a full-time childcarer. At this point the direct financial reciprocation for her services stopped and the previous balance of reciprocity shifted, making Alison a 'net receiver' of support (Finch, 1989). Her mother-in-law's role was reduced to carrying out the school run in the morning and afternoon for her grandchildren and her granddaughter's friend:

Chloe's friend, well, her mum, because they're at big school now her mum's finding it hard to get someone to have her, so she drops her here so many mornings a week at 7.00. So I take them all up to John's mum's and she's got a house full of kids at 7.00 and I smile and wave to her. So yeah, we have Alice for a couple of days a week.

(Alison, age 35, office worker, two children)

Alison gave two reasons for the lack of direct financial reciprocation once her children started school. First, she argued that her mother-in-law no longer perceived that she was actually 'doing a job' because she no longer provided full-time care. Second, she did not want to insult her mother-in-law by offering her money. Nevertheless, she and her husband still tried to reciprocate by purchasing exceptional items for the grandmother or buying her extra gifts at Christmas, what Finch and Mason (1993:43) call 'indirect exchange or reciprocation'. This arrangement was informal, to the point that the grandmother was not even supposed to know that the money was being saved on her behalf.

No I don't officially pay her now they're both at school because in her eyes it's not classed as a job now, she's not doing a job, she's just having her grandchildren basically. But what I do that she don't know about is, I save so

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much each week and then every so often if she needs anything like... she needed a new fridge the other week and me and John bought her a fridge. And then it's like Christmas; we always buy her that bit extra at Christmas as thank you presents and that. So we spend the money on her other ways but without insulting her by saying "here's your childminding money". And it's like in school holidays, she has them in school holidays but I always take up like cereals and their juice and crisps that I know they're going to have a lot of, so I always sort of fill her cupboards for her. So we do give it back that way without insulting her sort of thing.

<div align="right">(Alison, age 35, office worker, two children)</div>

By contrast Alison's mother, who, because she still had a full-time job, was unable to offer much help with childcare, was provided with gifts in the same way as the mother-in-law. When talking about the relationship with her mother, as opposed to her mother-in-law, the implication was that family ties are so strong between mother and daughter, that financial recompense would be out of the question.

But my mum's easy, she's really easy to please, my mum. They wouldn't even dream if you tried to offer them any money. So every so often it would be like "oh I've bought you a packet of fags" I don't like buying them fags because I don't agree with them but it's what they do and it's their thing, and they both like a bit of a tipple every so often so I'll buy them that. I treat them in different ways, just like John's mum. In fact it was my mum's birthday in September we sent her and her friend off to Ragdale for the day. Paid for them to go to Ragdale for the day.

<div align="right">(Alison, age 35, office worker, two children)</div>

Few families offered any other type of resource with the exception of Cheryl's family who facilitated her entry to employment through the provision of economic support (Finch, 1989). Cheryl's description of her mother's influence is fascinating because alongside her description of her mother's direct influence on her employment

decision, she also introduces the concept of 'intergenerational transfers of resources' (Brannen *et al.* 2004:151). In the extract below she describes the way in which her mother influenced not only her job preference but also provided the financial support to pay for a nursery place:

> I can remember the first job I had that I got through the agency, when I came to Leicester because it was very hosiery orientated, the agency wanted to put me into a factory and my mum went mad. She said "you are not going in a factory" because I did typing qualifications at school. Do you know what, I thank her. I don't thank her a lot but I thank her for that. And for me to take notice as well. I don't know why I took her advice, I didn't normally but yeah. I thought because she paid like for the nursery that was all, I didn't have any other money. [HO'C: Was it her idea to pay for it or did you ask her for it?] No it was her idea but I know why. It was because my family, rather than give practical help, have always given financial help. They thought that was what you did. It was more financial than practical. Rather than me go home and live with her.
>
> (Cheryl, age 50, personal assistant, three children)

Cheryl's description of the transfer of resources is unusual amongst this group as no other respondents talked explicitly about the provision of direct financial assistance flowing from mother to daughter. This is perhaps not surprising because as Attias-Donfut and Wolff (2000:36-37) have suggested, the transfer of financial resources is unusual within families with the exception of high-income families and few of the families interviewed appeared to fit this category. However, they also argue that childcare provided by grandparents and other family members does represent a financial advantage to parents whose time is freed up to enable their own labour market activity usually without the financial burden associated with childcare. Therefore, it can be argued that the provision of free childcare is a financial benefit of sorts. Indeed, the lack of any financial costs associated with care provided by grandparents provided the rationale for many women to work. For some respondents (Becky, Layla, Pauline, Gill)

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the cost of appropriate childcare would have precluded them for taking paid work outside the home, as Layla describes:

I thought to myself as well, if you put them out into a nursery it wouldn't be worth going to work really. The wages are not brilliant in hairdressing and it would hardly be worth me going, it wouldn't be worth my while to be honest. If my mum hadn't been around to help me I don't think I would have gone back to work, it wouldn't have been worth it, you know, money wise'.

(Layla, age 28, hairdresser, two children)

(b) Making Legitimate Excuses

The preceding section looked at the ways in which support is provided within families, particularly flowing downward from mothers to daughters and, in this case, focussing mainly on the provision of childcare. The discussion highlighted the negotiation which takes place, both explicit and implicit, in order to achieve a desirable and acceptable outcome for the individuals concerned. Concepts of 'duty' and 'obligation' emerged as important factors contributing to the decision to provide support within families. However, this does not explain the decisions made and justifications given in families where support is less forthcoming or indeed not provided at all. Finch (1989) argues that it is important not only to understand why people provide support to other family members but also to examine the reasons why others do not commit themselves to supporting others.

There was little evidence of any significant amounts of childcare duties being performed by grandmothers. Both mothers and daughters gave reasons, or 'legitimate excuses' (Finch, 1989:210) why grandmothers could not provide childcare. For example, a number of grandmothers were still employed in full or part-time work (Hilary, Brenda, Diane, Cheryl, Eileen, Pauline, Maggie) and they were generally not

prepared to sacrifice their resources, in particular their much-valued free-time, in order to look after grandchildren.

And the job is so tiring that I don't have the energy levels that I had when I was 30 and I'm not going to kid anybody that I do. And at the end of the day actually I just want to relax actually because it's a very demanding and a very busy job.

(Diane, age 55, health care worker, 4 children)

[HO'C: And then what about your grandchildren, do you have them or look after them at all?] Yeah. Usually it's on my days off, its "Mam..." it's only the five year old if he's poorly because she has to go to work. It does get on my nerves a bit to be honest because it's my time off. But really she'd only ask me if she was stuck. He goes school now but it's when he's ill and there's something at short notice she'll ask me but kids put on their mams' anyway don't they, it's what they're there for. But it gets on my nerves because it's my time. I love my grandkids but I think I've had enough. Done my bit, yeah. Because I used to think, when my mam used to say she didn't want to look after my kids that "miserable beggar" but I understand, you do, you've done your bit and you don't want to start again. No, don't want screaming kids round me. Yeah, so I'll have them in an emergency or if I want them.

(Liz, age 56, health care worker, four children)

So if I wasn't working full-time, yes, I think there would be a pressure on me to look after my grandchildren more. A lot of women my age are still working full-time and they've looked after their own children, they don't want to be stuck at home all day every day looking after grandkids now. Well they're your grandchildren, you want to see them don't you, you want to look after them, I do want to but at my choosing, not when you just tell me I've got to do it.

(Eileen, age 59, office worker, two children)

These grandmothers did, then, spend time with their grandchildren because as Attias-Donfut and Wolff (2000:39) suggest 'grandmothers in general arrange to spend time with their grandchildren whether they work or not' but this was only on their own terms. There was a reluctance to be seen as childcarers. They did not mind what was often termed as 'helping out', by babysitting occasionally or by providing emergency cover due to illness but most did not want to be taken for granted, especially if they were still working full-time themselves. Diane, Eileen and Liz all explained that they wanted to spend time with their grandchildren but only on their own terms. They certainly did not want to be seen as being responsible for their grandchildren or to be taken for granted by their children:

'Well it's interesting actually – I don't often look after my grandchildren. I see them a lot but I don't have care of them very often. I do see them a lot. That's been a bit of a trouble really for me to accept that boundary, you know, of course I'm pleased to see the children but actually I don't necessarily want the responsibility for them. I don't feel taken for granted or that there's an assumption that I will. I'm properly asked if you like rather than assumed. I think we've had to negotiate a lot. We've had to talk about that quite a bit and I said "excuse me" you know, "I'm not a second parent" so that's clearly not how the children see me at all. But I rarely get asked to baby-sit. I'm happy to do it, you know, but I don't know, they're all pretty home bods really. I'm happy to do it but it's not assumed I will, which is how I want it. So that's lovely, I don't mind that but I don't do much babysitting. I will but I don't get into it'.

(Diane, age 55, health care worker, 4 children)

'She never relied on me to look after the children because I live too far away to do that kind of thing on a regular basis and I work full-time so really it would be impossible even if I wanted to but I don't, not really. I mean even now the pressures on me to offer to help out when I can'.

(Eileen, age 59, office worker, two children)

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The daughters whose mothers were reluctant to help out were able to justify their mothers' decision quite easily. Reasons such as their mothers' employment commitments, the geographical distance between mother and daughter, daughters' concerns about the more 'elderly' grandmothers ability to look after children and being unable to provide care for one grandchild when there were competing demands to look after other grandchildren were all given. Finch and Mason (1993:97) terms justifications such as these as 'legitimate excuses' made by one party, in this case the grandmother, and importantly, accepted by the party affected, in this case, the daughter. A 'legitimate excuse' might be provided by an individual who is 'unable to provide assistance' rather than being 'able but unwilling'. Legitimate excuses often focus on commitments such as employment demands and the barrier of geographical distance, the excuses which individuals make in order to avoid providing support to other family members.

Natalie, for example, talked in the very accepting way about the difficulty she and her mother faced in coordinating care because they lived in different parts of the city and her mother works evening shifts:

[HO'C: Did you mother ever have them?] No, because I lived in Knighton and my mum lives in Beaumont Leys. Yeah, she missed out on the girls quite a lot really in that respect. [HO'C: And now you live closer to her, does she have them?] Yeah, she has Matthew. But yeah, because she worked nights, on her days off if I'm stuck and the girls go to the guides and I've got no-one to have Matthew, my mum will always have him. Not so much when he was little but now he's older and he's quite self-contained and asks for what he wants and that, she's quite good, she does have him.

(Natalie, age 34, bar worker, three children)

Natalie's mother, Liz, explained her own mother's reluctance to look after her child in a similar way:

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My mum had him a couple of times but she didn't want a young baby around her at night. She went to work and so of course she didn't want a few months old baby at night.

(Liz, age 56, nursing assistant, four children)

Maggie was also unable to rely on her mother, even when Maggie was widowed as a young mother of four children. She explained that her mother could not help because,

'Well, she lived in Market Harborough (15 miles away) and it was just too far for her to be able to help me. I mean if someone could bring her over to me then she'd help out but that usually happened only when I was at home too. I couldn't rely on her to look after them on, like, a regular basis'.

(Maggie, age 73, retired secretary, four children)

Ruth talked about her mother not being able to help because she lived too far away and does not have a car but she also mentioned the competing demands her mother faced from her other children. Ruth's children were born some time after her siblings' children but she felt that it would be unfair if her mother helped her out when she had not been able to care for her other grandchildren because she had worked full-time when they were growing up:

Well my mum helps out sometimes, you know, if I'm desperate and sometimes she'll have the girls in the school holidays but she's getting on a bit now and I think it's too much for her to have them around her all day without me there. She didn't look after my sisters' children either so I never even really thought about asking her, it wouldn't have been right really'.

(Ruth, age 36, nurse, two children)

Finally here, Sonia, talks about the lack of childcare support her mother provided because she was working full-time herself:

And, of course, again, I had a young mum and so she was a young grandma so she was working full time, my mum had always worked full time and so actually there was no sort of off-loading her (Sonia's daughter) on to anybody else.

<div align="right">(Sonia, age 36, civil servant, one child)</div>

Conclusion

This chapter began by examining the extent to which the values associated with mothering are transmitted between generations. It was argued that the influence of grandmothers, whether daughters perceive this as positive or negative, is of key importance in understanding mothers' decisions about combining work and childcare responsibilities. Some of the mothers, termed in this chapter as 'mimics', described the positive influence their own mothers had on them and as such these women have to a great extent reproduced their own mother's behaviour. Other women, described here as 'resisters' have gone to great lengths to avoid repeating the mothering behaviour and employment decisions of their mothers.

An important finding of this chapter is that the data revealed that very few grandmothers acted as regular childcarers. This is in direct contrast to the findings of other studies (Brannen and Moss 1991; Cotterill 1992; Sharpe 1984; Wheelock and Jones, 2002) which argue that grandmother care is central to the facilitation of mothers' employment. Although this chapter found that grandmother care was important, it was not as significant here as other studies have suggested. This is evidence perhaps that the shift away from grandmother care predicted by authors such as Gatrall (2005) and Uttal (2002) that the combined impact of women remaining in employment for longer and increased geographical mobility means that fewer mothers and grandmothers live in close proximity and are therefore less able to provide care than has been the case historically.

The provision of support, or resources, between generations was not, then, a hugely significant aspect of the lives of these groups of women. The grandmothers, for the most part, did not act as regular childcarers on behalf of their working daughters. All of the grandmothers did want to spend time with their grandchildren and were always on hand to help their daughters with childcare in certain situations, such as family illness. However, it appears that amongst the grandmothers there was a general reluctance to sacrifice personal resources, namely their free time, in order to benefit their children. One of the explanations for this trend may be that the increased levels of provision of formal childcare and therefore the accessibility of this provision, grandmothers did not feel obliged to provide care for their grandchildren.

There was also little evidence of 'reciprocity' between generations. Whilst few grandmothers provided exclusive care for their grandchildren, all grandmothers provided care at some level. However, there was little apparent direct reciprocity of this. This is perhaps due to the age and lack of practical support required by the older generation interviewed for this thesis. As Attias-Donfut and Wolff (2000:42) suggest,

'family transfers are mainly directed towards kinship members who have the greatest needs. Economic transfers, whether financial or in kind, circulate from richer to poorer generations, whether flowing upwards or downwards'.

In conclusion then, at the time when the women of both generations were interviewed there seemed to be little need for the provision of support on a daily basis in either direction. The grandmothers were, for the most part, leading active lives and continuing to participate in paid employment. Their daughters therefore made childcare arrangements that did not necessitate a reliance on the older generations, and levels of reciprocity appeared to be low. Over time this may change. As the grandmothers reach retirement age they may be able to play a more active role in the care of their grandchildren on a regular basis. Equally, the older generation may begin to need more support from the younger generation. It is possible that for some of the

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older generation the childcare they did provide was in part as an investment for future reciprocity, for example, as and when they themselves require care (Jones, 2000).

In the next chapter childcare strategies are examined in more detail. Given the finding of this chapter, that grandmother care is less important than other studies suggest, it is important to examine the strategies and types of care which mothers born in the 1960s and 1970s are utilising.

Chapter Seven

Childcare Practices across Two Generations

Chapter Seven

Childcare Practices across Two Generations

Introduction

The previous chapter examined the importance of kinship ties, specifically those between mothers and daughters, and the transmission of mothering values. It was argued that grandmothers, thought to be central in the provision of childcare within families, were less important than has been previously suggested (Wheelock and Jones, 2002; Vandell *et al.*, 2003). Although grandmothers clearly played an important role in the lives of their grandchildren and played an important part in providing 'emergency' or 'exceptional' childcare, it was only in one family chain that grandmother acted as the main carer for her grandchildren whilst their mother was at work. This chapter does not question the assumption that family care is the preference of most mothers; indeed this research corroborates that view. However, the chapter does argue that women do not actively reject formal care strategies simply because of high costs or concerns about the quality of care, as has been suggested by other studies (Bell and La Valle, 2003; Baines *et al.*, 2003; Dex, 2003). Indeed, a number of women stressed the importance of formal care once a child reaches a certain age, because of the perceived benefits of a nursery environment. At this age, often suggested to be around three years old, formal care is frequently chosen over and above family-based care.

If grandmothers are not providing the quantity of care suggested by other studies, it is important to examine the types of childcare provision which grandmothers accessed in the past and contrast this with the type of care that contemporary mothers are accessing. As Riley and Glass (2002) suggest, there is a need for more research which focuses on childcare preferences, and this chapter aims to address this issue by examining how and why mothers decide upon their childcare strategies. It is argued that informal care practices such as the utilisation of care provided by relatives and friends as well as strategies such as working at home, were important for both generations of

working mothers. Formal childcare practices, however, tended not to be used by the grandmother generation and this type of care has only recently become more widely accessed.

This chapter begins by outlining the types of care used, looking at both the type of care used by the grandmothers when their children were growing up and the care that their daughters now use for their children. Each type of childcare arrangement is looked at in detail and the discussion covers both pre-school age care, e.g. childcare for babies and children aged up to school age and care for school-age children, in particular before and after school care and holiday care. The data suggest that between the two generations there has been a clear shift in behaviour with mothers born in the 1960s and 1970s far more likely to use formal childcare than the mothers born 20-30 years earlier. There is also some evidence to suggest that childcare arrangements were more complex amongst the grandmothers.

As discussed in chapter three, for the purposes of this thesis, the term childcare is taken to be any type of non-maternal care. In chapter two the terms 'formal' and 'informal childcare' were defined and Table 7.1, below, illustrates the way these terms have been defined for the purposes of this thesis. However, alongside the categories 'formal' and 'informal childcare' a third category has been added and this focuses on what are termed here as 'work-based strategies'. This category has been developed in order to help classify the work carried out by the women which enabled them to avoid using childcare of any description. This category includes solutions such as working at home, securing flexibility at work and working part-time hours (see Table 7.1).

Table 7.1 A Typology of Childcare Strategies

Type of Childcare Strategy		
Formal Childcare	**Informal Childcare**	**Work-based**
Nursery	Shared care/shift parenting	Part-time work
Childminder	Grandmother care	Working at home
Playgroup and Pre-school	Other relatives	Flexible employer
Nannies	Friends	Taking children to work
Au pair		
After-school clubs		

The discussion below examines the types of care used by mothers and grandmothers as outlined in Table 7.1 above. The following section is divided into three main parts according to the headings used in the table: formal childcare strategies such as nursery care; informal childcare strategies, such as shared care; and finally work-based childcare strategies, such as working at home.

Formal Childcare Strategies

In chapter three of this thesis definitions of childcare strategies formed the basis of the discussion. In particular, the distinction between different types of care. The chapter highlighted that much of the literature emanating from the UK differentiates between types of care using the terms 'formal' and 'informal' childcare to classify types of care. Within chapter three, the term 'formal childcare' was defined as childcare provided by institutions or individuals operating on a commercial basis which

is market-based and involving monetary exchange (Paull and Taylor, 2002). The definition of 'formal care' refers, then, to care provided by those outside the family which usually involves monetary exchange and is based either in institutional settings or in another family home (childminders). This category includes nannies and au pairs who usually live in the family home. Most carers included here hold formal childcare qualifications, with the exception of au pairs. To reiterate points made in chapter three, the definitions include the following:

1) Nursery Care: institutional care provided away from the home and usually paid for by parents. Fees can be high and highest use is found amongst middle class families (Vincent and Ball, 2001).

2) Childminders: usually care for children in the childminder's home. Childminders are the main providers of formal childcare (Vincent and Ball, 2001).

3) Play groups and pre-school groups: provide childcare for a few hours a day when children reach the age of approximately 2 years. The pre-school groups operate in order to introduce children to the school environment before starting school (Paull and Taylor, 2002).

4) Nannies: a highly qualified employee of the family who can live in the family home. Infrequently used service as very expensive (Gregson and Lowe, 1994; Cox and Narula, 2003).

5) Au pair: an unqualified carer who lives in the family home (Cox and Narula, 2003).

In the following discussion the role of formal childcare strategies is examined. Within the sample interviewed for this thesis only the first three categories of formal care outlined above (nurseries, childminders and play groups) were used by the respondents. Therefore, care provided by nannies and au pairs is not discussed.

(a) Nursery Care

The end of the twentieth century witnessed a huge increase in the number of privately run day nurseries in the UK (Vincent and Ball, 2001). The number of day nurseries increased at an unprecedented rate between 1987 (32000 registered day nurseries) (Office of National Statistics, 2001) and 2005 (542,900 registered day nurseries) (Ofsted, 2005). However, few of these places were state-funded and the establishment of private businesses accounted for much of the growth of this sector. Prior to the recent expansion of the nursery sector in the UK the limited nursery places available were largely state-funded and open only to certain groups such as single mothers. Only two of the grandmothers interviewed for this study used a nursery for their children. Cheryl, in the quote below, explains that she was only able to access a nursery place for her son only because she was a single parent:

[HO'C: So who looked after him while you went to work?] A nursery, he went to a nursery. [HO'C: What sort of nursery was it?] Actually it was like a single parents' nursery. [HO'C: And how did you find out about it?] My mother did because I moved to Leicester and well don't ask me how. [HO'C: Did you have to pay for it?] Yeah, my mum did, yeah. Later on, once the boys were at school, I'd take them to school and luckily Vanessa (Cheryl's daughter) was in a nursery that was opposite the school. And then it was again a Council run nursery that if you were a single parent, you know, because I was on my own then so you automatically got a place in a Council run nursery.

(Cheryl, age 50, personal assistant, three children)

The only other grandmother who used a nursery was Diane. However, it is relevant to note that Diane was able to access a nursery place only because at this point she was living overseas where nursery places were more widely available. Diane was keen for her children to begin their education as early as possible, an aspect of nursery care also seen as positive by other mothers, and this explains why she sought nursery care:

I paid for them to go to a nursery – because they don't start school there until they're six, which felt ridiculously late because obviously we get in at four if we can and start their education early. [HO'C: So why did you change to using a nursery?] I changed to the nursery because I wanted them to start having an education. Yeah, they must have been about three and four and I could get them into nursery then. I wanted them to be with other children and I wanted them to have some kind of structure to the day, well to the morning anyway, they only took them for the morning, and to start learning their letters and, you know, that kind of thing. [HO'C: Yes, and did it do that?] Yes it did. Yes it did actually, the nursery was good. Yes, and the woman who ran it was really nice, I really liked her, and the children started to read early because they'd had that type of care. Children benefit from nursery if it's a decent one with the socialising and such like. And I knew, you know, I know it sounds funny but I know my kids are bright and I wanted them to get involved in things.

(Diane, age 55, health care worker, four children)

Cheryl and Diane's experiences were unusual amongst the grandmothers. Although some nursery places did exist in Leicester in the 1960s and 1970s few of the other grandmothers could recall this type of facility or any other type of formal care being available. Indeed, Diane, went on to explain that when she returned to the UK with four young children, she found that the situation with regard to nursery care was very different:

Well it was different here because here they were kind of only council nurseries. There might well have been private nurseries but they were so expensive you had no access to them, especially not on my income, no way would I have had access to them. So yeah it was, definitely, it was the sort of thing that health visitors referred your child to – certainly when I was coming through and not the type of place where loads of kids would go.

(Diane, age 55, health care worker, four children)

Other grandmothers recalled that when their children were growing up there was a lack of any kind of formal childcare available in Leicester:

> Well, when I was pregnant I did some part-time work but had to give up once she was born because there was no way, there was no childcare available, you know, I didn't actively look around, I just knew there wasn't any, there weren't any crèches. The idea of a nanny or an au pair didn't arise, we couldn't have afforded it, that's the only alternative really. There were no childminders like now, there was no, no sorts of nurseries, there were no playgroups - because we're talking 1959 now, There was no way you could find childcare for two children, a toddler and a baby, no way.
>
> (Hilary, age 67, teacher, four children)

> [HO'C: Was there anything else around like nurseries or childminders?] Not like there is now, no, no. They've got a lot more things now than when we had. We were just relying on family and friends then. You'd still got your registered but you were paying half your money out that you was earning, like it is now.
>
> (Liz, age 56, nursing assistant, four children)

Eileen also recalled that formal childcare facilities were unusual during the 1960s and 1970s and that the main option for mothers at that time was to take their children to a playgroup:

> I don't think we had childminders then, I can't remember hearing about them or anyone using them. Nurseries were coming in but that wasn't until they were about three, they didn't go to nursery until they were about three in those days and then they would just be local nurseries and you paid about £3 for a morning. It was more like a playgroup or playschool I suppose, you know in a church hall, about two mornings a week and they're bored really.
>
> (Eileen, age 59, office worker, two children)

Amongst the younger generation nursery care was much more widely used and nine of the mothers had used nursery care at some point. However, as the quotes below indicate, the mothers' attitudes to nursery care varied quite widely and some women, like Fiona, below, gave positive accounts of nursery care whereas other women were, at least initially, more ambivalent about this type of care.

I'd heard good things about the nursery my girls went to, mainly through my friend actually, talking to her, I knew her children had gone there and I felt fine about sending Molly there too. She only went part-time anyway, afternoons only, Monday to Friday and Nick had her at home in the mornings. So I wasn't worried about using a nursery but I think because we had a good balance between home and nursery and I wasn't as concerned as if it was full-time nursery. I didn't even think about looking for a childminder, I just didn't really like the idea of that, I don't know why.

(Fiona, age 44, research scientist, two children)

But I just could not imagine her as a baby going into nursery, I just couldn't imagine how they could look after a baby the same as I would... But then once they're in nursery I think I was happy they were in there, what they were learning and how they were getting on.

(Jo, age 33, office worker, two children)

Becky, quoted below, was in the process of registering her son at a local, private day nursery. Her mother had catered for her childcare arrangements up until this point but Becky explained that now her son was older she thought that he would benefit from a nursery environment:

[HO'C: Did you have a look at any nurseries or anything like that?] Yes I did. There's one in the village, a private nursery and he's going to that one in January, you know, now he's going to be a bit older. He needs some input and with having the baby as well I'm worried that he won't get that input also. I just

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want him to get his independence and playing and socialise – I think that's important because they can get a little bit bored when they're on their own and they just get demanding don't they? This nursery's got like constructive play. So they go through the maths and the spelling and that kind of thing. They've got little herb gardens and animals and things like that, it's a really highly recommended nursery and it just happens to be in our village as well so it's ideal. Well it is really fairly expensive but I'd rather pay and him go to something that I'd like him to go to than go to something that's a little bit cheaper and it's not the best child care.

(Becky, age 34, police officer, one child)

However, although Becky's account of nursery care and the nursery she had chosen was very positive, she still appeared to have doubts about sending her son to nursery:

I still don't trust anyone else to look after Daniel, he's going to nursery in January and I'm still really dubious about it. [HO'C: Why do you think that is?] I don't know. I really don't know. I think he's just so precious to me. But I find it quite difficult to even contemplate sending him to nursery.

(Becky, age 34, police officer, one child)

The perceived educational and social benefits of the nursery environment were important influences on a number of the mothers who chose nursery care. For example, both Vicky and Kirsty, like Becky, explained that they had taken great care over their choice of nursery care and both had decided to send their children to nursery because of the perceived benefit of a nursery environment:

So yeah I didn't feel good about leaving him but I hoped it would help him because he was so shy and quiet. And they were lovely at the nursery. I don't have any concerns about how good they were, and it seemed liked they picked up on what an anxious parent I was. It had to be in a place that was registered and people come out to inspect and say yeah. There wasn't an option for

childminders, I didn't want him to go to family – so yeah that was it. That was it.

<div align="right">(Vicky, age 31, training manager, four children)</div>

Similarly, Kirsty, who was initially determined to care for her daughter herself and to avoid using a nursery, changed her opinion when she found a nursery which met her childcare ideals:

Now she goes to a little place two afternoons a week, which has taken some finding to go somewhere where I was happy but they're brilliant there, they're always on the look-out. [HO'C: What sort of place is it?] It's a little Montesorri school and there's only four on a Tuesday afternoon and two staff. Oh it's fantastic. I mean I didn't want her to go anywhere, but then I found this place and that just outstripped the rest of them by far, so by the time she was two and a half and I'd kind of decided that that was a good time for her to start going, that was great really.

<div align="right">(Kirsty, age 42, teacher, one child)</div>

Sarah also stressed the importance of finding a suitable nursery in terms of financial cost and the nursery environment:

Yeah, they went to a nursery. My daughter, she went to nursery. My son was in school and my daughter went to nursery part-time. [HO'C: How did you find out about the nursery in the first place?] Oh it was just looking round. They were all so expensive and then I eventually found one which seemed a bit more human and were like, you know, "look, come down and have a look, we can do this, we can do that" and that's where I put her.

<div align="right">(Sarah, age 31, training manager, three children)</div>

Sarah was unusual in this sample because she had also received help with childcare through Social Services when she became a single parent. She was offered

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what she termed 'reprieve care' in the form of a part-time nursery place for her son in a nursery operated by Social Services:

> [HO'C: what do you mean by 'reprieve care'] It was just that care was arranged through social services at the time to give me a break just for him. So he went like, I think he went like one day a week but the nursery was not nice and the kids weren't nice because it's social services run and every child with a problem was there, you know. More often than not you'd go and you'd pick him up and "somebody's done this to him and that to him" and whatever else to him and that was hard. But I was single parent by then and if you have to work then you have got to put your kids somewhere and there was no other option other than a nursery, so yeah.

She contrasted this with her experience of private nursery care:

> My daughter's nursery was very different though, absolutely brilliant. She loved it. She was ready for nursery so she just absolutely loved it. And the workers were lovely and it was a nice environment and you got to know the workers and I became friends with a couple of them anyway which meant that you trusted them. So my daughter's experience paved the way for me and then subsequently lots of the friends who I'd known then, all their kids went there. [HO'C: So was there a big difference between the two nurseries then?] Yeah, a huge difference. The social services one that he was in at the time was a bit, it really was hard work in terms of the type of children that they had but it was predominantly for if you had problems, that's where your kids went, OK it's for people who are having difficulties therefore you're getting a certain type of children, a certain type of family using the service whereas with this one it was for people who were earning money who could afford to pay for care. It's a whole different mix of children, completely, a whole different mix of parents and we had a much better experience there.

Nursery care had then become more widely available when the second generation had their children. For the grandmother generation the lack of availability of nursery places made this type of formal care an unrealistic option whereas the women of the mother generation were all aware of the availability of nursery care. However, it is significant that none of the women sent their children to nursery on a full-time basis. This seemed to be important factor for the mothers, perhaps because of the perceived need to balance childcare and home life, as Fiona comments above, 'we had a good balance between home and nursery' and this was significant for a number of mothers, such as Jo, below:

And because it was part-time nursery, I think full-time I would have struggled with, I don't think I'd have ever stuck with full-time nursery. It was always just four days a week or two days and I did still have them as well at home quite a bit as well, so it was a nice balance.

(Jo, age 33, office worker, two children)

Overall, perceptions of nursery care amongst women of both generations were positive. Both mothers and grandmothers stressed what they perceived as the importance of introducing children to a nursery environment before starting school.

Many of the women stressed benefits of nursery to their children, such as the opportunity to socialise in groups and to spend time in an educational environment. Interestingly a number of women mentioned the recent media attention on nursery care. Sandra, quoted below, compared nurseries and childminders, favouring nurseries because of the number of staff present in these settings:

I think probably nurseries there's more people there, I think there's more supervision. I think it would be lovely if they could get cameras in so you could get online and see where your kid is, you know, when you're at work and that, I think that would be lovely. You hear such horror stories don't you about how

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the kids are mistreated. I know they pick bad ones when they do a television programme but, still, I wouldn't like a little baby to go [to nursery].

(Sandra, age 56, retired accounts officer, three children)

Most of the mothers of the younger generation appeared to have positive perceptions of nursery-based care and either used this type of childcare or suggested that they would be happy to do so. This is in direct contrast to the overall perception of childminders. As some of the quotes above hint, a number of mothers rejected childminder care without even seriously considering it as a care option. The discussion now goes on to look at this form of provision.

(b) Childminders

In the discussion above the focus has been on those mothers who used a nursery and their reasons for choosing this type of care. The quotes in the preceding discussion reveal that a number of the women who used nursery care actively rejected the use of a childminder. Overall, women of both generations were critical of childminders, although there were a number of mothers who used a childminder as a childcare provider. Childminders represent an interesting category because in some cases the mother's relationship with the childminder began solely as a friendship and only later developed into a more commercial arrangement. However, here a distinction is made between care provided by friends where no payment is involved and care provided by friends where a financial transaction takes place. In these cases the care provider is classified as a childminder rather than a friend.

Alison explains below that she did not think about using a nursery mainly because she felt she had not needed to. She was happy with the arrangements she had made and satisfied with the level of care her daughter received from a childminder:

[HO'C: Did you have a look at nurseries or anything like that?] No. No, whether that were because Maxine [childminder] were on the doorstep, Maxine was

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automatically there, I didn't have to think about nurseries because she had a couple of other children that she looked after and it was like a mini nursery anyway. I knew that she'd get that thing from Maxine, I knew that there was no way on this earth that Maxine would sit her in a corner and that's where she'd stay all day sort of thing. Maxine was a mum herself, she'd got three children herself and she was a very lovely person, so I knew that Chloe would get a lot of attention there. I knew Joseph would be alright because he was with his Nan and she doted on him.

<div align="right">(Alison, age 35, office worker, two children)</div>

By contrast, Debbie had a negative experience of using a childminder for her son's care:

A friend over the road looked after him – one and only time ever I've had a childminder and never again. Oh it was awful. It was a friend, and the state that I found him in just totally put me off. I was sending like posh nappies, you know, and she was going out buying the cheap pound packs because she'd got a kid the same age and putting him in them and keeping all my nappies and things like that, just the little things. But he was in a right mess one day, because I went home poorly and found him in these nappies and thought "eh?" and couldn't work out why he was so sore. So it's the first and last time I've ever really had a childminder.

<div align="right">(Debbie, age 37, care home worker, two children)</div>

Debbie and Alison were the only women, of either generation, to use a childminder to care for pre-school age children. All other women who used or had used the services of a childminder did so for after-school and/or holiday care for school age children. For example, Pat, one of the grandmothers, managed to work flexible hours during school terms but during the school holidays she found it necessary to arrange additional childcare, in this case a childminder. She was not particularly happy with the

arrangement but accepted it because this type of provision was only required in the school holidays:

> Well I had to get somebody to look after them then a lady on Maidstone Road I'd seen her up the school a lot and I knew she did childminding and I asked her if she'd do it and she said yeah. It were alright, not too good but she were quite a nice lady and it were only the school holidays.
>
> (Pat, age 59, cleaner, three children)

This type of use appeared to be the most usual pattern. Childminders, as opposed to nurseries, were not perceived as suitable providers of long-term care. Jo's comments below encapsulate this view:

> The summer holidays I use a childminder now as well. Mia goes there one night a week, she's happy to go. And she is quite a good childminder, she has a lot of kids in the school, she's got a room full and she's nice and I'm quite happy with her. [HO'C: It's quite interesting what you say about childminders, that you wouldn't have had one when you first used nurseries but you don't mind now?] Because it's one day a week, one day, just one day, so long as she's in a safe, happy environment I'm not too worried what she does for one day, you know, it's a nice place and I don't mind if she sits there watching telly for half a day. It's just thinking that every day I thought nursery could be more educational I suppose and more structured in getting them into school.
>
> (Jo, age 33, office worker, two children)

Jo's view of childminders is interesting because initially she rejected this type of care and instead used a nursery. However, once her daughter started school her attitude changed and she began using a childminder to provide some after-school and holiday care. Jo explained that she was satisfied with this arrangement because it was only a short period of time and, importantly, the childminder did not provide her full-time childcare.

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Whereas aspects of nursery care were seen as being positive and beneficial to the child, there were no aspects of childminder care mentioned in this way. Indeed, mothers of both generations were more likely to stress their negative perceptions of childminder care. Common perceptions of childminders were based around the fact that they were solely responsible for the children in their care and were likely to leave children watching television for long periods of time rather than addressing the educational needs of the children:

I didn't want to use a childminder, I just didn't fancy the idea. Just didn't fancy her being in somebody else's house and only one person responsible and other children and like kettles and things around. But I mean that's all very fine because obviously there has to be, but the television set, I didn't want her anywhere where she could watch television. And I just thought a nursery, more structured, learns more. Because I don't think, you don't have time to do things at home do you but I knew they would be concentrating on her but then I just thought "well a few more members of staff", you know, I just never fancied the idea of a childminder. I was always bothered about like going outside so I picked one that I knew had a nice little garden and everything like that because that was quite important.

(Louise, age 44, office worker, one child)

[HO'C: Did you think about anything other options, like childminders?] No. Because I thought, because I think childminders, I don't necessarily rate them. I think I had more security thinking that at a nursery they were active, they were doing things, it's just not television – not that I mind television but with a childminder how do you know your kids are not watching television all day? That was my concern. I thought nurseries are that much more professional I suppose, I'm sure some childminders would probably not like me saying it but I don't know, I just felt that happier with them being in a nursery and they were very caring in the nursery.

(Jo, age 33, office worker, two children)

I tend to think that a nursery is probably better than a single childminder. I'm sure some of them are very good but giving the children stimulation but I do remember Leanne and David in particular, being a little bit worried about Edie's childminder because he would go there and pick her up and she'd be plonked in front of the television and she was plonked in front of the television when she arrived and she was there when they came back. Not that she'd been in front of the television all day but the fear that maybe there was too much of that going on.

(Hilary, age 67, retired teacher, four children)

It's very stringent to be a childminder actually but loads of people do it informally and I think there was that kind of worry. And also I think children are exposed to much more educational things in a nursery than they are with a childminder unless you've got a very good childminder, you know they get the telly rather than planned activities for the day and that kind of thing. So I think there's something around that as well, children get a better level of activities and interaction in a nursery than they do with a childminder.

(Diane, age 55, health care worker, four children)

What is fascinating here is that few of the mothers suggested that they had a strong aversion to formal care (Baines *et al.,* 2003; Bell and La Valle, 2003; Dex, 2003). However, mothers did attach certain criteria to the use of formal care; namely that it should be used only when a child reached a certain age and that it should not be used on a full-time basis. This is interesting because it contrasts with the argument of other writers who have suggested that some mothers, particularly those from working class backgrounds, choose not to use formal care because they have a preference for family-based care. Data from the interviews carried out for this thesis suggest that whilst most of women agreed that family-based care was 'best' for their children, women of neither generation suggested that they had a strong aversion to formal

childcare. Indeed some of the women actively chose formal care over and above family-based care:

[HO'C: So if you could have had any sort of childcare arrangements when you first went back, would your mum full-time have been your preferred thing or not?] No. I still think I still think I would have liked her in nursery a couple of days, also because of the socialising. So even if my mum was only 50 years old and could have coped I still think I would have definitely thought about nursery, I don't know but I'd like to think that I would still have considered it, you know, just for the social and for the stimulation they get and I mean they know what they're doing don't they? And they do painting and those type of things that we don't get time to do.

(Louise, age 44, office worker, one child)

However, the age of the child seems to be significant here with some women suggesting that formal childcare is unsuitable for children below a certain age. Layla, quoted below, was one of the few mothers who seemed to disagree with nursery care. Nevertheless, she also felt that once a child reached a certain age, in this case the age of three, then utilising formal care is acceptable:

Ellie started nursery [pre-school] in January. She was 3 in the September and she started after the Christmas. [HO'C: So, do you see that differently?] Yeah. I feel that at that stage, that society, everybody else is telling you that your children need something else and I think it tells me that I have to let go. And not only that, it's a routine thing and the nursery is so lovely there, I do know one of the teachers, she looked after me, she's a lovely teacher and she's head over the nursery and I just feel I've got my own peace of mind, you know, I think that's what that is.

(Layla, age 28, hairdresser, two children)

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The comment from Layla is interesting because it reflects a theme discussed in chapter three, that in the early post-war years the idea that mother-centred care was crucial until the child reached a certain age was propounded. The age of three is significant because Bowlby's (1955) influential work suggested that mothers should care for their children until the age of three otherwise the child's development was at risk. Other women interviewed here also mentioned developmental milestones as being significant in their decision as to when to begin using formal childcare:

I wouldn't have taken work during the day then, not while they were little, I didn't want anybody else to have them while they was dead little. I wanted to be there with them myself, I just wanted to see, well, I think you miss a lot don't you? Walking and talking and different things if somebody else has got them.

(Pat, age 59, cleaner, three children)

I didn't want a job all day and every day where I missed out on them walking and, I mean Reece, I went back early with him, I mean he crawled, sat up and done most things. I mean he walked at 8 months. I wanted to see, I wanted to be at home to see them walk and see them talk and to be there for that, but like with Kyle, yeah it was about six months I think he was, but I was here all day, I didn't go to work until night time and so I didn't feel like I'd missed out on anything with him.

(Debbie, age 37, care home worker, two children)

Having had her so late in life I was definitely going to be looking after her myself and that was the intention and there was no way she was going to a nursery. So I'd kind of decided that for sure. In my heart of hearts I do feel if I've got a child I want to be the main person caring for them. So that was another big thing for me, that there's no way she was going to be going somewhere else really, I was really quite evangelical about that. I mean she walked at 10 months and so she was pretty independent by the age of 1 but I still wouldn't have sent her to a nursery though. [HO'C: Why not?] Because I

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just worry that when they go to speak somebody's not there to listen and I think that's really important.

<div align="right">(Kirsty, 42, teacher, one child)</div>

Informal Childcare Strategies

As highlighted in Chapter 3, by contrast to 'formal care', the term 'informal' care is usually used to denote care provided by relatives and friends. The types of care included in the definition of informal care are: care provided by partners (usually fathers), grandparents, other relatives and friends. Such care does not usually involve any financial exchange. However, as Wheelock and Jones (2002:444) comment, a standard definition of informal care does not exist in the literature. For example, they use the term 'complementary childcare' to describe childcare provided by relatives, friends and neighbours, excluding resident partners and fathers, whilst other studies include partners in the definition of informal care (Paull and Taylor, 2002). For the purposes of this chapter, the term 'informal care' is used to describe care given by family members and friends, including partner care. The term also includes family care which involves monetary exchange. The types of childcare included under this umbrella term are categorised according to the identity of the carer:

1) 'Shared care' or 'shift-parenting' - a system by which mothers and fathers are in paid employment but work a shift system whereby one parent works while the other cares for the children and vice versa (Gowler and Legge, 1982; La Valle *et al.*, 2002).

2) Grandmother care - either the paternal or maternal grandmother can fill this role but usually it is the maternal grandmother who is involved in this way (Cotterill, 1992; Wheelock and Jones, 2002).

3) Relatives and friends – this is where other relatives and friends, usually female, provide care which is usually unpaid and irregular.

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In this part of the chapter the main focus is on shared care because the 'special' role of grandmothers has been treated as a separate category and therefore is already discussed in Chapter Five.

(a) Shared Care and Shift-Parenting

In this thesis the role of fathers in the provision of care is defined as a type of childcare. Using the definition to include fathers was informed by the interview process during which both grandmothers and mothers tended to describe the role of their husbands or partners as having facilitated their participation in paid employment. Indeed, a number of the women were only able to enter employment outside the home during the hours their husband or partner was at home to take care of the children. This is in contrast to both Uttal (2002) and Wheelock and Jones (2002) who have argued that the role of partners and husbands should not be separated from a mother's role in an analysis of childcare strategies and therefore care provided by husbands is not considered as childcare. However, Vandell *et al.* (2003) argue that any type of 'non-maternal care' should be considered as childcare and in this thesis the same definition is used since, as suggested in chapter three, it is women who tend to take the main responsibility for arranging childcare.

The term 'shift-parenting' describes a childcare strategy in which both parents participate in the labour market but operate childcare by a shift system. One parent works outside the home while the other cares for the children at home and responsibilities are 'swapped' when the working parent returns home, as Maggie describes:

> I had a night-time job in a factory, just for the extra money really. My husband would come home from work and then I'd go out and he'd sort the kids out.
>
> (Maggie, age 73, retired clerical worker, four children)

Usually, as with Maggie and her husband, the husband/partner would work standard hours in full-time employment whilst the woman would work non-standard hours in part-time employment, such as early morning shifts, evening shifts or night shifts. Securing part-

time paid employment, often with non-standard work hours, which dovetailed with husbands and partners hours of work, was an important childcare strategy for many women. This was the system operated by a number of women of both generations at some stage in their employment history, as described below:

When I had Alison I didn't go back then, I didn't go back to the factory, I stayed at home and then I got a night job at British United Shoes, 5 until 9. Richard would come in from work and I'd go cleaning at British United till 9, at night, like. [HO'C: And did you mind doing that?] No, no, when I left them with Richard at night, that was no problem, I worked Monday to Thursday you see, you didn't go Friday. So Monday to Thursday was fine.

(Marilyn, age 57, nursing assistant, two children)

[HO'C: So when you were working at the factory in the evenings what happened with Reece then?] Well, Lee was here then so he'd have him, yeah. It was only a couple of hours a night. It was only part time, but I was there for about two or three years doing the same thing. Well, it worked out really well because it's only like two or three nights a week but then Lee has Thursdays off and so we always have Thursdays together.

(Debbie, age 37, care home worker, two children)

I was pregnant with that one, then I went back to work when she was about nine months old. I worked at a video shop just part time, evenings and weekends. [HO'C: And what did you do with the kids then?] My partner had them. [HO'C: Did he mind?] No, not really because you have to do don't you? You've got to so no there wasn't a problem with that at all really and I didn't mind doing it, not really because I like to go out to work, I like working and it was a job where I met an awful lot of people, no I quite enjoyed it.

(Natalie, age 34, bar worker, three children)

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When Gary were about six weeks, six or seven weeks old I went back the job I had before he was born, it was shortage of money really that made me do it. I went like twilight shift. It's like 5 till 10 or 6 till 10, in the evenings like. When my husband came home I went to work. He'd get in and I'd go out to work but it didn't work. [HO'C: Why not?] Basically he couldn't cope. He couldn't cope with work and then coming home and looking after a young baby.

(Liz, age 56, nursing assistant, four children)

'Shift-parenting' enabled women to avoid using formal childcare and/or the need to call upon other family and friends to provide childcare. It also allowed women to ensure that their childcare arrangements were maintained as a 'private matter' resolved within the unit of the nuclear family, as Pat describes:

I didn't want to go back to work straight the way anyways and leave the kids with anyone so I just did a night time job. I started when she were about six months old I think, about 5 years I stayed in that job, till they started proper school. It were 6-8:30 and it fitted in well because Pete got home at 5 and I left at 5.30 so you know I didn't have to have anyone else to look after the children. No he didn't mind, you know, as I say, the money was handy and he didn't mind having the children sort of thing and I was home for 9 o'clock and I was always here sort of thing when they got home from school and in the holidays and that.

(Pat, age 59, cleaner, three children)

(b) Other Relatives and Friends

The role of friends and relatives (other than husbands/partners and grandmothers) in the provision of childcare has been shown to be a significant strategy by some studies (Land, 2002; Halliday and Little, 2001; Windebank, 2001). This strategy was, however, little used amongst the respondents interviewed for this thesis. Few women

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talked about a relative other than the child's father and/or grandmother providing childcare. Similarly, few women appeared to rely on friends as a source of childcare.

In the quote below, Sandra, one of the grandmother generation, describes a childcare arrangement that she made with a friend. This involved taking turns to collect each other's children.

I was working two days a week and she would have Becky, that's the youngest one and pick them up out of school so I didn't actually have to rush home. And I had her little boy and it worked out about two days each. It was ever so handy, you know, she was a registered childminder anyway but we just swapped. So she'd ring me and say "is it alright today" and I was only working two days so as long as it wasn't Monday and Tuesday I would have Stuart any of the other days. That worked OK. And then when they went to school, you know, and then I'd pick them up at night and Ann would be probably home about 4 or 5 o'clock, the same time as roughly I would come home from work.

(Sandra, age 56, retired accounts officer, three children)

Eileen had a similar arrangement with a friend who had children the same age as her own daughters. Sharing childcare with a friend enabled both women to take on part-time work without the expense of paid childcare:

I went back part-time when they were about two and a half I think. Jo was about two and a half. I had a friend who had two children about the same age and we were looking after them, two mornings a week I'd have them to play and she'd be having mine two mornings a week while I went to town or went shopping or got on with the housework, so that sort of gravitated to "will you have them if I go and do a bit of casual work?" And then I did casual job a couple of days a week, and she equally did the same on the two other days. That worked out quite well because it was easier to look after the children if you've got people

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round to play. It gave you a break when they were away. [HO'C: And did you pay each other or not?] We didn't pay each other, no, we just did it.

(Eileen, age 59, office worker, two children)

Both Natalie and Layla, mothers from the younger generation had benefited from the help of friends prepared to cover the school run on a temporary and short –term basis:

Yeah, I think it was only a couple of mornings a week when I had early lectures but my friend who lives in New Parks used to take them to school for me, just informal, you know, I didn't pay her anything.

(Natalie, age 34, bar worker, three children)

Finally here, Diane was the only respondent whose childcare needs were met by a family member other than a partner or grandmother. Both Diane's sister and also another female relative played important caring roles on Diane's behalf:

But there was family support then, you know, my sister was always happy to take the.... come and stay with the kids, so that kind of worked out fine. And she had her own child later so either I had hers or she had mine, you know, that kind of family arrangement. But in the end my aunt's sister's child, my aunt's niece, I think she was about 15 or 16 and she'd babysat for me a few times if I'd gone out in the evening or if I'd done a late shift or something she'd kind of come round and help the kids. So we finally set up an arrangement where, if I was on an early, she was only down the road so she would come up and get the children ready and get them off to school and they'd walk to school with other children so, you know, everybody was together. And then I would be home for the children when they got back, and if I wasn't, if the shifts worked that I was on a late, she would come and have tea ready and she would feed them and stay with them until I got home after 9 o'clock. Horrible yeah, complicated. Very complicated.

(Diane, age 55, health care worker, four children)

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Diane's account of her childcare arrangements is striking in its complexity. Yet, such multi-faceted patterns of care appeared to be quite typical amongst the grandmother generation. By contrast the childcare arrangements made and utilised by women of the mother generation were generally less complicated and involved fewer carers or combinations of care types. This theme is developed in more detail in the final section of this chapter.

Work-Based Solutions

The third type of childcare examined here is defined as 'work-based solutions'. This way of resolving childcare issues does not fit neatly into the more often used definitions of care discussed above: formal and informal childcare. These definitions are focused primarily on the status of the childcarer, whether childminder, nursery, grandmother, etc. Work-based solutions to childcare are strategies which are devised by the mother to enable her to combine paid work and domestic responsibilities without relying on other providers of care. Instead work patterns which dovetail with domestic responsibilities are adopted. These strategies include working at home, flexible working and taking children to the workplace. These strategies are not usually included as a discrete category in discussions of childcare but because such arrangements were widely used by women of both generations this approach is treated here as a childcare strategy.

(a) Working at Home

With the exception of Allen and Wolkowitz (1987) and Phizacklea and Wolkowitz (1995), few studies of women and childcare mention the role of home work as a solution to the problem of combining paid work and domestic responsibilities; a strategy often used by the grandmother generation to combine work and childcare. Phizacklea and Wolkowitz (1995) focus attention on, and question, the role of homework as a means of combining paid work with domestic responsibilities such as

childcare. They argue that 'home-based work is usually the result of an attempt to fit paid work around unpaid work, particularly childcare' (Phizacklea and Wolkowitz, 1995:81). However, they also point out that homework is far from a solution to childcare issues because the demands of young children frequently leave little time for carrying out work at home.

As outlined in Chapter Two, Boris (1994:107) describes the importance of homework; the taking in of work such as dressmaking, which was widely used by mothers as a means of earning money whilst remaining located in the domestic sphere. Boris's work (1994:107) focuses on the US where she suggests paid work was often carried out by mothers working at home as it allowed them to 'fulfil their duties as mothers, they could look after the children, care for illnesses and cook' (p.177). Young and Wilmott (1957) also found 'outwork' such as typing and making dresses to be an important childcare strategy in East London in the post-war period. This thesis argues that working at home was also important for women in Leicester during the 1960s and 1970s but was no longer important for mothers born in the 1960s and 1970s despite recent evidence of increasing numbers of female, white collar homeworkers (Phizacklea and Wolkowitz, 1995).

A number of the women in the grandmother generation described in some detail their experience of homeworking, often known in Leicester as 'outwork' or 'outdoor work'. During this period industries such as boot and shoe and hosiery manufacture and other textile manufacturing were an important aspect of the local economy. Indeed, since the 1900s, the Leicester economy has been synonymous with three main industrial manufacturing groups – engineering, textiles and clothing and footwear manufacture. In the mid 1960s these 'three industrial groups dominated manufacturing industry in Leicester' (Pye, 1972: 375). Many women in Leicester began their working lives in the factories of the hosiery, textiles and boot and shoe industry (O'Connor and Goodwin, 2004) and when they entered motherhood many were able to continue working in the industry they had trained in but by carrying out factory work in the home environment. These factories generated substantial amounts of work which could

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either be carried out within factories or as 'outdoor work'. The grandmothers described the machinery which was installed in their homes and the delivery of garments to be put together at home. Most Leicester women who did 'outwork' took in work from textile or boot and shoe factories:

> A friend up the road they'd got their own company and they wanted some out work so I had a sewing machine here, big sewing machine and did boat stuff and things like that, upholstery. We have another room out there so, yeah. I just sat with the children and did the work, yeah it was fine. Well I could just put it down if the phone rang, leave it, go and answer the phone. It was an industrial sewing machine, just a little louder than a sewing machine so I could work on it even if the kids were asleep. [HO'C: Was it quite hard to do the two things together, to be doing that and look after a baby?] Very up and down, you just accepted it. I couldn't sit down for two hours solid unless they were asleep. I did it as much as I could to get the orders out for the people up the road.
>
> (Sandra, age 56, retired accounts officer, three children)

Sandra's account corroborates evidence from Phizacklea and Wolkowitz (1995) who suggest that combining childcare and homework is fraught with the difficulties of balancing the demands of domestic and paid work. Later on in Sandra's career she also worked at home in an office related role, providing accounts work which also involved duties such as answering the telephone. She explained that she found it much more difficult to do that type of work from home:

> I did start doing actually some company accounts at home, when I didn't have the machine and I had a big desk in the playroom and everything, did it there. But that was much more inconvenient because the phone used to ring when one of the kids wanted attention and I tried to sound professional and it wasn't because the kids were in the background. So eventually I had to put my books away.
>
> (Sandra, age 56, retired accounts officer, three children)

In some cases the daughters could recall their mothers working at home. Natalie described the impact of her mother's work on the home environment:

I can't remember us going anywhere after school apart from home. But when we was I'd say Matthew's age, my mum used to do outdoor work so I can remember like the breakfast room just being full of my mum's work.

(Natalie, age 34, bar worker, three children)

Whilst Layla prompted her mother's memory of the homework she had done when Layla was a child:

[Layla: What was that little job that you did when you used to make those corduroy trousers?] Oh that was at home, yeah, I forgot about that, yeah, I did have a job at home doing studs on Levi jeans and things. I done that for quite a while, I mean that was pin money that was really. I think I'd seen it advertised in The Mercury. I thought "I'll go for that, at home" and so I did. They brought a little machine but there was no electrics to it. Because I was a bit dubious with having like with knives or anything like that with the children about, I was a bit dubious. But this, it was just like a stud thing, it was a lever you know. I did the work in the bottom bedroom. Yeah. I could do it at night and early in the mornings. Oh there was another one like that too. Oh no, no, now you've set the ball rolling. The Levis, eventually that went bust and I got this other one and it was making children's clothes, at home, yeah. Some beautiful little clothes I used to make.

(Gill, age 58, cleaner, four children)

Liz's account, below, is fascinating because although she talks about the difficulty of working at home and looking after a baby she also describes actively seeking homework because of childcare problems she was experiencing:

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Then I had outdoor work and I overlocked at home. Basically you put the machine where you could and then they brought all the work to you and you made the jumpers. You know how you've got the overlocking, do you know what I mean by overlocking? You've got your sleeves and your jumper bits and just put them all together and I did it mostly at night when he was in bed. That was hectic though. Trying to look after babies and work as well, and I'd done that for a few years. It was hard. [HO'C: How did you find out about the home working jobs?] Well I knew you could do that but back then it was a lot of outdoor work, so you just looked down the paper and phone them up basically. But I had to pack it in for a bit when I got pregnant with Debbie. So I packed it in for a bit but then when Natalie was born I still carried on with the outdoor work, so I'd got three children and still working at home. I stopped doing outdoor work again then and went back to the factory, doing the Hoffman press, once the kids were all at school. I think it was for a couple of years I did that and my father-in-law used to help me out, you know, picking the kids up from school and that but then I had to give it up and start working at home again, purely through childcare. My father-in-law got too ill so I had to do that, so I started overlocking at home again.

(Liz, age 56, nursing assistant, four children)

Pat also talked about the homework she had done when her children were young. Like Liz, she suggested that she had taken this type of work on because it meant she was around for her children during the school holidays. She also describes the difficulty of fitting industrial machinery in the domestic setting and the noise levels of the machinery:

I got a job at home after I was made redundant from the factory. The machine took up the whole of the spare bedroom. That were hand flat knitting. Before that I used to stuff teddy bears at home, could do that at night as it was quiet, stuffing them and sewing the backs up. [HO'C: how did you find out about the home work?] My sister in law were doing it for this bloke who had a factory

and she asked him if he'd got any more work. Well when they kids were at school like I used to do it, do a certain amount in the day and finish sort of thing once they were home. It was too noisy to work the machine once they were home and I didn't used to do it at night at all really because it's quite noisy. It was hard work but extra money and convenience but I was there for them but also I was there in the school holidays aswell.

(Pat, age 59, cleaner, three children)

Marilyn explained that she could not cope with homework, partly because of the invasion of her domestic space:

[HO'C: Did you ever do anything like work at home or anything like that?] Yeah, I did some machining work. I didn't want to go out to work and my neighbour, she knew somebody who had a machine and could do machining at home and they brought you a machine round but I couldn't cope with a machine, we only had one living room and the machine was in the corner. Oh I couldn't be doing with that, boxes of leather in the corner with this machine and all that noise. But you see in them days women did things like that save going out, they had machines at home. I mean I had one friend, she used to put the binding round wool, used to have boxes and boxes but she had two rooms so in her other room she had boxes and boxes of wool hundreds of balls of wool, but that's the sort of thing you did. The kids wouldn't do it now and I don't blame them. I don't really. I don't blame them.

(Marilyn, age 57, nursing assistant, two children)

Marilyn, quoted above, suggests that young women are no longer prepared to take on work of this type of work. Indeed, Layla was the only mother from the younger generation who had used the strategy of working at home to enable her to combine caring for her daughter and participation in paid work. Layla was a hairdresser and she was able to build up a small 'mobile' hairdressing business. Although she called this 'mobile hairdressing' she actually worked from home and her clients came to her

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house. This, she explained, enabled her to look after her daughter at the same time as working:

> You see the beauty of hairdressing is that you can earn money at home and that's what I used to do with Ellie a lot and that's why I never found I had to go back to work quickly and full-time because I found it easy getting myself business really. I was a bit sort of cagey when I first did somebody's hair because she was so tiny and my mum was there in the afternoon for the first month or so because I thought "oh if she starts what do I do?" I used to make all the appointments in the afternoon so that I knew my mum could be here. [HO'C: At the person's house? Did you go to their house?] They come to me. Yeah. I just found that easier. And I think at the time I didn't drive so I just couldn't get to them. So it would be people that are friends of friends so they'd come to me and my mum would be there. And then I got brave and I thought "well she's a good baby" she got to know the routine roughly and then she used to sit and play and I used to do their hair and she was as good as gold really. You know I needed mum. I was a bit sort of "how do you do it" but I did and, you know, she (the baby) was fine'.
>
> (Layla, age 28, hairdresser, two children)

(b) Flexible working

For a number of women in both generations the role of their employer played an important part in the facilitation of balancing home and work responsibilities. It is, perhaps, surprising, given the recent attention to employer policies such as family friendly working hours, that some of the grandmothers described their ability to take paid employment which fitted with their family responsibilities. For example, some women described their negotiations with employers aimed at securing hours which suited the demands of childcare such as working school hours during term time and either not working during school holidays or again negotiating hours which meant that

childcare was not perceived as being required; evidence perhaps of early family friendly employers.

One of the explanations given for flexible hours being quite readily available stems from the nature of Leicester's employment opportunities. As highlighted above, the hosiery industry was important in Leicester up until the late 1970s. Many grandmothers were themselves daughters of hosiery workers and, they, like their mothers, entered hosiery work on leaving school (O'Connor and Goodwin, 2004). The hosiery industry was predominantly a female one and, as such, employers appeared to be sympathetic to the domestic demands of mothers, as Gill, quoted below, suggests in her description of one employer who enabled women to work 'flexible' hours:

> I negotiated those hours, which was pretty good, they would accommodate you but you did find hosiery factories were like that. Smaller firms and factories you'd find were pretty obliging I think. All the ones I worked at were. I think it was based on married women with children and you flitted in after school and before, you know, you never done a full day really. [HO'C: And were there other people doing those hours as well?] Oh yes, lots. Lots were doing it, everybody was doing it. And you'd all rally round in school holidays.
>
> (Gill, age 58, cleaner, four children)

Marilyn also described a similar situation at the hosiery factory where she worked:

> I worked the hours I wanted to do really, you, to fit round the kids. [HO'C: So how would you have arranged it then, to get those hours?] Well in the hosiery they've done that, you could pick your hours in the hosiery, I don't know about anywhere else but they did, we had women do 8 till 2, 8 till 5, you could pick 9 till 3, 9 till 2, whatever suited you really as long as you did the hours. Yeah. It was all women and that's probably why it were like that.
>
> (Marilyn, age 57, nursing assistant, two children)

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Eileen talked about clerical work in the same way:

> I quite enjoyed temping, that must have been when they were at school that I did that and then I think when they went to school I gradually increased my hours temping, I can't remember, and then temping jobs led to offers of permanent jobs and when they want you they'll fit round your hours. [HO'C: Is that what you found?] Yes, they worked around me, they know you've got children and so they'll just have you when they can, when you are available. They knew what the conditions were before they offered you the job in a way, so they didn't have to talk that through. They worked the circumstances around you, you know, and if they wanted you as a worker then they'd let you do the hours that suited you with the children.
>
> (Eileen, age 59, office worker, two children)

(c) Taking Children to Work

Two of the grandmother generation and one of the mother generation described taking their children to work with them as a way of combining employment with childcare. Gill explained that although she had not been seeking employment when her daughter was a baby, she accepted a job offer because she was able to take Layla with her to work:

> I'll put it down to this, that when I had her and I used to take the two boys to school, the headmaster there he asked me if there was any chance I could do a stand-in job of doing the lollipop lady. And I said "well I can't Mr Smith because I've got the young one" I said "she's only six months". "Well can't you bring her in the pram and sit her at the side" I said "well I could do" I says "I'll do it temporary by all means" you know "but obviously the baby comes first". And I done that for four years – temporary and Layla was as good as gold.
>
> (Gill, age 58, cleaner, four children)

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When her daughter was older, Gill returned to work in a factory where she found her employer's attitude to be very flexible in terms of hours of work and in allowing her to bring her daughter to work if necessary. Layla, Gill's daughter had a clear memory of this experience:

> You know, you could vary your hours like and I could take Layla in there with me, they even paid her a little wage. She used to go with the boss, she went in the machine room – you used to go with Rose hadn't you? Counting buttons weren't it? [Layla – respondent's daughter: Yeah. I can remember like a big tub and I remember actually sitting in them, in the tubs. And I can remember like counting buttons and they used to give me like a little brown wage packet that I always used to get and you know, how much? £2?] I worked there for quite a few years but he was always so obliging, you know, if you needed time off you needed time off.
>
> <div align="right">(Gill, age 58, cleaner, four children)</div>

Alison's memory of going to work with her mother was similar:

> [HO'C: Had you been into the factory with your mum at all when you were growing up?] Oh yeah, in them days you could take your kids anywhere really couldn't you, so I used to go in with her, you know, weekends. I think she only worked part-time – I can't remember – but I was always in and out and so I more or less knew the place anyway, I think that's why when Vern the manageress offered me a job it was like, well, I thought I belonged there anyway really because I knew everybody.
>
> <div align="right">(Alison, age 35, office worker, two children)</div>

Layla was unusual amongst the younger generation because, as discussed earlier, she had participated in paid work by working at home as a mobile hairdresser. She described her anxiety when she first started to do this but this anxiety was eased once she realised that her daughter was 'a good baby':

And then I got brave and I thought "well she's a good baby" got to know the routine roughly and then she used to sit and play and I used to do their hair and she was as good as gold really. She was fine, sometimes they'd sit and feed her for me while I did their hair. Yeah, so they weren't really that bothered and she was a good baby which made all the difference.

She contrasted this with her experience of combining childcare and employment once her son was born. This arrangement had been far less successful:

I took him in to work a couple of times, he's been in the pram whilst I was you know, pushing him, but he's not as easy a baby. No, she used to sit there quite content, but he's like "mum hold me" as soon as I put him down he's awake.

The Complexity of Childcare Strategies

The preceding discussion of childcare arrangements has shown that for both generations childcare strategies were highly complex. However, it is argued here that the complexity of arrangements has declined between generations and the data illustrates that the grandmothers used a greater number of childcare strategies than the mothers. This is illustrated in Table 7.2. The two left hand columns identify the grandmothers and their childcare strategies over the period when childcare was required and the two right hand columns show the mothers childcare arrangements.

It is evident from the table that the grandmothers tended to utilise a greater range of resources when negotiating care for their children and there appears to have been less consistency in their arrangements overall. By contrast, women from the younger generation tended to use fewer types of childcare and to have enjoyed more consistency in their arrangements. This contrast between the generations is very clearly illustrated by the experience of the first grandmother in the table, Sandra and her daughter, Becky. She used up to four different childcare strategies to enable her to

participate in paid employment. These strategies included: working at home as a machinist; working flexible hours which enabled her to drop off and collect her children from school and be available in the school holidays; grandmother care provided by her own mother; and finally 'shared care' whereby she and a friend shared responsibility for collecting each other's children. By contrast her daughter, Becky, used only two types of care: grandmother care and nursery care. Moving down the table most mother and daughter chains resemble this pattern, Marilyn, for example, used five different childcare strategies whereas her daughter, Alison, has only made use of two different types of care.

There are a number of explanations for the pattern revealed here. First, the grandmothers may appear to have had more complex arrangements because at the time of interview they were able to reflect on their children's entire childhood whereas most of the mother generation still had relatively young children and had not yet experienced the need to make any more complex arrangements. Second, it is important to consider working hours and it may be that distinction between full and part-time work was important. For example, mothers in full-time employment tend to have more stable and less complex childcare patterns. This is because they have to ensure that their childcare needs are met on a full-time basis. By contrast, mothers working part-time have a tendency to arrange childcare on a more ad-hoc basis because the need for childcare is more sporadic and it is therefore easier to rely on short-term, temporary, informal solutions. Indeed, Windebank (2001) indicates that the BHPS (1991) reveals that formal care is more important for women working full-time with children aged less than five years old than it is for women working part-time hours or for those with older children who tend to rely more on informal strategies. Third, number of children may be significant and the complexity of childcare arrangements may increase with number of children. The number of children is indicated on the table by the number next to the mother's name.

Table 7.2 Childcare Strategies across Two Generations of Mothers

Grandmother (No. of children)	Type of care	Mother (No. of children)	Type of Care
Sandra (3)	Flexible hours Home work, Friend Grandmother care	Becky (2)	Grandmother care Nursery
Marilyn (2)	Shift-parenting Childminder, Home work Flexible hours Children to work	Alison (2)	Mother-in-law Childminder
Brenda (2)	Home work	Sarah (2)	Childminder
Pauline (2)	N/A	Jane (2)	Nursery
Gill (4)	Home work, Child to work Flexible hours	Layla (2)	Grandmother Home work
Liz (4)	Home work Flexible work Father in law No care	Debbie (2)	Childminder Shift-parenting
		Natalie (3)	Friends Shift-parenting
Pat (3)	Childminder, Home work Flexible hours, Shift -parenting	Alison (1)	Flexible work
Hilary (4)	Mother-in-law Childminder	Fiona (2)	Nursery Flexible hours
Maggie (4)	Shift-parenting Neighbour, No care	Ruth (2)	Nursery, Partner, Other family, Friend
Eileen (2)	Friend, Nursery	Jo (2)	Nursery, Childminder
Maureen (2)	Shift-parenting	Helen (1)	Nursery, Grandmother
		Louise (1)	Nursery, Grandmother
Diane (4)	Childminder, Nursery Niece, No care	Sonia (1)	N/A
		Sarah (3)	Nursery, After-school
		Vicky (4)	Nursery, Partner
Peggy (3)	Flexible work, shift-parenting	Kirsty (1)	Nursery
Cheryl (3)	Nursery, Neighbours	Vanessa (1)	Nursery

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Conclusion

This chapter has outlined the different types of childcare arrangement used by mothers and grandmothers. The chapter argued that the complexity of childcare strategies has declined over time and between generations. For example, the grandmother generation tended to use more types of care than their daughters. By contrast the mothers of the younger generation had more consistent childcare arrangements, often using only one or two types of arrangement. This pattern could change over time. It may be that the grandmother strategies were complex because they were able to reflect on entire periods of childhood whereas some of the mothers had young children and had, thus far, only needed childcare for a relatively short period of time.

Previous studies of childcare have argued that the group of mothers most likely to use formal childcare such as nurseries are those with a high level of education who work long hours (e.g. Dex, 2003; Lewis, 2003). It has been argued in this chapter that there is some evidence to suggest that this pattern of care may be changing and that the accessibility of formal nursery care has begun to improve. This is in part due to the increase in the availability of facilities and also to the introduction of financial benefits such as 'working families tax credits' which are aimed at encouraging mothers into the labour market.

The majority of women of both generations suggested that family-based care was the ideal solution to childcare provision. However, only one of the mothers indicated that she actively rejected formal care on this basis. Overall, both mothers and grandmothers stressed the benefits of the nursery environment to children but with the qualification that this type of care should not be a full-time solution. Contrary to Westwood's (1984) research, there was no evidence here that nursery care was seen as being 'institutional' or that the use of such care would result in the relinquishing of parental care.

The role of childminders emerged as being less significant than other research has found. For example, Vincent and Ball (2001) argue that childminders are the main providers of formal care. However, amongst this group of respondents nursery care was the most important formal care strategy and childminders were mainly used for small amounts childcare, for example, after school and/or often temporary childcare, e.g. in the school holidays. Perceptions of childminders were generally rather negative and this may explain this pattern of use.

Finally, this chapter has illustrated the complexities of childcare choices. Childcare strategies amongst the grandmother generation were characterised by their complexity and a 'piecing together' approach which enabled them to combine paid work and childcare responsibilities. Amongst the younger generation of mothers childcare patterns look to be less complex, involving far fewer strategies. However, as their children get older and perhaps the number of children in the family unit increases, it is likely that the patterns of care will become increasingly complex over time.

Chapter 8

Conclusion

Chapter 8

Conclusion

Introduction

This chapter sets out the key conclusions of this research. It begins by highlighting the key findings of the thesis in relation to the original questions asked. This section is divided into four distinct elements, first the historical context is documented, second, the role of intergenerational influence is examined, third the impact of issues such as geographical mobility and local childcare provision is highlighted and finally the relevance of policy developments in recent years is identified. The chapter then moves on to look at the limitations of the research. The implications of the research for future policy related developments are then outlined. The chapter, and the thesis, end with a number of suggestions for further research in this area.

The central question which this study sought to investigate was:

How have strategies of combining paid work and childcare changed across time and within families?

Three subsidiary questions were also addressed:

1) How have childcare strategies changed between generations, within families?

2) How do other factors - such as financial considerations, geographical mobility, attitudes towards childcare and the level of local childcare provision - impact on the choice of childcare?

3) Has the increase in formal childcare provision - such as nurseries and childminders - had any impact on women's employment and childcare choices and behaviours?

Within this concluding chapter each of these questions will be discussed in turn. The following section begins by examining the extent to which strategies of combining paid work and childcare responsibilities have changed across time and within families.

Combining Paid Work and Childcare: An Historical Perspective

In the preceding chapters it has been argued that the balancing of childcare and paid employment has always been problematic for families and for mothers in particular. The provision of care remains a 'gendered responsibility' (Brannen *et al.* 2003:179) and therefore it is usually the mother who has to fit work hours around childcare responsibilities. Issues such as cost, location and availability of childcare have, and continue to, act as major structural constraints on women's work decisions (McRae, 2003:331). The continued dominance of the male breadwinner model and the associated notion of idealised motherhood further complicate women's, particularly mothers, position in relation to the labour market.

There is, however, a lack of empirical work which takes childcare into consideration when examining women's participation in the labour market in the early post-war period. This thesis has aimed to address this gap by examining, in some detail, the childcare strategies of both the grandmother generation and the mother generation.

Taking the older generation first, a key finding of the research concerned the childcare strategies amongst the grandmother generation. Their childcare arrangements were characterised by high levels of complexity and a 'piecing together' approach which enabled the women to combine paid work and childcare responsibilities. The complexity of childcare strategies has, however, declined over time and between generations. Amongst the younger generation of mothers childcare patterns were far less complex, involving fewer strategies and fewer childcare

providers. For example, the grandmother generation tended to use more types of care than their daughters. Within a number of the family chains there were grandmothers who had used up to five different arrangements, such as a combination of working at home, working flexible hours, shift-parenting with their husband, using grandmothers as carers and sharing caring with friends. By contrast the mothers of the younger generation had more consistent childcare arrangements, often using only one or two types of arrangement such as a nursery and flexible hours at work. The younger generation were also far more likely to be users of formal childcare, a pattern discussed in more detail below.

The decrease in the complexity of arrangements can be accounted for, in part, by the historical context. The grandmothers became mothers in a very strong male breadwinner society with a prevailing attitude that mothers should stay at home and devote themselves to domestic chores and childcare (Lewis, 1992). The lack of formal care provision at the time when the grandmothers had young children meant that the grandmothers had to utilise multiple strategies to enable them to combine work and family life. The grandmothers brought up their children at a time when childcare was perceived as a private matter to be resolved within the family unit. There was little support for women who participated in paid employment and, as such, this group had no choice but to make elaborate arrangements. Indeed, only two of the grandmothers had used nursery-based care.

Since this period there has been a perceptible shift in policy and the younger generation of women entered motherhood at a time when government policy had begun to be aimed at encouraging women back to work after having children (Smeaton, 2006). This research found that amongst the younger generation patterns of childcare use were characterised by relative simplicity in arrangements rather than complexity. Many of the younger generation of mothers had been able to access and make use of nursery-based care. This generation were far more likely to use formal care than their own mothers had been, suggesting therefore that certain changes at policy level have filtered down over time. The implications of changes in policy relating to women's employment and childcare are discussed in more detail below.

It is important to recognise, however, that the patterns identified here could change over time. It may be that the grandmother strategies were complex because they were able to reflect on a 'lifetime' of childcare whereas some of the mothers had young children and had, thus far, only needed childcare for a relatively short period of time. In addition, as the children of the younger generation get older and perhaps the number of children in the family unit increases, it is likely that the patterns of care will become increasingly complex over time even amongst the mother generation.

Intergenerational Influences on Childcare Strategies

The values and practices associated with mothering appeared to be transmitted between generations in the majority of family chains of women who took part in this research. The influence of grandmothers, whether daughters perceive this as positive or negative, is of key importance in understanding mothers' decisions about combining work and childcare responsibilities.

With the exception of Brannen (2003) and Brannen *et al.* (2004), little has been written about the transmission of mothering values between generations. One of the key contributions of this thesis is the development of an analytical framework or typology as a basis for interpreting and understanding patterns of intergenerational behaviour, in particular those associated with motherhood and employment. This typology of intergenerational employment and childcare strategies suggests that the behaviour of mothers is often influenced by their own mothers' actions, either positively, by 'mimicking' their role or negatively, by avoiding the reproduction of their mothers' behaviour. The women interviewed for this thesis have been classified as either:

> (a) Mimics – women who actively and consciously followed their own mothers' roles in relation to combining employment and childcare responsibilities;
>
> (b) Coincidentals – women who explain their behaviour in relation to their mothers' as being purely coincidental and those who make no

link between their behaviour and their mothers' even when the behaviours bear close resemblance;

(c) Resisters – women who have actively avoided repeating the employment and/or childcare behaviour of their mothers'.

For example, those women termed in this thesis as 'mimics', described the positive influence the behaviour of their own mothers had on them and as such these women have reproduced their own mother's behaviour. These patterns were evident amongst the women who explained their decisions about combining home and family as being due to having the 'same outlook' as their mother or because they were 'bringing up the children in the same way that my mum brought me up'. Other women, described as 'resisters' went to great lengths to avoid repeating the mothering behaviour and employment decisions of their mothers. The patterns of behaviour in such cases is described here as 'inverse intergenerational transmission'. These women explained their own behaviour as happening in direct response to their own experiences. For example, some of this group went to great lengths to avoid using a childminder because they had bad memories of time spent in the care of a childminder. Other women talked about working unusual shift patterns to ensure that they were always at home when her children arrived from school. This was attributed to negative memories of returning to an empty house when they were children.

Brannen *et al.* (2004) have suggested that intergenerational ties are vitally important in childcare and work decisions. Wheelock and Jones (2002) found evidence to suggest that intergenerational ties are of extreme importance, impacting on decisions relating to care of the children in a number of ways. This is because parents, and in particular, maternal grandmothers were seen as 'the next best thing' for childcare when the parents were unavailable. Also, the influence of maternal grandmothers over the way children are brought up and 'the shared values and 'ways of doing things' between mothers and daughters is one of the social reproduction mechanisms through which the gendered provision, organisation and management of childcare was reinforced' (Wheelock and Jones, 2002:451).

Factors Affecting Childcare Decisions

Whilst the findings of the thesis do suggest that intergenerational ties are important, the role of grandmothers as providers of childcare was found to be less important than other studies have argued. Grandmothers are widely seen as the key providers of childcare on behalf of their children who are often working parents (Lindars, 2003). However, an important finding of the thesis is that very few grandmothers acted as regular childcarers. This is in direct contrast to the findings of other studies (Brannen and Moss 1991; Cotterill 1992; Sharpe 1984; Wheelock and Jones, 2002) which argue that grandmother care is central to the facilitation of mothers' employment. Although grandmother care was important for the women interviewed, it was not as significant here as other studies have suggested.

One of the explanations for the relatively minor role of grandmothers in the provision of childcare within families is that the majority of the grandmothers interviewed continued to participate in paid employment. This thesis found that few of the grandmothers were able to provide care for their grandchildren precisely because they themselves remained active in the labour market. Indeed, contrary to other research (Cotterill, 1992), this thesis found that grandmothers were reluctant to commit themselves to the provision of care for their grandchildren, with most expressing a preference to spend time with their grandchildren on their own terms.

This group of women were selected for interview because they had worked when their children were young and most had continued to be economically active. Indeed, other research (Mooney *et al.*, 2001) also suggests that grandmothers in their 50s and 60s are under increasing pressure to extend their working lives and continue to participate in paid employment. In the context of this research, this meant that few of the grandmothers had either the free time available, or the inclination to spend their limited free time acting as carers for their grandchildren. All of the grandmothers were very clear that they wanted to spend time with their grandchildren and most emphasised the enjoyment they got from being with their grandchildren. However, they were, for the most part, reluctant to be viewed as 'childminders'. The grandmothers wanted to spend time with their grandchildren but on their own terms.

This is evidence perhaps that the shift away from grandmother care predicted by authors such as Gatrall (2005) and Uttal (2002). They have suggested that the combined impact of women remaining in employment for longer and increased geographical mobility means that fewer mothers and grandmothers live in close proximity. Grandmothers are, therefore, less able to provide care than has been the case historically.

For the women interviewed here, geographic mobility did not initially appear to be an issue. Most of the family chains lived in Leicester and it could be assumed that the problems associated with increased geographic mobility would not have an impact in this case. However, both generations often stressed the difficulties of not living in close proximity to other family members. In most cases the distances involved were less than approximately five miles. Nevertheless, even these short distances were perceived by both generations as making it difficult for grandmothers to be relied upon as carers. In some cases this was due to the limited availability of public transport and/or the lack of availability of a private car.

Other family chains highlighted the age and health of the grandmother generation as being a significant issue. Mothers in the younger generation were reluctant to ask their mothers to act as carers if they were concerned about the grandmothers increasing age and ability to look after young children. Others worried about the poor health of often elderly parents.

The majority of women of both generations suggested that family-based care was the ideal solution to childcare provision. However, overall, both mothers and grandmothers stressed the benefits of the nursery environment to children from a certain age, but with the qualification that this type of care should not be a full-time solution. Contrary to Westwood's (1984) research, there was no evidence here that nursery care was seen as being 'institutional' or that the use of such care would result in the relinquishing of parental care.

Policy Changes

As already highlighted in the preceding discussion childcare has, historically, been treated as an individual matter to be resolved within the family. As such there has been a lack of explicit policy relating to childcare and a lack of state involvement in childcare provision. Towards the end of the twentieth century the increased demand for childcare began to be met by childcare providers operating in the private sector. Care provision increased but the cost of care has been high and childcare has been far from universally accessible. The Labour government's 1998 'National Childcare Strategy' has gone some way to address the childcare needs of all families but the key aim of increasing the availability of low cost childcare may not be the solution if, as others studies have suggested, mothers express a preference for other, usually informal types of care.

Previous studies of childcare have argued that the group of mothers most likely to use formal childcare such as a nurseries are those with a high level of education who work long hours (e.g. Dex, 2003; Lewis, 2003). Indeed, existing qualitative work on women and childcare practices has tended to focus on women in high status jobs (Brannen, 1992) who have, until recently, been the main users of formal privately funded and expensive childcare. Consequently, the experiences of women working in lower status occupations who have found it difficult to access such care have been neglected in the literature. As Walters (2005:194) comments, there is a need for more 'in-depth qualitative research … on the attitudes and work orientations in lower level occupations'.

This thesis addresses Walters' plea and a key contribution of this work is its focus on the childcare strategies of women in lower status work. It has been argued in this thesis that there is some evidence to suggest that the patterns of childcare use identified above may be changing and that the accessibility of formal nursery care has begun to improve. This is, in part, due to the increase in the availability of facilities and also to the introduction of financial benefits such as 'working families tax credits' which are aimed at encouraging all mothers into the labour market.

Future Research Agenda

Although the interviews were detailed and in-depth they covered only 14 family chains and each chain consisted of only two women. Further interviews with a greater number of women and the inclusion of additional generations, such as great-grandmothers and great-granddaughters may shed more light on the issues raised. For example, by extending family chains in this way it would be possible to explore further the conceptual categories developed here of: mimics, coincidentals and resisters.

Revisiting and re-interviewing the mothers who have taken part in this study, alongside their daughters would also be of great interest. It may be, for example, that the less complex patterns of care identified in this generation increase in complexity as their children grew older. Interviewing the daughters, who are currently school age, would again enable an extension of the concept of intergenerational reproduction of patterns. This youngest generation will also be beneficiaries of the recent changes in childcare policy such as the introduction of 'wrap around care'; an extension of the school day to provide care not only during standard school hours but also before and after school.

A significant and deliberate omission from this research were men – both fathers and grandfathers. The inclusion of men's perceptions of childcare and men's patterns of work would, however, be of value. This is particularly resonant with the current policy emphasis on men and family friendly work (O'Brien, 2005) and the recently identified pattern of increasing numbers of men requesting part-time work in order to spend more time with their children. Issues such as paternity leave rights and the rights of fathers have attracted increasing attention in the media as the quote below suggests:

> Fatherhood in Britain is changing, but it is hard to know how much. Until the late 90s, British fathers were largely characterised by their absence - from single-parent families, from most two-parent families for most of the working week and, most tellingly, from almost all political and media discussions about childcare and the work-life balance. Yet since then, the

government has introduced paid paternity leave and the right for fathers to request flexible or part-time working. It has proposed in the work and families bill currently going through parliament that fathers be allowed to use a share of their partner's paid maternity leave. (Beckett, 2006)

All the women interviewed for this thesis were working mothers who had either worked when their children were growing up or currently had young children and were in employment. Mothers who did not work when their children were young were excluded from the study. This meant that family chains where only one of the generations combined work and motherhood were not included in the research. However, interviews with this group would add a further dimension to this work. For example, it may be that amongst women of the younger generation their experience of their own mothers' employment played a role in their own decision not to work (resisters). Alternatively, in cases where the grandmother had not worked and the mother in the younger generation participated in paid employment the factors influencing this decision may differ considerably from women in those families where both generations had participated in the labour market.

Finally here, childcare providers, such as nurseries, were not included in this study. Nevertheless, interviews with individuals such as nursery owners and/or managers would provide an additional dimension to the research. Anecdotal evidence from conversation with one nursery owner suggests that patterns of childcare use have changed considerably in recent years. For example, until the late 1990s the majority of mothers were accessing full-time care because of a lack of job flexibility. In addition, most were entitled to limited paid maternity leave and their children started full-time nursery at a few months old. Recent policy changes have meant that opportunities for requesting flexible work have increased and women are more easily able to request part-time working hours. In addition, extended and enhanced maternity leave provision, such as longer periods of paid leave, mean that mothers are able to stay at home until their babies reach a slightly older age, typically nine months to one year. This suggests that changes at policy level are having a significant impact on some women, perhaps, specifically, women in high

status jobs who have traditionally been the main beneficiaries of policy changes (Smeaton, 2006).

This thesis has examined the childcare strategies and employment decisions of two generations of women. However, as suggested in the section above, the thesis has raised a number of questions which lead on from this piece of research to form a future research agenda on this topic. It is hoped that this work will inspire others to follow the path set by this thesis and continue to carry out research in the areas which remain somewhat neglected.

Appendices

Interview Letter

<div align="right">July 25th 2005</div>

Dear

Sometime ago you may remember that your husband was interviewed for the Young Worker Study being carried out at the University of Leicester.

At that interview I mentioned that I am working on another study about women, work and childcare. I wondered if you would be interested in taking part in a short interview as part of this study? The interview questions would be about your employment history; in particular the way in which you managed to combine work and childcare when your children were young.

I would be very grateful if you were able to take part in this project. I will telephone you in the next week or so to arrange a convenient time and place to meet. If you are not interested could you let me know by telephone (0116 2525952 – direct line or 0116 2525954 – department secretary) or email hso1@le.ac.uk Please also feel free to telephone me if you have any questions about the interview or the project.

I look forward to meeting you again soon,

Yours sincerely

Henrietta O'Connor

Mothers and Daughters

- I am trying to contact mothers and daughters to take part in a research project about **women, work and childcare.**

- I am looking for women (born around 1945 - 1955) who worked when their children were growing up;

- Who are now grandmothers with at least one daughter (probably born around 1965 - 1975) who is also a mother and who also works.

If you would like more information, please…

- Have a chat with me (Henrietta O'Connor) this evening, or

- I can take your details and get in touch with you, or

- Just give me a ring on 0116 2525952 (email: hso1@le.ac.uk)

Thank You!

<div align="right">

ID No. ....

</div>

Women, Work and Childcare Strategies

Interview Schedule A – Grandmothers

Name..

Address...

....

DOB..

Date of Interview...

Place of interview..........................Who present?................................

How contacted?..

Start Time..................   Finish Time...................

INFORM RESPONDENT OF BACKGROUND

My name is Henrietta O'Connor and I am undertaking this research as part of my PhD at the Centre for Labour Market Studies at the University of Leicester. It aims to find out more about the ways in which women combine work and family life. I'd like to ask you today to talk me through your own employment history and the ways in which you managed to work and bring up your children.

- The information given to me during the course of this interview will be treated in the strictest of confidence.

- Your answers will be unattributed to either yourself or to any organisation for which you work or have worked for. I will not repeat anything you say in other interviews with family members.

- I am an impartial and independent researcher from the University of Leicester and I have no connections any other bodies (e.g. Inland Revenue, Social Security etc).

INTERVIEW START – TOPIC GUIDE

The interview will take about an hour and I am going to ask you a series of questions about your life and your family, particularly about the work you have done and the childcare you have used.

SECTION 1- FAMILY LIFE

I'd like to begin by asking you a little background information about your life, starting with a few questions about your children and gradnchildren.

Name	Name	Name
DOB	DOB	DOB
Job	Job	Job
Children	Children	Children
Location	Location	Location

I'd like to move on and ask you some questions about your life since your first child was born, in particular the way in which you managed to combine your family responsibilities with work.

Children and Work

- Were you working when you first became pregnant?
- What did you plan to do? Return to employer?
- How long did you work for?
- When did you go back to work?
- What did you do?
- Who looked after the baby/children?
- Why did you choose that childcare?
- How did you feel about it?
- How did it work out?
- Did you ever have any problems?
- How did you cope with holidays?
- What do you think about nurseries?
- What about childminders?
- What about using family?

HELP WITH CHILDCARE

ı/do you rely on your family for help with childcare?

- Did you ever have any help in arranging care or paying for care?
- Were you aware of any other childcare facilities available to you at the time?
- Why didn't you use these?
- If you could have had the perfect childcare arrangement what would this have been?
- If you could start all over again as a mother what would you do differently?

DOMESTIC RESPONSIBILITIES

- What did your husband/partner think about you working?
- Was your husband involved in making the decision about what childcare you used?
- Was he involved in arranging any aspect of this care? (arranging/collecting/dropping off/emergency and illness cover)
- Do you think that men should be involved in looking after the children or is it the mother's responsibility to do this?
- Do you think that generally a father should go to work and a mother stay at home with the children?

WOMEN AND WORK

- Did you think that people disapproved of you working when your children were young?
- What would you say was the main reason for you taking on paid work?
- If money had been no object to you, would you still have worked?
- Did you ever worry about the childcare you had chosen?
- Is there a certain age when a child should be with the mother?
- What type of childcare do you think is the best that a parent could choose for their child?

INTERGENERATIONAL PATTERNS: MOTHERS

- Did your mother work?
- Can you remember her working?
- Do you think this influenced your decisions about work?
- What used to happen to you when she worked? (prompt: Do you remember who looked after you?)
- Do you remember how you felt about that?
- Do you think this influenced your decisions about childcare?

) you think your mother taught you about bringing up your children?

- How did she teach you?
- Do you do anything in bringing up your children which is the same as your mother did?

INTERGENERATIONAL PATTERNS: DAUGHTERS

- Do/does your daughter(s) work?
- What does she do about childcare? (prompt – do you look after grandchildren?)
- What do you think about that?
- Why do you think she chose this childcare?
- Would you say you had any influence on her decision?
- Do you know what other childcare options are available to her?
- Why do you think she doesn't use these?
- What do you think would be the best thing your daughter could do to help her look after the children?
- Why do you think this?
- Do you think things are easier for mothers now or when your children were younger?

END QUESTIONS

I'd like to ask a few general questions to end the interview

- Did you leave school with any qualifications?
- Have you obtained any qualifications since leaving school?
- At the moment you are _____. What do you think you will be doing in 10 years time?

I'd like to thank you for taking part in this interview and to explain to you what happens next.

Finally, is there anything you think I haven't covered or anything else you would like to say?

Do you have any questions you'd like to ask me?

Interview Notes...

<div align="right">**ID No. ....**</div>

Women, Work and Childcare Strategies

Interview Schedule B – Mothers

Name..

Address...

....

DOB..

Date of Interview...

Place of interview.............................Who present?.........................

How contacted?..

Start Time..................   Finish Time...................

INFORM RESPONDENT OF BACKGROUND

My name is Henrietta O'Connor and I am undertaking this research as part of my PhD at the Centre for Labour Market Studies at the University of Leicester. It aims to find out more about the ways in which women combine work and family life. I'd like to ask you today to talk me through your own employment history and the ways in which you managed to work and bring up your children.

- The information given to me during the course of this interview will be treated in the strictest of confidence.

- Your answers will be unattributed to either yourself or to any organisation for which you work or have worked for. I will not repeat anything you say in other interviews with family members.

- I am an impartial and independent researcher from the University of Leicester and I have no connections any other bodies (e.g. Inland Revenue, Social Security etc).

INTERVIEW START – TOPIC GUIDE

The interview will take about an hour and I am going to ask you a series of questions about your life and your family, particularly about the work you have done and the childcare you have used.

SECTION 1- FAMILY LIFE

I'd like to begin by asking you a little background information about your life, starting with a few questions about your children.

Name	Name	Name
DOB	DOB	DOB

I'd like to move on and ask you some questions about your life since your first child was born, in particular the way in which you managed to combine your family responsibilities with work.

Children and Work

- Were you working when you first became pregnant?
- What did you plan to do? Return to employer?
- How long did you work for?
- When did you go back to work?
- What did you do?
- Who looked after the baby/children?
- Why did you choose that childcare?
- How did you feel about it?
- How did it work out?
- Did you ever have any problems?
- How did you cope with holidays?
- What do you think about nurseries?
- What about childminders?
- What about using family?

HELP WITH CHILDCARE

- Did you/do you rely on your family for help with childcare?
- Did you ever have any help in arranging care or paying for care?
- Were you aware of any other childcare facilities available to you at the time?

dn't you use these?

- If you could have had the perfect childcare arrangement what would this have been?
- If you could start all over again as a mother what would you do differently?

DOMESTIC RESPONSIBILITIES

- What did your husband/partner think about you working?
- Was your husband involved in making the decision about what childcare you used?
- Was he involved in arranging any aspect of this care? (arranging/collecting/dropping off/emergency and illness cover)
- Do you think that men should be involved in looking after the children or is it the mother's responsibility to do this?
- Do you think that generally a father should go to work and a mother stay at home with the children?

WOMEN AND WORK

- Did you think that people disapproved of you working when your children were young?
- What would you say was the main reason for you taking on paid work?
- If money had been no object to you, would you still have worked?
- Did you ever worry about the childcare you had chosen?
- Is there a certain age when a child should be with the mother?
- What type of childcare do you think is the best that a parent could choose for their child?

INTERGENERATIONAL PATTERNS

- Did your mother work?
- Can you remember her working?
- Do you think this influenced your decisions about work?
- What used to happen to you when she worked?
- Do you think this influenced your decisions about childcare?
- What do you think your mother taught you about bringing up your children?
- How did she teach you?
- Do you do anything in bringing up your children which is the same as your mother did?

I'd like to ask a few general questions to end the interview

- Did you leave school with any qualifications?
- Have you obtained any qualifications since leaving school?
- At the moment you are _____. What do you think you will be doing in 10 years time?

I'd like to thank you for taking part in this interview and to explain to you what happens next.

Finally, is there anything you think I haven't covered or anything else you would like to say?

Do you have any questions you'd like to ask me?

Interview Notes..

Appendix 5

Data Protection Letter

Dear

Thank you very much for agreeing to take part in this project. I greatly appreciate you giving up your time in order to help with this research.

I would like to reassure you that the information which you give to me will be treated in the strictest of confidence. All data collected will be treated in accordance with the Data Protection Act. In addition, your answers will not be attributed to either yourself or to any organisation which you work for or have worked for.

I am an impartial and independent researcher commissioned by the University of Leicester. I have no connections with any other bodies, e.g. the Inland Revenue, Social Security etc.

What will I do with the data you give me? My intention is to use the data which you and other interviewees provide in order to produce a series of academic papers and possibly a book. Your own data will be completely anonymous and you will not be identifiable through the published work. The publication process will take some time but I aim to maintain up to date information on my progress through the University website which you can find at: www.clms.le.ac.uk

Once again, thank you very much for your participation.

Yours Sincerely

Henrietta O'Connor

Appendix 6

Letter of Thanks to Interviewees

October 13th, 2005

Dear

Thank you participating in the interview for my research project. I really enjoyed our conversation and I am grateful to you for giving up your time to talk to me.

I would like to take this opportunity to reiterate that the information you have provided will be kept <u>strictly confidential</u>.

Once again, I am very grateful for your participation in this research and if you have any questions about the progress of the research please do not hesitate to contact me at any time on 0116 2525952.

I am looking forward to meeting you again in the future.

Best wishes

Henrietta O'Connor

Appendix 7

Key Themes for Data Analysis

1) Intergenerational patterns
2) Post-war women's work and childcare strategies
3) Lower status jobs and childcare
4) Changes in childcare patterns

Women and the Labour Market in the Post-War Period
Working patterns – motivation to work, type of work, negotiation of hours of work, attitude toward work (for money, sanity, extra money), flexible working, home working.

Childcare Strategies in the Post-War Period
Strategies used – formal and informal care
Strategies used in 'out of ordinary' routine (illness, school holidays, non-standard hours)
Reasons for strategy - family care preference, lack of formal provision, lack of awareness of provision, formal childcare too expensive, don't agree with formal care, age of child.
Perceptions of ideal childcare scenario

Childcare and Household Relationships
Responsibility for childcare (choice, arrangement, logistics)
Breadwinner model – how important is this?
Husband/partner's thoughts about work
Good mothers, bad mothers, ideal of the housewife?
Others perceptions of working mothers - community 'norms'?

Childcare: The Policy Perspective
How far policy links (or not) with women's childcare preferences
Has policy had any impact on reality, e.g. has it become 'easier' for mothers to work

Intergenerational patterns
To what extent are daughters' choices informed/influenced by their mothers working practices?
How important are grandmothers in provision of care?
What is their role (their perception of their role, their daughters' perceptions)
Influence of grandmother in parenting behaviour of daughter generally.

Appendix 8

Data Analysis Coding Sheet

Intergenerational influence
        Mother working
        Daughter working   = influence of this
        Grandmother's role
        Patterns within and between generations

Motivation for working (Hakin)
        Generational influence
        Money (survival, pin, luxury)
        Sanity
        Ambition

Childcare Strategies

Home-based solutions	*Work-based solutions*
Partner	P/T work
Family	Flexible work
Nursery	Home work
Childminder	Taking child to work
Neighbours	
Friends	

Childcare Problems and Solutions
        Rationalisation of decision
        'Morality of motherhood'
        What is 'right'

Community attitudes and prevailing 'norms'
        Norm amongst community
        'Golden age' of neighbours

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